

ACP - EEC CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY

SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING

SUMMARY REPORT
OF THE PROCEEDINGS
OF MONDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 1981

LUXEMBOURG

SITTING OF MONDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 1981

IN THE CHAIR

Mr Tandeng MUNA

Mrs Simone VEIL

President of the National Assembly
of the United Republic of Cameroon

President of the European Parliament

(The sitting was opened at 5 p.m.)

1. Opening of the annual session of the Assembly

Mrs VEIL, President, declared the annual session of the Assembly open¹.

(Formal opening sitting)

¹Membership of the Assembly - Election of the Bureau: see Minutes

Mrs VEIL, President of the European Parliament and co-President of the ACP-EEC Consultative Assembly, extended a very warm welcome to all the participants, particularly Mr MUNA whom she was happy to see in the Gallery.

She saw in the opening of this session clear testimony to the durability of links between the ACP countries and the EEC and viewed the successive enlargements of the Convention as concrete signs of that durability.

She extended a welcome to the two new Member States, the Republic of Vanuatu and the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mrs Veil then welcomed Commissioner Pisani whose heavy responsibility it was to replace Commissioner Cheysson and whose untiring and devoted work in favour of development she emphasized. She pointed out that after Yaoundé I and II EEC-ACP cooperation had reached a new stage: the current Assembly was the first since the entry into force of the new Convention.

Turning to the alarming situation now faced by the developing countries, whose oil bill now exceeded the development aid granted by the industrialized countries, Mrs Veil made an urgent appeal for the establishment of fairer relations between North and South in a world where millions of children were dying of hunger and where, according to the experts, a billion jobs had to be created.

Political leaders called for the introduction of a new international economic order, but private interests and national egotism barred the way to effective solutions.

There was, however, one encouraging sign: intense diplomatic activity had developed since the summer. The North-South dialogue had been resumed and preparations had been made for the forthcoming meeting at Cancun. Furthermore, the recent Nairobi and Paris Conferences had alerted both governments and public opinion to the problems of the developing countries. These meetings augured well for an effective renewal of the North-South dialogue, but the absence of world agreements was having an adverse effect on ACP-EEC cooperation.

With regard to the state of implementation of Lomé II, the President pointed out that there were difficulties connected with the sugar protocol and the world cocoa agreement but that the INSANALLY report would make it possible to determine the level of responsibilities. It was essential that ACP-EEC relations remained a model of reference.

The speaker then referred to the work of the Joint Committee which, since the last session, had set up two working parties, one of which was drawing up a plan to combat hunger and malnutrition, the other being concerned with finding solutions to the energy problem. This latter working party had decided to present, that year, a report aimed at extending the Convention's field of application to include cultural cooperation between the ACP and EEC countries. She congratulated it on the quality of its work and the value of its proposals.

It rested with the parliamentary institutions to propose the integration of the cultural dimension into cooperation policy.

Mrs Simone VEIL was convinced that the debate to be held on this subject would constitute one of the landmarks of the work of the Assembly which had long since demonstrated its determination to emphasize the human aspects of cooperation and thus help in bringing together the peoples of the Community and the ACP States.

She concluded with these words: 'At a time when the situation in so many Third World countries is truly tragic, may these ties forged between our peoples be a ferment of progress, a factor of hope. Such is my wish in opening this session.'

(Loud applause)

Mrs FLESCH, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, welcomed the members of the ACP-EEC Consultative Assembly, who since Lomé I had been meeting regularly in Luxembourg, one of the places of work of the European Parliament.

As a former member of the Consultative Assembly, she was particularly aware of the importance of the Assembly's work and its outstanding contribution to strengthening cooperation between the peoples of the Community and the ACP, while at the same time respecting the sovereignty of each.

The goal of Lomé I was to redefine relations between developed and developing countries; Lomé II contained new potential for accomplishing the second stage which was to make it more effective.

The most serious challenge facing the international community was the dual problem of development and inequality. The speaker concluded by calling on the members to exhibit the political determination to meet that challenge.

Mr MUNA, Co-President of the Consultative Assembly, began by expressing appreciation at being re-elected for a fourth term and said it was an especial honour to be able to continue working alongside Mrs Veil. He conveyed his gratitude to the Luxembourg authorities for their hospitality.

It was significant, he went on, that the entry into force of Lomé II coincided with the accession of three new member countries - Greece, Zimbabwe and Vanuatu. Lomé II was a unique contribution to wider international cooperation which testified to the will on both sides to improve the welfare of mankind. He welcomed the improvements in the new Convention in respect of information and consultation, the co-financing provisions and the measures to expedite Council work. The Convention offered great expectations and had laudable objectives. It was the job of parliamentarians to explain them to the peoples and to ensure implementation of the Convention. It was also their duty, he added, to educate the masses in order to promote self-realization and self-reliant development. There was a need for policy makers to realize that progress and peace served the interests of all. If the objectives of Lomé II were fully implemented, fear would be eliminated between North and South, East and West and black and white, liberating resources for economic and social development.

He believed that the work of the Assembly reflected the conviction that we were on the right path. There was a will to succeed and to achieve progress along the path towards greater freedom and prosperity.

(Applause)

(The sitting was suspended at 5.30 p.m. and resumed at 6.30 p.m.)

IN THE CHAIR: Mrs VEIL

President

The President read the draft agenda¹.

Mr PANNELLA asked whether it would not be possible to enter the motion for a resolution on hunger in the world before Mr Jaquet's report on the amendments to be made to the Consultative Assembly's Rules of Procedure and expressed concern at the speaking time allowed for this topic.

Mr SIDDIG asked for a short debate on energy.

The President suggested that Mr Siddig raise the question of energy within the framework of the most appropriate debate.

(The Assembly rejected Mr Pannella's request and adopted the agenda without amendment².)

3. List of speakers

The President proposed to fix the deadline for entering names on the list of speakers at noon the following day.

Mr PANNELLA felt that as some members might not have had time to read the documents by then, the deadline should not be set at that time.

The President defended the proposed decision on the grounds of time and organizational constraints.

(The Assembly adopted the proposed deadline.)

4. Introductory statements

¹ See minutes

² See minutes for deadline for tabling amendments and receipt of documents - speaking time.

Mr VOLOVASAMANAIA, President of the ACP Council of Ministers and Co-President of the ACP-EEC Council of Ministers, conveyed his Councils' best wishes to the members of the Consultative Assembly for another successful and rewarding round of deliberations. He stressed the role of the Consultative Assembly and Joint Committee in the Lomé Convention, in providing key initiatives and the genesis of solutions to insoluble problems. The Assembly's contribution was particularly important at this point. The second Lomé Convention had come into force in January 1981 and the ACP-EEC Council had already held one meeting in April under the new Convention, which had established the Ministerial Management Committee for Finance and Technical Cooperation (Article 108), agreed on a procedure for the accelerated inclusion of new products in Stabex, solved difficulties regarding Greek accession to the Convention and made progress on the force majeure provisions of the sugar protocol for ACP sugar exporters unable to deliver quotas. Work continued on critical questions, including the experts report on complementary financing for industrial cooperation, the evolution of ACP-EEC trade and ACP access to Community agricultural products on preferential terms. The progress made was largely due to the efficient functioning of the institutions including the Consultative Assembly and the Joint Committee. He paid tribute to his predecessor and particularly to the former EEC Development Commissioner, Mr Claude Cheysson, stressing his contribution to ACP-EEC cooperation and indeed to all mankind, and welcomed his successor, Mr Pisani.

The speaker referred to the question of the timely submission to the Consultative Assembly of the Annual Report of the ACP-EEC Council of Ministers, and suggested that in future the reports should not cover more than the previous year, in order to be ready for submission to the Consultative Assembly by June.

Progress had been made, but as Mr Insanally had pointed out in his report, not enough. The two most serious problems were sugar and STABEX and a special Council meeting was being arranged to consider them. The ACP were concerned by the almost certain increase in the number of starving to 800 million by 1990, and in contrast, in regard to STABEX, the ACP had in 1980 only obtained 137 million ua - a loss of 120 million ua in one year - and the prospective loss on sugar for the ACP amounted to millions of pounds sterling. The EEC had fixed a price increase 1% less than that offered to EEC producers and the effects of this discrimination would be felt for many years. He hoped the Consultative Assembly could resolve these issues.

Other critical issues were the increasing food shortage in the ACP States, the crippling energy problem and the structural changes in the economy resulting from ACP-EEC cooperation: the Consultative Assembly had set up working groups on two of these issues, and he hoped that their work, together with the Council's deliberations and the report of the ACP-EEC experts on complementary financing would contribute to solving the serious situation and improving the quality of life.

He applauded the report on cultural cooperation, which would enrich ACP-EEC relations. In an increasingly hostile environment, the continuing interest shown by other countries in the ACP was proof of its success. Here he congratulated Belize on its sovereignty and looked forward to its participation and also to the accession of Spain and Portugal to the EEC. This would increase the grouping to 75 countries, thus directly involving nearly one-half of the world's nations and making success or failure more momentous. With regard to

the Community's expansion, the ACP sought better information to avoid a repetition of the difficulties, now resolved, which had faced Greece. Expansion, he said, must improve and not dilute the quality of the relationship. He referred to other groupings which had no place in our world, speaking particularly of acts of hostility by South Africa against Angola, Namibia and other countries. The ACP rejected such acts as uncivilized and wished to see an end to such debasement of humanity. Those engaged in the experiment of the Lomé Convention must try to uplift human life. The ACP must also try to avoid, under Lomé II, the errors and weaknesses of Lomé I. The ACP and EEC must together try to improve the fortunes and living conditions of their respective peoples in international fora, particularly at Cancun later this year.

There was but one world to share and in that world tanks and guns and bullets must never be given priority over bread, medicine and books. There was still a long way to go, particularly to resolve the problem of increasing starvation in ACP States at a time when the EEC had massive surpluses. Lomé II must show real progress, or future cooperation would be prejudiced. They could strike a most effective blow against the social and economic destruction of mankind by setting a true example of a model relationship between rich and poor nations.

He concluded by stating that two requirements were effective institutions and political will on the part of the countries involved, and wished the Consultative Assembly a most fruitful and practical outcome to its deliberations.

(Applause)

Mr HURD, President-in-Office of the Council of the European Communities and Joint President of the ACP-EEC Council of Ministers spoke of the factors which had made possible the smooth transition from Lomé I to Lomé II, namely the practical interim measures regarding trade and institutional arrangements, the advances under Stabex to six countries which had suffered particularly serious export earning losses and the Community's readiness to apply unilaterally new arrangements for the access of certain EEC products. These had enabled the April meeting of the ACP-EEC Council of Ministers to adopt without discussion the thirteen decisions referred to by Mr Volovasamanaia. He stressed the direct and practical impact of these decisions on the lives of individuals in the member countries and the need to make people aware of what the Lomé Convention had achieved.

Real improvements had been made in the field of customs cooperation which were of great value to individual ACP States.

The speaker called on the Members of the European Parliament to urge their national parliaments to avoid further delay in ratifying the Accession agreement with Zimbabwe. New requests for accession from former Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean - in particular Belize - would receive a warm welcome.

He welcomed Mr Pisani and paid a warm tribute to Mr Cheysson who, as French Foreign Minister, continued to take an active interest in the development of ACP-EEC relations.

Speaking as President-in-Office of the Council Mr HURD shared the ACP countries' concern over the need to reduce Stabex transfers. While the Community attached great importance to the system, it should be remembered that it was not open-ended. The Community was considering the proposal for obtaining additional resources put forward by the ACP Committee of Ambassadors, but felt that it was too early to conclude that overall resources would be inadequate.

The speaker regretted that the ACP was unable to accept the 7.2% rise in guaranteed raw sugar prices which was in effect more generous than that made to EEC producers who would be subject to a 2% levy. The firm assurances by the July agricultural council should allay fears that the 82% increase in white sugar prices would lead to an erosion of raw sugar prices. The Community was currently considering a mandate to allow it to open negotiations to join the International Sugar Agreement.

The Community had completed the procedures for establishing SISMIN system and expected to reach agreement soon on the eligibility of claims submitted under it.

The Community recognized the need for better preparation for Council meetings and regretted that the last Council was unable to discuss adequately the problem of world hunger. Despite efforts by the EEC the situation in many countries, including some ACP countries, had deteriorated in recent years. The ultimate aim was to improve agricultural development so as to allow developing countries to feed themselves. The Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development would have an important contribution to make. The Community would study sympathetically the proposals on world hunger which the Italian Government had stated at the Ottawa Conference it would be discussing within the Community.

He accepted the importance of the reports on fisheries and cultural cooperation which, he felt, could become important areas in ACP-EEC relations.

The speaker welcomed the progress at the UN Nairobi Conference on new and renewable sources of energy which he described as a milestone in the search for global solutions to energy problems. He also welcomed the Paris Conference and pointed out that the Community had accepted the 1.5% target for aid to least-developed countries.

The speaker praised the Lomé Convention as a unique relationship within the North-South framework which produced solid and practical achievements. Its strength was that its institutional arrangements permitted constant renewal.

He concluded by paying tribute to the role of Luxembourg and the European Parliament in Community partnership with the developing countries.

(Applause)

Mr INSANALLY, rapporteur, said that notwithstanding the lateness of the time at which the Fifth Annual Report of the ACP-EEC Council of Ministers had been submitted, the issues with which it dealt were familiar to all the members of the Consultative Assembly, who would thus be able to appreciate and express their views upon the central themes of his report.

In drawing up his motion for a resolution and report, his guiding thought had been to determine whether the provisions of Lomé II were being implemented in the spirit of the original Convention. One could admire the superb legal and administrative provisions of the Convention, but these in themselves were not adequate unless backed by a spirit of generosity and genuine cooperation in their implementation. And the fact had to be faced that in spite of these splendidly liberal provisions, the Lomé system was not working as well as it should.

Mr INSANALLY singled out a few issues to illustrate his remarks. The first was the question of enlargement. It could not be said that the consultation process had worked to complete satisfaction in the case of Greece's accession to the ACP-EEC Consultative Assembly and care would have to be taken that this did not arise again when the question of accession for Spain and Portugal came to be considered. Again, in the face of so much hunger in ACP countries, the ACP States were puzzled at the way in which some countries were given privileged status in the matter of aid from Community resources. A further instance was the STABEX system which was supposed to guarantee export earnings for the ACP countries. It was obvious that more resources had to be ploughed into this system, but in the Joint Committee debate on this the spokesman for the Committee on Development and Cooperation seemed doubtful as to whether such additionality could be achieved.

Perhaps one of the most difficult areas was the protocol on sugar. ACP sugar exports were coming under increasing pressure, though there was hope that this situation could be improved if the EEC were to enter the International Sugar Agreement. However, the EEC did not seem prepared to reconsider its position in regard to the very important question of fixing the price for ACP raw sugar.

In general then the association between the ACP and the EEC seems to be bedevilled by some kind of malaise. Good intentions are evident, but it may be seriously questioned whether the Institutions of the Association are capable of doing their work effectively at present.

Mr INSANALLY said that his motion for a resolution tried to grapple with the important issues in a realistic fashion, though indeed it could be argued that what was wanted was not so much new resolutions as the resolve to translate old resolutions into reality. The draft motion for a resolution had gone through several revisions, had been thoroughly debated and amended last week in Strasbourg at the Joint Committee and after thorough discussion this week in Luxembourg should go a good way towards meeting the wishes and aspirations of all the members of the Assembly.

The speaker said that the ACP countries did not wish to sound like a hypochondriac, but that there was a genuine case of illness and after all a sick man must describe his symptoms if he hopes for a cure. Development sprang from the desire and resolve of one country to raise itself up and improve the lot of its people, but it could be effected only with the support of the international community as a whole which had to make available not only the fruits of its own experience but also the resolve to lend wholehearted support and assistance in a spirit of generous and brotherly cooperation.

(Applause)

(The sitting was closed at 7.50 p.m.¹)

¹See Minutes for agenda of next sitting

