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## **Legitimacy and credibility of EC aid programming process questioned in the ACP/EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly**

Questions have been raised by European and ACP parliamentarians on the legitimacy and the credibility of the programming process of European Community aid to ACP countries under the 10<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund (EDF), in the context of a debate with Louis Michel (European Commissioner for Development) during the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the ACP/EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in Barbados on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2006.

Louis Michel explained that *"the EU should respect the choices of its partner countries in the programming process"*. He added that he will push to ensure that governance *"is an essential element of the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF programming"*. The Commissioner's definition of governance has however been questioned by various members of the ACP/EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. Vitorio Agnoletto (MEP, Italy) noted that *"the allocation of a great part of the aid money according to the governance profile, which contains conditions on migration, privatisation or the fight against terrorism, will increase the accountability of ACP countries to the EU as a donor and trade partner rather than their accountability to the citizens"*. This has been supported by Marie-Arlette Carlotti (MEP, France) who raised doubts regarding *"the ability of ACP countries to retain their sovereignty on their development model, while the governance profile plans to push ACP countries towards further liberalisation"*.

The use of European Community aid under the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF to promote liberalisation in ACP countries through the signing of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) has not been denied by the Commissioner who declared that *"the regional programming under the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF should fully support the EPAs process"*.

Moreover while Filip Kaczmarek (MEP, Poland) asked for the Commissioner to be more concrete regarding the participation of civil participation in the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF programming process by *"making the reports of the consultations (list of participants included) available on the Europa website in the coming days"*, Louis Michel expressed doubts regarding the use of publishing these reports. He promised to *"look into the issue though"*. Commenting on the issue, Florent Sebban, Eurostep's policy advisor, noted that *"these hesitations to make the reports of the programming consultation available on the Commission website demonstrates the level of commitment to a broad and inclusive European Community aid programming process by some in the European Commission."*

Concerns raised by Parliamentarians on the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF in the context of the ACP/EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly are in line with the "We decide, You 'own!'" report published recently by Eurostep. This report, based on case studies from civil society actors in Benin, Burundi, Cameroun and Zambia, concludes that the principles

enshrined in the Cotonou agreement such as ownership, transparency and participation are being violated in the programming process of European Community aid under the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF.

Florent Sebban added that *“unless the ownership, participation and transparency principles set out within the Cotonou Agreement and other international commitments are respected, civil society actors from the ACP countries and Europe will not accept – and will challenge – European Community aid programmes under the 10th EDF.”*

The report “We decide, You ‘own!’” can be downloaded (in French and English) at:  
[http://www.eurostep.org/wcm/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=88&Itemid=101](http://www.eurostep.org/wcm/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=88&Itemid=101)

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