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Subject : Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation
- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of
the Member States meeting within the Council

At its meeting on 14 May 2007, the General Affairs and External Relations Council, and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, adopted the Conclusions set out in the Annex to this note.

**CONCLUSIONS OF THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL**

on

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation

1. Gender equality is a fundamental human right, a question of social justice and also a core value of the EU, including EU development policy as underlined by the European Consensus on Development and the Development Cooperation Instrument. The promotion of gender equality and the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls are goals in their own right and also instrumental and key to achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the implementation of the Beijing platform for Action, the Cairo Programme of Action, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
2. The Council stresses the close inter-linkages between sustainable achievements in poverty reduction and development and the empowerment of women, including their political empowerment. Gender equality should therefore be a core aspect in the EU development policy's programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
3. The Council recognises that women's economic empowerment and women's enjoyment of human rights, in particular political rights, are interdependent and mutually reinforcing and calls on the Commission and Member States to:
 - make women's economic and political empowerment a prominent development theme;
 - provide special support for women to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by national and international trade and markets, address negative effects of trade liberalisation on women's working conditions and income opportunities, and

- enhance public private partnerships in support of the promotion and accelerated achievement of gender equality and the elimination of gender based discrimination.
4. The Council welcomes the Commission Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation¹, which for the first time sets a frame for a better EU coordination, and fully supports the twin-track approach of increasing the efficiency of gender mainstreaming and refocusing specific actions for women's empowerment in all developing countries. Of particular importance is the broadening of the scope of gender equality beyond the social sectors to other areas such as economic growth, trade, migration, infrastructure, environment and climate change, governance, agriculture, fragile states, peace building and reconstruction.
 5. The Council recognises the Commission's and the Member States' specific responsibility to support developing country partners in eliminating discrimination and gender inequality by increasing visibility and accountability on gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation and to promote and engage in an enhanced political dialogue at all levels, including the highest political level, which incorporates gender equality explicitly as a central theme.
 6. The Council notes that development cooperation is only one of the policy areas that impact on women and girls and that there is a need to ensure that policy in other areas is coherent with the objectives of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

¹ Doc. 7257/07 + ADD1 - COM (2007) 100 final + SEC (2007) 332

7. The Council notes the commitments of development partners including e.g. country owned gender equality policies and regional commitments such as the Africa Union’s Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the Protocol to the African Charter on the Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). The Council calls on the Commission and the Members States to support development partners in fulfilling commitments and goals on gender equality and women’s empowerment. The Council underlines that the effective implementation of the international commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment must be improved.
8. The Council stresses the importance of tackling gender-based violence in all of its manifestations, including harmful traditional and customary practices such as female genital mutilation. This should also apply to conflict/post conflict situations as well as to migration and trafficking of women. In this context, the Council reaffirms the commitment made in November 2006 on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and calls on the Commission and Member States within their respective competences:
- to develop and fully implement appropriate measures, such as concerted and harmonised national action plans for the implementation of Resolution 1325 and the integration of the provisions of Resolution 1325 in country strategy papers (CSPs), including promoting the role and utilising the resources of women in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction, peace-building and development, and
 - to take measure to end impunity and significantly scale up effective prevention and assistance programs, paying particular attention to the groups whose vulnerability to discrimination and violence is heightened by such factors as disability, lack of parental care, or HIV/AIDS, or who belong to minority groups, are refugees or internally displaced persons.

9. The Council acknowledges that despite the considerable progress made so far, an effective gender perspective still has to be fully mainstreamed into country strategies and in the practice of EU development cooperation, and calls on the Commission and Member States to consequently:
- apply appropriate tools and instruments and improve their efficiency towards women's empowerment and the elimination of gender based discrimination in all sectors;
 - exercise strong leadership on the promotion of gender equality, and
 - embed a gender perspective in core processes and procedures, clear accountability mechanisms and consistent and relevant training to ensure competence and adequate staff capacity.
10. The Council calls on the Commission to ensure that responsibilities within its different directorates for delivering on that agenda are clearly defined and to strengthen resource allocation and accountability for mainstreaming of gender equality within its development programming with all development partners.
11. The Council underlines that increased and more effective aid allocations, aimed to generate sustained results, are needed to facilitate the achievement of national, regional and international commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women and calls on the Commission and Member States to introduce effective measures and clear targets for a significant increasing resource allocation in support of gender equality and women's empowerment over the coming years.
12. The Council welcomes the gender policy markers developed by the OECD and calls on the Commission and Members States to systematically apply the gender policy marker as a strategic tool for effective targeting and monitoring of aid allocations to gender equality and women's empowerment and to the elimination of the gap between policies and their implementation.

13. The Council welcomes the work done by UN bodies on gender equality and calls upon the Commission and Member States to cooperate and coordinate with these organisations on joint strategies and programming. The Council also recognises the important contribution of the work of the CEDAW Committee in the implementation of the CEDAW Convention¹. The Concluding Comments, that the CEDAW Committee issues as an evaluation and recommendation to State Parties, should be used by the Commission and Member States as a basic document in the elaboration of national and sector strategies and programmes.
14. The Council recognises that strategies for gender equality and women's empowerment will have to adapt to and become integral part of the new aid modalities. Budget support, as all other aid modalities, has to take into account gender equality concerns by going hand in hand with a high quality policy dialogue. The Council therefore calls on the Commission and Member States to integrate gender equality as a core value and goal of EU development cooperation in the elaboration and implementation of the new aid modalities and to support partner countries in the process of targeting interventions and resource allocations to gender equality and women's empowerment in sector policies and programs as well as national poverty reduction and growth strategies, medium-term expenditure frameworks and national budgets and to this effect also promote gender responsive public financial management systems and performance assessment frameworks.
15. The Council calls on the Commission and Member States to facilitate coordination of donors' activities on the promotion and accelerated achievement of gender equality, e.g. by promoting clear objectives and indicators on gender equality and by assigning clear tasks and responsibilities to lead donors to this effect in all sectors.

¹ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly

16. The Council recognises that real ownership of development processes by partner countries requires the full participation of all actors of civil society, particularly women's organizations, in cooperation with governments. The Council therefore calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure the participation and contribution of civil society in the negotiation process on country strategies with partner countries. The Council recognizes the critical role of national mechanisms and institutions for the advancement of women and gender equality in working with other parts of the government and the need to strengthen, their human and financial resources and capacity in order to ensure that gender perspective is effectively mainstreamed in all policies, programmes, budget processes and projects at different levels and sectors.
17. The Council recognises the need for sex-disaggregated data and gender sensitive indicators and calls on the Commission and Member States to:
- promote national capacities on the collection and application of sex-disaggregated data, gender sensitive performance- and impact- indicators;
 - support the collection of relevant information and underlying basic statistics that can track changes in gender equality and women's empowerment and the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls, and
 - support and engage in enhanced information and knowledge sharing on gender specific tools, data, analytical documentation and training and mutual accountability mechanisms on the promotion of gender equality.
18. The Council calls on the Commission and Member States within their respective competences to actively seek to advance gender equality and the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls and their role in relevant regional and international fora and to promote regional and international cooperation in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment as well as engaging with the existing international and regional networks and institutions in this field.

19. The Council underlines the importance of equal access of women to employment and economic resources, including land, credit, science and technology, decent work, education, vocational training, information, communication and markets, as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls.
20. The Council recognises the key role of women as private sector entrepreneurs, food producers and managers as well as a major agricultural labour force, and actively supports initiatives investing in opportunities for women with regard to private sector development, agricultural services, credit, training and networking in the context of government sectoral policies and programmes.
21. The Council, recalling relevant international instruments, recognises women's rights to have control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexual and reproductive health. The Council strongly reaffirms the linkage between HIV/AIDS policies and programmes and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) policies and services, and underlines that full access to them by women as set out in the ICPD/Cairo Declaration and Programme of Action (1994), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly (2000), the 2000 UN Millennium Declaration, the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS agreed at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) in 2001, the Outcome Document from ICPD/Cairo + 10 (2004), the Declaration from Beijing + 10 (2005) the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS agreed at UNGASS+5 in 2006 and the 2005 World Summit Outcome is crucial for women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment. The Council furthermore underlines their inter-relationships with broader issues of poverty reduction, sustainable development and economic growth. To reverse the current trend of feminization of HIV/AIDS and poverty, the Council recognizes the need to eliminate gender inequalities, gender-based violence and abuse as well as to increase the capacity of women and girls to protect themselves and calls on the Commission and Member States to take all necessary measures to promote and support an enabling environment for the empowerment of women and their full economic independence.

In this respect, the Council welcomes the national and regional commitments of development partners on the promotion of SRHR and the fight against HIV/AIDS which are in accordance with the goals and objectives of the afore mentioned declarations and programmes of action.

22. The Council welcomes the commitment of the Commission to strengthen its monitoring and reporting on the promotion and achievement of gender equality in partner countries in their annual reporting and to evaluate, refine and adapt the strategy on Gender Equality in Development Cooperation in good time for inform and feed into the CSPs mid-term review, the annual work programmes and the next programming cycle, and calls on Member States to actively support the Commission in this endeavour.
23. The Council invites the Commission to report on how it intends to strengthen efforts on improving gender equality, women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming and to present clear and measurable targets and indicators by the end of 2007 which will be used for reporting and assessing purposes within the framework of the Annual Report on the European Community's Development Policy and the implementation of external assistance as from 2008.
24. The Commission and the Member States shall discuss possible next steps on how to further strengthen efforts and concrete measures to improve gender equality, women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming in development cooperation.

REFERENCES

- (1) UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979).
- (2) Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly “Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century and the Declaration adopted on the occasion of the Ten-Year Review and Appraisal of the Fourth World Conference on Women at the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.
- (3) Millennium Declaration, (2000) and the Millennium Development Goals and also the “2005 World Summit Outcome”.
- (4) European Consensus on Development - 2005 EU Joint Development Policy Statement (OJ C 46 of 24.2.2006, p. 1).
- (5) Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005).
- (6) Cotonou ACP-EC Partnership Agreement.
- (7) EU Strategy for Africa: "The EU and Africa: Towards a Strategic Partnership" (doc. 15961/05).
- (8) The Barcelona Declaration on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the related Five-year Work Programme agreed at the tenth anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Summit in November 2005.
- (9) Commission Communication on a Roadmap for Equality between women and men (doc. 7034/06 + ADD1 - COM(2006) 92 final - SEC(2006) 275).
- (10) Resolution 1325 (2000), adopted by the UN Security Council at its 4213th Meeting, on 31 October 2000.
- (11) Communication on the thematic programme for human and social development and the financial perspectives for 2007-2013 of 25 January 2006 ("Investing people") (doc. 5834/06 - COM (2006)18).

- (12) Regulation (EC) n° 1889/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on establishing a financing instrument for the Promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide (OJ L 386 of 29.12.2006).
 - (13) Council Conclusions of 24 November 2004 on Cairo/ICPD + 10 (doc. 15157/04).
 - (14) Council Conclusions of 24 May 2005 on a European programme for action to confront HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis through external action (doc. 9278/05).
 - (15) European Council of 16 and 17 June 2005, Presidency Conclusions (doc. 10255/1/05 REV 1).
 - (16) Council Conclusions on promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming in crisis management (doc. 14884/06 + REV1 + REV1 COR1).
 - (17) Resolution on the impact of International Trade on Women adopted by the European Parliament in September 2006.
 - (18) Council Conclusions of 23 April 2007 on Recently Emerging Issues regarding HIV/AIDS (doc. 7227/07).
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