Procedure file

Basic information

INI - Own-initiative procedure	2006/2234(INI)	Procedure completed
EU/South Africa relations: strategic partnership		
Subject 6.40.07 Relations with African countries		
Geographical area South Africa		

Key players

European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	DEVE Development		
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	INTA International Trade	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	General Affairs	2799	14/05/2007
	General Affairs	2755	17/10/2006
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Development	MICHEL Louis	

Key events

28/06/2006	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2006)0347	Summary
28/09/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
02/10/2006	Vote in committee		
04/10/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0310/2006	
17/10/2006	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
24/10/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
24/10/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0430/2006	Summary
24/10/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		

14/05/2007	Debate in Council	2799	

Technical information

Procedure reference	2006/2234(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	DEVE/6/39195

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(2006)0347	28/06/2006	EC	Summary
Committee draft report		PE376.729	18/08/2006	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE378.570	13/09/2006	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0310/2006	04/10/2006	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0430/2006	24/10/2006	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2006)5316-2	23/11/2006	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2006)5635	19/12/2006	EC	

EU/South Africa relations: strategic partnership

PURPOSE : to present a communication on an EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership.

CONTENT : the purpose of this Communication on a Strategic Partnership with South Africa is to propose a comprehensive, coherent and coordinated long-term framework for political cooperation with South Africa, one which is mindful of South Africa?s traumatic past, of its role as an anchor country in the region and of its unique position on the continent and on the global scene. The paper discusses the progress made in post-apartheid South Africa. This progress includes a constitutional multi-party political system,a functioning parliamentary democracy,a prevailing sense of constitutionalism and of the rule of law,mechanisms for accountability, transparency and information in public administration, andan independent judiciary. It also discusses the major social challenge facing the country - the wide social and economic disparities that affect the whole of society. This is further illustrated by two dramatic issues:the alarmingly high prevalence of HIV/AIDS with an estimated adult prevalence rate of 21.5%; and the level of both ordinary and organised crime and violence affecting in particular women and children.

At present,the Trade Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA) is the legal basis for overall relations between South Africa and the EU. It covers political dialogue, trade, development cooperation, economic cooperation as well as cooperation in a whole range of other areas. South Africa is also a party to the Cotonou Agreement, but has no access to its financial instruments or preferential trade regime. The current organisation of political dialogue is based on exchanges with the EU Heads of

Mission in Pretoria, regular visits by Ministers and senior officials in both directions and the annual Cooperation Council. In addition, exchanges between the European Parliament and South African Parliament are held through the EP Delegation for South Africa, and South Africa is an active participant in the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. This institutional setup has been considered satisfactory in the past, but needs to be reviewed in the light of the strategic nature of the EU-South Africa partnership.

The EU is South Africa?s main economic trade partner, accounting for approximately 32% of its exports and 41% of its imports. South Africa is also the EU?s largest trade partner in Africa. The EU?s exports to South Africa have risen by an average of 9.5% annually since the entry into force of the TDCA. With regard to development cooperation, the EU is by far the most important donor: the Commission and the Member States together provide about 70% of total donor funds, which amount to about 1.3% of the government budget and 0.3% of GDP. Development cooperation in the shape of the ?European Programme for Reconstruction and Development? (EPRD) amounts to nearly EUR 130 million a year and is financed from the Community budget.

Meeting in the Joint Cooperation Council, South Africa, the European Commission and the Member States have acknowledged that recent changes in EU?South Africa relations call for a more coherent strategic framework. The proposed Strategic Partnership seeks to implement this process:

- by bringing the Member States, the Community and South Africa together in a single and coherent framework, with clearly and jointly defined objectives, covering all areas of cooperation and associating all stakeholders;
- by moving from political dialogue to strategic political cooperation and shared objectives on regional, African and global issues;
- by enhancing existing cooperation, developing stronger and sustainable economic cooperation, fully implementing the TDCA provisions on trade-related areas and extending cooperation to the social, cultural and environmental fields.

In addition, the Strategic Partnership must build on the ?MDG Package?, ?The European Consensus on Development? and the ?EU Strategy for Africa? by putting at the heart of political dialogue the progress towards attaining the MDGs along with governance issues and peace and security at both domestic and international level.

Political cooperation: The most important element of the proposed Strategic Partnership consists in moving from mere political dialogue to active political cooperation. The South Africa?EU Partnership must become a meeting place for building bridges between two consensus-seeking representatives of the North and the South. Its main purpose must be to enable the two parties to actively seek common ground on issues of mutual interest, support each other?s political agendas and take joint political action at regional, African or global level.

Promoting trade: The free-trade agreement foreseen in TDCA must be developed to include the harmonisation of trade regimes and new commitments on matters such as services, government procurement and investment. Both parties must also seek to develop cooperation in several trade-related areas: customs cooperation, rules of origin, the fight against fraud and irregularities in customs and related matters, competition policy, intellectual property rights, consumer protection, food safety, sanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, and standards and norms, both from a domestic application and an export promotion point of view. Air transport plays an important role in economic development, regional integration and the promotion of trade. The TDCA provisions on economic and other cooperation open up a wide area of potentially fruitful cooperation that could benefit both parties, such as in the area of **regional policy** and social cohesion.

Development cooperation ? a new Country Strategy for 2007-2013: the 2007-2013 development cooperation programme needs to take into account South Africa?s position as a middle income country (MIC), and examine South Africa?s need for ODA and focus on the added value of Europe?s contribution. It must ensure the protection of the natural resource base and be environmentally sustainable.

The Commission invites the Council, the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee to endorse the main thrust of the Communication. On the basis of these broad principles, the Commission will draft an action plan for implementing the Communication, which will be submitted to the Joint EU-South Africa Cooperation Council later this year and should lead to a Joint Declaration by the partners. Depending on the discussion in the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee as well as on the South African views, such an action plan could focus on:

- strengthened political dialogue, leading to common political positions and joint action;
- active joint involvement in regional and global issues;
- implementation of a jointly drafted Country Strategy Paper in line with this Communication;
- revision and full implementation of the TDCA according to the above priorities.

EU/South Africa relations: strategic partnership

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership.

Firstly, it recalled the agreement reached at the EU-South Africa Joint Cooperation Council in 2005 to take new steps to ensure that the relations between the EU and South Africa develop into a truly strategic partnership. The Council reaffirmed the EU's commitment to working towards this goal. The Council stressed that the strategic partnership between the EU and South Africa shall be complementary to and fully consistent with the EU Strategy for Africa.

According to the Council, the process of developing an EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership should be based on an open, concrete and transparent dialogue between the two parties and be pursued on the basis of mutual understanding and ownership of the process. The Council welcomed the Commission's communication "Towards an EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership" as a good basis from which to begin the negotiations that should seek to bring the Member States, the Community and South Africa together to agree on a single and coherent framework. The framework should have clearly and jointly defined objectives, cover all areas of cooperation and ensure the participation of all stakeholders.

The Council underlined that the strategic partnership shall be built on the existing relations between the EU and South Africa with the objective of strengthening and bringing added value to these relations, while being fully consistent with international human rights obligations as well as with the EU Strategy for Africa and the EU consensus on development. Coherence needs to be assured between the Strategic Partnership, the TDCA, the EPA negotiations with the SADC group, the CSP and South Africa's national, regional and African priorities and commitments to its regional partners.

In this context, the existing cooperation between the EU and South Africa will be enhanced by moving from political dialogue to shared objectives and strategic political cooperation on regional, African and global issues including conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. It is also envisaged that the Strategic Partnership will develop stronger and sustainable economic cooperation, fully implement the TDCA provisions on trade related areas and extend cooperation to the social, cultural and environmental fields.

The Council further welcomed the intention to draw up an operational, results-oriented and measurable action plan for the implementation of the strategic partnership in cooperation with the Member States, the Community and South Africa . On the EU side, the implementation of the Action Plan should be a joint exercise to which both the Member States and the Community will make a valuable contribution based on their respective spheres of competence.

Lastly, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to continuing dialogue with South Africa with a view to reaching a common understanding on the strategic partnership in the Joint Cooperation Council in November 2006.

EU/South Africa relations: strategic partnership

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Luisa Morgantini (GUE/NGL, IT)and welcomed the Commission's approach on an EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership. It felt that the new approach moved from political dialogue to strategic

political cooperation in which South Africa was identified as the 'anchor country' capable of pursuing shared objectives on regional, African and global issues, taking into account the fact that South Africa plays an important role as spokesperson for Sub-Saharan African countries in international fora such as the WTO and the United Nations. The Strategic Partnership should:

-provide a single framework under which the existing cooperation instruments could improve performance in the interests of the South African population and economy;

-be complementary to the EU-Africa Strategy and incorporate existing strands of work on the Development Cooperation Instrument, Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and other ongoing negotiations.

The Action Plan should have poverty alleviation as its overriding objective. Parliament stressed that tackling the HIV/AIDS crisis, with a balanced approach between prevention (with an emphasis on sexual and reproductive health), treatment and cure, must remain a political priority for the South African Government. It welcomed the Government's decision in favour of a programme to deliver anti-retroviral drugs, but nonetheless insisted that its implementation be urgently improved.

Parliament went on to call on South Africa to clarify the relationship between SADC, SACU and TDCA, with a view to devising a more orderly regional development policy. The Commission should clarify EU policy in relation to SADC, SACU and TDCA, taking into account the EPA negotiations.

Emphasising the specific political role which South Africa was already playing for the whole continent (e.g. for Sudan, Congo, Liberia), Parliament considered that this position had to be supported by the EU. It hoped for further development of the African Union and called on South Africa to use this political influence to bring about a peaceful settlement of the crisis in its neighbouring country Zimbabwe.