



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DG DEVELOPMENT

The Director General

12 10 2006

Brussels,
DG DEV D(2006)/3553

Mr Simon STOCKER
Director
EUROSTEP aisbl
115, rue Stévin
1000 Bruxelles

Subject: Benchmarks for the programming of aid under the 10th EDF

Ref.: Your letter of 6 April 2006 to Commissioner Michel

Sir,

Thank you very much for your letter to which the reply took unfortunately more time than was strictly speaking required. My apologies for the delay.

In your letter you reiterate the need for further harmonisation, coordination and effectiveness of EU's aid efforts and for a strong involvement of civil society actors in the programming process. You advance a number of benchmarks that you would wish the EU to meet in the programming process.

Let me assure you that the political and policy orientations that you want to monitor through the proposed benchmarks are duly reflected in the various policy documents adopted by the European Union over the past one and a half years, such as the European Consensus, the Africa Strategy and the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness. These policy documents should guide the programming process. Furthermore, operational guidance, through the so called Programming Orientations, has been given to the Commission's delegations and geographical services to ensure that the key principles are taken into account and respected. I attach a copy of the full set of documents that are also published on the Commission's Europa website¹ for your information.

You will see from the Programming Orientations and annexes that poverty eradication and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals are strongly reflected therein and that international legal and political obligations take up their rightful place in the country diagnostics to ensure that human rights in all its forms, decent employment the environment and gender equality can be appropriately dealt with in the programming process.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/comm/development/body/csp_rsp/programming_ACP.cfm

You will also read that the principle of ownership is confirmed and in practice should drive the programming process by taking the partner countries' development agenda's as the starting point of the programming exercise and by aligning cooperation to the extent possible to national procedures and budget cycles. At the same time the Commission will try and work as closely as possible with other donors, in particular the EU Member States to coordinate the various programming processes and where possible to come to a joint programming exercise. National authorities are encouraged to take the lead role in the coordination efforts.

The programming exercise is not aiming to introduce new conditionalities. This is also not done through the new method of aid allocation which on the contrary aims at rewarding those countries that demonstrate good levels of governance or that are committed to further governance reforms required to promote the development of the country.

As you quite rightly mention, to promote genuine ownership it is important to fully involve civil society in the programming process. This is therefore an essential feature of the exercise. Non State actors should be involved at different stages of the programming process and in particular be given the possibility of contributing to and commenting upon the CSP/RSP. To ensure that Non State actors can become actively involved in the programming, they must have access to the relevant documents. Heads of Delegations are encouraged to share the documents with all stakeholders in the country of their competence and all guidelines are published on the internet.

Turning to the last point of your letter where you say that development must be kept distinct from military and security activities, I wish to reassure you that the areas eligible for funding are those as laid down in the European Consensus.

Yours sincerely,



Stefano MANSERVISI

c.c.: Mrs. Luisa Morgantini, Chair of the European Parliament
Committee for Development