

# Overview ACP-EU Assembly: indebtedness, Somalia, Arab Spring

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*Lomé, Togo 23 November 2011/ European Parliament:* MPs from African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and MEP counterparts adopted resolutions on the consequences of indebtedness on development, the crisis in the Horn of Africa, especially Somalia, the impact of the Arab Spring on Sub-Saharan Africa, the Lisbon Treaty's effects on ACP-EU cooperation, and the integration of people with disabilities. The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly held its meeting from 19 to 23 November in Lomé, Togo.

### **The consequences of indebtedness on development financing in ACP countries**

ACP and EU members of the JPA called on the EU and ACP countries to work out a model for a debt offsetting mechanism for indebted countries. This could take the shape of debt cancellation, rescheduling, repayment. One third of ACP countries are either in debt distress or at a high risk of that. The resolution underlines that any additional funds obtained through debt cancellation should be allocated to increase social expenditure in areas such as basic education, primary health care and HIV/AIDS.

### **Food and security crisis in the Horn of Africa, especially Somalia**

The Assembly was "acutely concerned at the unprecedented and still deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Horn of Africa", and "regarded the famine death toll in as unacceptable". MEPs and ACP MPs urged the international community to redouble its efforts to cope with the emergency situation so as to meet the growing humanitarian needs and prevent any further worsening of the situation. The food and security crisis is currently affecting 13.3 million people, and tens of thousands of people, more than half of them children, are already dead.

### **The consequences of the Arab Spring on Sub-Saharan Africa**

In a resolution on the Arab Spring, the Assembly condemned the violence in Syria and Egypt and voiced concern that Libyan weapons in al-Qaeda hands could pose a threat to the entire world. The Assembly called on the EU, the African Union and the UN to help tackle the humanitarian crisis affecting hundreds of thousands of refugees who have fled Libya to neighbouring Tunisia, Egypt, Niger, Mali and Chad and to Europe.

### **The impact of the Lisbon Treaty on ACP-EU partnership**

The JPA believes the EU and ACP countries should take advantage of the changes brought about by the Lisbon Treaty, such as the establishment of the European External Action Service and the European Parliament's new powers. The parties should take this opportunity to revitalise their partnership, so to take it "beyond the donor-recipient relationship and into a partner-partner relationship". The Assembly therefore urged to define areas of common interest, such as energy, climate change and migration.

### **The integration of disabled people in developing countries**

The majority of disabled people live in developing countries, where they can't find jobs and leave poverty behind. Not to mention that the risk of becoming disabled increases with the degree of poverty. ACP MPs and their European counterparts underlined that the social and economic costs of excluding the disabled are enormous. The resolution stresses the need for

positive discrimination and to combating stereotypes to strengthen social inclusion.

## Debates without resolution

The Joint Parliamentary Assembly was opened by President of Togo Faure Gnassingbe, with the participation of President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger and ACP-EU Co-Presidents Assarid Ag Imbarcaouane (Mali) and Louis Michel (liberal, Belgium). Mr Michel underlined that the current financial crisis should not be used as an excuse to cut development aid.

Among several other topics, the Assembly discussed the democratic transition in Togo with Prime Minister Gilbert Fossoun Hounbo and Togolese ministers. Members welcomed the progress made by Togo so far, and urged Togo to continue the reforms.

The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly brings together elected representatives of the European Union and the ACP countries, that is MEPs and MPs, from 78 states that are signatories to the Cotonou Agreement, which is the basis for ACP-EU development cooperation. JPA meetings are held twice a year, alternately in an EU and an ACP country. The previous session was held in Budapest, Hungary. The next JPA will take place in Denmark on 28 to 30 May 2012.

## Links:

Link to European Parliament's JPA page

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