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REPORT

on the work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2001
(2001/2012(INI))

Committee on Development and Cooperation

Rapporteur: Marie-Arlette Carlotti

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PROCEDURAL PAGE

At the sitting of 18 January 2001 the President of Parliament announced that the Committee on Development and Cooperation had been authorised to draw up an own-initiative report, pursuant to Rule 163 of the Rules of Procedure, on the work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2001 .

The Committee on Development and Cooperation had appointed Marie-Arlette Carlotti rapporteur at its meeting of 10 April 2001.

The committee considered the draft report at its meeting of 20 February 2002.

At its meeting of 21 February 2002 it adopted the motion for a resolution unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Joaquim Miranda (chairman), Margrietus J. van den Berg, Marieke Sanders-ten Holte and Anders Wijkman (vice-chairmen), Marie-Arlette Carlotti (rapporteur), Yasmine Boudjenah, Maria Carrilho, John Alexander Corrie, Nirj Deva, Fernando Fernández Martín, Michael Gahler (for Jürgen Zimmerling), Vitaliano Gemelli, Karin Junker, Glenys Kinnock, Karsten Knolle, Paul A.A.J.G. Lannoye, Nelly Maes (for Didier Rod), Mario Mantovani (for Hervé Novelli), Maria Martens (for Luigi Cesaro), Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez, Hans Modrow, Luisa Morgantini, Tokia Saïfi and Francisca Sauquillo Pérez del Arco

The report was tabled on 22 February 2002.

The deadline for tabling amendments will be indicated in the draft agenda for the relevant part-session.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

European Parliament resolution on the work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in 2001 (2001/2012(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the resolutions adopted by the Joint Parliamentary Assembly at its 2nd session in Libreville¹ (19 to 22 March 2001) and at its 3rd session in Brussels² (29 October to 1 November 2001),
 - having regard to the Agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific States on the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, on the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000 (Cotonou Agreement),
 - having regard to Rule 163 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Development and Cooperation (A5-0050/2002),
- A. recalling and welcoming the fact that the Cotonou Agreement has opened the way for renewed cooperation between the European Union and the ACP States, based on enhanced political dialogue, with a view to promoting a partnership founded on genuine parity and solidarity,
- B. whereas the agreement has extended the scope of cooperation to issues as vital as peace and security, conflict prevention, management and resolution, sound management of public affairs, migration policy, gender equality and environmental protection, which must now be dealt with as part of this joint and balanced political approach,
- C. whereas the application of the Cotonou Agreement will also present the EU delegations in the ACP countries with new, broader tasks,
- D. whereas the text of the agreement reflects a new philosophical approach which recognises civil societies and all non-state actors as indispensable partners in the development process and seeks to promote their involvement in discussions and decisions forming part of ACP-EU cooperation,
- E. whereas the principles referred to in recitals B and C - in particular the sound management of public affairs and the recognition of the role of civil societies - have frequently not been promoted or have even been frustrated since these countries gained independence, owing to the continuing influence of the former colonial powers, and whereas we must draw appropriate conclusions from this state of affairs,
- F. whereas the JPA's role has been strengthened through the introduction of this new approach and whereas important responsibilities have been conferred on it (under

¹ OJ C 265, 20.9.2001, pp. 20-61.

² not yet published in OJ.

Article 17 of the Cotonou Agreement) to promote democratic processes through dialogue and consultation,

- G. whereas, in order to carry out its new tasks, the JPA initiated a vast process of adjustment of its working methods and Rules of Procedure in 2001,
- H. whereas, despite the undeniable progress made in this direction in the past year, the process of making the JPA into a genuinely parliamentary assembly based on full parity should be continued and speeded up in order to bring it into line with the objectives which the Cotonou Agreement has set it,
- I. regretting the slowness of the process of ratification of the agreement, in particular among European states, which is interfering with the strong political message it represents in favour of a renewed approach to North-South solidarity,
 - 1. Reiterates its conviction that the Cotonou Agreement constitutes an essential means of contributing to the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and the integration of ACP countries in the world economy and is still a unique model of interdependence and a balanced partnership between northern countries and developing countries;
 - 2. Regrets that most Member States of the European Union have not yet ratified the Cotonou Agreement, and calls on them to do so as soon as possible;
 - 3. Welcomes the fact that the political dimension has been placed at the heart of the partnership, reflecting the conviction that peace and security, human rights, the rule of law and sound management of public affairs are fundamental prerequisites for development, and welcomes the JPA's increased responsibilities in this field;
 - 4. Stresses that the central role conferred on the JPA in implementing this new approach requires a thorough revision of its operating methods and its very nature, and urges its members to carry out the necessary reforms in order to achieve the objectives set out in the Cotonou Agreement and enable the JPA fully to realise its potential in the service of development cooperation; maintains that, in order for these reforms to have an impact, the JPA should be given new powers, in addition to its right to express an opinion, to enable it to exercise financial and political control over the funding of cooperation, negotiations and the ratification of new treaties;
 - 5. Considers the scaling down of the EU's external relations service in the ACP countries to be counterproductive and calls on the Commission to reconsider closing down delegations, to adjust staff policy to the new tasks, to fill vacant posts promptly and to ensure the exchange of information with the JPA so that the desired goals of decentralisation and deconcentration produce fruitful results;
 - 6. Emphasises the JPA's parliamentary nature which, in addition to its symbolic value, is first and foremost a practical expression of its purpose which is to embody the democratic values underpinning the ACP-EU partnership as the expression of the will of the people;
 - 7. Welcomes the fact that the JPA initiated an ambitious programme of revision of its working methods and Rules of Procedure in 2001;

8. Hopes that the discussions which are underway will lead to operational reforms as soon as possible and states once again that it trusts the JPA Working Group on the Rules of Procedure to give the matter further consideration and put forward appropriate proposals;
9. Reaffirms the principle that the parliamentary nature of the JPA implies that states should be represented exclusively by democratically elected parliamentarians and that, from this viewpoint, voting by non-parliamentarians must be considered as an exceptional and transitional measure, subject to approval by the JPA; notes that the Working Group on the Rules of Procedure has drawn up a draft compromise meeting this concern and insists that it should be considered by the JPA at its forthcoming session in South Africa;
10. Considers that the implementation of this principle must be facilitated by revising the rules on the financing of the participation of ACP parliamentarians in JPA sessions to bring them into line with the new approach contained in the Cotonou Agreement; welcomes, in this connection, the Assembly's intention to be more actively involved in scrutiny of the management of EDF funds, to ensure that payments are made effectively and speedily, and calls on the Commission to provide it with all the necessary assistance to this end, and, in particular, to specify how the funds set aside for ACP parliamentarians are administered and utilised in order to guarantee their participation; takes the view that, on the basis of a strict assessment of funding arrangements for JPA sessions, the establishment of a specific fund for the sole purpose of financing the participation of parliamentary representatives is an avenue worth exploring;
11. Notes that the parliamentary credentials, parity and democratic legitimacy of the JPA will only become fully effective once a solution is found to the basic imbalance between the European contingent, reflecting the European Parliament's political make-up and the spectrum of political views within it, and the system of representation of ACP States, based on the "one country, one vote" principle, which in actual practice prevents different political views from being expressed; calls, in this connection, for comprehensive discussions, with no taboo subjects, to be opened on a re-weighting of votes with a view to establishing a system guaranteeing genuine parity and political pluralism, and on the material resources this will require;
12. Expresses its concern at the Commission's decision to reduce the number of its officials working on European Union delegations in the ACP countries and to abolish definitively its delegations in nine ACP countries;
13. Calls for proposals to be submitted for the parliaments of ACP states to make additional financial, material and organisational resources available to improve consultation between ACP delegates between sessions and to involve them more closely in the preparation of plenary sessions;
14. Reiterates its conviction that votes by separate Houses is contrary to the principle of parity which is a feature of the JPA; calls therefore for the gradual removal of this procedure and urges the European House to decide no longer to make use of this procedure, as part of an explicit or tacit moratorium;
15. Considers that the Assembly's decision to set up three standing parliamentary

committees to monitor key issues in all areas relating to cooperation (political affairs, economic development, finance and trade, social affairs and environment) and to submit their conclusions for consideration by the Assembly is an essential step in the JPA's development into a fully parliamentary assembly; stresses that membership of the standing parliamentary committees should be in keeping with the rule of parity and guarantee a geographical balance between full members and between substitutes; also urges proportional and politically balanced representation among both members and substitutes;

16. Considers that the organisation of thematic workshops should be reconsidered so that they relate more closely to the work of the plenary sessions; suggests, in this connection, especially when a session is held in an ACP country, that priority be given to practical issues linked to the local situation, and that arrangements be made for in situ visits as part of their business in order to make the workshops more open to civil societies and jointly to devise operational proposals to be submitted to the JPA;
17. Considers that the unanimously reasserted wish to improve the impact and clarity of the Assembly's political messages also requires further discussion of the organisation and conduct of sessions and, in particular, their duration (proceedings over four full days), the structure of the agenda (possibly abandoning the general report), more effective control of the number of speakers (who could be appointed by the groups or the ACP representatives on a political or geographical basis) and concentration of debates on a more limited number of topics;
18. Confirms that the organisation of the agenda for sessions and the admissibility of topics are the exclusive responsibility of the Bureau, which is the only body authorised to consider proposals for improving the present procedure; notes, in this connection, the ACP proposal to establish a filter mechanism to limit the number of resolutions and endorses the idea of setting up as soon as possible a procedure for limiting the number of resolutions to be discussed during sessions as a means of solving the problem of agendas becoming over-crowded; stresses, however, that the procedure to be introduced must include an "emergency clause" enabling the most sensitive issues relating to human rights or to current events to be given due consideration;
19. Recalls its attachment to a parity-based approach to the topics to be discussed and suggests that priority be given to issues affecting both European states and ACP countries and challenges to be resolved jointly, and that a positive approach be promoted, highlighting examples of good practice and cooperation projects that are successful or innovative in order to make representations to the Commission regarding their funding or extension;
20. Draws attention to the fact that the Cotonou Agreement is intended to promote a participatory approach, with greater involvement of civil societies and non-state actors and making better use of local knowledge systems in the planning and implementation of cooperation between the European Union and the ACP countries; welcomes this development, which is a sign of recognition for the fundamental role of civil societies in the process of sustainable and fair development, and stresses the need to involve representatives of civil society in the JPA;
21. Calls on the bodies concerned in the ACP and European countries to specify as soon as

possible the procedures and instruments which will make it possible to put this into effect and calls, in particular, on European and ACP representatives in the JPA to establish the procedures and criteria on the basis of which observer status could be granted to NGO networks during JPA sessions, with special care being given to guaranteeing representation of European and ACP NGOs on the basis of parity and to establishing mechanisms that will allow their views to be heard in sittings of the Joint Assembly;

22. Emphasises also the need to make the JPA's action more visible and easier to understand for the general public, both in European and ACP countries, by promoting the innovative nature of this unique instrument of cooperation and North-South solidarity; considers that the proposal to hold the European session of the JPA in the EU Member State holding the Presidency might contribute to this goal; asks that the secretariats responsible for organising sessions of the JPA be given adequate resources to this end;
23. Notes the progress made in 2001 by ACP states in defining the regions which will constitute the geographical scope of regional meetings mentioned in the Cotonou Agreement; encourages the ACP countries to continue in this direction and calls on the JPA to specify, at the same time, the operating arrangements for regional meetings, taking account of the various political tendencies and taking care to ensure the best possible link with existing regional organisations and national parliaments;
24. Expects the European Parliament also to devote appropriate attention to the proceedings of the JPA and the related endeavours to make progress on development, and to arrange a comprehensive debate at least once a year, as befits the status of the JPA; calls on the European Parliament's responsible bodies to ensure that members of the Development Committee and/or - depending on the region concerned - members of the JPA are duly involved in all issues and activities concerning external relations; proposes that ACP representatives should also be able to speak in plenary debates concerning ACP cooperation, in particular those concerning the activities of the JPA;
25. Stresses that the Cotonou Agreement gives key importance to the political dimension and emphasises the absolute need to strengthen political dialogue under the aegis of the JPA to strengthen its crucial role in the promotion of democratic processes;
26. Takes the view that missions to observe and monitor elections and mediation missions organised under the aegis of the JPA on the basis of parity represent a particularly important instrument to this end, and stresses that the organisation of such missions should be given its proper place within the JPA's activities; considers it essential for opposition political groups and small and medium-sized political groups to be fully associated with these missions, on both the ACP and EU sides;
27. Warmly welcomes the fact that the Assembly was able unanimously to pass a resolution on Sudan following the joint fact-finding mission to that country;
28. Is also of the opinion that the mandate and role of the vice-presidents responsible for human rights need to be clarified and strengthened, in particular with regard to their monitoring and mediation role;

29. Believes that the encouragement given to speeding up democratic processes could also be expressed in a practical manner by a "democratic bonus" in the form of material and financial aid to improve the operation of democratic parliaments in ACP States;
30. Emphasises the fact that asserting the JPA's political role should enable it more successfully to uphold the shared interest of and solidarity between ACP and European States and peoples at world level, in particular within international regulatory forums such as the WTO, so that the rules concerning the liberalisation of trade laid down by those organisations take due account of the need for sustainable development and the problems of the ACP countries;
31. Calls on the JPA to follow closely the practical implementation of the new provisions for aid programming and delivery contained in the new agreement;
32. Asserts that the negotiations with ACP countries on a future trade regime, due to begin in late 2002 and probably leading to regional free trade agreements with the EU as of 2008, constitute a fundamental and far-reaching change in ACP-EU relations and urges the JPA to play an active role in the process from the outset;
33. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the ACP-EU Council, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the parliaments of the Member States, the parliaments of the ACP States and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

A Joint Parliamentary Assembly in a new mould, with a different structure and culture

The Joint Parliamentary Assembly is the only international forum that regularly brings together, on an equal footing, representatives from the developed and the developing countries, with a view to fostering north-south interdependence. We must preserve its unique and in many ways exemplary character by giving it more political weight on the international stage and the operational capacity to play the central role assigned to it by the Cotonou Agreement.

The Cotonou Agreement has made profound changes in the cooperation objectives between the European Union and the ACP states, but has also set new goals, by laying the foundations of a renewed partnership that is fairer and more effective.

It makes provision for profound change – a revolution – in the JPA's modus operandi – the rules and operating and working procedures must be those of a genuinely parliamentary and democratic assembly.

There is an underlying cultural change here: the representatives of the European states and the representatives of the ACP states must be equal members of the same assembly.

A new approach to the annual report on the work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly

The break with the past introduced by the Cotonou Agreement has had some impact on the character of the report. Traditionally the annual report on the work of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly has simply described the work accomplished in the year in question.

The report must now harmonise the views of the European representatives in the JPA. It will endeavour to highlight the JPA's enhanced role and how far it is following the Cotonou Agreement. It is also an occasion for the Parliament delegation in the JPA to review its joint action by providing Parliament with:

- a political analysis of the progress or difficulties in the JPA over the past year and the way the Parliament delegation has responded;
- proposals and current thinking on objectives, how to achieve them and the pace of development.

The idea is that Parliament as a whole should express its views on these guidelines, exercise democratic control over the actions, choices and proposals of its appointed delegation in the JPA, and state what it expects of the delegation. This is fully in line with the excellent report for 2000 by my colleague Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez, which set out the same objectives.

This report does not pretend to play the part of the JPA or the Working Group on the Rules of Procedure or negotiations with our ACP partners. The JPA is of course solely responsible for

decisions about its future organisation. It alone can decide its own rules of operation. Consequently this report does not undertake a precise definition of the JPA's future operating procedures but only proposes some broad policy guidelines to help it move towards becoming a fully parliamentary and democratic assembly.

The Joint Parliamentary Assembly at a watershed

The year 2000 had raised great hopes of a new era in relations between the European Union and the ACP states, but 2001 did not fulfil all its promise.

To establish its new powers, in 2001 the JPA undertook a massive adaptation of its working methods and rules of procedure. There were positive developments in 2001, which should be highlighted, such as the numerous motions for resolutions that were prepared collectively and jointly signed and tabled by European and ACP representatives in the JPA.

This type of common approach by EP political groups and ACP representatives is a noteworthy indication of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly's progress towards becoming a parliamentary body with genuine parity. The construction of the new JPA is in hand.

However, 2001 was also marked by delays and resistance that hindered progress.

The main reason for disappointment and disquiet is undoubtedly the European states' inertia in ratifying the Cotonou Agreement. The year ended with a sad balance sheet in this respect: only three European countries had ratified the agreement. This sluggishness sent out a regrettable political signal. We must strongly urge all the Member States to speed up procedures so the ratifications are completed in 2002.

Among the disappointments we must cite the growing (and your rapporteur would say untimely) use of the procedure of voting by separate college, which is tantamount to a denial of parity in the JPA and of its parliamentary nature. The European representatives' use of this procedure in the past year represents a step backwards.

There is also disappointment about the delays in drafting of the JPA's rules of procedure. Despite some significant steps forward, differences were not ironed out on a number of basic points that have an impact on the JPA's parliamentary and democratic credentials. The debates on the question of voting rights for non-parliamentary representatives are a clear illustration of this. We can only deplore the lack of flexibility shown by some ACP delegates which poses a threat to the good will and spirit of openness and compromise of the rapporteur of the Working Group on the Rules of Procedure – Edgar Yves Monnou – and of numerous ACP representatives.

We may consider last year a transition year. Your rapporteur wishes to state clearly that this transition should lead to a renewal of the impetus launched by the Cotonou Agreement.

This is the intention behind the lines of thinking set out in this report, which will focus on the four major areas of work opened up by Cotonou:

- confirming the parliamentary nature of the JPA;

- reinforcing its parity;
- taking the opportunities offered by regionalisation;
- promoting democratic processes and respect for human rights.

I. Affirming the parliamentary character of the JPA

This innovation is the principal benefit of the Cotonou Agreement. Far from being purely a matter of form, the new title of Joint Parliamentary Assembly symbolises the renewed partnership between the European Union and the ACP countries, with an emphasis on its increased political dimension. Promotion of democracy, building peace, respect for human rights and sound management of public affairs are now at the heart of cooperation.

However, the principle must become reality.

1. Changes to the organisation of the JPA: moves towards genuine parliamentarianism

Overloaded session agendas, sluggish debates, a lack of continuity in parliamentary business, lack of consultation between European and ACP representatives between sessions, lack of coherence between instruments and working bodies (workshops, general report, etc.) are all handicaps that currently prevent the JPA from fulfilling its potential and carrying out the full role conferred on it by the Cotonou Agreement.

Various proposals have been put forward:

- the sessions should last four full days so workshops in particular could operate more effectively;
- the overcrowded agenda could be modified by dropping the general report as part of the evolution towards becoming a genuine parliamentary assembly with standing committees;
- there should be a specific response to the fundamental question of following up resolutions adopted by holding a hearing of the Commission and ACP-EU Council on this subject, followed by a debate, at the opening of business of each session;
- the excessive number of speakers (156 on the list at the last session!) could be dealt with by the groups appointing a spokesman (or a limited number of spokesmen) on each item on the agenda;
- the excessive number of resolutions could be dealt with by strict rules on admissibility;
- the JPA European session could be held in the country that holds the presidency of the European Union so the ACP delegates get a better understanding of the realities of the situation in Europe; we should tackle the lack of application of the European representatives, who are easily distracted by their obligations in Brussels and Strasbourg; and we need to respond to the desire to give the JPA a higher profile and improved image.

All these lines of thinking should be developed further and taken into account. Some are given particular attention in this report.

Standing committees

The principle of creating three standing committees to replace the old system of ad hoc working groups was put into effect in 2001. Pending an official decision on their terms of reference and names, their areas of responsibility are as follows:

- Committee on Political Affairs
- Committee on Economic Development, Finance and Trade
- Committee on Social Affairs and the Environment.

The emergence of these joint committees should enable the JPA to operate on the basis of continuous parliamentary business with a high political content. They will provide a forum for more wide-ranging debate before sessions, which will lighten the burden in plenary and permit more rigorous attention to questions raised during the session. The reflection on the operation and tasks of the standing committees must also help provide answers to two critical questions: follow-up to resolutions adopted by the JPA and the place and *raison d'être* of the general report.

The Working Group on the Rules of Procedure will now consider their membership, operation and agenda. Here the European Parliament must confine itself to urging rapid progress in the negotiations. It should also be made clear that membership of standing committees should not only reflect the parity rule, it should also guarantee geographical balance among the full members and the substitutes.

Workshops

Their debates are often very fruitful but do not receive all the attention they deserve in the current organisation of session business.

The workshops provide an opportunity for in-depth discussion away from immediate pressures, on the basis of expert and specialist views, and for making operational recommendations to the JPA. In this respect they are still of great interest and should retain their place in the new JPA. However, the benefits of their work must be better exploited by greater integration in session business and linkages with the JPA's other work. In particular, efforts should be made to see that they supplement the standing committees' work.

No doubt more distinction should be made between the subjects of resolutions and subjects dealt with in the workshops. When the session is held in an ACP country, the workshops should deal with a specific subject that is of interest to or that has a particular impact on the host country. The practice – which was tried out in Libreville in 2001 – of organising a field trip relating to the workshop's theme should be encouraged, to foster this link with the realities of the local situation.

Such an innovation would enable workshops to better fulfil their intermediary role between the JPA and civil society. They constitute a privileged forum where civil society can be associated with the JPA's work, hear its views and take account of its proposals.

2. Progress on voting rights: towards political pluralism

Participation and voting by non-parliamentarians

The debate over Article 2 of the Rules of Procedure has raised controversy and led to numerous disagreements among the ACP representatives and between European and ACP members. Representation of states involved in ACP-EU cooperation by non-parliamentarians is clearly in contradiction with the JPA's stated parliamentary status. More than ever the principle of representation by parliamentarians alone must be forcefully reaffirmed.

The Working Group on the Rules of Procedure has devised a compromise which specifies that voting by non-parliamentarians must be subject to prior authorisation by the Bureau and the approval of the JPA. This is a step in the right direction. It is to be regretted that so far the Bureau has refused to consider it. The JPA must take a decision at its next session in South Africa.

Political pluralism

The JPA has a fundamental imbalance in that the ACP countries are represented on the 'one-country/one-vote' principle whereas the European delegation represents the political composition of the European Parliament.

The political effect can be summarised by the formula 'one-country/same vote' as in practice this means that the views of members of the parliamentary opposition in the ACP countries are not heard. We need to remedy this imbalance by a general debate, without taboos, on how this principle might be challenged and votes generally reweighted to allow introduction of a single, genuinely equal system that would ensure the representation of various shades of political opinion.

The proposal to finance three delegates per state, one of whom would represent the opposition (put forward by Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez in his 2000 report) is undoubtedly the most promising avenue to explore.

The financing question is fundamental. It would be absurd to insist on political pluralism in the delegations of all states represented in the JPA without providing the appropriate funding.

The Joint Parliamentary Assembly's democratic legitimacy is at stake.

3. Strengthening the links with civil societies and public opinion: towards greater democratic legitimacy

The Cotonou Agreement implies more than evolution, it requires a change in philosophy and the need for a participatory grassroots approach. In the current development of its working methods, the JPA must make this new approach a reality by putting forward specific proposals to associate civil society (NGOs and economic and social players) with its work.

In its new set-up the JPA will be an essentially parliamentary forum, whose guiding and decision-making powers are conferred only on the elected representatives of the people of EU

and ACP countries. But it must remain open to European and ACP civil societies and integrate their proposals more in its thinking and work.

‘Inform’ and ‘involve’: the key words

- inform European and ACP civil societies and – going further – public opinion of the existence, concerns and work of the JPA, to popularise this unique instrument of north-south solidarity;
- involve, in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement, non-governmental players in defining the JPA’s political approach and in devising and implementing cooperation strategies.

We must therefore find contact points and create instruments to encourage consultation of civil society in the JPA’s political dialogue. In this spirit, we must develop the proposal to grant observer status to NGO networks at JPA sessions, making sure that European and ACP NGOs are represented on an equal footing. We must seek an agreement with our ACP partners on specific procedures, especially eligibility criteria, so we can ensure that the associated NGOs are thematically and geographically representative.

Tribute must also be paid to the work of the ACP-EU follow-up committee, whose third regional seminar in Santo Domingo in May 2001 confirmed the quality of its work. Its efforts to set up procedures for systematic consultation of economic and social sectors as part of the planning of European Union cooperation in each ACP country must be encouraged.

II. Reinforcement of parity in the Joint Parliamentary Assembly

We must respond to the challenge of creating a parliamentary assembly where the members have equal status. The parity aspect is essential to the partnership that has united the EU and ACP countries for over 30 years. However, there are still a number of imbalances behind the affirmation of this principle.

1. Parity in the matters dealt with by the Assembly

Consideration of the matters dealt with by the old Joint Assembly as well as the JPA raises serious doubts about the ambitious objectives covered by the word ‘parity’. The great majority of resolutions deal with matters that concern – and often challenge – only the ACP countries. The political treatment of these themes tends to give greater weight to a negative picture, which highlights only problems, delays and crises. To remedy this double imbalance, we must:

- tackle issues that are relevant to both the European and ACP countries, problems that they both face, and challenges that we must face together;
- foster a positive approach by also emphasising what works well, successful cooperation, examples of good practice, successful projects, innovative measures that ought to be copied, etc.

This is not just semantics. Adoption of resolutions highlighting projects and actions that bear fruit would make it possible to put pressure on the Commission to increase financial support, draw lessons from what has been achieved and extend the application of what has been done.

Admissibility of themes

There has been no improvement in 2001 – far from it – as regards the persistent question of the excessive number of resolutions adopted by the JPA. This glut of resolutions is counterproductive as regards the readability of what is produced by the Assembly and it waters down the political message. All members agree in condemning this trend. However, they do not all draw the same conclusions.

The regional resolutions constitute a first response to these difficulties. However, many of these resolutions are regional only in name and are more like a catalogue of local or national problems. More reflection is required to ensure the resolutions are genuinely regional, by giving more weight to a thematic rather than a geographic approach.

The JPA must seek a new balance between the number of resolutions it can effectively deal with and the need to remain open to all issues. The debate is under way in the ACP countries, some of which want to introduce a filter by establishing three criteria of admissibility: agreement from both the ACP and EU sides, follow-up to a theme that has already been the subject of a resolution, and the outcome of a parliamentary mission.

The European Parliament confirms that this question falls solely within the Bureau's remit and it must decide on these guidelines. It must also make it quite clear that any procedure to solve this problem should in no way form a type of censorship. It is essential to incorporate an emergency clause that would make it possible to give full attention to the most sensitive issues concerning human rights or topical events.

2. Equality as regards material and financial resources

In fact, equality might be said to be virtual rather than real. The ACP countries do not have a common parliament. Unlike the European delegates they cannot count on the infrastructure and logistic support offered by the European Parliament.

The general challenge is to improve consultation and collaboration between European and ACP delegations between sessions. We can legitimately expect the standing committees to respond to this need once they are in place.

However, other specific solutions have to be found to enable better integration of the ACP countries' parliaments in preparation for the JPA sessions. We should for instance improve information procedures between parliaments (the European Parliament and the ACP national parliaments) and encourage access to information technology by the ACP parliaments.

Methods of financing the JPA

The question of financing to help ACP delegations attend sessions is fundamental. Under the Lomé Conventions, the internal financing agreement drawn up jointly by the ACP secretariat and the Commission did not make provision for covering the travel and residence expenses of ACP representatives attending the JPA sessions. This is a powerful brake on participation by ACP parliamentarians and an insurmountable barrier to building delegations representing several different political persuasions.

These financing rules should now be revised in the light of the Cotonou Agreement's new guidelines, on the basis of a rigorous financial assessment by the Commission of ways of financing JPA sessions.

A promising solution seems to be the creation of a special fund that would cover the session travel costs only of ACP parliamentary representatives, and which would not be used for any other purpose.

We should also study whether it would be appropriate to establish a link between funding granted to delegations of various states and the presence of parliamentarians in their delegations.

3. Parity in operation

Voting by separate college

Rather than being members of a single assembly operating according to parliamentary rules, we sometimes have the disagreeable impression of belonging to two assemblies working side by side. The existence of separate houses is a negation of parity within the JPA. We must forcefully reassert the need to abolish this arrangement. The JPA will only be truly parliamentary when this dichotomy has disappeared. In the meantime there must be severe restrictions on this procedure, which should only be used as a last resort. Your rapporteur would also urge the European delegates to set an example by renouncing its use, by means of a tacit or explicit moratorium.

Joint political groups?

The current goal should be a JPA functioning on the basis of joint political groups, covering both European and ACP parliamentarians. This new alignment would profoundly transform the running of the JPA. Thus, speaking time would be allocated to each of the joint groups, which would also produce a joint list of speakers.

III. Taking the opportunities offered by regionalisation

A beneficial way of strengthening political dialogue

Regional integration recently speeded up in the ACP countries. It was initially intended to encourage trade and economic cooperation between ACP countries by setting up free-trade areas but it now increasingly has a political dimension. The WAEMU's decisive step towards political unification in 2001 is an example. Political ambition is tending to replace strictly commercial thinking.

The regionalisation laid down in the Cotonou Agreement must parallel and reinforce this trend. It must enable these emerging political institutions to associate themselves more effectively with the work of the JPA.

An instrument to modernise the JPA's work

The JPA must adapt its working methods to the new order. The demarcation of future regions is exclusively the ACP countries' responsibility. Here, it appears, tangible progress was made in 2001. At the same time, there must be more reflection on the tasks of the future regional meetings, on tying them in with plenary meetings of the JPA, and on how they will work alongside existing or emerging regional organisations.

Regionalisation should prove effective in conflict prevention, which was given priority in the Cotonou Agreement. The existence of such forums for debates and exchanging ideas ought to favour the emergence of regional security zones.

Regionalisation also opens up new prospects for dealing with questions that concern a group of countries collectively and producing a collective answer. Climate change, trafficking in raw materials, deforestation are some of the persistent questions that could appropriately be studied in depth in a regional framework, alongside work carried out by the corresponding regional bodies.

Regional meetings could also act as laboratories for political pluralism by use of new methods of representation that would enable states to bring delegations consisting of members of different political persuasions.

IV. Promoting the democratic process and human rights

Under the Cotonou Agreement the JPA's role is *to promote democratic processes through dialogue and consultation* (Article 17).

The Assembly has already had occasion in the past to consider democracy and human rights issues. Its responsibilities in this area have been considerably strengthened and it has also increased its responsibility and vigilance with regard to sound management of public affairs. Its *raison d'être* is more than ever promotion of dialogue, between the ACP countries and the European Union and between the ACP countries themselves, to establish democracy, respect for human rights and sound management practices in public affairs at the heart of the cooperation partnership.

To do this the JPA can take advantage of some positive trends emerging in the ACP countries. In fact it is increasingly the ACP countries themselves that are most critical of infringements of human rights or hitches in the democratisation process. The very lively debates on the deterioration of the situation in Zimbabwe are a clear illustration of this.

The setting up of a standing committee to deal with political questions and the organisation of regional meetings should enable the JPA to play a more effective role in the matter. Pending clarification of his duties in the light of this development, the Vice-President responsible for human rights issues must continue his work and submit recommendations to the Bureau to promote human rights in the ACP countries and in Europe.

More vigorous political support for democratisation is an ambitious objective for which the new JPA will need adequate resources. Its support must be:

- political: tribute must systematically be paid to favourable developments in the situation of human rights and democratic processes, so encouragement is given;

- also material: encouragement in speeding up democratic processes could be given practical form by material and financial aid to improve the running of democratic parliaments in the ACP states. We need to introduce a democratic bonus.

Promoting parliamentary diplomacy

The JPA must be recognised for what it is: the main democratic (and the only joint) player in the service of development and the promotion of human rights and democracy on a worldwide scale.

In this connection your rapporteur wishes to urge the fundamental importance of electoral observation missions and thematic missions organised under JPA auspices. There must be more reflection on material, financial and human resources so these missions can be organised in the best conditions. In particular:

- the equal and balanced composition of the delegations should be ensured by representation of member countries as a whole and all political groups;
- there should be precise criteria – a joint understanding – for management of crises, conflicts or election procedures.

Considerable progress was made on these questions in 2001, which we must welcome. Unanimous adoption of a resolution on Sudan, in the wake of a joint fact-finding mission, is the most obvious indication.

This impetus and clarification of missions organised under JPA auspices is an essential part of the parliamentary diplomacy that the Assembly should be engaged in. Its mediation missions run alongside those of traditional diplomacy and have considerable advantages: a break with the post-colonial concept of individual preserves, greater freedom to speak and intervene, less protocol than in traditional diplomacy.

Affirmation of the JPA's political role must give it more weight internationally and ensure that it is consulted by the highest international regulatory bodies such as the United Nations General Assembly.

To do this we have to enhance our solidarity and interdependence and defend our common interests together. An international forum such as the WTO is the sort of arena where we should be showing our solidarity. The fourth trade conference at Doha last year provided an opportunity to take a few timid steps along this road. This development can be encouraged by technical and material assistance to ACP countries to help them organise themselves and get their voices heard collectively in international forums (e.g. the representation office at the WTO). This must be stepped up.

Conclusion

The Cotonou Agreement sowed the seeds of a new order – a new identity – for the JPA. However, the future of the cooperation partnership between the European Union and the ACP countries largely depends on our willingness to put these guidelines into practice. This is the great challenge for our Assembly.

Despite undeniable progress in the past year, the JPA must continue and intensify its transformation into a genuine parliamentary assembly based on full parity so it is capable of fulfilling the goals set out for it by the Cotonou Agreement.