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DRAFT REPORT

on the challenges and opportunities of education and vocational training in
ACP countries

Committee on Social Affairs and the Environment

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PART B: EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Introduction

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20), *The Future we want*, reaffirmed that full access to quality education at all levels is an essential condition for achieving sustainable development, poverty eradication, gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as human development, for the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The accelerating trend towards globalization and trade liberalization has created new opportunities for the exchange of goods, services and information among ACP countries. These can be exploited to the maximum if ACP countries invest in a properly trained human resource of high technical quality through a revamped education sector.

Background

Know-how, information and communication are at the heart of human progress, of humanity's endeavours and of human well-being. Recent developments in information and communication technologies have given a new dimension to know-how, to exchanges of information and to communication in a world of growing globalization. ACP countries therefore need to build a human resources capital with the skills that will facilitate the integration of these countries in the knowledge-based economy.

It is well recognised that a well-educated and skilled workforce contributes directly to raising overall productivity, enhancing economic growth, eradicating poverty and ultimately improving the living standard of the population of ACP countries. Furthermore, properly designed, targeted and executed education and training projects and programmes, can also be effective in removing impediments for the people to live useful and productive lives in their own communities. And for this to be possible and sustained, there must be a flexible educational system (schools, teachers, universities and administrators) that have both the confidence and methods to meet both ordinary and extraordinary challenges.

Challenges

ACP Countries have varied achievements in education, some having made remarkable strides in the different levels of education, and others experiencing a variety of problems in meeting targets for education as required by the commitments in the MDGs. Learning should set a foundation for a fair and sustainable future for the populations. In this context, systematic reform in education is imperative for the economies of most ACP countries, with the following objectives:

- To increase access for all citizens to quality education services;
- To increase the effectiveness and efficient delivery of education to all its citizens;
- To contribute to the building of an internationally competitive education services sector;
- To enhance the economy's capacity for educational policy development and implementation;
- To develop a broader internationally focused curriculum;
- To promote innovative mechanisms for the delivery of educational services;

- To increase transparency and accountability of educational service delivery; and
- To contribute to the development of an internationally competitive labour market.

The asymmetries of the emerging international economic order, the governance of international affairs, the current situation of the world economy and the debt burden render a multitude of challenges in ACP countries by giving rise to economic and social instability. These issues affect the effective transfer of knowledge throughout the sectors of society.

Provision of a sustainable infrastructure for technical and vocational education and training is necessary to meet the needs of the labour market and development goals in ACP countries. Thus, there is a need to integrate technical and vocational educational and training programmes and literacy campaigns in ACP Countries, into national skills strategies, involving industry to ensure that, inter alia, entrepreneurship is integrated into quality training programmes.

It is recognized that that influence of new technologies in knowledge creation, particularly Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), contributes to inclusive education and sustainable development.

Further, the challenges brought about by conflicts in some ACP countries, undermine the promotion and development of education and exchange of expertise. In this regard, it is vital to address common educational challenges through regional integration and cooperation, particularly in higher education and technical and vocational training in ACP Countries. As such ACP countries should commit to good governance in the education sector including the transparent and effective utilisation of resources.

Enhancement and promotion of the mobility of skills through south-south cooperation programmes in ACP countries should continue, particularly through scientific, technical, cultural and curricular exchanges. In this regard, the ACP countries will be able to build a human resources capacity that is competitive in a globalised world. The problem of the brain drain is a constant threat to maintaining skilled human resources at the service of ACP education systems.

Global solidarity in promoting the Dakar Education for All (EFA) Goals continues to be important and the Official Development Assistance (ODA) from the developed countries will remain critical for ACP Countries, in the post-2015 Development Agenda, in spite of the changing global economic landscape. In this regard, the political and economic transitions in ACP Countries require that the post-2015 Development Agenda positions education in such a way that it is relevant to all sectors of society, including youth and adult literacy and promoting positive values and attitudes.

Under the 10th EDF the EDULINK programmes for higher education and research, financed by the EU and implemented by the ACP Secretariat, are an excellent foundation for cooperation in this field, and experiences from this initiative should be extended to other areas in education and vocational training.