

# ***EU Council Conclusions on an EU-Strategy for the Pacific***

**Sommaire** EU Council Conclusions on an EU-Strategy for the Pacific (17 July 2006: Brussels)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. "The European Union recalls its long-standing cooperation with the Pacific ACP countries in the framework of the ACP/EU Partnership Agreement and reaffirms its ambition of strengthening the partnership between the European Union and the Pacific region.

2. The Council moreover recalls the existing EU agreements with the Pacific and draws attention to the close links with some Member States through the overseas territories of France (French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna) and of the United Kingdom (Pitcairn).

3. The Council reaffirms its commitment to working with the Pacific region to support the eradication of poverty and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by addressing issues such as governance, stability, regional and economic integration, and environmental vulnerability. In this context the Council also recognises the many other challenges the countries face, such as human resource development and unemployment, health care issues, in particular sexual reproductive health and rights as set out in the Cairo Agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development, the fight against HIV/Aids, as well as transportation.

4. The Council welcomes the Commission Communication on "EU Relations with the Pacific - a Strategy for a Strengthened Partnership" and agrees to focus its attention on the areas set out below:

– Strengthening the political relationship between the EU and the Pacific ACP countries, for example through an enhanced dialogue with the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF);

– Addressing the socio-economic and environmental challenges through more efficient, better coordinated and more focused development cooperation, giving priority to sustainable development and sustainable use of natural resources.

5. The Council confirms that all efforts should be in line with the European Consensus on Development, which defines the objectives and principles of Community development cooperation and highlights the importance of policy coherence for development, taking into account the countries' own needs, strategies, priorities and assets. A strengthened political relationship

6. The Council emphasises its wish to enhance political dialogue on matters of common interest with the Pacific states and region, including democracy, good governance and human rights, peace and security and regional and economic integration.

7. Recognising that democracy and good governance are based on credible, efficient institutions, the EU will lend particular support to good governance and the fight against corruption. The positive roles of parliaments and civil society, especially NGOs, are seen as important in this respect.

8. Promoting and protecting human rights, especially women's and children's rights, and fundamental freedoms, respecting the rule of law and encouraging the growth of pluralistic participatory democracy in the Pacific region are recognised goals and will be advanced as prerequisites for stability and growth.

9. Political cooperation will also include specific assistance for fragile states and for post-conflict reconstruction, in line with the United Nations, and encouragement for further initiatives, such as electoral monitoring and special missions to help resolve political issues.

## **Regional cooperation and integration**

10. Regional cooperation is especially important in the Pacific in order to deal with its development challenges. In this context, the Council underlines the unique identity and vulnerability of Small Island States and the importance of respecting the special needs of the smaller nations in the region, and highlights the outstanding cultural diversity of the Pacific region.

11. Therefore, regional cooperation shall be further intensified by encouraging the existing regional

organisations, in particular the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), to implement the Pacific Plan, and key CROPs (Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific), such as the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, and also by building on synergies and cooperation with the OCTs in the region.

12. The Council furthermore reiterates the potential of regional economic integration and trade, including cooperation with the OCTs, which is seen as beneficial for all parties. The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) as an instrument for development will be the privileged area of cooperation, fostering smooth and gradual integration of the region into the global economy and promoting sustainable economic development. In this regard, the Council reaffirms its commitment to the timely conclusion of the EPA negotiation to allow it to enter into force by 1st January 2008. The Council underlines the importance of compatibility of the EPA with similar arrangements between the countries of the Pacific and like-minded partners in the region.

13. The Council notes the importance of trade links with and between the countries of the Pacific for prosperity and security in the region to enhance growth and employment. In this context, the Council acknowledges the important contribution to private sector development made by the European Investment Bank and the Asian Development Bank and encourages these organisations to increase their efforts in the region within the existing mandates.

Furthermore, the Council also recognises the value of technical assistance aimed at enhancing trade.

#### **More efficient and focused development cooperation**

14. The Council highlights the need for the EU to enhance its profile in the region, including through strengthening EU representation and contacts between the EU and the Pacific.

Given the limited presence of Member States in the Pacific, the Commission's proposal for joint EU action shall be elaborated further, for example the "Europe House" concept.

15. The Council sees the necessity of supporting the Region to achieve the MDGs as an overall objective, especially the fight against poverty. In this respect special attention should be given to Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Timor Leste, being the three countries with the lowest GDP/capita in the Pacific, and the most disadvantaged and poorest groups of society of the countries in the region.

16. The Council notes the particular challenges of sound sustainable development in the Pacific and the vulnerability to natural disasters. Willing to support sustainable development in the Pacific, the EU will help countries protect their biodiversity, including dealing with climate change and rising sea levels and addressing diminishing fish-stock and coral bleaching.

17. The Council furthermore emphasises its readiness to support Pacific countries in land use, land and natural resources management, the fight against land degradation, illegal logging and deforestation, and making ecological and sustainable use of renewable energy resources and the immense ocean and coastal resources, including enhanced pollution and waste management.

18. Moreover, the Council stresses the need to strengthen Disaster Risk Reduction including through the Pacific Tsunami Early Warning System and France, Australia and New Zealand (FRANZ) agreement.

19. The Council underlines the importance of ensuring that policies fully support the MDGs and the principles outlined in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of March 2005. The Council recognises the importance of working closely with all other donors active in the region, as well as with multilateral institutions, such as UN organisations, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, in an effort to improve donor coordination and harmonisation and alignment to recipient country systems. In this context, the existing relations with Australia and New Zealand should be further strengthened.

#### **Follow-up**

20. The Council invites all parties to ensure the effective follow-up of these conclusions. The Council will build on existing mechanisms to monitor and review progress on the implementation, in consultation with Pacific Partners. The Commission is asked to report on progress within the scope of Community competence. Contributions from EU Heads of Missions in the area are welcomed."

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