Development strategy for Africa

2005/2142(INI) - 17/11/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Maria **MARTENS** (EPP-ED, NL) on a development strategy for Africa. (Please see the document of 24/100 /2005.) Parliament stated that in order to promote sustainable development, African governments themselves bear the primary responsibility for good governance, the fight against corruption, and investment in poverty reduction in their countries. The principle of African ownership is essential in EU-Africa relations, but needs a different approach in well-performing and in fragile States. An Africa strategy should be geared towards economic progress for the whole continent, but the majority of African States is fragile and suffer from structural instability, and will therefore neither attract investment nor develop a private sector. The Africa strategy should have a special approach to the needs of fragile states in order to avoid their further lapsing into poverty and violence and consequently destabilising their neighbours,

Principles and institutions:*Parliament stressed*that the EU needs to develop a differentiated approach, distinguishing between cooperation partnerships in political, social and economic stability for well-performing States and partnerships towards such structural stability for fragile States. The EU should approach well-performing States as equal partners in a relationship based on full ownership, to enable them to maximise efforts in achieving the MDGs (e.g. through budget and sector support). In contrast, fragile States must be approached in a relationship based on a level of ownership and using policy instruments compatible with the prevailing circumstances. Budget aid, especially in fragile States, must carefully be assessed on a case-by-case basis so as not to favour military expenditure, thus prolonging conflicts.

Parliament emphasised that an integrated EU strategy for Africa must also address the lack of coherence between other policy areas and development policy, and indicate how other policy areas can contribute (both in terms of policy setting and in terms of financing) to the implementation of the strategic development plan, aimed at poverty eradication, for the continent. Addressing the lack of coherence should also include addressing issues such as export subsidies, tied aid, debt burden, export credits and commercial use of food aid.

There must be increased coordination of European aid between national and EU-level strategies and actions, but also between Member States themselves, to avoid aid fragmentation and duplication, and to enable the EU to assume the global leadership role it ought to play in the fight against poverty.

Parliament called on the Commission to support fully the drive for harmonization amongst donors, according to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of 2 March 2005 by the OECD/DAC.

Good governance and capacity building:*Parliament stressed the*overall needs for capacity building, especially in the fields of administration, healthcare, education, economics and democratisation, in the public as well as in the private sector. It underlined the crucial role of women in agriculture, health care and education on the way towards achievement of sustainable development. Women must be involved at all stages of not only development policy but in all political decision-making processes, including planning and assessment. Parliament recalled that respect for human rights by countries in receipt of EU development funds is essential. It urged the EU players involved in development assistance, while drawing up and monitoring projects funded or co-funded by the EU, to consider the progress - or the lack of progress - made with regard to human rights by such countries.

Finally, the EU must work towards a democratisation of international institutions in order to achieve a stronger representation of developing countries' interests, with particular reference to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization.

Social infrastructure:*T*he availability and affordability of basic health care services is an absolute condition for the successful implementation of health policies in Africa. Parliament stressed therefore the need for national African health programmes to focus on basic healthcare (both curative and preventive), availability of safe water, sanitation and sexual and reproductive health. The Commission is urged to ensure that the EU is at the forefront of efforts to ensure that basic education is free and compulsory. This must be combined with substantial new resources and more targeted spending of existing resources. The Commission should spend at least 20 % of the development funds it allocates to Africa on basic health and basic education. Parliament considered that investing in girls' education is the most effective development strategy since educated girls generate smaller and healthier families, leading to increased productivity and poverty reduction.

Economic growth:*Parliament u*rged that full account be taken of the fact that most African countries are heavily dependent on primary commodities, which are particularly vulnerable to price fluctuation and tariff escalation. It emphasised the importance of diversification, the development of processing industries and small and medium-sized enterprises.

A stable and predictable investment climate – through respect for the law, for property rights and for rules concerning intellectual property – is important to achieve sustained foreign financial inflows and thus create jobs, reduce the "brain drain" and create an environment conducive to stable economic growth. Parliament underlined the importance of micro-finance to build a strong middle class to sustain economic growth.

Moving on to the WTO Doha Round, Parliament stated that this must contribute positively to developing countries, in particular in Africa. This includes applying Special and Differential Treatment to developing countries and abolishing all trade-distorting agricultural subsidies.

On the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), Parliament felt that this has the potential to promote economic growth in Africa. However, it called on the Commission to address concerns with regard to the lack of accompanying measures for compensation for tariff losses, support for capacity-building, technical assistance, and the continuation of non-reciprocity in market access. The Commission must also actually deliver figures on the financing of accompanying measures and strengthen technical assistance to allow a better outcome.

Parliament welcomed the renewed commitment on granting 100% debt relief to 18 of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries made at the meeting of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and African Development Bank. It called for the expansion of debt relief commitments to those governments which respect human rights and the principle of good governance, and prioritise poverty eradication on the basis of MDG-needs.

Peace and security:*Parliament called*on the Commission to develop a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and reconstruction as an integral part of partnerships towards structural stability for fragile States. It underlined the importance of regional bodies in providing a ground for maintaining a peaceful environment. The Africa Peace Facility, created in 2003 by the AU Heads of State at the Maputo Summit, needed to be strengthened. Parliament encouraged other civilian mechanisms to contribute to conflict prevention, resolution and management in Africa, with increased EU funding. Development policy is one of several tools for addressing the root causes of insecurity but it should not be subordinated to security policy.

Environment/natural resources:*Parliament* welcomed recent Commission commitments - long overdue - to go from word to deed in regard to environment mainstreaming, and to put strategies for the promotion of sustainable development high on its agenda.

Implementation:*Parliament r*equested the Commission to combine its strategy for Africa with a detailed implementation action plan with a clear timeline, a detailed indication of the means and financial resources to be mobilised (including financial commitments by the Member States), an indication of the different levels of intervention (local, national, regional, pan-African) and their respective roles, and an indication of a genuine joint monitoring mechanism to assess progress (involving Parliament and the AU). This implementation plan must cover all of Africa, including north Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa , for which at present separate regulations and agreements exist.

Finally, Parliament expressed disappointment at the lack of ambition of the proposed financial framework: the Commission only envisaged the possibility of mobilizing increased financial resources for the "post-9th EDF period" and did not discuss the possibility of using debt relief as a means for mobilizing additional financial resources for the MDGs.