

Portuguese Presidency of the EU (Version for ECDPM – 22/06/07)

Main priorities for the Portuguese Presidency

The three Presidencies of the troika (Germany, Portugal and Slovenia) cover a period of strategic importance for further shaping the Union's future development policy and strengthening its political role in international processes, the EU being the world's most important donor.

The three Presidencies are taking place at a time when the EU's new financial instruments for external action and the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) are opening a new chapter in the EU's external relations with its developing partner countries.

A **special focus** of the three Presidencies will be **on Africa**. In this neighbouring continent, the development challenges are enormous and of the utmost urgency. If the MDGs are to be achieved, the successful fight against poverty in Africa is particularly decisive. Furthermore, aspects of political, economic and social stability in Africa as well as migration have a direct impact on Europe. In this context, European development policy has an important role to play and an overarching responsibility.

The implementation of the EU's Strategy for Africa is underway and will be supported by the three Presidencies. The **EU-Africa Joint Strategy** intends to serve as the strategic document for EU-Africa relations for the years ahead.

Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) are being negotiated between the EU and countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) within the framework of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (the Cotonou Agreement). The three Presidencies will be engaged in the facilitation of the negotiation process trying to reach an agreement before the end of 2007.

On a thematic level, the three Presidencies will also address **issues of global relevance for development** such as energy, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, climate change and the sustainable management of natural resources, as well as the issue of fragile states, the situation of women and children in armed conflicts, migration, poverty-related and sexually transmitted diseases, women's rights and gender equality.

The three Presidencies will pursue the implementation of the **Paris Agenda** and the related commitments on **aid effectiveness**. To that end, they will continue the process of developing operational methods and principles for a more efficient **division of labour within the EU** with a view to reducing transaction costs in delivering EU development contributions.

Taking account of the individual priorities of the Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies, the three Presidencies will, furthermore, examine whether to possibly conduct a study on an appropriate **EU strategy on crisis prevention and fragile states**, with special reference to the situation of women and children in armed conflict and the general issue of poor governance.

On the 3rd of May, a CONCORD delegation met with Prof. Dr. João Gomes Cravinho, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs & Cooperation of Portugal. Mr. Cravinho explained that the upcoming Portuguese Presidency will deal with a number of dossiers, some of those are 'inherited' while others are put on the agenda as an initiative of the Presidency. **Among the inherited dossiers are the EU-ACP negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements (which the Commission would like to finalise by the end of this year), the Joint EU-Africa Strategy, and the Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.** Two issues (out of the list of 12 thematic areas for Policy Coherence) will be put on the agenda by an own initiative: **security and migration**.

The Portuguese NGDO Platform project for the Presidency

In order to influence the outcomes of the EU Presidency, during the second half of 2007, the Portuguese NGDO Platform will organise their work towards a set of long-term public policy change objectives.

The main focus the EU Presidency project will be the EU-Africa Dialogue.

Already on the occasion of the Cairo EU-Africa Summit in 2000, a parallel civil society forum took place in Lisbon (Euro-African Forum of Lisbon, 31 March-01 April, 2000) on the Euro African Dialogue. The present initiative aims at following up that process, with a view to strengthen relationships and partnerships between northern and southern CSO's and to set and implement an independent civil society agenda on development issues tackled during the Presidency, with concrete steps and action plans for CSO's.

In this framework, the main areas of work will be:

- **Public accountability, Governance and the fulfillment of human rights (including Governance of Aid, Fragile States, civil society control on budgets and public expenditures, accountability, governance and fulfillment of human rights)**
- **Development and Migration** (Causes of migration, right of migrants, management of migrations fluxes, human security and fragile states, etc.)
- **Development & Cooperation Issues** – (as a transversal topic including: ownership, partnerships, innovative and additional funding for development, quality, quantity and transparency of aid, etc....)

Therefore, in line with previous NGO's Presidency projects, the Portuguese Platform will aim at:

1. Promoting the networking and partnership of Southern and European civil society actors, in order to strengthen the poverty focus of EU development policy and Europe's responsibility on Policy Coherence for Development.
2. Promoting public debate on present focuses of the EU development cooperation towards Africa, and an active involvement of Civil Society in the Euro-Africa dialogue.
3. To reopen for discussion the EU approach to "Governance", through a mutual learning exercise with the participation of Southern civil society partners and stakeholders, enhancing the principles of "accountability of the State to its citizens".
4. Strengthening the role of NGOs in Portuguese and EU development policy.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Portuguese NGDO Platform will actively engage with Southern and European civil society organisations, as well as other relevant stakeholders, seeking the formulation of shared positions and dissemination of good practices.

A civil society forum will take place in Lisbon in November, gathering together civil society representatives from Africa and Europe with the main objective of working together towards the construction of a strong shared vision on development for Africa.

It will serve as a basis of intervention of non-state actors in the formulation of future strategies on the North-South relations and feed the debate during the Europe-Africa Summit, scheduled to take place during the Portuguese Presidency.

This Forum will offer a unique opportunity for a wide range of civil society and parliament representatives from Europe and Africa to voice their main concerns and make recommendations on how to improve the Europe-Africa dialogue.

It aims at being an instrument for policy analyze and debate, to open and broaden the horizon/perspectives of the dialogue among Europe and Africa. The rational behind it is to build on and follow up, existing relationships and partnerships among European and African

organizations and networks. Its main goal is to strengthen working relationships as well as to improve the capacity of these actors to elaborate long term policy proposals.

It will be held in conjunction with the Parliamentarian Forum organized by the North-South Centre. Due to their own specificities and to allow for a deeper debate among these actors, although both events will be articulated during the opening and closing sessions, each of them will be held in parallel so as to facilitate debates among peers.

The final product of the forum would combine:

- a proactive and innovative political declaration regarding Civil Society vision on Euro African relationships, including concrete planning of actions and working agenda to ensure that the Forum will be part of a process, and not an end in itself;
- key political messages and recommendations on the main topics tackled during the Forum, that could be used as a lobbying tool in different political sphere, including the Official Summit.

As part of the troika process, the initiative of the Portuguese NGDO Platform is a continuation of the VENRO project of the German Presidency and also enters into the line of debates on the policy coherence previously focused by the Finnish Presidency. It will also contribute to feed the debates and actions of the following presidency projects of the Slovenian and French Platform – under the global framework of CONCORD -, namely where actions are connected to Education for Development (Slovenia) and the promotion of Partnerships for Development (France).

For more on the Portuguese NGDO Platform and the Presidency Project:
www.plataformaongd.pt