

Opinion of the Committee
on Foreign Affairs
2015/16:UU6

Towards a new partnership between the
European Union and the African,
Caribbean and Pacific countries after
2020

Summary

In this opinion, the Committee examines the joint consultation paper from the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission, 'Towards a new partnership between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries after 2020' (JOIN(2015) 33 final).

The opinion includes a specific opinion (Sweden Democrats). The Committee proposes that note be taken of its opinion.

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The Committee's proposal for a parliamentary decision

Towards a new partnership between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries after 2020

The Riksdag takes the opinion into consideration.

Stockholm, 19 November 2015

For the Committee on Foreign Affairs

Kenneth G. Forslund

The following members participated in the decision: Kenneth G. Forslund (Social Democrats, S), Karin Enström (Moderate, M), Sofia Arkelsten (M), Julia Kronlid (Sweden Democrats, SD), Margareta Cederfelt (M), Pyry Niemi (S), Kerstin Lundgren (Centre), Göran Pettersson (M), Krister Örnfjäder (S), Björn Söder (SD), Birgitta Ohlsson (Liberal), Hans Linde (Left), Sofia Damm (Christian Democrats), Maria Andersson Willner (S), Pernilla Stålhammar (Green) and Jamal Mouneimne (S).

Report of the matter

The matter and preparatory work

On 6 October 2015, the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission published the joint consultation paper 'Towards a new partnership between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries after 2020' (JOIN(2015) 33 final).

The purpose of the paper was to initiate a broad public consultation on the key questions pertaining to the partnership and relations between the EU and the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP countries) after 2020. The consultation was launched on 6 October and runs until 31 December 2015.

The consultation on a new partnership between the EU and the ACP countries after 2020 will be dealt with by both the foreign affairs and development arms of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), because the agreement is about both development aid and broader political partnership between the parties.

On 8 October, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Annika Söder informed the Committee of the Government's views on EU relations with the ACP countries (after 2020) as part of the information session prior to the FAC foreign affairs meeting on 12 October. The issue was addressed from a general perspective and the Committee received access to the Government's preliminary position through the annotated agenda for the upcoming meeting. Since the issue was a point of discussion at the FAC foreign affairs meeting on 12 October, no Council conclusions were adopted. The Committee was briefed on the outcomes of the meeting on 14 October 2015.

On 15 October 2015, the Committee decided to inform the speaker that it was open to dealing with the consultation paper in an opinion if the speaker, after consultation with the group leaders, decided to refer the document to the Committee on Foreign Affairs for consideration in accordance with Chapter 9 Section 20 of the Riksdag Act.

On 22 October, State Secretary Ulrika Modéer informed the Committee about post-Cotonou/EU-ACP relations during the information session ahead of the FAC development meeting on 26 October. The Committee received access to the Government's preliminary position through the annotated agenda for the upcoming meeting. The Committee also received access to the document 'Questions for discussion on EU-ACP post 2020', which formed the basis for the development ministers' discussion. The discussion between the development ministers was only an initial discussion and the ministers will return to the issue later on in the consultation process. No Council conclusions were adopted. The Committee was briefed on the outcomes of the meeting on 29 October 2015.

On 23 October, JOIN(2015) 33 was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs for consideration.

On 10 November, the Government Offices submitted an explanatory memorandum entitled 'Cooperation with the ACP countries after the Cotonou Agreement' (2015/16:FPM14).

On 11–12 November, an EU–Africa summit on migration was held in Valletta, Malta. A political declaration and an action plan were adopted at the summit.

Through IPEX, the Committee has learnt that the consultation paper is also being considered by the German Parliament.

The Committee considered the Cotonou Agreement in Opinion 2001/02:UU3 ‘The Partnership Agreement between the European Union and its Member States and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries’. The Riksdag approved the agreement on 31 October 2001.

Since then, the Committee has dealt with the Cotonou Agreement in opinions 2006/07:UU8, 2007/08:UU2, 2007/08:UU5, 2008/09:UU13, 2010/11:UU13, 2011/12:UU10, 2012/13:UU2, 2012/13:UU12 and 2013/14:UU15.

Further processing at EU level

According to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission have announced that, once the consultation has ended on 31 December 2015, they intend to publish two working documents from the Commission that summarise the consultation procedure. One of the documents is expected to take a retrospective approach and evaluate the Cotonou Agreement, while the other document is expected to be more forward-looking and focused on the relationship between the EU and the ACP countries after 2020.

The two working documents are expected to form a basis for a Commission communication presenting a draft of the EU’s mandate for the EU–ACP negotiations. The communication is expected to be presented in spring 2016. The Commission’s proposal for a decision in the form of the communication will form a foundation for the work at the Council that will result in a Council decision on the EU’s mandate for the negotiations. The decision on the EU’s mandate is expected in autumn 2016.

The start of negotiations between the EU and the ACP countries on relations after 2020 is initially planned for 2017 or 2018.

Background

Content of the consultation paper

The Cotonou Agreement between the EU and the ACP countries was signed on 23 June 2000 and expires on 28 February 2020. It covers political dialogue, economic cooperation, trade, and development cooperation.

Consultation paper JOIN(2015) 33 addresses how the partnership should be structured after 2020 and aims to evaluate what lessons can be learnt from the current partnership, thereby creating a useful and functioning platform to advance the partners’ joint interests after 2020. The evaluation focuses on the partnership’s scope, instruments and ways of working.

The paper notes that both the EU and the ACP countries, as well as the relationship between them, have developed and changed since the agreement was signed in the year 2000. For example, major differences have emerged between the 79 countries in the ACP group in terms of economic development and growth. Other factors that have changed since the year 2000 and that concern both the EU and the ACP include climate change, migration and terrorism.

A number of stakeholders have gained a more pronounced role in the ACP regions since the year 2000, which has increased the complexity concerning which stakeholders are covered by the Cotonou Agreement and how the EU's relationship with them works. Outside the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, but in synergy with it, the partnership with the three regions that make up the ACP group has been strengthened through the Africa–EU Strategic Partnership, the Joint Caribbean–EU Strategic Partnership and the strategy for a strengthened partnership with the Pacific islands. Cooperation with regional and sub-regional organisations has been stepped up as well, particularly on economic matters and in the area of peace and security. The EU has concluded economic partnership agreements with a number of ACP countries, which has transformed the trade pillar of the Cotonou Agreement into a multi-pronged relationship with a number of regional groupings.

The adoption of the UN's 2030 Agenda in September 2015 will have an impact on the ties between the EU and the ACP countries after 2020.

A shortcoming of the Cotonou Agreement is felt to be that it struggles to meet the need for greater flexibility, coherence and evaluation in a changing world. For example, the increased diversity within the ACP group has led to a need to review the EU's development aid to the countries. The EU has recently emphasised the principle of differentiation, and in order to ensure that EU aid is targeted where it is needed most, more tailored types of cooperation are proposed.

The future relationship will also have to adapt to the new realities of a multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder partnership. The paper therefore underlines the importance of a partnership after 2020 that is based on the partners' joint interests in order to achieve the best results. The preliminary assessment from the Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is that the EU and ACP's main joint interests are:

- common global interests in a multipolar world (climate change, water, energy and food security, etc.)
- human rights, democracy and rule of law, as well as good governance
- peace and security, and the fight against terrorism and organised crime
- sustainable and inclusive economic growth, investment and trade
- human and social development
- migration and mobility

In order to ensure that the partnership after 2020 is a better and more effective tool that promotes the interests of both the EU and the ACP countries, the Commission and EU High Representative suggest that the following areas should be prioritised:

- a stronger political relationship
- coherence of geographical scope
- cooperation tailored more towards groups of countries with a similar level of development
- strengthening the relationship with key actors
- streamlining the institutional set-up and functioning of the partnership
- better adapted and more flexible development cooperation tools and methods.

The Committee's review

The Committee supports the idea of establishing a broader political partnership between the EU and the ACP countries after 2020 in order to help create relationships of equality based on mutual interests. The Committee does not consider that the Cotonou Agreement should be renewed in its existing form, as its current structures, including the conditions and structures for development aid, were established in a different time and context.

The Committee considers that the foundations of the partnership after 2020 should include the implementation of the recently adopted global sustainable development goals (2030 Agenda), which apply to the EU as well as to the ACP countries. It is imperative that respect for human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance continue to lie at the heart of the partnership after 2020.

The Committee notes that one of the effects of originally basing the partnership between the EU and the ACP countries on development aid and one-sided trade preferences was that it helped create clear donor and recipient roles among the partners. Even if the Cotonou Agreement includes a broad political dimension, economic and trade cooperation, and development finance cooperation, in the Committee's view it has not been able to meet the increasing need for flexibility and differentiation brought about by developments over the past 20 years. The Committee considers that the EU needs to set out clear differentiation that takes into account the differences between countries, and intends to continue monitoring the process to see how this can be achieved.

With regard to the process ahead, the Committee notes that political dialogue with the ACP countries will remain important in the future. The Committee also notes that it is important that the ACP countries are continually consulted during the process to ensure their sense of ownership. The Committee considers it important that the EEAS and the Commission cooperate closely to ensure a comprehensive approach.

The Committee intends to continue monitoring the work towards a new partnership between the EU and the ACP countries after 2020.

Specific opinion

Towards a new partnership between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries after 2020 (Sweden Democrats)

Julia Kronlid (SD) and Björn Söder (SD) put forward the following:

The Sweden Democrats see it as extremely important that, once the Cotonou Agreement has expired, the relationship between the countries of Europe and the developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific continue to be characterised by a striving for mutual understanding and cooperation and opportunities for sustainable development for the countries concerned.

The Sweden Democrats see aid and trade as the primary instruments to help people in developing countries to lift themselves out of poverty, and therefore wish to see good and appropriate policies in these areas.

Since the Cotonou Agreement was signed, all three regions have been characterised by strongly differentiated development; for example, in southern Africa, Botswana has a GDP per capita that is almost ten times higher than that of its neighbour Zimbabwe. By definition, therefore, new agreements must be different and adapted to the situation in each country and region.

The Sweden Democrats therefore wish to issue a specific opinion in which we present our principles for the future of the cooperation:

- The Sweden Democrats wish to see fundamental principles drawn up, but the agreements should be regional, with separate thematic focuses on trade, aid, politics/human rights and readmission.

Trade

- The trade policy and trade agreements should be based on the 'more for more' principle, with clear conditionality.
- The Sweden Democrats are critical of EU agricultural policy, which in combination with trade facilitation could create a competitive disadvantage for Swedish farmers. This is something that we wish to avoid.
- The Sweden Democrats do not wish to participate in agreements that give EU countries the right to use third countries' fishing waters. We also want other natural resources to be exploited by the countries where the resources are located.

Aid

- The Sweden Democrats wish to see a gradual transition to results-based aid.
- The Sweden Democrats wish to see a greater focus on Development Goals 1, 2, 3 and 6 in aid policy.
- Budgetary support as a form of aid should be phased out completely because the risks of corruption are too great.
- Within aid policy, former colonies of EU countries have traditionally been particularly favoured – something which we question strongly. Aid should instead be distributed according to need.

Readmission

- The Sweden Democrats see readmission agreements as a necessary part of relationships with relevant developing countries.

ANNEX

List of documents reviewed

Joint consultation paper JOIN(2015) 33 final 'Towards a new partnership between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries after 2020'.