Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 890 (1988)[1]

African food policies and development aid - A case for rethinking past strategies

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recalling in particular its Recommendation 1062 (1987) on political co-operation between Europe and Africa, Resolution 856 (1986) on Africa's food crisis, and the imminent European Public Campaign on North-South Interdependence and Solidarity ;

2. Concerned that, while per capita food production is rising at impressive rates in many parts of the developing world, Africa is seeing its per capita food production steadily diminishing, thereby frustrating its efforts to achieve food security ;

3. Conscious that this development is caused not only by rapid population growth, environmental deterioration such as in the spread of deserts, and errors stemming from the colonial period, but also to an important extent by political mistakes both on the part of several African governments -affecting agriculture - and in the shaping of aid policies by industrial donor nations ;

4. Believing that, at the heart of these mistakes, has lain an over-emphasis on industrial development and a consequent neglect of agriculture, excessive reliance on imported food, discouraging domestic food production, and exaggerated military spending ;

5. Considering that in several countries the agricultural sector has furthermore been subjected to ideological policies for which it is particularly ill-suited, such as collectivisation (to be distinguished from co-operative and other projects carried out in common, which are to be welcomed), forced migration and non-remunerative prices paid to farmers ;

6. Recalling also that efforts to enhance food production are often frustrated by wars which, frequently fuelled from the outside, upset, kill or incapacitate farming populations, hinder food trade and absorb scarce economic resources ;

7. Aware that numerous diseases and poor hygienic conditions threaten to undo decades of development by decimating populations, disrupting government administration, and through the cost of hospital care ;

8. Welcoming, however, signs that several African governments are beginning to recognise the crucial importance of agriculture for overall development and the eradication of hunger, and the need to encourage in particular small-scale peasant farming while steering clear of ideological policies -as manifested for instance in the African Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, adopted by the Organisation of African Unity in 1986 and presented at a special session of the United Nations General Assembly ;

9. Cognisant that European donor countries have also, on their part, made mistakes in their aid policies, for instance through insufficient adaptation of exported technology to local conditions, excessive emphasis on large-scale, overly mechanised projects and insufficient co-ordination of aid programmes,

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1. Assembly debate on 26 and 27 January 1988 (20th, 21st and 22nd Sittings) (see Doc. 5819, report of the Committee on Agriculture). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 January 1988 (22nd Sitting).

10. Calls on the governments of member states of the Council of Europe and the European Community :

10.1. to increase their assistance for agricultural and fisheries development to African countries and, at the same time, critically examine the efficiency of that aid ;

10.2. to pay particular attention to the relationship that exists between, on the one hand, over-production in industrialised countries resulting, inter alia, in depressed world prices and, on the other, the difficulties of these developing countries in Africa to increase their own food production ;

10.3. to take into account the interests of developing countries in the Uruguay Round of negotiations on agriculture ;

10.4. to reorient, in particular, the bulk of the aid from large-scale, highly mechanised and import-dependent projects to low-cost, self-help methods which benefit local villages and peasant farmers, and which adapt technology to Third World conditions as well as further the educational level of those receiving assistance ;

10.5. to take care that food aid does not disrupt the efforts to promote food production by recipient countries ;

10.6. to promote African agricultural and other research which takes as its point of departure Africa's own particular problems and conditions ;

10.7. to pay special attention to the co-ordination of projects with those of other nations, and to make greater use, to this end, of United Nations specialised agencies such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the FAO, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), while paying close attention to the actual value of assistance to the recipient country ;

10.8. to emphasise, in their assistance, projects which aim at the emancipation of African women and which benefit women specifically in the rural and agricultural setting ;

10.9. to encourage the African governments concerned to develop forms of agriculture which respond to the needs of the population and which stimulate or, as the case may be, co-ordinate local initiative, production and trade ;

10.10. to grant exports from developing countries in Africa greater access to European markets, in the spirit of the Lomé Conventions concluded between the European Community and several developing countries, in recognition of the crucial importance of such exports for the economic recovery of the countries concerned, and to take urgent measures to ease the paralysing burden of the external debt of many African countries ;

10.11. to engage themselves more actively in trying to bring an end to the numerous wars which jeopardise agricultural development in several parts of Africa ;

11. Requests its President to forward this resolution to the European Parliament, OECD and the Organisation of African Unity.