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Committee on Development

2012/2136(INI)

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DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Development

for the Committee on Foreign Affairs

on the impact of the financial and economic crisis on human rights
(2012/2136(INI))

Rapporteur: Keith Taylor

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Development calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Highlights that the economic and financial crisis has had detrimental effects on access to food, health care and education for the most vulnerable groups in society, in both urban and rural areas; recalls that governments have a duty to ensure respect for economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights and to provide protection against abuses by, for example, corporate and other private actors;
2. Stresses that the crisis has shown that social protection spending increases poor people's resilience to shocks; highlights as well that countries with effective systems of domestic taxation reduce their vulnerability to sudden losses of trade taxes or foreign capital inflows; urges, therefore, the EU to help developing countries set up progressive and effective taxation systems to mitigate the impact of the crisis;
3. Deplores that, while the international community acknowledges the indivisibility and equal importance of all human rights, ESC rights remain difficult to enforce in practice; believes that full use should be made of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) that allows for individual complaints of alleged violations of ESC rights;
4. Reaffirms that while the global economic crisis poses a severe threat to the fulfilment of ESC rights, there is no justification for states, whatever their level of income, to compromise on their obligation to respect fundamental human rights; stresses that governments have, at all times, an obligation to ensure 'minimum essential levels' of the social and economic rights necessary for living in dignity;
5. Stresses that the global crisis has clearly demonstrated that – in a context where deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation have entrenched global poverty and exacerbated inequalities between and within countries – a rethink is urgently needed of the role of the state in economic policy; believes that the fulfilment of social and economic rights depends on, inter alia, the capacity of the state to regulate the financial market and to allocate resources in an equitable manner through, for example, an effective, transparent, and progressive taxation system;
6. Stresses the universality of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda as a fundamental principle to ensure fair globalisation; calls on the EU to support a human-rights based response to the crisis and to actively contribute to the establishment of social protection floors in developing countries, while respecting their individual approaches with regard to implementation;
7. Urges the Commission and the Member States to ensure that human rights are genuinely protected in the remit of any trade and investment agreements concluded; insists that the Commission conducts systematic human rights impact assessments of trade and investment agreements to help ensure effective enforcement of human rights;
8. Notes with concern that the global economic crisis is jeopardising Official Development

Aid spending by EU Member States; recalls that the costs of the global economic crisis are being borne disproportionately by poor countries, despite having originated in the richer countries; urges, therefore, the EU and its Member States to maintain and deliver on their existing bilateral and multilateral ODA commitments and on the targets identified in, for example, the UN Millennium Declaration.