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Mr. Louis Michel
European Commissioner for Development
and Humanitarian Assistance
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels

Dear Mr. Michel,

Democratic scrutiny of ACP country strategies

I write to express our concerns over the failure to ensure any credible democratic scrutiny for the establishment of the country strategies and national programmes for the countries of the ACP regions. When the then representative of the Council President in Office, Mrs. Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, offered the European Parliament the right to scrutinise the ACP CSPs before finalisation this was seen as recognition of the importance given to democratic scrutiny, as provided for in the context of establishing the Development Cooperation Instrument. The subsequent withdrawal of this offer by the European Commission and Council raised questions about the commitment to ensuring democratic accountability in the planning of the EU's financial support to ACP countries under EDF 10.

The withdrawal of the offer was explained on the grounds that the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly was the appropriate forum to undertake this scrutiny, being a forum identified in the Cotonou Agreement. While we welcome the offer to give the JPA a role in overseeing the CSPs and their implementation, it neither has the powers or the mandate to effectively scrutinise the CSPs. This can only be done by an elected Parliament or Assembly with powers over budgets and their discharge. Within the European Union this is the role of the European Parliament. In the context of ACP countries this is the national Parliament.

As we noted in the briefing paper we published in July this year the mandate of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly does not include

the discharge of the EDF, nor does the Assembly have any budgetary control. We certainly support a role for the Assembly in the definition, implementation and evaluation of European aid programmes towards ACP countries and we will be engaging with members of the Assembly on this in the context of its next plenary session in Kigali. We also believe that it is well placed to strengthen the involvement of national ACP parliaments in scrutinising their respective national strategies, the results of which should be taken into account by the Commission and national government. However it cannot replace the process needed in the European Parliament to ensure there is no democratic deficit in European aid to Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

We are now led to understand that EDF 10, to which the next set of ACP country strategies relate, will only come into force in the second part of next year at the earliest as a result of the delays in the ratification process. Should this be the case we believe that this provides an important opportunity to ensure that the democratic scrutiny that the draft ACP country strategies need and deserve is put in place. Inviting the European Parliament to undertake this process would give credibility to the final adoption of the country strategies and demonstrate a commitment within Europe to the governance of the EU's cooperation with its ACP partners.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Stocker
Director

- cc. Mr. René Radembino-Coniquet, President of the Senate of Gabon and Co-chair
ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly
Mrs. Glenys Kinnock MEP, Co-chair, ACP-EU
Mr. Josep Borrell, MEP, Chair of the EP Development Committee
Members of the EDF Committee