

Brussels, 20 July 2009

Mr. S Manservisi
Director General
Director General for
Development
European Commission

Mid Term Reviews of ACP programmes

Dear Mr. Manservisi,

At the meeting of the Stakeholders Advisory Group on 29 May, you suggested that we might consider working together in a number of identified countries to make the involvement of civil society actors in the MTR more effective. We were very interested in this idea and have considered how best we might approach such collaboration.

Following the meeting of the SAG we took a number of steps to broaden the potential engagement of our colleagues in Europe and in ACP countries. This included informing and starting discussions in Europe about the process of the MTR, as well as the consulting with partners and colleagues in a number of ACP countries.

At the same time we have had some contact with Commission officials from DG Development about the potential for a constructive collaboration.

We have felt at the outset that our ability to take forward any planning was contingent on a full understanding of the way in which the MTR would be pursued within ACP countries. Given the central role of the Guidelines for the MTR we indicated to your colleagues that we could only develop effective proposals once we had seen the content of the Guidelines. Initially we were informed that we would have sight of these on 15 June, and were proposing that we schedule a meeting with DG development soon afterwards to consider how to undertake a collaborative approach. Ultimately, however, we only received copies of the guidelines on 7 July. We understood that at that stage the delegations had already been in possession of the Guidelines, at least in their nearly final form, for at least two weeks to enable them to start their planning.

There was also a discussion with Mr. Van Damme on 30 June where he presented the guidelines to Concord's Cotonou Working Group. He indicated that the process would be very much in the hands of each individual delegation, and cast doubt on the use of any efforts we might make in Brussels - except to alert our counterparts in ACP countries.

We had hoped that any collaborative activity between ourselves and DG Development could be established before the delegations started their detailed planning. Given the delay in our having access to the Guidelines, and the short period for the in-country phase that is still scheduled to be concluded by 15 October we have concluded that we need to put our efforts into working with our colleagues in ACP countries to promote the opportunity for their engagement in the MTRs. We believe that this will be the best use of our capacities given the constraints we face.

We want to emphasise, however, that we do expect that the in-country processes will be conducted in accordance with the procedures that were presented to the meeting of the SAG in November 2007.

At that time your service set out a *Road Map* defining the approach that the Commission and its delegations should take to ensure an effective engagement with civil society in developing country strategies and the reviews of these strategies. As you will recognise the key aspects of the *Road Map* are that they are systematic, transparent, ongoing and inclusive. The *Road Map* draws on experiences, assessments and evaluations on the involvement of civil society in the original programming process for EDF 10 and prior to that time. We expect that this *Road Map* provides the standard approach that each delegation takes towards engaging civil society in the MTR, and we are advising our counterparts in ACP countries that they should expect the *Road Map* to be implemented in their country. I attach a copy of the relevant part of the document.

We will, with our colleagues in the ACP, be making assessments of the process and the outcomes in the months ahead.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CONSOLO', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Olivier CONSOLO, Director of CONCORD

Copy: M. Pieter Bangma

Encl. Recommendations from Non State Actors and Local Authorities Consultation in the elaboration of 10th EDF Country Strategy Papers in ACP countries.

Non State Actors and Local Authorities Consultation in the elaboration of 10th EDF Country Strategy Papers in ACP countries

(20 December 2007)

(Extract of the paper)

Recommendations

The main obstacles encountered during the consultation process as expressed by both Northern and Southern NSA/LA and EC delegations are summarised in this section. Recommendations are based on best practices are put forward with a view to moving away from ad hoc, informative processes to a more systematic, consultative dialogue with stakeholders covering all aspects of cooperation. While these recommendations are not ready-made remedies, they should be considered as a tool or source of inspiration for delegations which can be adapted to the different realities of each ACP state.

In view of EU commitments on aid effectiveness, creation of parallel dialogue structures should be avoided. The recommendations below should be systematically linked into existing processes including the regular meetings which take place in country between government, donors, NSA and LA for joint reviews of budget support and monitoring missions of PRSP results.

1. Reinvigorate dialogue and interaction

First and foremost, in some countries, there is a need to revitalise the motivation to participate in consultation processes and policy dialogue. Although stakeholders have been actively involved in many countries, in some cases Northern and Southern NSA seem to be disillusioned and consider that the commitment to a consultative process is only formal as priorities are pre-defined and there is no real room for manoeuvre to take comments into account. On the other hand, NSAs also appear at times apolitical and only interested in participatory processes where there is a perspective for capacity building support.

In countries where participation has not worked as it should, EC delegations should immediately take the initiative to engage in confidence building between state and non state actors in order to build relationships and discuss respective expectations from the consultation process.

Emphasis should be placed on the mutual benefit of ensuring constructive and effective interaction between actors. In this respect, coordination between donors is clearly essential with a view to avoiding consultation "overload".

Action: EC delegation to organise meeting with NSA/LA before the end of the first quarter 2008 with threefold objective:

1. Present final CSP and review process (next step being Annual Operational Review 2008)
2. Inform of any policy developments (e.g. new thematic programme "NSA and LA in Development")
3. Announce date for presentation of roadmap for future consultation process with stakeholders (see point 3). Other in-country donors should be associated to this exercise;

2. Ensure involvement of broad typology actors

Building on good practice already established during the 9th EDF programming process, a wide range of different types of NSA were consulted in this process. Moreover, the majority of ACP countries now dispose of a mapping study providing a clear picture of NSAs at country level.

Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement. It seems that organisations consulted by delegations are not always the most relevant ones and indeed may lack the required expertise to participate efficiently in the policy dialogue. There are also concerns regarding representativity of actors which are too closely linked to the government and regarding inclusion of grassroots groups and marginalised populations.

Actions: EC delegation to dispose of mapping to ensure systematic inclusion of a broad range of independent NSA and LA in policy dialogue. Consultation is to be extended beyond capitals to ensure inclusion of marginalised out-of-reach groups (decentralised consultation). Delegations to consider following example of Eastern Caribbean where regular dialogue is ensured through establishment of NSA advisory panels (see box no. 9).

2. Move from ad hoc information to institutionalised dialogue

Efforts to re-invigorate dialogue covering a broad range of actors are to be followed up by presentation of a concrete plan of action. In many countries, NSA/Las were not given the opportunity to fully participate in dialogue because of time constraints which, in turn, often led to weak input to the process and low levels of feedback from the government and EC delegation.

In order to allow stakeholders to fully play their role, it is essential that the consultation process is carefully planned in advance and includes mechanisms which allow for stable and continuous dialogue.

Action: EC delegation to establish a roadmap for the consultation for the period leading up to the Mid Term Review of 10th EDF programming (2008-2010). The roadmap shall be presented to stakeholders before the end of the second quarter 2008 and integrated into the Annual Operational Review 2008. It shall outline the following:

- WHY? Objective of consultation process – role and expectations of each actor;
- WHEN? Schedule – times and dates for consultations for the period 2008-2010, with particular focus on lead up to the High Level Forum in Accra in September 2008 (to be updated regularly);
- WHERE? Extension of consultation beyond the capital in order to include rural, out of reach areas (decentralisation);
- WHAT? Form of consultation – general meetings, sectoral/thematic meetings, regional events, media (press, web) and/or other mechanisms to be specified;
- HOW? Working methods – basic standards for interaction:
 - a. EC delegation to send relevant documentation at least 6-8 weeks in advance;
 - b. Take holders to provide written contributions in advance;
 - c. Further exchanges at consultation session (general meeting, sector-specific or thematic meetings, panels, web based consultation...);
 - d. EC delegation to provide report and feedback on consultation within 4 weeks;

4. Improve Communication and Transparency

In order to deliver on the targets set out in recommendations 1, 2 and 3, it is essential to apply open and “user-friendly” methods of communication. Transparency is key to building confidence and

ensuring effective consultation of a broad constituency of stakeholders. In this respect, the nomination of NSA focal points in EC delegations has received very positively across the board.

Concerns have been expressed, however, regarding differing levels of access to information in ACP countries. Where available, there is a need to make more systematic use of affordable ICT solutions such as the web, national press, TV, radio, pamphlets etc in order to ensure awareness raising and efficient circulation of information.

Action: EC delegation to publish on website all relevant documentation relating to general and programme-specific planning (joint annual reviews, evaluations, reports on consultation, programming guidelines etc). The “roadmap” (see recommendation 3) setting out the timetable and rules of engagement for consultation should be published as a live document and updated regularly. EC Headquarters to explore mechanisms of support to network of civil society focal points at country level.