Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1181 (1999)[1]

North-South development co-operation in the 21st century: a contribution to the Council of Europe's second campaign for global interdependence and solidarity - Europe against poverty and social exclusion

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly welcomes the current Council of Europe Campaign on Global Interdependence and Solidarity – Europe against poverty and social exclusion, and recalls its Recommendation 1319 (1997) on the desirability of holding such a campaign. It counts on the campaign not only to render the public more aware of the growing inequalities in wealth between rich and poor in the world and in Europe, but also to permit a search for better strategies to combat them. An essential part of winning support for the campaign is publicising examples, both large and small, of successes in developing countries. The campaign will devote its efforts and an adequate proportion of available funds accordingly.

2. The Assembly recognises that the climate for development co-operation between Council of Europe member states and the world's poorest nations has changed considerably since the Council's first campaign in 1988, due to strained finances of donor countries and a certain "aid fatigue" among the public, including disillusionment with a perceived lack of efficiency of development assistance, or even misuse of funds in certain recipient countries. However, some member states have increased their development budgets because the public supports their government spending more on international development.

3. The Assembly notes that, despite repeated promises at the international level, most of the developed countries that are members of the Organisation devote less than 0.7% of their GDP to development aid and regrets that, contrary to these promises, most national development aid budgets are steadily declining. It again calls on member states to implement, as a matter of urgency, a genuine strategy to combat poverty, hunger, and disease in the many eastern and southern countries where food supplies barely suffice and public health is at risk.

4. The Assembly believes, however, that some donor and some recipient countries have learnt considerably from any past mistakes and stand ready to use future development assistance more efficiently and spread it more equitably. There are numerous examples of how a relatively small amount of funding has helped to create basic infrastructures, such as clean water supplies or new schools, and these success stories can counterbalance the kind of criticism that discourages donations from individuals and excuses governments and richer countries from action. It considers such assistance now more necessary than ever to improve such areas as public health, transport infrastructure, education, the position of women, child welfare, housing and health infrastructure – sectors which normally do not benefit from private investment, but are essential for economic and social development – especially at a time when the global economic crisis is hitting the poorest developing countries with particular severity.

5. The Assembly in this context recalls its Resolution 981 (1992) on the new North-South relationship, in which it listed essential conditions for development assistance in needy recipient countries. These are: the respect for human rights, the readiness to carry out economic and social reform, especially for the promotion of women, the reduction of military expenditure, the protection of the environment, and natural catastrophes

1. Assembly debate on 28 January 1999 (7th Sitting) (see Doc. 8281, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteurs: Mrs Durrieu and Mr Frey). Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 January 1999 (7th Sitting).

requiring emergency assistance. To these must now be added resolute measures against economic crime and corruption, in conformity with Assembly Resolution 1147 (1998) on the threat to Europe from economic crime.

6. The Assembly also recalls its Recommendation 1336 (1997) on combating child labour exploitation as a matter of priority and calls on member states to counter the economic exploitation of children through their development co-operation programmes.

7. The Assembly expects member states, in their future development co-operation policies, to apply these principles and others agreed within international fora such as the OECD's Development Assistance Committee. The Assembly also hopes that these principles will guide European Union member states in their current reform of the Lomé Convention, which links it to a large number of developing countries.

8. The Assembly also calls on national parliaments to follow up the themes of the campaign, in particular through the creation of a development committee within each parliament.

9. The Assembly urges member states to implement the measures included in the action programme adopted at the Copenhagen Summit on social development, held in 1995, and to associate themselves as of now with the preparations for the follow-up summit, which will be held in the year 2000.

10. On the threshold of the Council of Europe's fiftieth anniversary, the Assembly, deeply conscious of the indivisibility of economic and social rights, and political and civil rights, affirms that the Council of Europe, has its specific role to play to promote the human rights of the poor both in its member states and in other parts of the world. Whilst welcoming that poverty eradication targets have been internationally agreed, the Assembly is convinced that the attainment of these targets – that derive from the great United Nations Conferences of the past decade – will depend on the political will and greater public support to translate these aspirations into action.

11. Consequently, the Assembly calls on its member states:

11.1. to fully support the Council of Europe Campaign on Global Interdependence and Solidarity and to make adequate financing available in order to ensure its success;

11.2. to take the necessary steps to set up national organising committees in each member state in close co-operation with non-governmental organisations working for the eradication of poverty and social exclusion domestically, and for the promotion of sustainable, human development worldwide;

11.3. to broaden public support through information and education throughout Europe for policies of solidarity in an interdependent world.