

# ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

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## REPORT

on experiences from the European regional integration process relevant to ACP countries

*Committee on Political Affairs*

Co- rapporteurs: Mr Bornito de Sousa (Angola) and Mr Filip Kaczmarek

### **PART A: MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

APP/100.203/A/fin.

## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
PROCEDURAL PAGE.....	3
MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION .....	4
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT (Published separately)	

## PROCEDURAL PAGE

At its meeting of 24 June 2007, the Bureau of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly authorised the Committee on Political Affairs to draw up a report, pursuant to Rule 2(8) of its Rules of Procedure, on experiences from the European regional integration process relevant to ACP Countries.

At its meeting of 23 June 2007, the Committee on Political Affairs appointed Mr Bornito de Sousa (Angola) and Mr Filip Kaczmarek as co-rapporteurs.

The Committee on Political Affairs considered the draft report at its meetings of 13 September 2007, 17 November 2007, 23 January 2008 and 15 March 2008.

At the latter meeting, it adopted the accompanying draft motion for a resolution unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Ibovi (Republic of Congo), co-chair, Cheron (Haïti), vice-chair, Aimo (Papua New Guinea), vice-chair, de Sousa (Angola), Dayori (Benin), Amon-Ago (Côte d'Ivoire), Dillen, Naib (Eritrea), Toga (Ethiopia), Cavuilati (Fiji), Milebou Aubusson (Gabon), Gahler, Kumi (Ghana), Gill (for Jöns), Diallo (Guinea), Kamar (Kenya), Leinen (for Gröner), Kollie (Liberia), Lulling (for Mantovani), Martínez Martínez, Peterle (for López-Istúriz), Pomés Ruiz, Ribeiro e Castro (for Coelho), Straker (St Vincent and the Grenadines), Mporogomyi (Tanzania), Klassou (Togo), van Hecke, Yañez-Barnuevo García, Mandizha (Zimbabwe) and Zimmer.

The resolution was tabled on 15 March 2008.

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

### **on experiences from the European regional integration process relevant to ACP Countries**

*The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,*

- meeting in Ljubljana from 17 to 20 March 2008,
- having regard to the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000, and revised in Luxembourg on 25 June 2005, and in particular Articles 1, 11 and 28 to 30 thereof,
- having regard to the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular Chapter VIII on regional arrangements,
- having regard to the Joint Statement by the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on European Union Development Policy: 'The European Consensus on Development' of 20 December 2005, especially Articles 72 to 74 thereof,
- having regard to the Declaration on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, adopted in Berlin on 25 May 2007,
- having regard to the Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community , signed on 13 December 2007,
- having regard to the Kigali Declaration on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), adopted by the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, meeting in Kigali (Rwanda) from 19 to 22 November 2007,
- having regard to the Resolution on the role of regional integration in the promotion of peace and security, adopted by the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, meeting in Vienna (Austria) from 19 to 22 June 2006,
- having regard to the ACP Committee of Ambassadors' Report on the future of the ACP Group as adopted by ACP Council of Ministers at its 86<sup>th</sup> session held from 10 to 14 December 2007 in Brussels, Belgium,
- having regard to the ACP Secretariat's project aiming at developing indicators to measure and monitor regional integration processes in the six ACP regions,
- having regard to the report by the Committee on Political Affairs (ACP-UE/100.203/08/fin.),

- A. whereas regional integration has become a dominant feature in the ACP world, with all ACP countries being a member of at least one regional organisation and around twenty regional integration arrangements including ACP countries,<sup>1</sup>
- B. whereas the joint exercise of sovereignty in regional integration frameworks may lead to an enhanced capacity of governments to protect the interests of their citizens, rather than a loss of sovereignty,
- C. whereas, in connection with regional integration, it must also be ensured that no loss of transparency and democratic accountability in decision-making takes place and that increased crime through the abolition of border controls and negative social repercussions through hasty liberalisation and wage competition are prevented,
- D. whereas major progress has been made in recent years in the field of regional economic and political integration among ACP countries and regional organisations play an increasingly prominent role in conflict prevention and peace-keeping; whereas the fight against poverty and for sustainable development has been and remains a major objective for regional integration in most ACP countries,
- E. whereas the strong political will of all partners to lay down and carry through common objectives and projects is the basis for successful integration,
- F. whereas several regional organisations including ACP countries have accomplished a customs union or are planning to do so in the coming years, and monetary unions are already in effect in some regional groupings; whereas some regional organisations have established solidarity mechanisms for reducing disparities or compensate polarisation effects from trade liberalisation within the region,
- G. whereas many ACP regional organisations have indirectly elected parliamentary institutions, which may develop democratic oversight functions and legislative powers in parallel with the deepening of integration,
- H. whereas regional initiatives like NEPAD or the Pacific Plan may further enhance regional cooperation with a view to meeting development and good governance challenges,
- I. whereas overlapping membership in different organisations with similar functional objectives is a serious problem in Africa, as recognised by the African Union at its 6th Summit in Banjul in July 2006,
- J. whereas the lack of cross-border infrastructure, e.g. transport routes, makes regional integration more difficult,

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<sup>1</sup> Among the regional integration organisations incorporating ACP countries are: African Union (AU), Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), Southern African Development Community (SADC), South African Customs Union (SACU), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS/CEEAC), Economic Community of the Great Lakes (CEPGL), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Caribbean Forum of ACP States (CARIFORUM), Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Indian Ocean Commission (COI), Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG).

- K. whereas some ACP sub-regions and states have entered into interim EPA arrangements in a way that may split ACP regional economic groupings and could undermine their integration process,
- L. whereas all integration processes must be transparent to the population concerned and require democratic oversight over all political levels through the involvement of parliamentary bodies and civil society,
- M. whereas the EPAs must have a strong development content to ensure the creation of trade competitiveness of the ACP states and to foster their smooth and gradual integration of ACP countries into the world economy,
- N. whereas no model of regional integration can be defined since any integration strategy has to be adapted to the particular interests and circumstances, but nonetheless general features can be identified which impede or foster integration processes; whereas the study of Europe's experiences with regard to the ACP regional integration processes can therefore be instructive, and can also deliver new insights for the EU itself,
- O. whereas European integration dynamics have partly been due to the existence of strong joint institutions, in particular the European Commission with great autonomy and the right of initiative, and to the existence of a European Parliament, directly elected by citizens, with ever increasing competences,
- P. whereas in the European case, solidarity between countries and societies has been one of the key factors of successful integration, as both richer and poorer countries have gained from internal development and cohesion policies,
- Q. whereas Europe's integration process profited, particularly in its early phases, from territorial continuity and proximity, an advantage neither the island states in the Caribbean and Pacific regions nor the African continent with its large territorial dimensions share,
- R. whereas economic development and reconstruction in Europe after the war has also profited greatly from external aid, in particular the US funded European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan),
- S. whereas the European economic integration process has not only been based on liberalisation alone but has been complemented by regulatory policies for supporting and protecting certain sectors, as well as cooperation for the promotion of sustainable development,
- T. whereas the compliance with common principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law have been essential for successful integration in Europe and the EU has recognised their central role by adopting a mechanism for suspending membership rights in case of serious violations of these principles,
- U. whereas a similar level of development and prosperity of Member States has proven not to be a precondition for regional integration in Europe and its experience suggests that regional organisations can be an effective framework for diminishing economic and social disparities; noting that nonetheless significant income inequalities remain, both

between and within EU Member States,

- V. whereas the European Communities/European Union has also experienced major crises and difficult phases, due to diverging interests among Member States and as a result of reservations among citizens inter alia as regards the speed and depth of regional integration; whereas those crises could always be overcome because of the readiness of all parties to accept compromises and the political will to uphold the overall objective of European integration,
- W. whereas integration in Europe has not prevented separatist movements and tendencies to disintegrate, but has helped to prevent or diminish violent conflicts,
- X. whereas the increasing number of EU Member States has led to more flexible integration mechanisms, where some Member States enter into enhanced cooperation structures; stressing that these avant-garde agreements have always been of a non-exclusive manner, remain open to all other members and do not touch on the core areas of integration,

### **Reconciliation and conflict prevention**

1. underlines that the stabilisation of peace and the institutionalisation of peaceful means for the resolution of conflicts is one of the major achievements of the European integration process, resulting from the lessons learned in Europe from devastating wars;
2. welcomes that regional and sub-regional ACP organisations play an increasingly important role in conflict management, peace keeping and peace-building, and are important partners of the United Nations in promoting international peace and security; welcomes the creation of regional early warning and early response mechanisms, e.g. by ECOWAS and IGAD, and calls for further strengthening of such mechanisms; calls on the international community to support capacity-building for regional organisations active in the field of peace and security, in particular as regards conflict prevention, management and resolution;
3. believes that regional organisations can play an important role in tackling the root causes of conflicts within and between Member States; believes that the promotion and protection of human rights at regional level and the joint fight against impunity presents a major step towards preventing conflict and enabling reconciliation between conflicting parties;
4. calls - realising that education is an important factor for tolerance and understanding - for the setting up of regional commissions to reach agreement on school and university curricula resulting in a breaking down of concepts of the enemy, in mutual respect and in the elimination of discrimination, meetings between teaching staff, pupils and students being important fora for bringing people in conflict-ridden regions closer together as neighbours;
5. notes that, as a rule, women and children are affected most by war, conflicts, violence, hunger and expulsions and that women must therefore be appropriately involved in all development and decision-taking processes;

6. calls on the ACP countries to enhance regional undertakings of joint exploration, regulation and control of natural resources, in order to promote reconciliation and interdependence;

### **Institutions and integration agendas in ACP regions**

7. underlines that strong joint institutions, representing regional rather than national interests, are needed to push the integration process forward and ensure compliance with jointly agreed standards; calls on the ACP regional organisation to ensure the necessary autonomy, proper funding and the selection of qualified staff for the joint institutions; invites the Commission to support the capacity building of the regional institutions, both with know-how and the necessary funding;
8. stresses the need for regional institutions to mitigate power differences among Member States;
9. calls on the regional organisations to define priorities, realistic common objectives and clear benchmarks to allow joint institutions, governments, parliaments and civil society to measure progress and success;
10. invites the ACP governments to agree to the joint exercise of sovereignty in selected sectors where long-term joint interests exist and cross-border problems need to be solved;
11. underlines that regional integration processes must be built on tolerance and mutual respect of national and cultural differences;
12. encourages the ACP Secretariat to expedite the development of the proposed regional integration monitoring system and calls on the EU Commission to provide required financial and technical support for the implementation of this system for the benefit of ACP regional integration organisations;

### **Inter-regional cooperation**

13. invites the African Union to support and steer a process of rationalisation of the regional organisation framework in Africa where competing integration agendas exist; notes, that the European example shows that overlapping membership is not a major obstacle where close coordination and cooperation is ensured between regional organisations, or functional differentiation is agreed upon;
14. calls on the ACP Group to consider, with EU's support, transforming the existing periodic meetings between the ACP Secretariat and the Heads of ACP regional organisations into an institutionalised Coordination Forum in order to facilitate dialogue, cooperation and coordination; calls on the ACP regional organisations to coordinate their positions in international negotiations to enhance their positions and influence;
15. welcomes the fact that the organisation of meetings of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly

at regional or sub-regional level pursuant to Article 17(3) of the Cotonou Agreement will enter the active implementation phase and looks forward to the outcomes of the first regional meeting of the JPA in Windhoek (Namibia);

### **Democracy and good governance**

16. underlines that a culture of freedom, openness and inclusion within the Member States of regional organisations is a precondition for successful regional integration; calls on all regional organisations in the ACP region which have not done so to define clear political criteria for membership, based on human rights, democracy, rule of law and good governance, and to develop constructive mechanisms for helping member countries to comply with these criteria; invites the ACP countries to consider effective mechanisms for suspending membership rights in the case of serious violations of these principles;
17. calls on the European Union to support regional initiatives for promoting democracy, human rights and good governance, like the African Peer Review Mechanism and regional election observation mechanisms, and to align its governance initiatives to the existing regional mechanisms;
18. calls on the EU and the ACP Group to step up their support for the parliamentary structures of regional organisations; stresses that direct election of representatives of Member States in regional parliamentary assemblies contributes greatly to the legitimacy of the integration process and is the prerequisite for securing it on a lasting basis;
19. believes that civil society organisations - in particular their trans-national activities - play a major role for pushing regional integration processes forward and ensuring democratic accountability of regional institutions;
20. calls on the EU and the ACP countries to ensure that the parliamentary organs of the regional organisations are consulted on the EDF Regional Strategy Papers and their implementation;

### **Economics and trade**

21. calls on the EU and ACP countries to ensure that the European Partnership Agreements are consistent with and contribute to the strengthening of ACP regional integration initiatives; notes that many ACP countries fear that the current trends of the EPA negotiations and the adoption of agreements by sub-regions may undermine regional integration efforts; insists that any agreements adopted by sub-regions must be open to other members of their respective regional organisation;
22. stresses that trade barriers between ACP regions should be reduced in order to enhance South-South trade, and calls for harmonisation policies to ensure a level playing field for commercial trans-border activities;
23. calls on the ACP regional organisations to establish or further develop regional cohesion mechanisms and solidarity funds for helping weaker Member States to carry adjustment

costs from trade liberalisation and to ensure proper financing; considers that the EU should support these mechanisms with both expertise and funding; recalls the EU experience that strong and independent anti-fraud mechanisms must be developed to limit the risk of misuse of structural and solidarity funds;

24. calls on the EU and ACP countries to enhance targeted investment in regional infrastructural networks to enable cross-border economic activities;

### **Functional cooperation**

25. underlines that trade liberalisation alone is not sufficient to engender regional understanding and integration dynamics, and that regional programmes and projects in selected priority sectors must accompany economic cooperation;
26. welcomes the many efforts of functional cooperation in the ACP region; calls on ACP countries to intensify regional and sub-regional cooperation in areas such as health and education, food security, infrastructure, environment and migration and to ensure adequate financing; recalls that the European Union budget for joint policies is composed both of external trade revenues and direct contributions from Member States' budgets;
27. underlines that the EDF Regional Strategy Papers must not only focus on trade liberalisation and integration into the world market, but need to put more emphasis on regional institution-building, capacity-building and human resource development in regional integration, functional cooperation, and support to redistributive and regulatory policy-making within the regions;
28. recommends the extension of exchange programmes for schools, universities and research institutions in the ACP regions to enhance trans-national understanding and the forging of a trans-national civil society;
29. instructs its Co-Presidents to forward this resolution to the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, the European Commission, the Council Presidency and ACP regional organisations.