

Work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2011

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The Committee on Development unanimously adopted the own-initiative report by Norbert NEUSER (S&D, DE) on the work of the African, Caribbean and Pacific group of states-European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly (ACP-EU JPA) in 2011.

Members recall that the ACP-EU JPA is the largest parliamentary body encompassing countries of both the North and the South. They also recall that, in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement, the political dialogue is among the key objectives of the JPA. In this sense, they welcome the JPA regional meeting held in Cameroon in 2011, which resulted in the adoption of the Yaoundé Communiqué on the proliferation of sexual violence.

Members demand that the JPA be kept updated on the state of play of the ratification of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, as revised in Ouagadougou on 22 June 2010.

An open and in-depth dialogue: Members welcome the fact that in 2011 the JPA continued to provide a framework for an open, democratic and in-depth dialogue between the European Union and the ACP countries on the Cotonou Partnership Agreement and its implementation, including the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).

They stress the **need to pay more attention to the outcomes of the work of the ACP-EU JPA**, and to ensure coherence between its resolutions and those of the European Parliament. Members are concerned over the fall in the participation of MEPs, in particular at JPA Committee meetings, and ask for greater involvement of MEPs in its meetings and activities.

Democratic scrutiny and impact of national parliaments: recalling that the High Representative/Vice President has given assurances that the EU Council should be represented at ministerial level at the sessions of the Assembly, Members call for a clearer delineation of responsibilities between the EEAS and the Commission in terms of the implementation of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. They stress the crucial role of the **ACP national parliaments**, local authorities and non-state actors in the drafting and monitoring of the Country and Regional Strategy Papers and the implementation of the European Development Fund (EDF). They call on the Commission and the ACP governments to guarantee their involvement and further emphasise the need for close parliamentary scrutiny during the negotiation and conclusion of EPAs.

Members draw attention to the need to involve parliaments in the democratic process and in the national development strategies. They stress their vital role in establishing, following up and monitoring development policies. In this context, the Commission is called on to supply all available information to the parliaments of the ACP countries and to assist them in exercising democratic scrutiny.

Budget cuts: Members express concern over budget cuts in EU Member States affecting development policy spending. They call on the JPA to maintain its pressure on EU Member States to meet their 0.7 % GNI target by 2015. Better targeting of resources where they are most needed is necessary to **reduce poverty**.

At the same time, Members call on the JPA to continue its discussions on the organisational costs of its meetings.

Human Rights: Members reiterate the importance of an enhanced, genuine and more comprehensive political dialogue on human rights, including non-discrimination on the grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. In this regard, they are concerned at **the increase in violence and discrimination against homosexuals in some countries**, and call on the JPA to put this on the agenda for its debates. Members call on the JPA to continue to monitor the situation in North Africa and in ACP countries in crisis, and to pay closer attention to situations of state fragility. All the same, they call on the JPA to continue to organise its own election observation missions on the same basis as the successful mission to Burundi in 2010.

Lastly, Members welcome the fact that holding these meetings make for a genuine exchange of views on regional issues, including conflict prevention and resolution, regional cohesion and EPA negotiations (as in the case of the meeting held in Cameroon).