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Committee on Development

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DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Development

for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Towards an EU strategy on the rights of the child
(2007/0000(INI))

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Development calls on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the development of the Commission's Action Plan on Children in External Relations, which will come under the approved framework and commitments of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child;
2. Stresses that the process leading up to adoption of the Strategy on the Rights of the Child should include a full and comprehensive consultation, involving children in particular;
3. Calls on the Commission to adopt a child-rights-based approach reflecting the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in all relevant actions, from policy development and programming through to evaluation;
4. Recognises the urgent need for policy and implementation guidance for Commission staff and calls for tools and training in headquarters and in its Delegations on the application of a human-rights-based approach to development policy in general and specifically for an approach based on children's rights;
5. Urges the Commission and Member States to carry out thorough assessments of the situation of children in partner countries, using widely-accepted data and approaches already routinely used, for example, by the UN, to support appropriate evidence-based policy making and country strategies;
6. Calls on the Commission to redouble its efforts to assist developing countries in translating the provisions of the UNCRC and optional protocols into their national legislation;
7. Stresses that, in order to make a lasting contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), children, their survival, development and protection, must be placed at the centre of all EU policy and practice;
8. Recognises that early childhood care and education, including immunisation, parenting, kindergarten and nurseries, are a child's right and recognises that early childhood is a time of significant development and that poor nutrition and a lack of care can lead to both physical and intellectual impairment;
9. Calls on the the Commission and Member States to make a concerted effort to help partner countries to achieve the target of free, universal primary education (MDG 2) and calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide the necessary funding for the Education for All - Fast Track Initiative;
10. Notes that emergency provision for children in conflict-affected fragile states rarely extends to appropriate education and calls on the Commission to support education activities, including implementation of the minimum standards outlined by the Inter-

Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, both in emergencies and in the transitional phase from crisis to development;

11. Highlights the need for special attention to be paid to MDG 3 on gender equality and for the education of girls, the recruitment and training of local female teachers, the elimination of any male bias in curricula, the location of schools closer to the communities they serve and the provision of appropriate sanitation facilities; stresses that schools should be zones of safety where the rights of children are respected, and that sexual harassment and violence in and around schools should be dealt with;
12. Calls for special attention to be focused on orphans and children suffering social exclusion, noting that they are most often hit disproportionately hard by discrimination, trafficking and inadequate access to education;
13. Deplores the pressures which undermine policies on sexual and reproductive health rights, leading to an increase in unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions for young people; urges the Commission and the Member States to maintain levels of funding for the full range of sexual and reproductive health services to meet MDG 5 (improve maternal health);
14. Highlights MDG 4 (reduce child mortality) and MDG 6 (combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases) and urges investment in research into and development of paediatric anti-retroviral formulations, in the provision of anti-malarial bednets and in the promotion of immunisation through the GAVI Alliance (formerly known as the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization).