



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 21 June 2011

11923/11

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NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to : Delegations

Subject: Meeting of the European Parliament's Committee on Development (DEVE) on
14-15 June 2011 - Summary record

The meeting was chaired by Mrs Striffler (PPE, FR). The agenda was adopted. The minutes of the meeting on 12-13 April, 2 May and 24-25 May 2011 were approved. No announcements were made by the Chair.

6. Combating illegal fishing at the global level - the role of the EU

The draft opinion (Rapporteur Mr Ponga (PPE, FR) was adopted by unanimity.

7. Towards a stronger European disaster response: the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance

The draft opinion (Rapporteur: Mrs Striffler, PPE, FR) was adopted, including some amendments.

8. An Effective Raw Materials Strategy for Europe

The draft opinion (Rapporteur: Mrs Schnieber-Jastram, PPE, DE) was adopted with amendments.

9. Prevent or react ? The EU approach to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

The Chair outlined the issues to be discussed (are the UN and EU well-equipped and structured to coordinate prevention? what are the economics of disasters and how can the EU spend smarter? is there a political will to go forward and what can Member States do?)

In her presentation, Commissioner Georgieva recalled the series of disasters which have hit a number of developed countries over recent months (Australia, New Zealand, the US and Japan) and noted that prevention was not for the future but needed to be addressed immediately. She stressed that money spent in prevention had the highest pay-off and that according to World Bank studies, returns from money spent on prevention were very high. She referred to some 6-8 Billion euros available under structural funds for disaster prevention in the EU, of which only some 20% were actually used. She considered that the issue of conditionality should be reviewed. She advocated using what she called "market signals" by using the conclusions drawn by insurance companies to do better planning. She considered that awareness-building was needed on DRR and indicated that Commissioner Piebalgs and herself had decided to convert DRR into a priority of their action. She indicated that 24 Commissioners had to play their part on those issues. She stressed the importance of public accountability on those issues.

Mrs. Wahlström, Special Representative of UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction notably stressed the need for better planning in this field. She noted that the exposure of OECD countries to disasters was very high, all the more so as these rich countries have more to lose.

Mr. Oxley, a representative of a network of civil society organizations underlined the importance of having an holistic approach on Disaster Risk Reduction, the aim of which should be to increase resilience to extreme hazards through gradual changes in the countries concerned.

He stressed the critical importance of inclusion and participation, of raising public awareness and social demand for such actions.

In reply to questions by MEPs, Commissioner Georgieva agreed on the great benefits of -(re-)forestation in terms of land stabilization, carbon capture and disaster risk reduction, while noting that one of the major difficulties in implementing disaster risk reduction strategies had to do with the great complexity of such endeavours at practical and political level given its multi-disciplinary nature.

Mrs Wahlstrom also highlighted the importance of forestation as well as the development of agriculture for disaster prevention. She also stressed the need to regularly update DRR strategies and assess risk needs to take account of continuous changes in the environment.

Mr. Huxley illustrated the importance of reforestation by referring to the factors that led to the floods in Pakistan last year and of restoring balance between the built and the natural environment as a means to prevent disasters.

10. An Assessment of the Effects of Land Ownership and Land Grab on Development

The Chair referred to the hearing organized on this issue last year and informed the committee of the preparation of an own-initiative report (Rapporteur: Mr. Deva, ECR, UK).

Mrs Gerstetter, a think-tank representative¹ made a presentation on the above issue. The importance of access to land for poverty reduction and of equal distribution of land to boost economic growth were highlighted. She indicated that there were no impact studies and that very limited information was available on the issue. She noted that one of the worrying elements in this context was the type of contracts used, which included very limited provisions, notably on the protection of the local populations.

¹ ECOLOGIC Institute, Germany

The MEPs asked questions on the type and identity of investors (institutional/private/States) and wondered what could be done to avoid potential abuses in this field (Goerens, ALDE, LU). Referring in particular to a fisheries agreement between China and Mauritania, Mrs. Lövin (Greens/ALE, SV) compared some fisheries agreements to a kind of "sea grabbing" and suggested that the Transparency initiative be extended to fisheries and agricultural land grabbing.

The Commission representative welcomed an excellent study while suggesting that issues related to women to be added. She referred to the work done by Member States and Commission in cooperation with the FAO on a guide on land issues since 2002, stressed the importance of security of access to land and the complexity of that issue which often entails cultural aspects, notably in Africa.

The expert Mrs. Gerstetter suggested that the FAO Voluntary Guidelines be strengthened, referred to biofuels as one of the "push factors" behind land acquisitions and the need to strengthen the accountability of EU firms on human rights issues. She noted that the local effects of land grabbing were not well known because of a general lack of transparency on these issues.

She praised the quality of the land policy guidelines of the EU at conceptual level but suggested that this text needed to be publicized. It was noted that peasants and farmers were helpless and that this fact was one of the reasons the international community should play a major role of oversight.

Publicity of land deals and a consultation of the local population prior to the conclusion of such deals were mentioned as a means to improve the situation in this regard. It was also noted that the duration of the deals (up to 99 years) were too long and that something should be done to protect the farmers against their own state in such situations.

11. Future financing of the EU : outcome of the final vote in SURE committee (with SURE coordinators invited)

The Chair indicated that the Commission proposal on the next Multi-Annual Framework would be made public on June, 30.

In answer to criticism that DEVE concerns as outlined in the opinion of the committee were not included in the SURE report on the above subject, the deputy Rapporteur for the SURE committee underlined that the report could not mention all policies of all sectors, and focused instead on the main issues related to EU development policy, notably: allocations under Heading 4, currently under-financed, to be more in line with real needs in future, and financial flexibility to be increased; commitments taken to meet the MDGs and fight against poverty to be financially met; Copenhagen commitments on climate change to be kept; EDF to be budgetized; status of emerging economies in the context of EU development policy to be reviewed; the setting-up of a financial transaction tax to be studied. The importance of ensuring neutrality of humanitarian aid , including by safeguarding the independence of its budget, was also underlined.

Mr Goerens, ALDE, LU expressed satisfaction that the main DEVE concerns were largely taken into consideration, including, in addition to the above mentioned issues, the questions of aid efficiency, the principle of additionality of aid for climate change mitigation and of financial flexibility between relevant budget headings. Mrs Keller, Greens/ALE, DE expressed frustration that none of the DEVE amendments were taken on board. She expressed regret that the opinions, which should be a privileged tool to ensure policy coherence, were often not taken into account by the leading committees. She advocated having a close look at proposals under the MFF, and not only on heading 4, as a means to check policy coherence for development.

The Commission expressed support for the principles (unicity of heading 4, additionality of resources and strong correlation between new priorities and resources; keeping ODA commitments and aid efficiency) and proposals included in the EP report, notably the budget flexibility to be increased and a new partnership instrument for aid to emerging economies.

12. Coordinators' meeting

In camera

13. An Assessment of the balancing of EU development objectives with other policies and priorities

A study on the above subject was presented. The study is aimed in particular at assessing the impact of EU policies on trade (notably GSP and EPAs), migration, climate change and agriculture.

Mr Mitchell, EPP, IE wondered about the Commission initiatives notably to promote regional cooperation on food security on the one hand and property ownership on the other hand. Mrs. Keller, Greens/ALE, DE asked about the impact of biofuel policies.

The Commission indicated that the 2011 report on PCD was under preparation and that this study was therefore timely. He indicated that the issue of biofuels and their role in PCD was controversial and should be examined on a case by case basis, as circumstances differed from one place to another.

14. The 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness

The Chair indicated that an initiative report (Rapporteur: Mr Preda) would be prepared on this item and that the Council would be invited to intervene at the next DEVE Committee meeting.

The Rapporteur Mr. Preda (EPP, RO) presented the main elements to be included in his report.

The Commission considered that in a context of aid fragmentation, an inclusive and political response should be sought. He estimated that the OECD framework was not sufficient in a context of emergence of new donors and that the aid paradigm was evolving in a changing world.

Mrs Greze, Greens/ALE, FR advocated pursuing the process of untying of aid and stressed the importance of further pursuing the objective of greater PCD. Mrs. Keller, Greens/ALE, DE considered that the rising tendency of donors to seek immediate value for the money given and to focus on short-term results was a dangerous one, as long-term and sustainable results should be sought instead in the field of development. She noted the difficult task of involving new donors such as China in the process and considered the Busan Forum as an opportunity to do so.

The Commission indicated that it would adopt early September a Communication outlining an EU position in preparation for that meeting.

15. State of implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia

The Rapporteur for the opinion Mr. Neuser (S&D, DE) outlined the main elements to be included in his report. He notably stressed the importance of a differentiated approach for each of these countries, the need to support the development of the civil society and to strengthen the dialogue with local authorities.

The Rapporteur for the AFET committee Mrs. Kiil-Nielsen expressed full support for the opinion.

Mr. Goerens (ALDE, LU) welcomed the opinion and advocated promoting the dialogue with Iran on these issues.

The Commission welcomed the proposals included in the opinion.

The Chair indicated that the deadline for tabling amendments was expiring on 23 June 2011, 17.00 and that the vote would take place on 22 September.

16. Next meeting(s)

- 12 July 2011, 9.30 – 12.30 and 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)
- 13 July 2011, 9.00 – 12.30 (Brussels)
