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Subject : Orientation Debate on Policy Coherence for Development and the Effectiveness
of EU external action
- Council Conclusions on Integrating Development Concerns in Council
Decision-making

At its meeting on 17 October 2006, the General Affairs and External Relations Council, in its formation of Foreign Affairs and Development Ministers, adopted the Conclusions set out in the Annex to this note.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS
ON
INTEGRATING DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS IN COUNCIL DECISION-MAKING

The Council adopts these conclusions in the context of its annual Orientation Debate on the effectiveness of EU external action, which this year focuses on Policy Coherence for Development

Introduction

1. The Council has on several occasions underlined the importance of ensuring that development objectives are appropriately incorporated into its decision-making process. In accordance with the conclusions of the European Council on the coherence and effectiveness of the EU's external policies¹, the Council agrees that Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is a tool to assist in delivering effective development policies within the framework of the overall objective of improving the efficiency, coherence and visibility of the Union's external policies.

Ensuring systematic information on the impact of decision-making on development

2. As part of this objective, the Council looks forward to the results of the external evaluation launched by the Commission in 2006 of its system for assessing the economic, social and environmental impact of its major legislative and policy defining proposals, and to the opportunity to reflect on how this system might be improved to provide more information concerning impacts on developing countries. The Council invites the Commission in particular to examine how to improve the quality and timing of its Trade Sustainability Impact Assessments so that they can be taken into account in the Council's decision-making process and their results properly integrated into the development dimension of Community trade agreements.

¹ Brussels European Council of 15-16 June 2006, doc. 10633/06, paragraphs 31-33.

3. In general, particular attention needs to be paid to assessing the direct and indirect effects of proposals within the broader area of external relations, but any area which might have an impact on development policy should be covered. Future presidencies are invited to ensure that the Council, assisted by its General Secretariat, takes fully into consideration these assessments when examining proposals.

Providing for effective discussion of development concerns in the decision-making process

4. COREPER will continue to be the main forum for ensuring policy coherence. Where an agenda item for COREPER is not primarily concerned with development policy, but where there is an important development dimension, the Presidency and General Secretariat should ensure that documents for COREPER fully reflect the various sectoral and horizontal considerations. The coordinating role of COREPER in this regard will be particularly important in cases where other senior committees (e.g. Article 133 Committee, EFC, SCA, PSC) have input into the policy-making process.
5. The Council invites each Presidency to do its utmost to ensure that development concerns are fully reflected across the policy spectrum at all relevant stages in the decision-making process assisted by the Council Secretariat. This should start with a clear reference in the joint three-Presidency 18-month programme to those issues which are likely to have an important development dimension. An update of the PCD rolling Work Programme in light of the EU and international agenda², to be carried out with the assistance of the General Secretariat and the Commission, will serve as a check list for this exercise. Each presidency is invited, when it draws up indicative agendas with the assistance of the General Secretariat, to ensure that agendas for Council meetings identify items with a development dimension and which might therefore require a wider discussion. The Presidency should subsequently inform delegations of the preparatory process it intends to follow for these items. This could include joint meetings of Council formations or highlighting on the agendas of the Council's subordinate bodies those items where the presence of development experts might be useful.

² Conclusions on Policy Coherence for Development: Work Programme 2006-2007, doc. 8387/06, p. 3

6. The Council invites further close working by future presidencies, Member States, Council formations and the Council Secretariat, together with the Commission, to consider and propose options for strengthening good practice at Council level to facilitate PCD within the framework of existing Council Procedures.

Ensuring capacity at all levels

7. The Council recognises the need for sufficient capacity to be made available by the Commission, Council and Member States in support of PCD and invites the General Secretariat to work with Council formations and Member States in order to assess the need for capacity building measures. It also invites all Member States to consider how they might support the development of PCD through more effective coordination in their own national policy-making processes.

Enhancing accountability and transparency

8. In the context of the overall policy on transparency agreed by the European Council in June 2006³, the Council should ensure that the integration of development concerns into the overall decision-making process is carried out in as transparent a manner as possible. This will also serve to emphasise the accountability of the Council for the impact on development policy of its decisions.
9. The Council underlines the importance of improving and extending existing consultative processes on the development dimension of non-development policies. A broad range of relevant stakeholders, including developing countries and civil society, should be involved.

³ Doc 10633, Annex I, p. 23-24

10. The Council welcomes the Commission's intention to prepare, for the first time in 2007, in full consultation with the Member States, a biennial report on the application of PCD. The report should help to encourage the further development of PCD, taking into account feedback from developing countries, civil society and the European Parliament. It should provide the Council with the basis for carrying out a general review of PCD across the Union as a whole as well as for assessing the application of PCD, including the issue of capacity, in the Council decision-making processes (and in all its configurations). The report should also serve as a public information tool.
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