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from : ACP Working Party
to : Permanent Representatives Committee / Council

No. Cion prop. : 15647/09 - COM(2009) 623 final

Subject : Draft Council Conclusions on the EU's relations with Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs)
- Adoption

1. On 6 November 2009, the Commission forwarded to the Council its Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, entitled "Elements for a new partnership between the EU and the overseas countries and territories (OCTs)".
2. Following discussions at a number of meetings, the ACP Working Party reached agreement on the attached draft Council Conclusions on 8 December 2009.
3. COREPER is therefore invited to confirm the agreement on the attached draft Conclusions and to submit them to Council for adoption.

Council Conclusions
on the EU's relations with Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs)

1. The Council welcomes the Commission's Communication on "Elements for a new partnership between the EU and the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs)"¹, which provides a good basis for further reflection on a replacement for the current Overseas Association Decision which expires on 31 December 2013.

2. The Council stresses the importance of updating this unique relationship to reflect new developments in the EU, in the OCTs and in the wider world. The future EU-OCT relationship should look beyond the current focus on poverty reduction and develop into a reciprocal partnership based on mutual interests that will foster the OCTs' sustainable development and build on their potential and assets while at the same time also helping to promote the EU's values and standards in the wider world. In this context, the Council underlines the need for a careful assessment of the diversity and specific circumstances, needs and priorities of each OCT. The Council also notes that important lessons should be learned from experiences with other, non-OCT regions facing similar challenges and opportunities.

3. The Council shares the Commission's view that (1) enhancing economic competitiveness, (2) strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability, and (3) promoting cooperation and integration between the OCTs and other partners and neighbouring regions should be key pillars in a future partnership. The Council welcomes the Commission's intention to examine these issues in more detail.

¹ Doc. 15647/09 - COM(2009) 623 final

4. The Council welcomes the Commission's reflections on how to best further develop and strengthen the EU-OCT partnership and foster sustainable development in the OCTs. The Council notes the Commission's view that "the [Union]'s internal policies, and in particular its regional policy, offer interesting examples." The Council welcomes the intention to support the OCTs – where relevant, appropriate and requested – to enhance their legislation to the level of the Union *acquis*, to be able to, in particular, take full advantage of an enhanced trading relationship. In general, the Council stresses the importance of adopting a differentiated approach within a coherent overall framework, and in accordance with the constitutional provisions governing the relationship between the OCTs and the EU Member States to which they are linked.

5. Without prejudice to the negotiations on the future EC Financial Framework for the period after 2013, the Council looks forward to the Commission's proposals for how appropriate technical and financial assistance to the OCTs can best be facilitated from 2014 onwards.

6. The Council encourages further and regular dialogue between the Commission, the OCTs and EU Member States with the aim of identifying specific proposals to revise the Overseas Association Decision to be presented to the Council before July 2012. In this context, and in order to allow for a more detailed discussion on the various elements of the new Decision, the Council also requests the Commission to report back to the Council before the end of 2010 on the progress made in this process.
