

Part of the act4europe campaign initiated by the Civil Society Contact Group

29 March 2006

Dear Commissioner Michel,

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

Let me start by thanking you for your efforts to promote donor harmonization under the programming processes for the 10th EDF, which are reflected in the recently adopted *Common Framework for drafting Country Strategy Papers and Joint Multiannual Programming*. We believe that further harmonization, coordination and effectiveness of the EU's aid efforts are imperative if we want to move closer to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and to eradicate poverty worldwide.

We furthermore welcome that the *Common Framework* re-iterates the commitment to involve Civil Society Organisations in the programming process, which is also clearly enshrined in the Cotonou Agreement. Strong involvement of Civil Society Actors in the drawing up of Country Strategy Papers is crucial if genuine ownership is to be achieved and if aid is to be effectively used where it is most needed.

In order to ensure that the programming process under the 10th EDF lives-up to the EC's commitment to improve harmonization, aid effectiveness and to meaningfully involve civil society, and indeed with a view to achieving all the objectives outlined in the European Consensus, including the Millennium Development Goals, we would like to strongly encourage you to meet the following benchmarks in the current programming process:

1. Respect for Community legal and political obligations

The European Community (EC) has strongly committed itself to focusing its development assistance on poverty eradication and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, most notably in the Cotonou *ACP EU Partnership Agreement*, in articles 177 – 179 of the *Treaty establishing the European Community* and in the *The European Consensus on Development*. In order to live up to its political and legal commitments, the EC must ensure that poverty eradication and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals are strongly reflected in the programming documents for its aid to ACP countries - the Country and Regional Strategy Papers (CSPs/RSPs)

2. Respect for international legal and political obligations

The Member States of the European Union are parties to numerous international conventions relating to human rights, including social, economic and cultural rights, women's rights and children's rights, core labour standards and the environment and have signed the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome. It must be ensured that these obligations are respected in the CSPs/RSPs.

3. Transparency of the CSP drafting process

In the spirit of the Commission Communication on the Transparency Initiative, the drafting process of Country and Regional Strategy Papers must be done in a more transparent manner. Access of civil society to information on drafts, guiding documents and framework documents -including financial provisions- must be guaranteed at all stages of the drafting process and must be globally accessible.

4. Civil society participation in the CSP drafting process

Eurostep is a member of CONCORD

As strongly enshrined in the *Cotonou Agreement* and in the *European Consensus on development*, civil society participation in the partner countries as well as at the European level is a requirement for the EC in the CSPs/RSPs drafting process. Consultations with civil society organisations (CSOs) in the partner countries must then be obligatory and must be conducted in a way that allows CSOs to constructively contribute to the strategies, e.g. drafts of CSPs must be distributed in good time before the consultation and must be in languages with which CSOs are familiar. The Commission must also be responsive to CSOs regarding the extent to which their concerns have been taken into account in the CSP.

5. Promotion of gender equality through women-specific actions and gender mainstreaming

The European Community and the Member States have committed themselves to promoting gender equality in all their actions, including in their development cooperation. This is strongly enshrined in the *Treaty establishing the European Community*, the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* and the *European Consensus*. In regulation 806/2004 on promoting gender equality in development cooperation, the Community specifically undertakes to promote gender equality through a twin-track approach of women-specific actions and gender mainstreaming. Moreover, the EC and its Member States have signed the Beijing Declaration and all Member States are party to the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW). This obligation to promote gender equality must be clearly reflected in the the CSPs/ RSPs.

6. Ownership rather than donor driven conditionalities

The EC has committed to strengthen ownership of development strategies by the partner country in the context of the *Cotonou Agreement*, the *European Consensus on Development* and the *Paris declaration on Aid effectiveness*. The allocation of aid should therefore not be used by the EC to impose new conditionalities that have no proven link with the objectives of eradicating poverty and achieving the MDGs in ACP countries. Indeed one can already observe in the proposed allocation criteria (proposed by the Commission in a working document distributed to the EDF Committee), suggestions to allocate the money to ACPs on the basis of Europe's short term political and economic interests. Indeed these criteria would add conditionalities on ACP countries' commitment to the fight against terrorism, cooperation on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction on the one hand and on market liberalization to further push for the realization of the Economic Partnership Agreements on the other hand. This must be rejected if Europe is to play a Responsible role in the World by respecting its commitment to ownership.

7. Respect for Community competences on development cooperation

Development assistance must be kept distinct from military and security activities. This is so first because development assistance is a Community competence, while matters relating to military and security issue are not. Second, in accordance with the official OECD/DAC definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA), development assistance must aim exclusively at the eradication of poverty and the promotion of the MDGs by non-military means, while military and security actions might follow many other objectives. Therefore, funds allocated to development must be exclusively used for development objectives and funding for actions related to military and security matters must be drawn from different budgets.

Yours sincerely,



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Director

Cc.

Members of the Committee on Development in the European Parliament

Members of the ACP-EU Joint Parliament Assembly

Members of the ACP working group in the Council