



European Solidarity Towards Equal Participation of People

Statement from the General Assembly Friday 7 June 2002

Retaining the Development Council is critical for the EU

The European Union, as a global player, has global responsibilities. These include helping to safeguard the interests of peoples and societies around the world. The strengthening of the European Union's foreign political and security policy can enhance its ability to fulfil these responsibilities. But this is by no means assured without a strong and separately identified development policy with the mechanisms within each of the EU's institutions to transform this policy into practice. Without this the EU's approaches to the rest of the world are likely to marginalize the interests of people who do not belong to the EU, particularly those living in poorer and more vulnerable countries.

We must recognise that the origins of the European Union, based on promoting peace and stability, are just as important today as they were when the EU was founded half a century ago. However, in today's globalized world, these objectives go beyond Europe's boundaries and need to be pursued within the global context – as the events of 11 September last year starkly re-enforced. This needs to be fully reflected in the way that the EU structures its approaches to what we call the "developing world".

The role of the EU as a global player in the world, and the responsibilities that the EU carries as a result, will be an important focus for debate over the next few months as part of the work of the European Convention. The specific role that the EU's development objectives and programme will play must be central to this debate. Its unique place must be recognised and be seen as being equally important to other external policies of the EU. While recognising the need for consistency and coherence between the EU's external policies as a whole, this cannot be allowed to result in the subordination of development co-operation to political foreign policy interests of the EU.

On the contrary, the EU's development co-operation policy needs to be strengthened so that the interests of the global community can be promoted within the overall institutional and policy structures of the EU. This need increases in the face of the enlargement process, to ensure that in an expanded Union the objectives and values of the EU's development policy are fully recognised and understood. This will require sufficiently identifiable capacity within the Commission to promote the EU's development policies and their implementation, and specifically identified fora within the Council and Parliament exclusively charged with these policies and practices.

The abolition of the Development Council as a separate formation within the Council, with its specifically identifiable role on the basis of a technical reform of the Council, would pre-empt the outcome of the Convention. It would be totally contrary to promoting an open debate on the future of the European Union, which is one of the stated objectives of the Convention. It would also lead to the effective marginalisation of development policy within the EU, inevitably hastened by the accession of the applicant countries. The result would be an abdication of central elements of the EU's global responsibility

Eurostep therefore calls for any consideration of proposals for the reform of the Council that would lead to the abolition of the Development Council as a separate and identifiable formation to be deferred, at least until after the conclusion of both the Convention and Inter-governmental conference.

**Adopted Friday 7 June 2002
by the General Assembly of *Eurostep*
Bern,
Switzerland**

Eurostep seeks to influence the development co-operation policies and practices of the European Union such that they contribute to building a global community based on principles of sustainability, justice and equity. *Eurostep* believes that as a global player the European Union has the capacity, together with the responsibility, to work towards this objective.

The membership of *Eurostep* includes:

ActionAid, Ireland; ActionAid, UK; CONCERN Worldwide, Ireland; Deutsche Welthungerhilfe, Germany; Forum Syd, Sweden; Helinas, Greece; Hivos, Netherlands; Ibis, Denmark; Intermón, Spain; Kepa, Finland; Mani Tese, Italy; Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, Denmark; Movimondo, Italy; NCOS, Belgium; Novib, Netherlands; Oikos, Portugal; Oxfam GB; Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations, Switzerland; terre des hommes, Germany.