ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

14th session from 19 to 22 November 2007

KIGALI
(Rwanda)

ORAL QUESTIONS TO THE COMMISSION
**ORAL QUESTIONS TO THE COMMISSION**  
**ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**  
**KIGALI (RWANDA)**  
**17-22 NOVEMBER 2007**

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ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Lydie Polfer, on behalf of ALDE Group

Subject: Civil society

Regarding the consultations with civil society organisations, the European Commission mentioned that 'non-state actors are consulted in the vast majority of countries'. However, it also stated that 'the methods used and the results achieved differ significantly from country to country', that 'in about one-third of the cases assessed, consultations appear to remain behind expectations'. How has the Commission been dealing with these different results? How has it tried to improve the situation in those countries where consultations were particularly disappointing? Since 'good practices are emerging in a number of countries that could be well replicated', has the Commission implemented a mechanism to share such good practice and encourage its replication? Moreover, since the Commission assured that 'EC Delegations have in many cases been proactive in launching consultation processes with non-state actors', could it provide concrete examples of this proactive attitude? Did the Commission provide documents in the local language? Was sufficient time provided for a meaningful analysis and was there a feedback system to ensure that suggestions made were taken into account? Can the Commission share reports of these consultation meetings, including lists of participants?

Finally, in its reply the Commission repeatedly referred to 'non-state actors'. Could it make sure that, within the broad definition of non-state actors, special attention is given to consulting excluded groups and their representatives, such as women or children's organisations?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Marie-Arlette Carlotti

Subject: Involvement of national parliaments in programming the 10th EDF

In its replies to questions at the JPA in Wiesbaden, the Commission stressed that national parliaments have a crucial role to play in determining national development policies and strategies.

However, on the basis of a study conducted in 52 ACP countries, the Commission acknowledges that a majority of governments have not consulted their parliaments on the country strategic documents for the 10th EDF.

What will be the Commission's formal response and what action will it take vis-à-vis the governments concerned to promote the involvement of parliaments in establishing and monitoring ACP-EU cooperation?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Gabriele Zimmer

Subject: Parliamentary role in development financing policies in ACP countries

At the G8 meeting in 2007, the main donors expressed concern about a possible further over-indebtedness crisis and the G20 undertook to draw up a responsible financing charter by the end of 2007. The charter should include the role of parliamentary scrutiny in both donor and beneficiary countries.

How will the Commission ensure that EU Member States and institutions guarantee the role of national and European parliamentary scrutiny respectively in granting new loans and grants and in monitoring loans already granted to developing countries and, in particular, ACP states?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Amadou Cirè Sall (Senegal)

Subject: ACP-EU cooperation

The objectives of cooperation between ACP countries and the EU are:

- to promote a new, fairer and more equitable world order,
- to promote and strengthen solidarity between ACP countries and understanding between ACP peoples and governments,
- to contribute to economic, social and cultural development between developing countries.

This cooperation has formed the subject of several conventions, commonly referred to as the Lomé and Cotonou Agreements.

However, most ACP countries are still facing the same problems, namely civil war, poverty, endemic disease, under-employment, misgovernance and illegal immigration.

In view of this dramatic situation, what assessment can be made of ACP-EU cooperation over its 30 years of existence?
ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

14th session – Kigali (Rwanda) – 19-22 November 2007

ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by the representative of Uganda

Subject: EU-Africa Strategy

We are all aware of the important work underway between the EU institutions and the governments of Africa on the drafting of an EU-Africa Strategy and the interest on both sides to consider structural change in order to put in place a more effective EU-Africa partnership, which must include a role for participation by parliaments and civil society.

In light of the political support given by the African Union to the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities and the support it gives to the African Decade and in view of the support expressed by the European Commission for advancing the signing, ratification and implementation process of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, would the European Commission consider a role for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities secretariat in the design of a new institutional framework? And will the European Commission support a clear reference and support structure for the advancement of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities within the Action Plan of the EU-Africa Strategy?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Vittorio Agnoletto

Subject: EU-Africa Strategy

In its reply in Wiesbaden, the EC rightly stated that the Pan-African Parliament 'is a promising and legitimate voice for good governance in Africa and deserves the support of all EU actors'. How is the EC going to provide political, and ideally technical and financial, support to the PAP in order to allow it to carry out its important role that the EC itself acknowledged?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Alain Hutchinson

Subject: EU-Africa joint strategy

The EU’s 2005 strategy for Africa was criticised for being unilateral. It was also justifiably criticised because there had been no consultation of the African Union's institutions, African parliaments and governments or European and African civil societies in drawing up the strategy.

Will the Commission take account of these criticisms in drawing up the new joint strategy between the European Union and Africa? If so, will it put forward and/or implement specific arrangements to ensure that the African Union institutions and African parliaments and governments are fully involved and that European and African non-state actors directly concerned by this strategy are systematically consulted, starting now and for the whole duration of the strategy?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Luisa Morgantini

Subject: EU-Africa Strategy

At the last JPA, the Commission stated that ‘the Joint Strategy would remain a permanent platform for continued dialogue with stakeholders in Europe and Africa in the coming years’.

What kind of mechanisms is the Commission foreseeing to ensure a ‘continued dialogue’ and not only ad hoc consultations?

How will the EC make sure that the results of the monitoring of the implementation will be taken into account?

Since the EC also stated that the Pan-African Parliament ‘is a promising and legitimate voice for good governance in Africa and deserves the support of all EU actors’, how is the EC going to provide political, technical and financial support to the PAP?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by John Bowis

Subject: Africa and climate change

What steps is the Commission taking to ensure that the impact of climate change is being fully taken into account during the implementation of EU aid programmes in Africa?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Thijs Berman

Subject: Fragile states

A third of the world’s poor live in states confronted with difficulties in ensuring the basic conditions for development, security, and respect for human rights, where progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals is slower than in many other developing countries. These states are seen as failed and fragile states. Their lack of stability tends to spread to neighbouring countries.

Does the Commission agree that a higher priority than in the past should be given to improving the stability, security, basic living conditions and human rights situation in fragile and failed states? If so, to what extent is the Commission willing and planning to take action by increasing technical assistance, and creating conditions in order to improve the capacity of fragile states to meet international obligations in terms of respecting basic human rights and meeting responsibilities regarding the rule of law?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Hon. Waven William (Seychelles)

Subject: Access of ACP private sector to EU funds

Given that the EC advocates that EU funds be made available to the ACP private sector in order to help it diversify and improve business capacity, what is being done to enable the ACP private sector to have easier access to funds? Given the cumbersome procedures (cf the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) peer review, discussed in the European Parliament's Development Committee on 10.09.2007), what is the EC doing to improve its aid delivery system?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Frithjof Schmidt (Verts/ALE)

Subject: MDG contracting

What will be done to ensure that general and sectoral budget support provided under the EDF will be targeted towards the implementation of the MDGs, and in particular towards supporting basic health and education? What budgetary control mechanisms are being put in place? Can the Commission elaborate on the participation of ACP governments, the European and ACP parliaments and civil society in the discussions on the establishment of MDG contracting? For which countries are MDG contracts being envisaged, and when is the first such contract expected to be concluded and implemented?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Josep Borrell

Subject: Health and Basic Education as Focal Sectors

It appears that only 3.3% of EC spending under the 10th EDF Country Strategic Papers will be focused on health and only 2.7% on education. Furthermore, out of 61 ACP countries, only two integrate health as a priority. Besides, it would seem that the Commission would not allocate more than 4% of assistance to development to support health and education in ACP countries.

How will the Commission respect the 20% benchmarks without including health and basic education as focal sectors and without specific spending on these in the ACP CSP?

How will the Commission ensure that budget support will deliver for health and education?

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1 According to Commission figures.
3 CONCORD (2007), Document d'information - Relations ACP-UE: L’UE va-t-elle respecter ses promesses ?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Anne Van Lancker

Subject: Health

Despite the largest youth population ever entering child-bearing years, European aid for family planning in poor countries is falling. Notwithstanding the strong commitment towards sexual and reproductive health in European development policy and the leading role of the EU on these issues in the past, health is no longer a priority in EC funding. It is clear that in most Country Strategy Papers health is not mentioned as a focal sector and SRHR is not mentioned at all. How will you ensure that sufficient financial EU resources are allocated to health and especially to SRH?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Karin Scheele

Subject: Commission's spending on health and education in the 10th EDF

In 1995, during the Copenhagen Social Summit, European and ACP countries committed themselves to ensuring that 20% of development aid would be focused on basic health and basic education. Europeans agreed to live up to their commitment in the context of their aid expenditures to Asia and Latin America by including a 20% benchmark within the DCI regulation.

However, according to Commission figures, it appears that only 3.3% of EC spending under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) will be focused specifically on health, while only 2.7% will be focused on education. These figures do not include budget support from the Commission, which has not yet been proved to be delivered for health and education.

How does the Commission believe that it can live up to its commitment of investing 20% in health and education without including specific expenditures in these sectors within the CSPs of the 10th EDF?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Catherine Neris

Subject: Violence against women

The rate of violence against women is particularly high in countries at war. Women and young girls in those countries are extremely vulnerable and are in acute need of support and information on sexual and reproductive matters, especially in refugee camps. How will you guarantee that these tasks are carried out? What importance do you intend to give them in the context of humanitarian aid and development aid?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Karin Jöns

Subject: Gender equality

Recognising that the Commission adopted the Communication on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in March 2007 which is intended to address gender equality not only as a fundamental human right but also as a means of poverty eradication, can the Commission ensure that the twin-track strategy indicated therein will be implemented in the new Country Strategy Papers or Annual Action Programmes?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Ana Gomes

Subject: Gender

The 10th EDF addresses gender equality issues by mainstreaming them as a cross-cutting theme (and the same applies to DCI CSPs). The Commission has allegedly 'decided unilaterally that gender equality cannot be a cooperation sector in itself in the 10th EDF CSPs but that it can only be promoted through mainstreaming' (quote from the CONCORD Cotonou Working Group Briefing Paper).

Every CSP should contain a gender analysis detailing the problems related to gender inequality identified in consultation with local actors - including parliament, civil society and women's organisations - and the proposed response strategy should contain specific objectives and actions to address the identified problems. However, gender is often merely mentioned as a cross-cutting issue.

This approach makes it difficult or impossible to assess gender equality objectives, activities indicators, targets or output measurements.

How can the Commission ensure that gender equality issues will be properly addressed through concrete actions and that outcomes will be assessed against targets and indicators?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Gay Mitchell

Subject: Land ownership, title and development

Land ownership and title is a very powerful development tool. Proper land title gives security of tenure and can be used to generate capital. Property rights are very weak or even non existent in many ACP countries. Will the Commission outline what action it is taking to improve the way land is treated in many developing countries and would the Commission see the potential for a pilot scheme in this regard?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Fiona Hall

Subject: Environmental sustainability

In its response to the European Court of Auditors Special Report (6/2006) concerning the environmental aspects of the Commission's development cooperation, the Commission states it will make a particular effort to better mainstream the environment into its direct budgetary support operation.

Will the Commission provide details on what measures and processes have been put in place to ensure that environmental sustainability is raised in the process of policy dialogue - for both general and sectoral budget support?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Marie-Joseph Achille Tapsoba (Burkina Faso)

Subject: Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)

EPAs are described as 'development instruments'. However, the negotiations are showing them to be little more than free-trade agreements.

By opening up ACP markets in this way to the unequal competition of European exports, are such agreements not liable, contrary to their original purpose, to annihilate regional integration efforts, to destroy infant industries, family farming and jobs and thus to cause a deterioration in the living conditions of people in the ACP countries?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Mikel Irujo Amezaga (Verts/ALE)

Subject: EPAs

The EU Commissioner for Trade, Peter Mandelson, has often repeated that 'there is no Plan B' for Economic Partnership Agreements, which implies that the ACP countries MUST sign them although it is not in their interest.

How will fully fledged free-trade agreements with the EU help ACP countries to develop their economies and combat poverty, given that history has shown that no economy is viable and strong enough to face unlawful competition in the ACP local market if it does not place itself under some protection?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Carl Schlyter

Subject: EPAs

The EU Commission is insisting that the EPAs contain a provision to eliminate all export restrictions. This would mean that ACP countries would not be in a position to limit or tax exports of their natural resources (fish, wood, oil, minerals, raw materials, etc.) so as to preserve them for local value-added processing, in order to move up from commodity producers to value-added producers. Can the Commission explain what the development objective is of banning export restrictions?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Mr D J Sithole (South Africa)

Subject: Transitional arrangements - EPAs

In a non-legislative resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 23 May 2007, the EP urged the Commission and the ACP countries to use the EPA review as an opportunity to openly discuss the obstacles to the completion of negotiations and to put forward detailed proposals to overcome them and stated that, by the end of the EPA negotiations, no ACP country should, in its trade relations, find itself in a more unfavourable situation after 2007 than under current arrangements.

Has the Commission openly discussed the obstacles to the completion of negotiations with ACP countries, particularly the 31 December deadline, and if so, what detailed proposals to overcome these obstacles have been proposed by the Commission?

Since the Commission appears intent on enforcing the deadline of 31 December 2007 resulting in ACP countries finding themselves in a more unfavourable situation in their trade relations with the EU after 2007, does the Commission have any regard for the resolution adopted by the European Parliament?
QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Hon. N. Deerpalsing

Subject: ACP/EC Sugar Protocol and EPA

Under Article 36(4) of the Cotonou Agreement, the Parties agreed to review the Commodity Protocols in the context of the new trading arrangements, in particular as regards their WTO compatibility with WTO rules, with a view to safeguarding the benefits derived therefrom, bearing in mind the special legal status of the Sugar Protocol.

The 4 April 2007 EC market access offer to ACP States under EPA does not comply with Article 36(4) in terms of safeguarding benefits and respecting the principle of 'acquis', and even introduces discriminatory safeguards against the Non-LDC ACP Sugar Protocol members and further introduces a de facto price reduction by proposing 80% of the reference price which has already been reduced by 36%. In other words, the ACP will suffer a reduction of 49%.

Can the Council state how the EU proposes to honour its obligations both under the Sugar Protocol and Article 36(4) in terms of safeguarding the benefits, bearing in mind that in the EPAs no ACP State should be worse off, and how it proposes to remove the discriminatory element?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Bernard Lehideux

Subject: EU termination of the Sugar Protocol

On 28 September 2007 the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, decided to terminate the Sugar Protocol as from 1 October 2009.

This unilateral decision raises serious problems.

First, it is premature since it ignores the fact that ACP countries are in a process of adjusting to the 36% reduction in prices following the reform of the sugar COM.

This decision will also cause the least competitive countries, generally LDCs, to be excluded from the European market.

Finally, it will send out an extremely negative political signal at a time when the EPA negotiations have not yet been completed. Moreover, it would have been appropriate to create the necessary conditions for solidarity between the EU and ACP countries in the context of the WTO negotiations.

Article 36(4) of the Cotonou Agreements stipulates that the agreements will be reviewed 'with a view to safeguarding the benefits derived therefrom, bearing in mind the special legal status of the Sugar Protocol'.

Is the Commission envisaging transitional trade arrangements for sugar to take account of the real needs of our ACP partners?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Hélène Goudin

Subject: Policy on alcohol in developing countries

In the current WTO negotiations on the liberalisation of trade, the EU is one of the strongest advocates of access to the markets for alcohol and tobacco in developing countries. If the EU’s demands are accepted, developing countries will no longer be able to regulate trade in these goods with the aim of protecting public health. The possibility of introducing monopolies will be restricted. Is it desirable to demand that developing countries should afford access to their markets for alcohol and tobacco? What effect is this likely to have on public health in the countries concerned?
ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

14th session – Kigali (Rwanda) – 19-22 November 2007

ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Mr Ramotar (Guyana)

Subject: EC market access offer under EPA and sugar

ACP States and the EU have agreed to negotiate WTO-compatible EPAs. This will also imply meeting the substantially all trade (SAT) requirement under Article XXIV of GATS.

The EC offer is to all ACP States but the latter are negotiating in six separate regions. SAT is not the sum total of all the ACP countries or a region, but it will be based on individual quantity or individual treatment of sugar because it is not clear who was going to be 'party' to EPAs as there was no customs union or territories in the ACP regions.

Therefore, the issue of sugar would have to be taken individually by each country signing the EPA in terms of WTO compatibility under SAT. There was nothing like a regional quota; it would be an individual quota to fulfil the requirements of Article XXIV in terms of SAT.

Can the EC state how the EC market access offer at least for sugar will be WTO-compatible?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Emmanuel Jardim Fernandes

Subject: Cape Verde-EU relations

In what way can stronger links be established between the EU and Cape Verde, in the run-up to the discussions on strengthening relations between these two partner countries in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Marie Hélène Aubert, Verts/ALE

Subject: DRC

The DRC has an abundance of mineral resources. A fair exploitation of these resources will enable the country to be reconstructed and developed. Many mining contracts that were unfavourable to Congo were signed during the war and transition years. These contracts were negotiated and approved without the slightest transparency.

An inter-ministerial committee made up of Congolese and international experts is currently examining these contracts. It will submit its assessments and proposals shortly at the DRC Council of Ministers' meeting.

What support is the Commission giving to this initiative? How can it help to guarantee transparency and good governance in the sector?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Olle Schmidt

Subject: Dawit Isaak

The Swedish journalist, Dawit Isaak, has now been imprisoned in Eritrea for six years. He has not been awarded a trial and several other journalists have been murdered.

The situation in Eritrea is of great concern.

The EU has, within the framework of the 'Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme' (2002-2007), set aside a total amount of EUR 96.8 million through the European Development Fund (EDF 9).

Is it suitable for the EU to provide funds to a state that treats its own citizens and those of other countries like in the case of Dawit Isaak? Shouldn't the EU be able to use these funds to put pressure on Eritrea to show respect for freedom of speech and human rights?
ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

14th session – Kigali (Rwanda) – 19-22 November 2007

ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Johan Van Hecke

Subject: Burundi

Since March 2007, Burundi has been in a political crisis due to tensions between the presidency and the parliament and internal divisions within the ruling CNDD-FDD. Moreover, the implementation of the September 2006 peace agreement between the government and PALIPEHUTU-FNL has failed. A new political solution should be negotiated between the government and the FNL to consolidate peace and to avoid fighting to resume.

How will the Commission contribute to facilitating the implementation of the peace agreement? Which measures will the Commission take to break the dangerous stalemate in the political situation?
ORAL QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION

by Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez

Subject: EU-Cuba relations

Did the exploratory meeting held in New York during the UN General Assembly, with the participation of Commissioner Louis Michel, with a view to improving relations between the EU and Cuba produce any progress both in EU-Cuba bilateral relations in general and as regards the possibility of the European Union promoting the signing of the Cotonou Agreement by Cuba, as repeatedly called for by all of the Union's ACP partners?