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"ACP-EU Parliamentary Assembly"

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

ACP-EU Parliamentary Assembly

Tenerife, Monday 29th March 2010

Co-presidents,
Members of Parliaments,
Colleagues,

I feel honoured today to have the opportunity to address this Assembly. There is no doubt that the Joint Parliamentary Assembly is the beating heart of the ACP-EU Partnership. This partnership can be a matter of pride for all of us. Because it reflects our common willingness to work together, building on common values. At a time of global competition, we have decided to keep on binding our respective fates. This is not necessarily the easy way: of course we have our differences.

But this is the only way to deal with global challenges, such as the fight against poverty, climate change, natural disasters, security etc. This interconnection can only be achieved through dialogue at all levels, and the Assembly is an important element. As the new Commissioner for Development, I am looking forward to engage into a fruitful dialogue with you.

New development provisions under Lisbon

To shape this dialogue even more constructively, I am encouraged by the novelties introduced on the EU side by **the Lisbon Treaty**.

This Treaty is also about **strengthening the EU development policy in different ways**:

- Development is recognised as a policy in its **own right on an equal footing** with other components of the EU's external policy.
- The focus is on **better coordinating** the Union's and Member states' development policies
- and on ensuring **more coherence** between the EU development policy and the other policies of the EU.

Being in charge of development in the new Commission, I can assure you **that I will make full use of these new provisions to strengthen this EU policy** and make it **as ambitious and efficient as possible**. In doing this, I also have the chance to rely and continue on the remarkable work of Louis Michel during his years in the Commission.

Commitments for the five years to go: the Spring Package

1. MGD's

What will be my main elements as Member of the Commission in charge of development for the next five years? Well, **MDGs will be the big story** of these five years as my mandate will end in 2014, one year before the MDG deadline of 2015.

Very practically, our common challenge is **to bridge the gap between the current situation and the one we aim at for 2015** on hunger, on maternal health, on quality education for both boys and girls etc.

In this regard, I am just to finalise a package of proposals, **the Spring Package**. I will propose to approach the MDG issue from different angles. We need a **comprehensive approach** whereby we try to influence those factors which **directly impact** on service delivery for the populations, but also those which are more to do with a **conducive environment for development**.

This includes that I will also deal with the **Policy Coherence for Development**. Policy Coherence is not limited producing a report every two years about the extent to which other EU policies take into account the development policies. **Policy Coherence is about concrete action** to ensure that the agriculture, trade, fishery policies, to name but a few, are development-oriented.

2. Financing

I will also put the emphasis on financing. It is clear that in the current poverty trap situation faced by many ACP countries, public investments are a necessity, and a massive effort is currently needed. We should pursue three tracks:

- **ODA**: I am discussing with my colleagues from the Member States to ensure that a practical commitment to collectively reach the 0.7% target in 2015 is met.

It is not only a financial matter. It is also a matter of confirming the EU's commitment to support the development of the poorest in the world.

It is a matter of international solidarity, because our world is interdependent and the richest countries cannot continue to be prosperous and peaceful if a growing part of humanity lives in deprivation and fear.

- **'innovative sources of financing'**: ODA alone will not be sufficient and we need to find other sources of funding.
- **taxes** : given the relatively low levels of tax basis as a % of GDP in most ACP countries, there is certainly a potential to increase domestic revenue collection : it is accepted that good governance in tax matters based on the fight against tax evasion could mobilize billions of dollars for development.

It is a matter of ownership of one's own policies and reforms. It is also a matter of accountability and sense of responsibility, in the context of the social contract mentioned earlier.

3. Fragile Countries

Finally, some countries, in particular the ones in situation of fragility, are lagging behind in terms of MDG progress. On third of the world poor lives in fragile countries, which also account for a third of maternal deaths and half of the world's infant deaths. In my proposal, due attention will be paid to the special needs and challenges encountered in situations of fragility.

The aim is in particular to avoid problems of "aid orphans", improve donor coordination and better articulate development and security interventions, in short seeking for more aid effectiveness.

These are in short some of the elements of my approach to MDGs in the broader sense. The upcoming High Level Conference on MDGs in New York will be a key milestone on the road to 2015, and I propose that the ACP and the EU work on common positions ahead of this event.

4. Haiti as a test case for new approach?

I am perfectly aware that this work risks remaining theory. The tragic earthquake in Haiti last January shows that all our efforts can be undermined in a few minutes. However we should take Haiti as a test case for a renewed approach to development and aid effectiveness, based on two principles:

- Ownership: the governance capacity of the Government of Haiti must be at the centre of the reconstruction effort. That is why a large part of our post-humanitarian envelope will be devoted to capacity-building of the Government.
- Division of labour: the risk is high that all donors contribute to the reconstruction of Haiti in a disseminated manner. The potential consequences of such dispersion would be serious (waste of funding, heavy burden on Government, risk of underfunding key elements of the reconstruction strategy...) and Haiti really does not deserve this.

Therefore in two days time **in New-York I** will plead for an agreement on a **joint action plan**, shared by the Government of Haiti and all donors, within which, with a minimum of self-discipline, all donors will organise their own post-humanitarian support.

5. Cross-cutting effect of challenges: example climate change

I also want to focus **my attention to climate change**, the biggest collective challenge ahead. Climate change related challenges **can also be seen as a key hurdle** for development. Its effects cut across all MDGs.

This will also be a test case of our ability to **build political alliances** with all countries involved, to ensure that new resources put on table reach developing countries in a aid effective way, i.e. adding resources, but not new layers of bureaucratie. The putting into place of the fast start envelope post Copenhagen will be key in this respect.

Needless to say that the **Copenhagen Accord** falls short of the EU's ambitions to have a legally binding commitment to limit global warming to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Nevertheless the more than 100 submissions to date by both developed and developing countries, many of them including targets and actions, demonstrate a broad and still growing support for the Accord.

It therefore provides a good basis for further progress. In the ACP-EU framework, I propose to work in two main directions :

- **Increase our cooperation in this area.** Currently 12 countries benefit from financial support under the Global Climate Change Alliance. I propose that more countries be provided additional financial support during 2010. This support should be directed in priority to capacity building and urgent investments for coping with climate change impacts.
- **Increase our policy dialogue on climate change** in order to better understand needs and expectations, to share our positions, and possibly to promote convergence of visions ahead of the next UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in Cancun in December 2010.
- We are planning to organise regional dialogue conferences in Africa, Pacific and the Caribbean over the coming months so to foster such dialogue.

Coherence of policies and legal framework

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Through all these challenges, we can see the main principles of the development policy of the upcoming decade emerging.

It is therefore **essential that our legal and institutional framework is in tune with the new needs**, challenges and joint principles of action for the upcoming years.

I am proud that we have precisely just concluded the negotiations of the **2nd revision of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement**. Let me highlight some of the main achievements:

- **Major development challenges** – such as MDGs, food security, climate change, HIV-AIDS, sustainability of fisheries will now be addressed in the Cotonou Agreement. The importance of each of these areas for sustainable development, growth and poverty reduction will be underlined, and joint approaches for our cooperation are now agreed to.
- One of the driving forces of the present revision exercise was to capture the trend towards **regional integration**. Our updated partnership will reflect the role of regional integration in fostering cooperation and peace and security, in promoting growth and in tackling cross-border challenges.
- As regards **trade and economic cooperation**, the trade chapter of the revised agreement reflects the new trade relationship and the expiry of the Cotonou preferences since end 2007.
- We did not ignore **the economic and financial crisis** in which the present revision process has taken place. Consequently, as regards development cooperation, the revised Agreement is oriented towards bringing more flexibility in the programming of development aid and counter-cyclical support to face exogenous shocks.
- Last but not least, an important step forward is also the strengthened interaction **between the joint institutions**, namely between the Joint Council and the Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

We also lay the ground for a constructive complementarity and synergies between EPAs and the Cotonou institutions. In particular, the parliamentary

oversight functions of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly are strengthened by including EPAs, other trading arrangements, the EDF and strategy papers as subject matters of discussion. And I have taken your views into consideration: the frequency of the JPA meetings will remain untouched, that is twice a year.

- Importantly also, the parliamentary dimension gets further strengthened by explicitly **recognising ACP national parliaments** as actors of the Partnership. National ACP parliaments will be consulted as appropriate both during our political dialogue and the programming process of our development cooperation.

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I am well aware of the challenge I am facing in my new position: I have the possibility to influence the daily living conditions of hundreds of millions of people in the ACP countries. And we all agree that there is a lot of work to be done to offer them a better perspective to live a decent life and to have a family.

And once again let me stress: this is not a one-way contract. We all know that if the ACP population lives in fear and deprivation this will affect at least in the long term also the well - being in the European countries.

So, I see clearly the task, and also responsibility, within the European countries to take care that our policies contribute to development in the ACP countries.

Nevertheless, it is the ACP governments and parliaments have the last word in this story. At the end of the day it is their development. That is why I very much look forward to a fruitful debate between us, during this particular JPA – and I take the occasion to thank the Spanish authorities for their warm and efficient reception – but also over the coming months and years.

Thank you.