

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)
Committee on Economic Affairs and Development
Meeting on 15 April 2008

Mobilising parliaments in the "New partnership for Africa's development" (NEPAD)
Rapporteur: Mr Bjørnstad, Norway, SOC
[AS/EC (2008) 06 Rev.]

Exchange of views with Professor Uwe Holtz, member of the Society for International Development, former Chairman of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development and former Chairman of the German Bundestag Committee on Development Cooperation

It is a great honour for me and a challenge as well to testify before this important committee on "Mobilising parliaments in the *New partnership for Africa's development*" (NEPAD). I would like to make some comments and proposals based on the very valuable report submitted to you by Mr Bjørnstad.

1. NEPAD is not only a socio-economic programme of the African Union, but also a political initiative. The NEPAD agreement explicitly talks of a "Peace and Security Initiative" and a "Democracy and Political Governance Initiative" as conditions for sustainable development in Africa.¹ So the preoccupation with NEPAD fits well into the priority activities of the PACE.

2. With the NEPAD agreement, African leaders addressed a double taboo: No longer have they identified colonialism and imperialism as main responsible factors for the backwardness of the African continent² and they gave up the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs. By creating the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM³) as an African self-monitoring mechanism, they acknowledge that internal political conditions are at stake.⁴

¹ Very important is NEPAD's holistic approach of sustainable human development which incorporates the interdependent and mutually reinforcing dimensions of economic development (poverty eradication and an enabling international economic environment), environmental protection (sustainable management of natural resources), political participation and democracy (at the local, national and regional levels), the social dimension (interrelationship of desertification and social problems) and culture as "an integral part of development efforts".

² NEPAD Agreement § 71: *African leaders have learnt from their own experiences that peace, security, democracy, good governance, human rights and sound economic management are conditions for sustainable development.*

³ <http://www.nepad.org/aprm>: "The APR process entails periodic reviews of the policies and practices of participating countries to ascertain progress being made towards achieving the mutually agreed goals and compliance in the four focus areas, namely Democracy and Political Governance, Economic

The Cooperation between the secretariats of OECD/DAC (Review and Evaluation Division) and NEPAD/APR⁵ should be strengthened.

3. The transformation of parliaments and MPs into real agents of sustainable human development is required (# rubber stamp legislatures). Among a variety of roles for parliaments and parliamentarians, the report considers three as particularly important: legislation, oversight, and representation. Okay. However, I add to these three roles three other functions (forming together what I call the “parliamentary hexagon”):

- a. The power of the purse which enables parliaments to decide on the budget – so parliaments should individually plan for APRM financing in their national budgets. (APRM teams should consult not only government officials and civil society organizations, but also parliamentarians, the media, trade unions and others.)
- b. The elective power: Parliaments or even the Pan-African Parliament should elect an ombudsperson and/or a commissioner for human rights.
- c. Influencing international affairs, i.e. foreign policy and international relations: (treaty and war power, power of mediation between the public and international organisations and institutions and monitoring international organisations). One example: The Pan African Parliament

Governance and Management, Corporate Governance, and Socio-Economic Development. National ownership and leadership by the participating country are essential factors underpinning the effectiveness of the APRM. The APRM process is designed to be open and participatory.”

⁴ In the years after the decolonisation African leaders proclaimed: First development – then democracy. Now they admit: NEPAD, § 23: Many African governments did not empower their peoples to embark on development initiatives to realise their creative potential. Today, the weak state remains a major constraint to sustainable development in a number of countries.(+ weak parliaments) They are making a pledge to work, both individually and collectively, to promote these principles in their countries, sub-regions and the continent.

⁵ A Panel of Eminent Persons (APR Panel) depicting regional and gender diversity was appointed by the Heads of State to oversee the conduct of the APRM process and ensure its integrity (Prof. Adebayo Adedeji (West Africa); - Chairperson). The APR Panel is assisted by the APR Secretariat, which provides the secretarial, technical, co-ordinating and administrative support services for the APRM. The APRM Secretariat is currently established in the NEPAD Secretariat in Midrand, South Africa. The APR Secretariat provides secretarial, technical, coordinating and administrative support for the APRM. There are currently 27 countries participating in the African Peer Review Mechanism. The APRM process looks at four focus areas referred to as the Thematic Areas as follows: Democracy and Good Political Governance, Economic Governance & Management, Corporate Governance, Socio-economic Development.

should create a parliamentary oversight mechanism vis-à-vis the African Development Bank.

The PACE and this committee could offer a parliamentary partnership – in the spirit of the co-operation agreement with the Pan African Parliament. They may practise an “experience transfer” with regard to “bankwatch” activities based on the cooperation agreement of 1992⁶ with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). PACE serves as a parliamentary platform/forum for the OECD, the EBRD and other international or UN organisations.

By the way, the already existing Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe debates, reports and resolutions on the activities of the OECD and the EBRD shall be better used as parliamentary watchdogs to these institutions.⁷

4. Official Development Assistance/ODA: The report rightly asks for an increase of the financial means and an improvement of the quality. One may not overestimate the role of money in the development process.⁸ Development cooperation is not just a question of quantity, but of quality. You parliamentarians

³ PACE Res in 2006: “The Parliamentary Assembly, acting as parliamentary forum of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) under the 1992 Agreement of Co-operation between the Council of Europe and the EBRD, has reviewed the Bank’s work in 2005...”.

<http://www.bankwatch.org/guide/ebird/cgebrd-council.pdf> : An agreement of Co-operation between the Council of Europe and the EBRD was signed on 14, April, 1992 (www.bankwatch.org/issues/ebirdpip/ebird-ce-agreement.doc). Since this signing, the Parliamentary Assembly has been exercising its "parliamentary supervisory function" over the EBRD. This is done via Annual Report about the EBRD - this report is usually discussed in May/June and also includes the resolution. The EBRD President makes a presentation in front of the Parliamentary Assembly Annually. The EBRD related matters are covered by the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development. The Council of Europe does not have any decision making power over the EBRD, but nevertheless the resolutions do have political impact. Also, the contacts with the members of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development can help raise awareness in the national parliaments about the problems related to the EBRD.

⁷ cf. Memorandum presented by U Holtz, Chairman of PACE’s Sub-Committee on International Economic Relations on the basis of the Sub-Committee’s meeting in Côte d’Ivoire, 28 September 1991 [AS/Ec/IER (43) 2]: “The PACE has repeatedly called for greater parliamentary influence over the aid policies of major financial institutions such as the World Bank. ... It is highly unsatisfactory that parliaments vote large development assistance budgets,..., only to find out that they have little control over their use afterwards.” So before lecturing others, we should strengthen the oversight power of our own parliaments.

⁸ In 2006, net disbursements of aid to Africa (SSA) rose to USD 43.4 billion (39.9) – the continent (SSA) received 41 % (37.9 %) of total DAC aid in 2006. The ODA/GNI ratio for Africa was 3.5 % and for SSA 6.1 %. Africa’s population in 2006: 926.4 mio. – SSA: 656 mio. (cf. OECD/DAC: Development Co-operation Report 2007, Paris 2008).

In 2005, net ODA per person: Africa 39 USD; Asia 13 USD; all developing countries 20 USD.

should deny taxpayers' money going to corrupt, kleptocratic and incapable regimes.

A Slovenian EU Presidency Seminar on Africa, organised on February 28, 2008, by AWEPA (Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa), in co-operation with the European Parliament, the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) and the Society for International Development (SID) European Programme, was held to mark the occasion of the EU Presidency of Slovenia. Participants adopted a Resolution on Parliamentary Monitoring of ODA and appealed to the parliamentarians – that may be interesting for your Resolution – i.a. to “undertake action to hold EU governments to account on international commitments, especially concerning the policy objectives of the European Consensus (0.7% for old MSs and 0.33% for new MSs by 2015 latest), to exercise parliamentary oversight and to stimulate parliamentary questions and debates about the level, distribution and effectiveness of European ODA.”⁹

5. The efforts of the countries concerned incl. good governance on the one hand,¹⁰ the international framework of trade, investment and finance – an enabling environment – on the other are more important than ODA. In the times of globalization, orientations and framework-conditions are the paradigm of sustainable, human development, the principles set out in “Universal Declaration of Democracy” of the IPU, and an international social and ecological market economy able to counter the unregulated capitalism.¹¹

⁹ cf. <http://sid-europe.org>

¹⁰ ODA to Africa by sector in 2005 – total DAC countries: Social 26.9 % (education 7.8, health 4.6, government and civil society 6.7), Economic 7.9 (transport, energy, banking), Production 3.7, Agriculture 2.7, Industry 0.5, Trade & tourism 0.5); Debt 37.1., Humanitarian 12.1, Programme Aid 5.0, Multisector 5.2 %. (cf. OECD/DAC: Development Aid at a Glance 2007. Statistics by Region, Paris 2007)

¹¹ The European countries as well as supranational, intergovernmental and non-state organizations and actors should strive to maximize the positive effects and to minimize the negative effects of globalization by setting the framework conditions, taking as orientation an “international social and ecological market economy” based i.a. on the Millennium Declaration and its MDGs, the UN Global Compact, the pertinent ILO agreements, the IPU Universal Declaration on Democracy, the International Covenants and the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter underlying i.a. the relevance of free trade unions, multilateral environment agreements, and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

6. The Report welcomes the work of the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (*AWEPA*) which – with a membership of some 1200 members of national parliaments in Europe – set up a parliamentary support programme to mobilise parliamentarians for NEPAD (§ 68). In addition it underlines the importance of the eminent work done by the Parliamentary Network of the World Bank (*PNoWB*). Please, add the Parliamentary Network of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (*PNoUNCCD*) - a network of information, interaction and influence aimed at increasing parliamentary involvement and efficiency in the fields of combating desertification, soil erosion and land degradation supported by the UNCCD secretariat and endorsed by the IPU.¹² Look at the current tremendous food price rises, and you discover directly how important land issues and the topsoil are.

7. As the report rightly points out: “With its expertise in promoting human rights protection and advancing democratic governance, the North South Centre is well placed to focus on these areas in its exchanges with African parliamentarians.” As one of the fathers of the North South Centre I deplore the withdrawal of Italy and France, two major contributors to its budget. I appeal to you to start a specific initiative within the PACE to defend the Centre’s existence and a prosperous future which enables it to serve as an influential network of parliamentary dialogues and capacity building programmes.¹³

¹² cf. <http://www.unccd.int/parliament/menu.php>

¹³ Uwe Holtz (Society for International Development) was concerned at the fact that several countries were withdrawing from the Council of Europe’s North-South Centre and called on the Conference of INGOs to defend the Centre. See Conference of INGOs of the CoE - Report of the meeting held on 22 January 2008 (www.coe.int/t/e/ngo/public/ingo_conference/documents/2008/03_OING_Conf_2008_CR1_en.asp#TopOfPage).