Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1006 (1993)[1]

North-South interdependence and solidarity: Europe and the least developed countries

Parliamentary Assembly

1. While many developing countries have shown unprecedented economic and social gains over the last thirty years - resulting in higher life expectancy, an increase in adult literacy by more than one third, and a decrease by half in the mortality rate of young children - the number of least developed countries (LDCs) with an annual per capita income of less than $ 600 has doubled since the 1970s, to forty-eight in 1992. A majority of these are in sub-Saharan Africa.

2. The 2nd United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Paris in September 1990, called it an "ethical imperative" to refuse the continued marginalisation of the countries in question, and warned of "serious seeds of tension" and a danger to peace if international commitments and shared development were abandoned.

3. Europe, along with other industrialised nations, must work closely with the governments and the people in the poorest developing countries in order to improve their economic, social and ecological situation, at the risk otherwise of seeing them slide into total destitution and chaos. Aid must be used efficiently, however, and be focused on the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children. Aid should primarily be aimed at human development and at guaranteeing that poor people have access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

4. LDCs themselves have a particular responsibility for the establishment and strengthening of democracy and "good governance", for putting their social and economic house into order, for protecting human rights and improving the lot of the broad masses, especially women, and for developing human resources through education and training.

5. Food aid could be used to promote economic and human development, including nutritional well-being, notably through targeted food subsidies, such as "food for work" programmes, based wholly or partly on the use of locally produced food.

6. Every effort must be made to enable developing countries involved in internal or external conflicts to cease hostilities and restore peace.

7. The Assembly calls on the member states of the Council of Europe and the European Community to take the following action in order to assist the poorest developing countries:

7.1. to improve those countries' terms of trade by allowing them greater access to the markets of industrialised countries, even for goods that compete with those of the North, to offer them the opportunity within the GATT framework to protect vulnerable infant industries and agriculture, and to encourage North-South co-operation and foreign investment;

7.2. to help LDCs that rely on only a few commodities for their exports, to achieve greater diversification of exports;

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1. Assembly debate on 2 July 1993 (44th Sitting) (see Doc.6865, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, Rapporteur: Mrs Verspaget; and Doc.6874, opinion of the Committee on Agriculture, Rapporteur: Mr Scheer). Text adopted by the Assembly on 2July 1993 (44th Sitting).

7.3. to realise substantial reductions in the foreign debt of LDCs, including official debts to governments and multilateral organisations, and to facilitate these countries' access to international capital markets;

7.4. to commit themselves - as agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development - to reaching as soon as practically possible, if this has not yet been done, the goal set by the United Nations of having official development assistance reach 0,7% of their GNP, and to ensure that at least one-third of such assistance be focused on the poorest developing countries;

7.5. to improve considerably co-ordination of bilateral and multilateral development co-operation programmes, notably within the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank;

7.6. to take every possible measure to facilitate non-governmental organisations carrying out their beneficial work on behalf of developing countries, usefully complementing other types of assistance;

7.7. to work in favour of reduced and better controlled arms exports to developing countries and to create control mechanisms to oversee hardware arms exports, in particular, in line with Assembly Resolution 928 (1989) on arms sales and human rights;

7.8. to promote the sustained development of the agricultural sector in order to increase the security of household food, as well as food quality and safety and to promote healthy life-styles;

7.9. to assist the LDCs in using renewable, locally available sources to satisfy their energy needs, thus improving their economies and avoiding unsustainable pressures on their natural capital;

7.10. to take urgent steps to stop further soil degradation and soil erosion for the enhancement of food security and the promotion of economic development.

8. The Assembly draws attention to the relationship between hunger and poverty in LDCs on the one hand, and the lack of democracy, the waging of civil and external wars, and violations of human rights on the other. It therefore calls on the governments of Council of Europe member states to broaden and develop the peace-building and peace-keeping instruments of the United Nations, and to elaborate further an efficient early warning system for emergency aid, permitting timely intervention to prevent disasters such as those in Somalia and the Sudan.

9. The Assembly also believes that women and men should have equal rights and opportunities, regardless of culture, tradition and religion, and that donor countries should take developing countries' compliance with this principle into greater account. Appropriate family planning policies are necessary to reduce undue population pressure, and they can only be implemented by women who are free from oppression, who have received an education, who benefit from basic health care, and who are sufficiently nourished.

10. Furthermore, the Assembly recognises that unless population growth is brought down to a rate lower than the increase in national income, neither the economic situation nor standards of living can improve. Population policies should, therefore, form a central part of north-south co-operation, and every effort must be made to encourage developing countries to introduce the policies required. Due consideration must be given to the re-establishment of a balance between population levels and the capacity of ecosystems.

11. Finally, the Assembly recalls the five criteria for future development co-operation set down in its Resolution 981 (1992). These are: the degree of poverty in the recipient country; its respect for human rights and democracy; efforts at economic and social reform; a reduction of military expenditure; and protection of the environment. These criteria are as valid for the poorest developing countries as for developing countries in general.