

Chinese policy and its effects on Africa

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The European Parliament adopted, by 618 votes to 16 against with 17 abstentions, a resolution on China's policy and its effects on Africa. The own-initiative report was tabled for consideration in plenary by Ana Maria GOMES (PES, PT) on behalf of the Committee on Development. Parliament urges the EU to develop a coherent strategy to respond to the new challenges raised by emerging donors in Africa, such as China. Such a response must not attempt to emulate China's methods and aims, since that would not necessarily be compatible with the EU's values, principles and long-term interests. The EU should position itself vis-à-vis its competitors by means of offers which are qualitatively more attractive, such as the establishment of modern, climate-friendly raw materials processing plants in the country of origin and the recruitment of local workers. Parliament welcomes China's willingness to provide practical cooperation to African countries without patronising them, but regrets China's cooperation with repressive regimes in Africa. It calls on the EU to encourage China to assume its responsibilities as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and acknowledge that China's presence in Africa, by itself, regardless of any "non-interference policy" intentions, does have a real impact in host countries.

Sustainable development: Parliament proposes that the EU, the AU and China should set up a standing consultative body to improve the coherence of their respective activities in development cooperation and establish a global framework for concrete operational projects on common challenges such as adaptation to climate change, renewable energies, agriculture, water and health. The EU should encourage China to ensure that economic conditions attached to international grants will not undermine sustainable development. China should engage in the expansion of the local African labour market, instead of bringing in thousands of Chinese labourers, make use of its health expertise to improve public health systems in Africa, and create a specialised aid institution aimed at enhancing Chinese aid expertise and independence and to commit itself to transparent reporting on aid budgeting.

Energy and natural resources: MEPs would like to see active cooperation on energy policy between Africa and the EU. They call on the EU to encourage African resource-rich countries to adhere to the Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) by providing enhanced support to the EITI. The EU should promote budgetary transparency in African countries, and "responsible lending" by all donors, requiring recipient resource-rich countries with a history of bad governance to take concrete steps towards greater transparency in revenue management as a condition for receiving non-humanitarian assistance. The EU must apply Articles 96 and 97 of the Cotonou Agreement to resource-rich countries and, at the same time, enter into a dialogue with China on increasing the effectiveness of corresponding measures. The EU should lead by example by making its own development programmes a model of good governance. Parliament calls on the EU to advocate the conclusion of international conventions on energy resources extraction to include transparency of licensing arrangements and contractual terms that determine fiscal flows to governments and a clause on the investment of a percentage of profit in local community development.

Trade, investment and infrastructures: Parliament calls on the EU and appeals to China to offer Africa a way out of the 'commodity trap' and to encourage its transformation into a region which processes commodities and develops services. MEPs urge the EU to encourage all Member States and emerging donors, such as China, to: (i) diversify trade and investment; (ii) transfer technology to Africans; (iii) strengthen international fair trade rules; (iv) expand global market access for African products; (v) lower tariffs on processed goods from Africa; (vi) promote the development of the private sector and its access to finance; (vii) promote trade facilitation; (viii) encourage regional integration in Africa; and (ix) facilitate remittance flows from African residents. The EU must reform its own Common Agricultural Policy and facilitate the access of African products to the EU market. The Commission should insist on a new trade chapter in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with China, on binding language with respect to ILO core labour standards, corporate social responsibility, provisions against social and environmental dumping, and ILO recommendations for decent work.

Environment: MEPs call upon the EU to encourage Chinese export-credit agencies, including the Exim Bank, to conduct systematic environmental assessments of infrastructure projects in Africa, such as dams, roads and mines.

Good governance and human rights: Parliament stresses that China's 'no-conditions' investments in those African countries misgoverned by oppressive regimes contribute to perpetuating human rights abuses. The EU is called to act consistently with its own values, principles and commitments under the Cotonou agreement in its relations with those African governments that obstruct democracy and violate human rights by denying them control of aid, budget support or investments.

Peace and security: the EU must maintain its arms embargo on China, as long as China continues to export arms to armed forces and armed groups in countries, many of them in Africa, that fuel conflicts and perpetrate gross violations of human rights. Parliament calls on the EU and China to suspend arms trade deals with those governments that are responsible for human rights violations, such as the governments of Kenya, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. China should also increase the transparency of its national arms export control regime, by ensuring complete reporting on exports to the UN Register on Conventional Arms Exports.

Lastly, Parliament urges the EU to encourage China to continue increasing its participation in UN and AU peacekeeping missions in Africa, and to supply combat troops, when necessary.