Welcome to the eighth edition of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly newsletter. You will see that the 28th Session, held once again in Strasbourg, was a highly successful event, covering a wide range of topics.

Louis Michel (EU Co-President)

“We are all one, we are the same, we all are one universal world.”

Fitz A. Jackson (ACP Co-President)

REPORT FROM THE
28th session of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly
1-3 December 2014, Strasbourg (France)

Overview
This edition is published after the 28th Session of the Assembly which took place from 1 to 3 December 2014 in Strasbourg and presents the topics discussed and the resolutions adopted. The Assembly held its customary Question Time with the ACP Council as well as the European Commission (Commissioner Mimica). The main political focus in the keynote debate this time was the future of Africa in a lively debate with Olusegun Obasanjo. There were urgent debates on the Ebola outbreak and the rise of terrorism in Africa. Other issues debated included the Committee reports on the post-conflict reconciliation, malnutrition and the role of the private sector. There were also debates on small island states, and Virunga National Park, but the debate on migration and development had to be cancelled, as well as the items with the EU Council, due to the last-minute cancellation of the Italian Presidency.
Main debates
The keynote debate with Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria, and member of the prestigious Africa Progress Panel, provided a full and lively picture of the general evolution of the diversity of African countries over the last 50 years. It emphasised the changing situation of the last decade when new opportunities created new hopes and new ambitions with regard to peace, democracy, good governance, economic progress and human dignity. Members insisted on a more effective and sustained implementation of programmes and some stressed that the fight against corruption and effective taxation were crucial for debt relief. They also discussed issues such as migration, cultural diversity versus human rights, poverty eradication, fundamentalism and conditionality of development aid. Mr Obasanjo won over the Assembly stating that Africa needed courageous vision and leadership, based on an analysis of local strengths and weaknesses.

Mr Obasanjo, “Yes! Africa can live up to its ambitions” - speech

Mr Obasanjo - debate (from 15:05:00 to 17:57:30)

The Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution on the Ebola outbreak in West Africa which expressed support for the affected countries and their condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives as well as the sincere appreciation to all humanitarian and health workers for their efforts in fighting this epidemic. The Assembly stated firmly that this endeavour should not be limited to fighting the disease but also to creating the conditions for the post-Ebola social and economic reconstruction of affected countries.

Resolution on Ebola

The Assembly also stressed the urgency of addressing the spread of terrorism in Africa. The debate was kicked off by a presentation of Claude Moniquet, Director of the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Centre (ESISC), who emphasised that while root causes, including underdevelopment and lack of state capacities, need to be addressed, urgent responses are needed as terrorist groups are working to expand their reach in Africa day to day. In the debate, and in the
resolution adopted, the Assembly calls on governments and international organisations to step up international and internal efforts, involving the police and other security forces but also religious leaders, teachers and local communities. Particular emphasis is also put on the proliferation of arms and on the link between terrorism and criminal networks. Solidarity with the victims and working towards more inclusive societies with opportunities for all, in particular the young, are also common threads in the resolution.

Resolution on terrorism

Claude Moniquet - debate (from 09:05:30 to 10:11:56)

Committee reports

The Assembly adopted three resolutions drafted by the standing committees. The first one, on the challenge of national reconciliation in post conflict and post crisis countries underlines that the reconciliation process after a conflict should take into account its specificity. Finding a fair balance between justice and reconciliation, memory and social peace is a precondition for its sustainability. Members also insisted on inclusivity of all layers of society, including ethnic, religious and social diversity but also involving in particular women’s and youth organisations, taking into account the importance of women for the economic activity and that they are the main victims in conflicts.

Resolution on post-conflict reconciliation

The resolution on private sector development strategy, including innovation, for sustainable development recognises that the private sector is a key driver of job creation, poverty reduction and economic growth, requiring an enabling, sound and stable legal and regulatory framework. This necessitates addressing challenges at local and national level, such as lack of access to financing and risk-sharing mechanisms, education and vocational training, and energy resources, as well as infrastructure deficit. Members underlined the importance of strengthening private-public collaboration, in light of their joint responsibilities to achieve development objectives and fight against poverty.

Resolution on private sector development

The economic cost of malnutrition is estimated to range from 2-3 % of gross domestic product to as much as 16 % in the most affected countries. The Assembly, in its resolution on the social and economic consequences of malnutrition in ACP countries, sets out recommendations to improve nutrition, which it says is a precondition for eradicating poverty and hunger, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating disease, empowering women and achieving universal primary education.

Resolution on malnutrition

Other debates

The new Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, impressed members with his detailed answers to the questions tabled for Question Time and in the catch-the-eye debate that followed his presentation. He also presented his programme for his term in office and explained the Commission’s action undertaken to combat Ebola.

Commissioner Mimica - statement and debate (from 09:51:10 to 10:15:45 and from 10:15:48 to 12:06:44)
The customary Question Time with the Council was limited to the ACP Council this time, since the Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU cancelled their participation at the last minute due to an important vote being held in the Italian Parliament. Mohamed Diare, Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance of the Republic of Guinea, President-in-office of the ACP Council, replied to questions and addressed diverse issues such as the Ebola outbreak, agriculture and access to water.

There was an interesting debate on the situation in Virunga National Park, in the Eastern DRC, for which the Director, Emmanuel de Merode made a plea for support in protecting the park from the threats of poaching, deforestation, uncontrolled fishing and illegal oil exploitation. He received resounding praise from members for his efforts.

Emmanuel de Merode, Virunga National Park - speech (FR)

Emmanuel de Merode, Virunga National Park - debate (from 17:34:15 to 18:24:50)

The Assembly also debated the specific challenges and needs of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Members recalled that, coinciding with the 2014 International Year for SIDS, determined action should be taken to address these challenges, including their vulnerability to external shocks such as natural disasters, climate change or rising sea levels. Members agreed that SIDS' reduced size, remoteseness, isolation, level of development and food and energy provision dependency should be taken into account when devising their development strategies.

Co-Presidents Louis Michel and Fitz A. Jackson also issued a joint declaration on “the UN climate change conference in Lima (COP20)”. 

Further information
ACP-EU website:
www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/acp

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