

Brussels, 28 February 2011

Beyond fighting poverty – Commission pushes for modernised EU relationship with Overseas Countries and Territories

The European Commission is seeking to redefine the EU - Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) relationship in view of the revision of the Overseas Association Decision. On 1 March, European Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs will participate in the annual OCT-EU Forum (Noumea, New Caledonia) to express his support for a new EU-OCT partnership based on the specific situation of these countries. The Commission intends to move this relationship beyond the fight against poverty towards the sustainable development of the OCTs based on a partnership that brings mutual benefits and obligations. On 1 March Commissioner Piebalgs will also meet with Mrs Marie-Luce Penchard, Member of the French government, and Mr Albert Dupuy, the High-Commissioner of New Caledonia (representative of the French government in New Caledonia).

Prior to his departure, Commissioner Piebalgs said: "A focus on poverty reduction is no longer sufficient for our relationship. Our new partnership should push for the economic and social development of the OCTs, ensuring an inclusive growth and a sustainable development. The OCTs have its important place in the European family and I am determined to put our relations to a new, improved footing. "

The main aim of the Forum is to elaborate on how the EU-OCT relationship can be moved to a new level ahead of legislative proposals expected for 2012. Commissioner Piebalgs will receive a joint paper from the OCTs, as well as Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, that lists proposals and ideas on how to further advance the relationship. Enhancing competitiveness, strengthening resilience and promoting cooperation should be at the core of the new approach. Increasing cooperation of OCTs with their regional and European partners will be an important element of this.

An overhaul will need to reflect the specific situation of OCTs. Many of them are vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change: cyclones, erosion, floods, the rising sea level; but also to public health threats such as infectious diseases. Often, additional challenges arise from a narrow economic base and low population density, not to mention the sometimes extremely remote location.

Background

The European Union and the Overseas Countries and Territories

The EU is closely associated to 24 OCTs – territories which have special relationships with four EU Member States: Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the UK. Many of them are in remote locations in the Atlantic, Pacific or Indian Oceans. OCTs are not part of the EU territory but their citizens are in principle European citizens. OCTs benefit from the 10th European Development Fund (EDF)

with a total of €286 million over the period 2008-2013. Greenland, which is not eligible for funding under the EDF, receives € 25 million per year from the EU budget as part of its Partnership Agreement with the EU.

Redefining the relationship

The current Overseas Association Decision of 2001 will expire in 2013. In preparation for this, the European Commission launched a Green Paper in 2008, followed by a Communication to consult on the future development of EU-OCT relationships. The communication defines three central objectives: Enhancing competitiveness, strengthening resilience and promoting cooperation. A legislative proposal for a new Overseas Association Decision will be presented by the Commission before July 2012.

See also:

[MEMO/11/120](#)

Commission Communication on a new partnership between the EU and the OCTs (6 November 2009)

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/development/overseas_countries_territories/dv0010_en.htm

Website of EuropeAid Development and Cooperation Directorate-General

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index_en.htm

Website of Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/piebalgs/index_en.htm

Contacts

Catherine Ray, Spokesperson: +32 2 296 99 21 or +32 498 96 99 21 – catherine.ray@ec.europa.eu

Wojtek Talko, Press Officer: +32 2 297 85 51 or +32 498 97 85 51 – wojtek.talko@ec.europa.eu