

Developing countries: integrate the environment in the development process, sustainable development

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Without debate, the Parliament adopted the report drafted by Ms. Maartje VAN PUTTEN (PES, NL) on measures to promote full integration of the environmental dimension in the development process of developing countries. The Parliament considers that the basic strategy of the programme is to achieve full integration of environmental policy in other policies, including development policy and that there is a need for further and still more progressive objectives and measures beyond the year 2000 to maintain the momentum of Community action. It calls on the Commission to come forward with appropriate proposals to give effect to the programme's objectives and recalls that the need to integrate environmental considerations into Community policy and action should be translated into more operational terms. It also gives a new title to the proposal that gives greater emphasis to the 'integration of the environmental dimension' in the external policies of the Community and in the development process in developing countries. For the Parliament, this policy should be implemented in accordance with the European Parliament and Council Decision no. 2179/98/EC establishing a revised European Community programme of policy and action in relation to the environment and sustainable development 'Towards Sustainability' and should comprise two components : 1) a strategy of integrating environment policy in the Community's development policy and in other policies which have an impact on development and environment policies, and 2) measures to promote the full integration of environmental policy in the development process of developing countries. These components shall be complementary and shall be pursued by the Commission in parallel, with the aim of ensuring that the Community as far as possible sets an example of best practice to developing countries. Bearing in mind these priorities and the importance of the environment for the development of the countries concerned, the Parliament considers that the financial amount indicated in the proposal should be considered as an absolute minimum to meet the objectives of the Regulation (given that this amount covers technical and administrative assistance required for the implementation of the project). It also stresses the importance that all the financial and political measures be co-ordinated. In parallel, the Parliament clarifies the meaning of 'sustainable development' and strengthens the scope of actions to be undertaken. It proposes that the programme should cover, among other things : - transboundary environmental issues, in particular air, soil and water pollution, - the inclusion in development co-operation projects of an environmental component which distinguishes, identifies and assesses the sustainable dimension of these projects, - sustainable management and use of natural and environmental resources in all sectors and in particular the productive sectors of the economy, - environmental problems caused by the non-sustainable use of resources due to poverty, - conservation of biological diversity (especially by protecting ecosystems and habitats and the conservation of species diversity, the sustainable use of its components, the involvement of holders of traditional knowledge on the use of biological diversity, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources), - the management of wetlands, - environmental impacts of non-sustainable forms of agriculture and the promotion of sustainable forms of agriculture, - town and country planning (especially with respect to the urban environment), - environmental problems related to industrial activities, - encouragement of the use of renewables, of increasing energy efficiency, of energy saving and the replacement of especially damaging energy sources by others which are less so, - information campaigns on hazardous substances and toxic waste and pesticides in particular, - the promotion of trade in products that have been produced in a sustainable manner, - the elaboration of programmes and projects for sustainable development, - support for the elaboration of development priorities and self-development capacities of indigenous and local communities, - the formulation of instruments aimed at promoting sustainable development and environmental integration (e.g. public databases on the Web), - observance of special environmental standards (in particular, labels and certification), - regional projects or projects

that help to strengthen regional co-operation in the area of sustainable development, - the dynamics of the links between international environmental instruments and human rights. In order to ensure increased effectiveness of the Regulation, the Parliament asks that priority should be given to projects based on the requests of the beneficiaries themselves or on criteria drawn up by the developing countries. With respect to comitology, the Parliament supports the idea of an advisory committee procedure. It modifies the funding thresholds proposed by the Commission which sought another type of procedure (5 million euros instead of the 2 million proposed by the Commission). It also calls for the establishment of an environmental monitoring unit which would be responsible for the co-ordination, linking and integration of the various aspects of development co-operation projects in order to maximise investigation and follow-up. Lastly, it strengthened the scope of the evaluation reports to be transmitted to the Parliament and the Council and calls on the Commission to submit to it no later than 31/12/2000 a report on the legislative and other initiatives that it intends proposing with a indicative calendar for adoption.