

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
GENERAL SECRETARIAT

PRESS RELEASE

6205/86 (Presse 53)

1073rd meeting of the Council
- Development Co-operation -
Luxembourg, 17 April 1986
President: Mrs E.M. SCHOO

Minister for
Development Co-operation
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The Governments of the Member States and the Commission of the European Communities were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr André KEMPINAIRE
State Secretary,
Development Co-operation

Denmark:

Mr Knud-Erik TYGESEN
State Secretary,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Germany:

Mr Volkmar KOEHLER
State Secretary,
Federal Ministry for
Development Co-operation

Greece:

Mr Constantinos LYBEROPOULOS
Ambassador,
Permanent Representative

Spain:

Mr Luis YANEZ
State Secretary,
International Co-operation

France:

Mr Michel AURILLAC
Minister for Co-operation

Ireland:

Mr George BIRMINGHAM
Minister of State,
Department of Foreign Affairs

Italy:

Mr Mario FIORET
State Secretary,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

Mr Robert GOEBBELS

State Secretary,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and
Co-operation

Netherlands:

Mrs E.M. SCHOO

Minister for Development
Co-operation

Portugal:

Mr Jorge COSTA OLIVEIRA

President of the Institute for
Economic Co-operation

United Kingdom:

Mr Timothy RAISON

Minister for Overseas Development

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Commission:

Mr Lorenzo NATALI

Vice-President

QUEST FOR FOOD SECURITY IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Food aid policy and the conditions for applying it

In the context of the food security sought by the developing countries, the Council held a detailed discussion of the approach followed in recent years as regards Community policy on food aid and food aid management bearing in mind the necessary adjustment of such aid to development conditions and needs.

In the light of the discussion, the Commission stated that it would be submitting to the Council proposals for amending the framework Regulation on food aid and the Regulation on mobilization.

The aim of these proposals would be to make food aid an even more effective instrument of development aid and of support to the developing countries' quest for self-sufficiency in food and to better adapt such aid to the needs of recipient populations. Greater flexibility would be proposed as regards triangular operations. The proposals would also be directed towards more efficient management and would take into account the responsibilities of the various institutions under the Single Act.

The Council instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to examine these proposals as soon as they were submitted, and to report back to it at its next meeting, on 11 November 1986.

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Food strategies

The Council took note of a Commission communication containing, in the field of the food strategies encouraged by the Community in the developing countries, an evaluation of the experiments carried out to date in some of their number, of the results achieved and the constraints and difficulties encountered, and outlining prospects for the future.

Following a general discussion, the Council adopted the following conclusions, which will serve as guidelines for further Community action both under the Lomé Convention and in the context of its actions in other developing countries:

"THE COUNCIL,

- recalling its conclusions of 6 November 1984 concerning the review of progress achieved in the support of the food strategies of four African countries;
- welcomes the communication by the Commission concerning an in-depth assessment of constraints and difficulties encountered and the analysis based on a comparison of the experience gained, particularly in Mali and Zambia;
- agrees to the broad outlines of this analysis and to the conclusions based thereon and stresses in particular the following considerations:
 1. Even though the environments, both political and material, in which the policy reforms were carried out were notably different, it has become evident that results were often very similar, in terms of both strengths and weaknesses.
 2. A notable strength of the food strategies experience is, so far, the progress achieved in the liberalization of food markets. A general weakness appeared in the lack of impact on smallholder productivity.

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Generally speaking, smallholder productivity should be improved to increase production, at prices which are at the same time profitable for the farmer without being prohibitive to consumers. In this context farmers' organizations have an important role to play.

3. A higher priority must be given to consumer and nutritional policies, which could result, inter alia, in:
 - increased demand for local products particularly in urban areas;
 - increased attention to the needs of vulnerable or disadvantaged groups;
 - nutritional programmes which are complementary to health and population needs.
4. Food strategies cannot be pursued successfully in isolation from broader policy reforms, e.g. exchange rate adjustment, improvements in land tenure and credit systems, more decentralized administration, marketing and processing, protection of natural resources.
5. The role of women in food production is to be more largely taken into consideration.
6. Food strategies have proven that in a number of cases they can lead to a better integration of food aid with other instruments for development co-operation such as technical and financial assistance, but this element should be further strengthened.
7. Food strategies can provide the framework for sectoral and even subsectoral policies. Within this systematic approach different priorities can be taken into account. Circumstances may differ across countries, for that reason the elements common to the concept of food strategies may be given different weight.
8. The elements stressed in the food strategy of Mali are:
 - longer-term mutual commitments such as multi-annual programming of food aid and restructuring of the cereals market;
 - multi-donor participation and co-ordination;
 - pooled food aid counterpart funds;
 - fight against drought and desertification.

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The question of the extension of some or all of the elements of this approach to other countries - adapted to their specific needs - should be examined.

9. The general experience in the four pilot countries has shown a significant increase in awareness of the urgency of reforms which has led to important policy shifts, notably in the fields of farmers' incentives, a better balance between private and public sectors, exchange rate adjustment and the preservation of natural resources. These trends need to be consolidated and intensified.
10. An essential aspect of food strategies is the reciprocal commitment to policy dialogue. This approach has already proven its use to all parties concerned in the ongoing Lomé III programming exercise and should be continued.

In this context the additional task of constant monitoring of progress achieved and difficulties encountered should be recognized alongside project identification and implementation.

The provision of adequate information of a statistical kind as well of a general nature - and its processing - need to be strengthened.

11. Efforts should also be made for better integration of food strategies in development programmes at a regional level.
12. Applied research in the agricultural field and extension services to farmers should normally be included in the food strategies process.
13. Assessment has shown that co-ordination among all donors and the governments of beneficiary countries, notably on the spot, has progressed.

However, further efforts remain desirable to increase intensity and effectiveness of this co-ordination both as regards the Community and its Member States as well as with other donors. Co-ordination should concern implementation as well as programming.

14. The assessment clearly indicates that the food strategy approach - which has been tested in four ACP countries - can now be considered suitable for a more general application.

The approach should be flexible so as to be adapted to the needs of these countries - ACP, Mediterranean and in Asia and Latin America - which desire to apply it, taking due account of the possibilities of both sides to support such a strategy in the specific circumstances."

Emergency food aid mechanism

The Council took note of a proposal from the Netherlands delegation that a suitable permanent mechanism be set up to ensure that emergency food aid could, where needed, be supplied without delay in addition to the normal programmes.

The Commission gave a reminder of the proposal which it had made at the European Council meeting in Milan that a permanent reserve be set up. Although this suggestion had been taken up for 1986 only, the Commission intended to submit the necessary proposals for 1987 under the budgetary procedure.

As a number of delegations felt that the issue should be looked at in greater detail before they could adopt substantive positions, the Council instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to continue examining the matter and to report back to it in time for its November meeting.

STRUCTURAL ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Rehabilitation and revival plan for the African countries most affected by the drought

The Milan European Council emphasized that it was vitally important that, in order to prevent a repetition of the famine situation, alongside emergency action there should be short and medium-term measures on the one hand and long-term measures on the other.

As regards short and medium-term measures, the Development Council of 4 November 1985 welcomed the rehabilitation and revival plan for the African countries most affected by the drought put forward by Mr NATALI, and approved the general guidelines for the plan, for which an amount of 108 MECU has been earmarked, in addition to aid from the Member States.

The Council heard a report from the Commission on progress in implementing the plan, which is already well under way and due to be completed by the end of 1986. It congratulated the Commission on the conditions under which the plan had been implemented, and, in particular, on the Commission's swift action.

Conservation of natural resources - countering desertification in Africa

The question of the conservation of natural resources and of countering desertification in Africa is a long-term issue, the importance of which was referred to by the Milan European Council, which placed particular emphasis on the need for European aid as a whole, whether Community or bilateral, to give priority to this

type of operation.

In the light of the above the Commission submitted a communication proposing a coherent overall policy, consisting of specific measures for the protection of natural resources and in the agricultural sphere and the implementation of suitable research policies and appropriate population policies and putting emphasis on the concentration of the means available at Community level (Lomé Convention, food aid, NGOs, southern Mediterranean countries) and on co-ordination between the Commission and the Member States as well as with other donors.

The Council expressed its appreciation of this significant communication, approving its analysis and general approach.

It decided to implement a long-term European Action Plan which would unite the resources of the Community and the Member States to counter desertification.

At the same time it emphasized, inter alia, the importance of close co-ordination of the actions of the Member States and of the Community, as well as of other providers of capital, and noted the Member States' favourable attitude on the matter.

At the end of the discussion the Council approved the following Resolution, which defines the broad lines to be followed in implementing the Plan:

"The Council:

- Bearing in mind the disastrous drought and famine which struck certain African countries in 1984/1985 and required a massive emergency effort by the international community to save millions of human lives,
- Recalling the plan to restore and revitalize the African countries most affected by drought, approved in broad outline at its meeting in November 1985, which is currently being implemented and is designed to bring about a resumption of rural economic activity in the countries concerned,
- Recalling that the Lomé III Convention pays special attention to drought and desertification control, for the first time devoting a special chapter to it, and that environmental concerns have also been recognized in the co-operation agreements between the Community and the southern Mediterranean countries,
- Considering that long-term measures must be taken to reduce the possibility of a repetition of catastrophes such as those which have occurred on several occasions since 1972 and to give some lasting effect to policies and programmes for rural development and food security,

- Considering the major efforts undertaken in recent years, particularly in providing aid for food strategies, which are now beginning to bear fruit,
- Recalling that the European Council in Milan in June 1985 considered it vital, in the light of the importance of present requirements in the field of environmental protection, in particular the battle against desertification in the developing countries, for all European aid, Community and bilateral, to give priority to that type of action and for donors to make long-term commitments and to organize their contributions coherently by setting up the appropriate co-ordination structure,
- Considering that such long-term measures can achieve their objectives only if they are integrated into the priorities of, and receive full support from, the countries and regions in which they are implemented,
- Aware of the scale and complexity of the problem of the deterioration of natural resources throughout the African continent,
- Aware, too, of the importance of taking the environmental dimension into account in all development measures and policies,

- Having taken note of the Commission communication entitled "Conservation of natural resources - Countering desertification in Africa" and approved the analysis it contains and the proposed general approach which involves mainly attempting to secure a better equilibrium between man and the environment,

AGREES to a long-term European Action Plan to counter desertification which will unite the resources of the Community and the Member States and the main points of which are as follows:

1. The Community and its Member States will give priority, in their respective co-operation programmes, to action to combat the deterioration of natural resources.
2. The campaign will involve both direct action (re-afforestation, measures to combat erosion, etc.) and indirect action (appropriate training and research, improvement of farming methods which will maintain soil fertility, promotion of a better equilibrium between populations and resources, rational use of energy resources, including firewood, etc.).
3. In this context, it is necessary to seek a strategy which draws largely on people: without their active participation, no measure has any chance of success. Men and women are largely responsible for creating the desert in their daily struggle to feed their families, but, by the same token, they are the most important agents in halting the process.

4. In the light of past experience, and in order to avoid measures being inadequate, piecemeal or too short, the Council emphasizes the importance of attaining a minimum intervention threshold. The effectiveness of this minimum threshold or "critical mass" depends on three considerations:

- the approach must be global and comprise a series of interdependent measures;
- a degree of geographical concentration is desirable, so that measures will have a lasting impact on the environment;
- the long-lasting nature of desertification requires that there be some continuity in the measures, so that the necessary long-term results can be attained.

To this end, it would be desirable in the initial phase for the various donors to set quantitative objectives within their present funding for financing projects directly related to nature conservation.

Obviously the use of such resources will be effective only if, as part of global, national and regional plans, it underpins the efforts of the partner countries to achieve the same objective.

It will probably prove necessary in due course, as implementation of the plan progresses, for donors to intensify their efforts.

5. The two sides will also have to introduce a series of administrative and procedural measures to ensure that environmental protection becomes an automatic response in development activity.

This response should mean that those responsible will bear in mind both the negative impact which various projects, particularly production projects, could have on the environment and other positive measures which should be undertaken to protect the natural heritage.

The Council therefore considers that efforts should be made by government authorities in the countries in question to involve local authorities more closely in the action being taken. These authorities should be encouraged to maintain and improve the dialogue with their people, so that they can act together to preserve natural resources and make rational use of them. This also requires greater administrative decentralization. Particular importance should attach to the participation of local and international non-governmental organizations and to action at regional level.

6. In view of the required scale of action the Community stresses the importance of intensive co-ordination between the recipient country, the donors and regional organizations active in the field in order to ensure maximum consistency and complementarity in existing and future programmes.

Such co-ordination involves increasing the consistency of the aid programmes of the Community and the Member States and prevailing upon them to give preference to that proportion of their aid which goes to the rural sector and particularly to environmental protection, alongside a similar effort by the recipient countries.

In this connection, the Council welcomes the Commission's intention of organizing regular meetings of members of the special units dealing with the problem in Member States' administrations and the Commission with a view to suggesting and organizing action in this sphere. It also considered that the Community, the Member States, the other donors and the international organizations should, whenever the need arises, take part in co-ordination operations - especially in the field - relating to measures to combat desertification."

PREPARATION FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY ON THE CRITICAL ECONOMIC SITUATION IN AFRICA

The Council reaffirmed the major importance which the Community attached to a successful outcome to this special session, which will have the task of examining every aspect of the critical economic situation in Africa.

With a view to this session the Council, following a substantive discussion, adopted the outline of a common position which will act as a guide for the attitude of the representatives of the Community and its Member States in New York. It instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to finalize certain specific points of this outline.

ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT: IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES - EXPERIENCE
OF MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION: CONCLUSIONS

THE COUNCIL

- Recalling its conclusions of 8 November 1982 and of November 1985
- Takes note of the papers presented by the Commission and several Member States, on the basis of which a useful exchange of views has taken place and decides to adopt the following conclusions with reference to important elements thereof:
 1. The importance of the United Nations forward-looking strategies must be underlined. These strategies contain specific suggestions relating to development co-operation, and in particular the recommendation that development institutions adopt explicit policies relating to women and development and put in place the management systems necessary to ensure the effective implementation and evaluation of these policies in the full range of their programmes and activities.
 2. In this context the Council notes the measures that the Commission has undertaken relating to project appraisal and the achievement of increased awareness and expertise amongst staff members and welcomes the further measures the Commission envisages relating to increasing the number of female experts, new seminars on women and development and closer contact with national authorities and other international development agencies.
 3. The Council notes also the measures taken by several Member States to implement policies which enable women better to participate in development actions which they support, in particular
 - the establishment of specialized administrative units which deal with project appraisal and try to raise general awareness and expertise concerning the participation of women in the development process.

Some Member States on the other hand have stressed that it is essential to consider the role of women as an integral part of the standard procedures for the preparation and appraisal of all projects and programmes.

- Measures concerning staffing both in the capital and in the field which strengthen the way the point of view of women can be taken into account.
 - Studies and evaluations concerning the impact of development actions on the status and the role of women as well as the establishment of guidelines to implement the lessons learned.
4. These specific measures, such as seminars and increased contacts with women's bureaus and organizations, should not be seen as isolated interventions, but are part and parcel of a long term strategy to integrate women into the development activities supported by the European Community and its Member States.
 5. Priority attention should be given to women's participation in sectors where their role has often been neglected in the past, such as agriculture and food production, processing, marketing and distribution, particularly in Africa where women have a vital contribution to make to master the critical food situation.
 6. The productive and useful exchange of views on policies relating to women and development should be continued. In this context the Council invites the Commission to convene, on a regular basis, a group of experts of the Member States and of the Commission. This group could particularly assist in the monitoring of the implementation of the policies and guidelines defined by the Council. The Council invites the Commission to report back at a later date on this implementation with a view to a renewed debate by the Council in due course.

PROMOTION OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES' TRADE

The Council, which had emphasized the importance of the promotion of developing countries' trade in its previous conclusions, examined the matter in greater depth, on the basis in particular of detailed assessments. At the end of its examination it adopted the conclusions set out below, which include, within the framework of a coherent overall approach, guidelines for the action to be taken by the Community in its relations with the developing countries:

1. "Trade promotion" should be defined as the "development of trade in goods and services", including the possibility of taking action at various stages, from before the production stage and up to final distribution, in order to increase trade in products and certain services, such as tourism, and to study, with a view to possible support, systems of export financing.
2. To improve the developing countries' trade performance, donors should help these countries to draw up an overall trade promotion policy; it is of prime importance in trade to establish a link between the development of human skills, the development of products and the development of markets.
3. The developing countries should be strongly urged - through a dialogue if possible - to pursue an integrated policy in keeping with production potential and the export capacity of agriculture, industry, craft trades and services.

For each country or region which so requests the Community should support the efforts made by recipients of Community aid to draw up action programmes setting out objectives, control and evaluation criteria and procedures. Such programmes must take account of the recipient's specific needs and circumstances.

4. An approach based on specific objectives should be followed when adopting Community aid measures for trade promotion.

In the particular case of trade promotion aid granted to the least-developed countries, a set of co-ordinated measures should be applied making use of the various instruments at the Community's disposal.

5. When production projects financed by the Community are prepared and appraised, particular attention should always be given to those aspects relating to the marketing and distribution of goods and services.

From its conception, every programme or project for promoting trade in developing countries should allow for the possibility of practical evaluation at every stage in terms of quality and quantity.

6. The conception, preparation, appraisal, implementation and evaluation of the Community programmes must be improved and there should be co-ordination to ensure some degree of consistency in Community action and compatibility between programmes and measures adopted in the field of trade.

The Council recommends here that in an initial stage the Commission should inform Member States of the projects envisaged and that the Member States should do the same.

7. The Council recommends that the Commission should create a suitable forum, composed mainly of relevant organizations in the Member States, to facilitate the exchange of information, co-ordinate programmes, monitor action regularly (every six months, for example) and give general guidelines for trade promotion programmes.

Existing co-operation should be stepped up with the ITC (UNCTAD/GATT International Trade Centre in Geneva). Close co-operation is also desirable with organizations such as the WTO (World Tourism Organization in Madrid), the CFTC (Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation) and other public or private institutions operating internationally in this area.

8. Encouragement should be given to operations to promote contact between economic operators whether in the private or public sector.
9. In consultation with the recipients, efforts should be concentrated on marketing in priority sectors such as agriculture, rural development and food production to ensure the viability of programmes based on production.
10. Regional meetings should be organized to promote action by the countries concerned and in particular the ACP States to bring about an increase in trade, including South-South trade. The Member States could make a major contribution to this effort by involving their trade experts and their representatives in the regions concerned.

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11. The Council hopes that, in agreement with the recipient countries, trade promotion will be an important factor in co-operation with the Maghreb and Mashrek countries.

12. The Community will endeavour to step up - in particular by a suitable appropriation, without prejudice to the budget procedure - its co-operation in the promotion of trade and services in the developing countries of Latin America and Asia and with their regional organizations. In view of the importance which it attaches to trade with those countries.