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HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT - REVIEW OF TEXTS

Today the Commission transmitted a communication to the Council and Parliament aimed at setting out a consistent general approach to the relations to be established between development cooperation policies, respect for human rights and support for the democratic process in the developing countries.

At European level many texts have already been produced on the question of human rights in relations with non-member countries. In accordance with Article 30(5) of the Single European Act, the Presidency and the Commission are responsible for ensuring that there is consistency between the Community's external policies and those agreed in European Political Cooperation (EPC).

In addition to the basic international human rights instruments (chiefly the 1945 United Nations Charter, 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Covenants of 1966 on civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights), the following should be considered.

1. At Community and Member State level

Particularly since 1973, the Community institutions have produced a number of declarations committing the Community to human rights and democratic values.

The preamble of the Single Act and the declarations of 21 July 1986 and 10 December 1988 also specifically provide for human rights to be taken into account in relations with non-member countries.

The conclusions of the Dublin European Council (25-26 June 1990) on human rights and good governance in Africa and of the Rome European Council (14-15 December 1990) on the promotion of democracy and human rights in external relations should also be mentioned.

The conclusions of the Council meeting of 19 December 1990 on a new Mediterranean policy, contain a declaration on observance of human rights and the fostering of democratic values.

The conclusions of the same Council meeting on cooperation with the developing countries of Latin America and Asia, also contain a substantial addition on human rights and democracy.

2. In the Community's cooperation agreements

Worthy of note are:

- Annex I to the third Lomé Convention (1984); Article 5 and relevant Annexes to the fourth Lomé Convention (signed on 15 December 1989)
- Preamble to the cooperation Agreement with the parties to the General Treaty on Central American Economic Integration, and the accompanying joint political communiqué (12 November 1985)
- Cooperation agreements with Argentina (April 1990) and Chile (December 1990)
- Joint declaration of Rome with the eleven Latin American countries members of the Rio Group (20 December 1990)

3. Regional acts

In addition to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, reference should in particular be made to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the American Human Rights Convention. These instruments signal a legal and also a political undertaking on the part of the States concerned.

4. Cooperation policy guidelines

The concepts and practice of cooperation have been continually developing, in the Community as elsewhere, under the influence of new ideas and objectives and successes and failures. Cooperation under the Lomé Convention is a typical example of this.

There has been a particular need for more in-depth dialogue (conducted in an atmosphere of trust) with partner countries on the subject of development policy. The most recent papers on the subject and recent practice have, moreover, given prominence to some important considerations including the following:

- the central position of man as a protagonist and beneficiary of development;
- the satisfaction of the basic needs of the population and the development of human resources;
- new participants in and approaches to cooperation: microprojects, grassroots participation, the role of NGOs, decentralized cooperation;
- human rights.