

Summary Report

Workshop for ACP Ambassadors

The implications of the Lisbon Treaty for the ACP Group

Brussels, 27 May 2010

Introduction

In October 2009, ECDPM facilitated a first meeting for the Ambassadors of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) on the implications of the Lisbon Treaty for the ACP Group. It was agreed to have a follow-up workshop after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty when the EU would have taken major decisions and when the implications for the ACP would have become clearer. Although final decisions are still outstanding, major progress has been realised in recent weeks in establishing the European External Action Service (EEAS) and in restructuring the European Commission Services in response to the EEAS. Against this background a second workshop was organised, aiming to 1) provide an overview of the most recent changes and proposals in the EU external relations post Lisbon 2) assess the possible implications of the new EU external relations and development architecture for the ACP and 3) discuss elements of an ACP response strategy to the likely changes in the ACP-EU Partnership.

Overall, ACP representatives remain concerned about their role and the role of development in general in the new proposed set-up, given the EEAS' focus on CFSP and its involvement in the programming cycle of the EU's development assistance, the EU's recent regionalisation of its relations with different blocs within the ACP as well as a possible budgetisation of the European Development Fund (EDF). They realise that there is still uncertainty over the exact impact of the Lisbon Treaty and that it is thus important to engage with the EEAS and the European Parliament (EP) to ensure that the Group's interests are heard. With regard to the joint interests of the Group, they recognise that a reflection on its joint cause post-2020 is necessary.

The workshop was jointly organized by the ACP Secretariat and the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) at the ACP House in Brussels. It was held under Chatham house rules.

Statements were delivered by **Dr Mohammed Ibn Chambas**, Secretary-General of the ACP Secretariat, **Ambassador René Makongo**, Chairperson of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors, **Mr. Kingston Cumberbatch**, Former Chair of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors and Chair of the Board of ECDPM, **Mr. Guillaume McLaughlin**, Advisor of Member of the European Parliament Guy Verhofstadt, and **Mr Domenico Rosa**, Head of Unit, DG Development. Dr. Ibn Chambas and Geert Laporte, Head of Institutional Relations and Partnerships, ECDPM, chaired the meeting. Dr. James Mackie, Programme Coordinator, ECDPM, and Ms. Jeske van Seters, Programme Officer, ECDPM, provided technical background presentations for the discussion.

Summary of the discussion

Main concerns raised by ACP representatives

- The ACP Group accepts that the adoption of Lisbon is an internal (European) matter but it is concerned about the impact of the Treaty on the **long-term development of the ACP-EU Partnership**. While Europeans say that the relationship will not be affected and may in fact be reinforced rather than weakened, the manner in which Lisbon will be implemented and how the institutions will be restructured will determine how the EU interacts with the ACP as a grouping in the long term. The ACP Group has to examine whether it is sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes in the international environment, like the Lisbon Treaty, while still being able to focus on objectives that have guided the ACP Group's existence for the past few decades. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the ACP Group to decide whether its *raison d'être* is still relevant in order to justify a long-term perspective.
- In the past few years, the EU has adopted separate regional strategies with Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and South Africa. The ACP reaffirm that these strategies should constitute a **Cotonou+** and should not undermine the solidarity of the ACP Group. In the dialogue between regional groupings and the EU, the ACP Group should be invited as an observer, as well as during trade negotiations with individual ACP states.
- The main **preoccupation** of EU foreign policy seems to be its **Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)**. According to the latest proposal¹ for setting up the EEAS (accepted by EU Member but still being negotiated with the European Parliament), the development chain will be broken. This is because the EEAS and the EU High Representative (EUHR) would have the authority over preparing the allocation and programming of development funds and setting out national and regional priorities and themes (although in the case of the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the EDF, in collaboration with the Commission under the supervision of the Development Commissioner). This proposed formula makes development support more susceptible to CFSP and not development concerns of ACP member countries. The EU seems to want to reduce expensive military peacekeeping roles and would thus promote its visibility differently. The fundamental issues of the recent Cotonou Revision are poverty eradication, promotion of sustainable development and the gradual inclusion of ACP countries into the world economy – how attached is the EU to these objectives?
- In the Lisbon Treaty, there is no longer a specific reference to the ACP Group nor a mention that the EDF should be outside the budget. This removes some formal barriers to budgetisation of the EDF – without necessarily promoting budgetisation. Under current EDF procedures, ACP countries and regions are aware of the allocation they are likely to receive. If the EDF was to be **budgetised**, would this change? The ACP Group should have a budgetisation strategy and could put thought into the possibility of ring-fencing (i.e. earmarking) funding to the Group.
- Under the new rules, the European Parliament (EP) has **co-decision** rights with regard to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and can reject trade agreements. As a result, the ACP may want to engage with Members of the European Parliament more and reinforce the role of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA). The EP wants to ensure the new institutional set-up equips the EU to take development objectives into account in all its foreign affairs activities. It supports the moving of thematic desks into the EEAS (in addition to the geographical desks as suggested in the above-mentioned proposal), in order to ensure coherence between thematic and regional instruments.

¹ <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/10/st08/st08724-re01.en10.pdf>

Questions raised

- Given the economic pressures facing Europe today, does development remain a priority?
- What will happen to the historic bond between the ACP and the EU if the EDF is budgetised? Could the historic bond be maintained if the EU dealt with the ACP in more homogenous regional blocs?
- Who should ACP representatives engage with on the ground? (As European Commission delegations have become EU delegations and may take over more tasks of Member State embassies, especially in smaller countries)
- Who will represent the EU in international fora (e.g. United Nations) and how will it ensure policy coherence at UN level?
- Where will EU foreign policy priorities be formulated?
- Will the EEAS become the European version of USAID, focused on foreign and security concerns?
- Does the EU see room for the ACP as a grouping in its geographic desks?
- How will the European Parliament link its 'parliamentary' diplomacy to the broader EU diplomacy?

Responding to the changes/ Follow-up

According to ACP representatives, the ACP Group needs to **actively seek points of collaboration and interaction with key EU actors in the new institutional set-up, as the EU side** is enforcing coherence and changing its architecture. It needs to be proactive in **reflecting on an approach to best deal with the more complex institutional changes resulting from the Lisbon Treaty** and on the post 2020 way forward.