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INFORMATION NOTE

Subject : Instrument for Stability – Exceptional Assistance Measures

Project : Honduras – Promoting democratic governance and reconciliation

The Commission informed the Council on the planning of this measure under the Stability Instrument in its regular information note of May 2010.

1. Purpose of the measures

The purpose of this Programme is to promote governance reforms, social and political dialogue and reconciliation in Honduras in order to consolidate democracy and peace in the country. The action will target the authorities, all national political parties, the Honduran civil society, the media and the established Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The project will ensure funding up to EUR 1,1 Mio and will be implemented by UNDP. For issues relating to the promotion and the protection of human rights, UNDP will work in cooperation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

2. Background and rationale

Honduras has been going through a serious political, institutional and social crisis since the 'coup d'état' of 28 June 2009 which generated unprecedented levels of polarisation and instability in Honduran society. The general election held in November 2009, to which the EU did not deploy an EU Electoral Observation Mission (EOM), apparently was conducted in a transparent and professional manner and marked a turning point for the resolution of the crisis despite the continuing political polarisation. The election of President Lobo and his programme of national reconciliation have brought institutional stability and, considering the steps implemented by the new Government of national unity, the EU decided on a progressive normalisation of relations in line with the position of the international community.

However, the overall political situation of the country remains fragile, with serious economic and democratic challenges and a high degree of social polarisation as well as weaknesses regarding the protection of human rights, which need to be tackled in a consensual manner. The crisis has indeed exacerbated the political divisions between sectors traditionally excluded from the political life of the country (the so called

‘Resistance’) and the ruling powers. It is therefore crucial to rebuild a ‘social pact’ for implementing the necessary reform within the constitutional framework in order to ensure stability, democracy and reconciliation.

Given the new momentum reached through the installation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in May 2010 and the adoption of the amnesty for political crimes, it has become clear that there is a need to rapidly support efforts to promote peace-building initiatives and the credibility of the institutions for enhancing the protection of the human rights.

3. Actions to be implemented

The project will support the following components:

- a) *Strengthening of democratic governance* through facilitating the establishment of platforms for social and political dialogue among national, regional and local actors on essential political and institutional reforms, including the reinforcement of capacities of civil society to participate in such platforms in a professional and effective manner.
- b) *Promotion of respect for human rights* by strengthening the regulatory mechanisms for human rights actors. This would comprise research and assessment, promotion of dialogue and capacity building for watchdog activities, technical support for the development of a national human rights strategy under the lead of the Government, specific support for the implementation of the relevant Constitutional provisions and enabling civil society to regain confidence in national mechanisms.
- c) *Provision of a backing for national reconciliation* through technical support to the TRC for analysing the past events, collecting information and developing this Commission’s capacities, programmes and strategies for reconciliation, in particular relating to human rights.
- d) *Building up conflict prevention capacities of media actors* in order to facilitate their participation in the reconciliation process. Activities will include the diffusion of relevant information linked to the promoted dialogue process as well as specialised training and capacity building on the role of the media in a polarised democracy.

4. Legal Basis and Budget

The legal basis for this decision is Regulation (EC) No 1717/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006, establishing an Instrument for Stability. It is proposed that a maximum of € 1,100,000 be committed from budget heading 19-06-01-01.

5. Time table

The duration of the action will be 18 months. The implementation is expected to start on July 2010.

6. Complementarity

The action will help easing tensions in the country and will contribute to the implementation of the key priority areas of the EU development cooperation identified in the Country Strategy Paper for Honduras, particularly support to security and justice sectors and social cohesion and poverty reduction.

In particular, the measure is consistent with parallel EU initiatives to provide support to selected NGOs and human rights defenders under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) as well as an ongoing EU integrated support programme for the security sector funded under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). The envisaged support to the TRC would complement other donors' contributions, including those of individual EU Member States.


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