European Communities' development policy: revision of the "development" Council's declaration adopted on the 10 November 2000

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Anders **WIJKMAN** (EPP-ED, SE) in response to the Commission's policy paper on EU development policy. (Please see the document of 24/10/2005.)

The European Consensus: Parliament welcomed the proposed Joint Declaration and proposed that its formal status be clarified as the binding development policy framework for action by the EU and its Member States towards all developing countries as defined by OECD/DAC. It also called for clarification on how the Joint Declaration will relate to the financing instrument for development cooperation.

Parliament felt that the present organisation of Community aid at Brussels level, notably the separation between programming and implementation, was not optimal for an effective implementation of its development policy.

Objectives and principles: The overall objective of EU development cooperation should be the reduction and ultimately the eradication of poverty within the framework of sustainable development. The concept of poverty is multidimensional - relating to human capabilities such as consumption and food security, health, education, rights, the ability to be heard, human security, social justice, dignity and decent work. Combating poverty will be successful only if the environment and natural resources are managed sustainably, and if equal importance is given to investing in people, with special emphasis on young people and women, first and foremost in health and education. Parliament stressed the important role of civil society in developing countries, as a service provider as well as a promoter of democracy and human rights, and called for enhanced support for capacity building for NGOs of partner countries.

Thematic Focus and Priorities: Parliamentregretted the absence of clear priorities among the action themes presented, notably at Community level, and called for clarification of the selection of objectives, action themes and priorities. Parliament reiterated the importance to be given to human rights in developing projects funded by the EU. In addition, issues such as prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, and the promotion of sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and women's rights, climate change mitigation, trade reform, conflict prevention, democracy and good governance (with priority being given to anti-corruption) merit special attention, since if they are not effectively addressed other development efforts may be in vain.

Aid Modalities, Financial Resources, Effectiveness and Coherence: Parliament considered that the debt initiative for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries left a lot to be desired. Debt relief should be reinforced in countries characterised by unsustainable debt where governments respect human rights and democracy and invest freed resources in a responsible way. Furthermore, debt relief should not have harmful economic policy conditions attached and should be additional to Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Parliament went on to deplore the lack of consistency in development policy within the EU, leading to high transaction costs, duplication of work and complications for partner countries. It expressed support for efforts to improve coordination, harmonisation and alignment of the ways in which donors plan and deliver aid as set out in the Paris Declaration, and said that such efforts should be applied to middle income countries as well.

The Commission should not be viewed as the 26th donor of the EU. Instead, the added value of Community aid should be identified and agreed upon, with particular attention being given to the potential for enhancing coordination, the scale of Community aid, the Commission's image of neutrality, its work on governance, democracy and human rights, and its role as a global player.

Parliament went on to support efforts towards policy coherence which should be managed so that the objectives and outcomes of development policies, rather than being undermined, are supported by other policies. There must be urgent action on EU policies that are particularly negative, such as trade, CAP and fisheries agreements; stresses the importance of enabling developing countries to meet EU standards in food, product and substance safety so that these do not become barriers to access to EU markets. Parliament called for the phasing out within five years of all forms of export support, including hidden support through export credits, food aid, export trading enterprises and tied aid. It noted that over the past three decades, the least developed countries have become net food importers, and therefore called for a shift in agricultural policy towards the prioritisation of food security.

Finally, Parliament believed that development policy must be based on the recognition of the right of a country to democratically define its own policies, priorities and strategies to protect its population's livelihood and social, economic and cultural rights and that these principles should be respected by the Commission and the Member States. It welcomed the growing recognition that market opening must be carefully sequenced. This entails the right of developing countries to design the pace and directions of trade liberalization on the basis of their development goals.