

*Claudia Bonk***Conference Report Lomé 2000 and beyond,
Vienna, Palais Auersperg, November 12 and 13, 1998****Introduction**

The conference "Lomé 2000 and beyond" was held at the Palais Auersperg in Vienna on 12 and 13 November 1998. More than a hundred participants and experts met to gather information on and/or to discuss the issues of the past Lomé Conventions and the objectives, means, strategies and problems of a possible future Lomé Convention.

The conference in Vienna was the final event in a series of lectures and workshops, which had been held throughout Austria. They were designed to contribute to a better understanding of the complex relationship and current developments between the EU and the ACP by stimulating discussion and debate on the future shape and content of the new agreement. The lectures and workshops had first presented a general introduction on the history of the Lomé Conventions, before addressing specific issues such as the new trade regime or the EU as a multilateral aid organisation in general. The workshops proved to be valuable preparations for those, who later attended the Vienna conference, which rather than focus on past history settled down to tackling the issues of particular pertinence.

In 1975, the EU (then European Economic Community) and the so-called ACP states (African, Caribbean and Pacific States) signed the first Lomé Convention or Lomé I, which provided co-operation on an economic basis described as aid by trade. Since then, much has changed. Successor conventions, Lomé II to IV, followed at five-year intervals and the range of topics addressed was continuously broadened. With Lomé IV scheduled to expire in February 2000, the renegotiation process was to start anew. In particular, the EU saw the need to adapt the new convention to global changes and new realities such as the WTO.¹

The Austrian presidency of the European Council coincided with the opening of the negotiation process September 30, 1998 and by common assent, this was seen as a perfect opportunity to alert a wider public to the issue of co-operation between the EU and the ACP countries. Both sides had already presented their mandates, on which the negotiations were to be based and the controversial topics would have to be dealt with.

The issue of a new Lomé Convention was clearly of interest to a wide variety of people. The list of participants included economists and businessmen as well as representatives of NGOs, teachers, university students, civil servants from very different ministries and other sectors of the public.

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The list of speakers included experts from Austria as well as other European and ACP states supplemented by representatives of multilateral organisations such as the Council of Europe, DAC (OECD), UNDP, the North South Centre of the Council of Europe and representatives of various NGOs.

Following a very informative introduction by G. Wellmer and F. Moreau, a provocative presentation by C. Greenidge, and appeals for more humanity and humility by W. Sauer and A. Win (during a panel discussion), it soon became very clear that the participants were most worried about poverty eradication. Though it still forms the main objective of the legal framework of the Lomé Convention, it runs the risk of being overlooked given the difficult negotiations in the trade sector.

After the presentations, the conference split up into working groups. Drawing on the wealth of knowledge of the speakers, the groups were very committed and to a large extent presented profound results. They drew up demands directed especially towards the EU commission.

It was argued that growth had to go hand in hand with poverty eradication and should not be considered in isolation. Strong pleas were entered for more openness in terms of the trade regime on the European side (e.g. Common Agricultural Policy) and it was insisted that civil society should be involved in the negotiations and evolving agreement.

The most interesting presentations and results of working groups are summarized below.

Gottfried Wellmer, a free lance researcher, critically assessed the impact of the EU Commission's final draft of the mandate to negotiate trade relations with the ACP states. He stated that:

„Lomé was from its inception a neo-colonial contract. Conceived in the Cold War period and impressed by the OPEC states' ability to set oil prices in a concerted action and confronted by the developing countries' demand for a just economic world order, the EU decided it badly needed to secure in contractual terms a steady flow of raw materials and minerals for its industries and was prepared to pay a price. The price was firstly the principle of non-reciprocity: this meant that the raw materials of the developing countries could access EU markets without paying heavy import duties, while duty had to be paid on EU capital goods exported to developing countries. The price was secondly compensation payments for the falling income terms of trade for raw materials (Stabex and Sysmin).

Thus the successive Lomé contracts confirmed the subservient colonial role of the developing countries in the global economy of serving as suppliers of raw materials and remaining dependent recipients of capital goods.

The end of the Cold War and the debt trap which the developing countries found themselves in, made the EU realize that they could now have a steady flow of raw materials without paying the price of the Lomé contracts. The principle of non-reciprocity is to be lifted and exchanged for the principle of reciprocity. The less compensation paid for the falling income derived from the sale of ever increasing amounts of raw materials the better.

To proclaim this as the end of the neo-colonial period and the start of global trade among equal partners is blatant nonsense. Between creditors and debtors, between highly industrialized and developing nations, between Transnational Corporations controlling two thirds of global trade and the least developed countries, the balance of resources and power is in favour of the former.

The EU Commission wants the ACP states to sign a framework agreement until the year 2000, the contents of which are rather blurred and not precise. Then, after a transitional period of five years, in which the Lomé IV accord continues to be valid, the EU Commission is putting forward two options:

1. The establishment of regionally based reciprocal free trade areas involving the conclusion of agreements in trade related areas or, failing that,
2. The incorporation of ACP countries into the General System of Preferences (GSP) scheme consistent with their current level of development; the possibility is held out of continuing to extend existing Lomé preferences on a non-reciprocal basis to the least developed countries.

General economic theory suggests that where market integration occurs between countries with economies of radically different levels of development and size, the benefits tend to accrue disproportionately to the more developed party, while the costs tend to be carried disproportionately by the less developed party.

Before any framework agreements can be signed by the ACP countries, the EU ought to demonstrate practically in a legally binding manner, how it will definitely structure the new trade arrangements in such a manner as to maximise the benefits to the ACP countries for their moves towards free trade, whilst minimising the adjustment costs which ACP countries have to carry as a result of introducing duty free access for about 90% of EU exports to their markets.

Particular adjustment costs are likely to arise from moves toward free trade in the agricultural sector. With many ACP countries dependent upon the agricultural sector for both internal, regional and external overseas trade, the issue of the trade-distorting effects of EU agricultural support programmes, under the EU CAP is of considerable importance. At present the EU Commission simply maintains that any future trade arrangement must be consistent with CAP. This singularly fails to address the issue of the impact of EU agricultural subsidies and administered price schemes for agricultural products on third country markets. Failure to address the issue will certainly generate severe disruptions in important agricultural sub-sectors."

The global flows of foreign direct investment have largely neglected Africa in the past and will undoubtedly continue to do so in the future. Only the oil-exporting countries in Africa have been able to attract a certain degree of foreign direct investment. Between 1990 and 1995, Africa as a whole attracted on average about US\$ 3.7 billion of which about a third went to Nigeria.² This stands in crass comparison to investment flows from Europe to the United States, which

accounted for about 190 billion US\$ in 1996 alone. 85% of all foreign direct investment flows are between the United States, Europe and Japan.

Trade relations between the EU and ACP states have significantly changed over the years of co-operation. Whereas in 1975 EU exports to the ACP countries accounted for 7.4% of all EU exports and imports from ACP countries to the EU accounted for 7.3% of all EU imports, the picture has changed dramatically. In 1992 EU exports to the ACP countries had slumped to 3.9% and EU imports from the ACP countries declined to 3.7%.³ This shows a clear downward trend in the importance of trade between the two parties, even though total ex- and imports between both parties have almost doubled over time.

Françoise Moreau of the European Commission described the genesis of the Green Paper and its evolution into the EU mandate.

„With Lomé IV ending in February 2000, the Commission decided in 1996 to start thinking about possible new approaches to the EU-ACP relationship, in a context which is very different from that in which the Convention was initially conceived some 25 years ago. The starting point of the Green Paper's analytical work was thus to identify the main factors of change which have and will have an influence on the ACP-EU relationship in the coming decades. Few would dispute that the international context has changed dramatically, both from a political standpoint and from an economic perspective. In short, what was needed was an in-depth reflection on how to adapt Community development co-operation policies to the post-cold-war era, to the outcome of the Uruguay Round and to the rapidly evolving situation in the ACP countries. Geostrategic considerations have changed, with sometimes significant consequences for the financial support coming from the great powers. Political liberalisation is underway and democratisation processes have begun to take root in most countries in the South. Such processes however are still fragile and need to be consolidated and firmly supported by external partners.

From the economic standpoint, it appears more and more clearly that the general process of liberalisation and the globalisation of trade and financial systems is leading to the emergence of a new international economic environment, which offers a lot of opportunities, but at the same time presents a number of risks. Also taking account of the recent financial crisis that occurred in Asia, we could consider that those risks are at least of three types:

First, the risk of further marginalising the poorest countries, among them many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, whose preferential margins are eroding and which face difficulties in adjusting their economies quickly enough to take advantage of the potential benefits of liberalisation. This, however, does not question the objective of promoting the progressive integration of the ACP countries in the world economy, because in the long run, it is the most effective way to achieve sustainable social and economic development. But our concern should be to ensure, that the necessary adjustments are properly monitored and that growth is equitably shared.

Secondly, the risk of increasing the divergences between groups of population within countries, a trend which is apparent in developing as well as in developed countries, as illustrated by the rise in poverty in Europe or in Northern America. Increasing social exclusion points to the need for appropriate social policies and for the integration of social development objectives in the formulation of economic policies, be it at national or at more global levels.

A third risk to be considered is linked to the high degree of interdependency and to financial crises arising such as the recent Asian crisis. This crisis is attributed to structural deficiencies in the regulatory framework and in the supervision of the financial sector, as well as to a lack of political transparency. This crisis confirms the validity of the EU's new approach to development co-operation which emphasizes the need for a democratic and participatory environment, the importance of promoting good governance and combating corruption, the need for a transparent and efficient institutional framework.

Another important element, that the Commission had in mind when launching this reflection on the future EU-ACP relationship, is the relative loss of legitimacy of public development aid. All recent figures on official aid show a declining trend, with the total aid effort by OECD countries amounting to slightly less than 48 billion dollars in 1997, compared with 55 billion the year before. As a percentage of donors' GDP, official development assistance has fallen to an average of 0.22%. This means that we are now very far from the initial objective of 0.7% fixed by the donor countries some decades ago. This situation is partly due to the budgetary as well as economic and social constraints faced by most donor countries, but it is certainly also due to the negative image given by proliferation of wars and violent conflicts, corruption and inefficiency, in short by a lack of visible results of aid in terms of reduced poverty and inequality, of improved human security and peace.

There is certainly a need to restore public support for development aid. It has often been argued that private investment could replace public development assistance. In the light of the financial crisis, however, it becomes more and more obvious that continuous and adequate flows of aid will still be necessary, in particular where the conditions for attracting long-term productive and non-volatile private capital are not met.

All those elements point to the need to re-think fundamentally the role of development co-operation and the type of partnership to be established between the European Union and the ACP countries.

Before drafting any formal proposal for the successor to the Lomé Convention, the Commission then decided to open a wide debate in Europe and in the ACP countries.

The aim was two-fold:

- First, to help revitalize the debate in Europe on development co-operation policies, and more specifically on the role of the European Union in this area, considering that development co-operation is one of the three main compo-

nents of the external action of the European Union, together with the common commercial policy and foreign policy;

- Secondly, to understand better the different views and the general expectations towards European development co-operation policy and EU-ACP relations in particular.

This debate has been a useful exercise and a real dialogue has taken place.

During the debate two key conclusions have progressively emerged: First, there is a strong desire to renew the partnership between the EU and the ACP group and to preserve the 'acquis' of the Lomé experience. Secondly, the partnership should be radically reformed in order to address new challenges and constraints. This implies reviewing both the objectives of the partnership and the means of achieving them.

Following the series of seminars, conference, and consultative fora that took place last year on the basis of the Green Paper, the Commission adopted a policy document setting out key policy guidelines reflecting the outcome of the debate. Five main conclusions came out clearly:

1. The need to reinforce the political dimension of the EU-ACP relationship, to revitalize the partnership, and to adopt a participatory approach involving a wider range of actors in the partnership;
2. To give priority to the objective of poverty eradication, adopting an approach that integrates the political, economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development;
3. Open up co-operation to economic partnership with the aim of helping the ACP countries to participate fully in an open world economy;
4. Radically re-work the practical modalities for implementing financial co-operation to make it more efficient; and
5. As regards the geographical coverage of a future agreement, to preserve the integrity of the ACP group, which was the main message of the Libreville ACP Summit, while introducing differentiation to attune the partnership better to specific needs and to the development strategies of each country or region.

These 5 broad conclusions have thus formed the basic framework for elaborating the EU's mandate."

Carl Greenidge of the ACP Secretariat in Brussels spoke about the priorities the ACP states were setting for a new convention. In his view, the ACP countries were not seeking the Convention to be re-written. At least they would only be interested in doing so if re-writing would enhance the "acquis" and improve the capacity of the partners to implement the ideas and visions of the Lomé Convention more effectively.

"The ACP goals are essentially development and growth. It is not that other priorities are not of interest to the group, but they recognise that the fight against poverty can only be won in the long term if it is recognised that it has to do with the enhancement of peoples' capacity to expand their productive capacity and

to influence their material conditions. As a consequence, in deciding whether any particular proposal meets ACP needs or not, it is necessary to look at the destination or nature of the aid, whether it encompasses poverty elimination, whether it looks at the problem of poor states versus poor sectors within states and social projects versus economic programmes aimed at production.

Basically, the group would wish to be satisfied that it is not being given a plaster as opposed to remedies.

Poverty is not a problem of intra-ACP distribution but of OECD versus poor states. UNCTAD has estimated that 1.2 billion people are at risk of marginalisation as a result of liberalisation. This means, that some international policies contribute to the widening of disparities, not only within states.

As regards the EU idea of using aid to enforce global agreements, this seems to find no favour with the ACP. The triumvirate of WTO, IMF and IBRD are now the managers of the international economic system. The policies they have been pushing are now being questioned. So we should not be expected to accept them uncritically. They have contributed to some of the inequities mentioned above. Lance Taylor of the School for Social Research in New York and Anna Schwartz of the National Bureau for Economic Research are calling for the abolition of the Fund. The Austrian President called upon the IMF to refashion its adjustment model. Is this to be reflected in the EU? Interestingly enough, ACP states in similar attempts receive little sympathy, let alone such support.

The Central Bank of the Russian Federation disposed of US\$ 3.8 billion of IMF resources in a month in a vain attempt to defend the Rouble! In June they received US\$ 4.8 billion. The ACP countries have no problem with this in itself, but recognise that no ACP state has in the past or can expect in the foreseeable future the receipt of such massive support. That such quantities of adjustment are required for some states to cope with instability suggests that the sum totally currently available is far from adequate. The brunt of the shortfall is borne by those who, for political reasons will not command a proportionate share.

The basis of all ACP initiatives is solidarity, which has its foundation in the Georgetown Agreement and the Libreville Declaration. In the Libreville Declaration the ACP states seemed to envisage using the Convention as a springboard for wider international economic initiatives. In this regard emphasis would be on ensuring consistency in international agreements involving or affecting the ACP states.

Out of this comes the search for a balanced dialogue with the EU and modified institutional structures.

The main principles and objectives of the ACP position are:

- i) The search to make partnership meaningful by ensuring that the dialogue takes place on subjects of interest to both sides and not only on EU preoccupations. The outcome of this dialogue would be to contract both parties rather than to impose unilaterally EU conditionality on the ACP states.
- ii) Among the issues that the ACP will put on the table for discussion with the EU is the impact on the ACP countries of EU third-party agreements (USA,

Latin America etc.) as well as the impact of the activities of the EU actors (transnational corporations and mercenaries) on original stability.

- iii) The group believes that some conflicts are avoidable, pre-conflict dialogue and assistance would be very valuable. After hot wars, there is a tendency for the international community to forget the states and ignore the high costs of reconstruction (Angola and Zaire) and of keeping the peace.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the ACP states have observed an OECD and EU reluctance to assist with Third World peace-keeping, especially if it risks the loss of OECD/EU citizens' lives. This is the case even where there are no threats to their strategic interests.

Where the EU has a strategic interest, they now seem to prefer indirect means of pursuing their interest, namely to use local forces or mercenaries to keep the peace. There is a preference to use surrogates – regional military powers such as Nigeria who are then not provided with the necessary support in terms of transport, personnel carriers and surveillance equipment necessary to have them implemented the task efficiently. Clearly enforcing the peace is not simply a question of feeding soldiers whose lives are cheap.

The other financial interests of many EU states are not consistent with peace, let alone peace-keeping. EU states constitute the majority in the world's top 10 arms exporters.

The new ideology underlying this model is that funds are less important than political priorities or institutions (corruption, human rights etc.). This has probably gone too far as objective indicators suggest that the problems facing the least developed countries need more financial resources if they are to be solved.

The ACP countries wish to see the international trade regime management recognised as part and parcel of development policy insofar as it affects their development prospects. There is therefore a need to have a convention which facilitates the capacities of ACP states to capitalise on the liberalised framework. The trade regime should not undermine this goal.

Regarding income stability, the ACP states see a relation between conflict prevention and conflict management. The UNCTAD 1997 Report pointed to the weakening of the state and civil society in least developed countries, where there has been a widespread collapse of such entities after 1980.

The origin of this problem lies in part with the trade situation. There has been a commodity price 'bloodbath' in 1993 and another downward trend in 1998 with the global recession. For example white sugar and gold prices stand at an historically low level.

So in trade the ACP wishes to give high priority to stabilizing the incomes of ACP commodity producers. For this reason the group has always had a strong commitment to Stabex-type instruments. Additionally, it needs to be emphasized that since commodity producers are so important to the group, closing down Stabex poses a threat to the group's solidarity. In line with this goes the high priority of the commodity protocols. Help is needed to export to buoyant markets and to develop products with high income-elasticity of demand.

Another priority of the ACP lies on market access. Market barriers, phytosanitary rules, dispute settlement, etc. all pose growing limitations to access to the EU market. The longterm requirement of the ACP states is to preserve their access to EU markets. From the very inception of the Convention, both the ACP and EU envisaged trade as an important mechanism for facilitating development by providing ACP states with the wherewithal to increase incomes. The Free-Trade Areas (FTAs), which the EU is proposing to the ACP, are effectively a proposal to open ACP markets to the EU and not the reverse.

The treatment of non-LDC ACP states forms another priority for the ACP states. One of the difficulties the ACP group has with the current trade regime is its failure to classify developing states properly. The constellation of developing countries is indeed very wide, reflecting a very varied range of actual capacities and potential. Few of the ACP states are in a position to compete effectively or to worship at the same altar of free trade as the transitional states. These economies need to be granted a meaningful period of transition and adjustment. One way out of the problem lies in the hands of the ACP group. It needs to use the muscle it has in the WTO, jointly with the EU where possible, to ensure that there are appropriate rule changes consistent with its needs.

In the area of financial and technical co-operation, the top priority is improved implementation. The basis of such implementation, which is our means of enhancing disbursements, can be found in the post-Fidji study. It includes decentralisation of decision making from Brussels.

The area of investment is also of special interest to the group. The ACP mandate identifies a number of areas to which special attention should be paid: Namely infrastructure, assistance to private investors, small businesses and joint ventures and the investigation into and dissemination of information especially in African economies that are in a position to benefit from investment. Consideration should be given to the EU treatment of this matter in the context of ASEAN.

The intermediate developing states seem to be in a position to benefit from the development of the services sector and are interested in support to services, especially in tourism. There is a need to recognize that a number of barriers to ACP exports exist in this area, which have a lot of potential. For example, the restrictions on the movement of ACP nationals into EU states. This is especially important in a context where ACP services move with labour.

It is helpful for the EU to continue to separate debt to member states from that to the Community. First, within the Convention provision should be made to relieve the external indebtedness of ACP states. Secondly, the EU should use its muscle in the Bretton Woods forum to ensure that the HIPC-Initiative (Highly indebted poor country-initiative) is made more meaningful and that not only two ACP states would benefit from debt relief by the year 2000. All sensible observers agree that all 20 highly indebted countries, which are all ACP states, need such assistance urgently.

Two other areas, which are not new to Lomé but which are being ascribed higher priority by both Lomé parties, are regionalisation and differentiation. The

ACP countries seek to sharpen the instruments Lomé carries for support of regional integration. This is conformed by the commitment of all ACP regions to the dopamine of regional integration. The question which the group has yet to address is the extent to which institutional arrangements need to be modified in order to avoid undermining ACP solidarity, especially in the light of the apparent EU proposal for de facto regionalisation of ACP instruments.

In the area of differentiation, the ACP propose that the EU agrees with them on including the wherewithal for treating the differences among ACP states.

In both these areas, ACP and EU seem to be at one. The test of this particular approach and the common ground will come when the specific details have to be framed. Indeed, it is interesting that the EU is proposing differential treatment of ACP states even as it is urging a simplification of the instruments of Lomé. Economists have long accepted that in normal circumstances under the rubric of the principle of 'effective market classification', differentiation should require that different targets warrant different instruments.

In conclusion, the group is seeking to convert itself into a platform in which it can confront the evolving global challenges and on which it can seek to deepen co-operation with its international partners. It is prepared to embrace the concept of political dialogue and to try to have a new convention which seeks to give meaningful effect to the concept by way of equal or balanced responsibility. The ACP group places high priority on increasing the effectiveness of the Lomé instruments. The overall priority in the context of the evolving global priorities and liberalisation is to keep aid development-focused."

Walter Sauer of the Austrian Union referred to a speech, that EU-commissioner Joao de Deus Pinheiro had delivered at the Third Ministerial Conference EU – Southern Africa on 3–4 November, 1998 in Vienna. He found it conspicuous, that the Commissioner had merely called for the alleviation, not the eradication, of poverty, preferring to use a very vague phrase. Sauer went on to say:

"The trade union movement will certainly not be satisfied with the alleviation of poverty. It is striving for the eradication of the roots of poverty, meaning the establishment of economic and social conditions which would allow for a life in dignity and prosperity for all. In order to achieve this objective, it is essential to tackle the causes of poverty, which produce poverty again and again under the current social circumstances. As trade unions we do not understand poverty as a given phenomenon, but rather as a social problem resulting from an unfair distribution of resources. One certainly has to distinguish between internal causes of poverty and underdevelopment as well as external ones, such as the debt crisis or the dumping of EU agricultural goods on African economies. In any case, we have to acknowledge that not charity, but only the fight against the causes of poverty can serve as the means to its eradication. The new Lomé Convention should therefore explicitly strive for the eradication of poverty.

The trade union movement is of the opinion that the liberalisation of the international trade regime cannot be the main goal of a development-focused

trade policy. We are not calling for the isolation or – as some ideologists in the seventies did – for the delinking of the poorest countries from the global economy. Experience of the past years on the other hand has shown that the present form of economic integration, globalisation which is mainly to benefit of the multinational corporations, will not produce the desired results, but rather increase the problems of the developing countries further.

A recently published joint study of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the European Trade Union Federation (ETUC) has criticised the mandate of the EU commission for the Lomé negotiations as follows: 'The goal of rapidly integrating the ACP countries into the world trade and the promotion of the private sector with guarantees of international investment seem to predominate, and risk making social progress subject to illusory economic growth ... The trade union movement believes that rather than giving priority to neo-liberal globalisation as dictated by the WTO, positive integration into the world market should be a gradual process, with transitional measures, accompanied by serious guarantees as to the economic and social impact, which will require the prior evaluation of the potential benefits for the ACP countries.'

It must be noted that from this point of view the new Lomé convention need not be adapted to WTO rules, but the WTO needs to be developmentally orientated. In this, the position of the international trade union movement is clearly more in conformity with the ACP position than with that of the EU.

Deus Pinheiro also spoke about the importance of the private sector to the development of the countries of the Third World. In connection with the Lomé debate one needs to address the question: What exactly is meant by the private sector? Are we talking about the importance of national private enterprises or of the support and promotion of multinational corporations? Is the main aim to strengthen the position of multinational corporations as the most powerful players in the globalisation process and to subjugate the economies of the Third World countries even more than before? Or should the ACP economies be strengthened and protected (e.g. with tariff barriers) to enhance the processing of regional goods and raw materials and their marketing, which was the underlying concept of Lomé I and II? Clearly the unions support the latter concept.

Lomé has a political dimension, under which all partners committed themselves to democracy and good governance. This is definitely not to be understood in such way as to dictate the political systems for the ACP countries. We should use the political dimension of the convention to realize the fundamental social rights, which all states have agreed upon, such as the ILO Core Labour Standards. As unions, we are calling for better conditions for the neediest participants in world markets. Therefore Lomé should not become a charity agreement, but should provide mechanisms for a change of the international economic system in favour of the South. At the same time, we are asking for the just distribution to the wide population of the economic results gained by these better conditions and we will not allow the monopolising of these conditions within elites. A new North-South balance should therefore allow for fairer economic

distribution patterns under national frameworks. If a Lomé system is to function well, it has to be supplemented by a socio-political regulation of the informal sector, by actively pursuing an employment strategy, by creating conditions for full employment, by focusing more on the protection of employees and the environment and by creating an effective social security system. Undoubtedly, this will only be possible via a change in the current neo-liberal distribution policy."

The following day a panel discussion was held. The panelists were representatives of multilateral organisations, the aim of the exercise being to present the floor with an opportunity to learn what other organisations thought of the Lomé agreement.

In her presentation, Aye Aye Win of the Global Synergies Initiative made three important points.

First she called for a "full endorsement of the focus of future EU-ACP development and trade agreement on poverty eradication. This is in line with the priorities set by the donor countries and the targets set by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD and it should also be in line with the previous international agreements at Copenhagen, Rio, Beijing and Cairo.

The world has the resources to eradicate poverty – what is required is the political will.

Economic growth is important, but it should go hand in hand with the political objective of poverty eradication. Globalisation brought about global economic growth and has generated US\$ 25 trillion. Amidst all this growth, it is a crime against humanity that over 1.4 billion people live in absolute poverty. It cannot be accepted that this growth is not enhancing equity. This has to be made clear in the new negotiations. The new Lomé presents the EU with an opportunity to illustrate solidarity not just with the South, but for solidarity with the poor in the South."

The second point stressed by A. Win concerned the actors in the Lomé process. "Despite the lip-service paid to the importance of civil society, the Lomé process is still closed with the negotiations confined to experts, technocrats and ministerial officials. There is a clear need to move away from this realist paradigm of states as the only actors and economic and political powers as the only tools and to expand people's spaces in the Lomé process.

If one gets too involved in the technicalities and the complexities, one loses sight of the vision. Lomé is about real people and real lives, and there is the need to involve them in the Lomé process.

There are the principles of partnership, ownership and democratisation in the Convention, that now calls for the democratisation of the Lomé process itself to involve the people, especially to involve men and women from marginalised and poor communities."

The third point referred to was humility: "Exercising humility is one important element in the fight to eradicate poverty. We are all too quick to prescribe

solutions to poverty eradication. We act as if we know all the answers of how this can be done without listening and learning from what the men and women from the poor and marginalised communities have to say.

People from poor and marginalised communities in Latin America, Africa, Asia, participating in a recent meeting called "Forum of the Poor" in Lisbon, stressed that human dignity was of utmost importance. The poor uphold human dignity like the rest of humanity. They are capable of speaking for themselves and working to improve their situation in partnership with others. Though poor in material terms, they have a wealth of wisdom; a wisdom that has largely been excluded because they have been dis-empowered by their economic and social standing.

Another important factor is to listen and learn from the poor. If we want to eradicate poverty, we need to listen and learn from the poor themselves. The poor are people who are busy making their living so that they can nourish themselves and their families. We must therefore be careful not to speak on behalf of the poor and substitute ourselves in the name of the poor. Any ideas to help the poor should be largely developed by the poor. NGOs, local and international as well as other actors must be careful not to impose their own projects as if they have all the answers. The answers lie with the poor and the ownership of initiatives should also lie with the poor. US\$ 1 spent on an initiative conceived and implemented by the poor will be far more effective in eradicating poverty than US\$ 10.000 spent on projects imposed by other actors.

The Lomé renegotiation process presents us with the opportunity to put an end to lip-service, to put aside our arrogance by imposing projects on the poor and instead pursue the objective of poverty eradication wholeheartedly, enthusiastically and exercising humility, respecting the dignity of the poor, listening and learning from them and working in partnership with them. It is in this way that we can move towards a globalisation process that puts the interests of the human being at its centre, and for the economic growth that works in the interest of the poor."

Following the panel discussion, the participants split up into seven working groups. The results and demands are presented below:

Working group no. 1 discussed "*Poverty eradication and the Lomé Convention*": Regarding the overall objective of development co-operation, the participants of the working group entered a plea to keep the term "poverty eradication" or "eradication of the roots of poverty" in content and in terminology. Weaker and allegedly more realistic terms such as poverty reduction were commonly rejected. There was a call for the corresponding terminological changes in the EU development policy in general and in the EU-ACP negotiation process towards a new Lomé convention in particular.

Much of the group's discussion time was pre-occupied with the question of how and by whom such a poverty eradication could be achieved?

It was vehemently warned against the use of Eurocentrist concepts for the definition of poverty and the identification of socio-political measures. This was directed against the Western concepts of *good governance* and *civil society* as

well as against the implementation of conditionalities within the framework of trade contracts.

In principle different strategic approaches to combat poverty through charitable and/or macro-economic means were discussed with different stresses on the formal and informal sectors, but without setting priorities.

There was consensus that the identification of the roots of poverty and the design of strategies towards its eradication should be a process driven by the poor.

Poverty eradication should cover not only the urban, but also the rural areas of a country, and representatives of the poor should be included in the decision making process in development co-operation on both a multilateral (in Brussels) and on a bilateral basis (in Vienna). However, there were critical questions on who could represent the poor (a very heterogeneous group of society) and which role political parties, that try to mobilize peasants and workers (the poor) in the South, should play. Furthermore, fundamentally accepted objectives of poverty eradication (p.e. access to clean water for all) could be striven for in different ways as comparison of different organisations such as WHO (free access to clean water) and the World Bank (cost effectiveness in the provision of clean water) shows.

Later on the participants of the group discussed problems of programme funding: aid provided by industrialised countries is diminishing because of donor fatigue. This stems from a lack of political interest and from disappointment owing to the past ineffectiveness of aid. Will more aid lead to more dependency instead of mobilizing capacities? Some asked for a development tax in the developed countries, others asked for the mobilisation of enlarged budgets for poverty eradication in the countries themselves.

Also discussed were the controversies of commercial investments in the social sectors.

The consequences of EU agricultural policy in Western and Southern Africa led to the discussion of trade policies and its role in the emergence of new poverty and the potential fail of social reforms (like land reforms). Out of this came the demand for more coherence between the different policy areas of the European Union. The ACP demands for better market access should also be supported.

Working group no. 2, which discussed "*The Lomé Convention and political dialogue*", presented the following results:

For want of time the working group did not enter into a discussion of the issues of good governance or dialogue as a means of solving the problem of poverty. Instead it focused on facilitating the political dialogue at the national and European Union levels. It refrained from prescribing specific approaches for the APC countries since it had no wish to impose solutions on those countries which, however, were encouraged in the spirit of partnership to consider the applicability of the participatory mechanisms deemed apposite for countries in the Union. The working group was also very conscious of the danger of trying to reinvent the wheel and thus sought to utilise existing mechanisms to the full.

At a national level, the starting point for the working group was that in any debate clear and comprehensible information on all issues should be freely available. In the EU-Lomé context, it was noted with regret that the very mandate given by the Council to the Commission was not in the public domain, thus depriving those wishing to enter into a dialogue of basic information. That contrasted sharply with the provision of information by the ACP countries whose secretariat had not withheld pivotal documents on the negotiation process.

On the principle of clarity and transparency of information coupled with a genuine sense of partnership, the dialogue in Austria should focus on encompassing: (i) the NGOs in their entirety; (ii) the 'social partners' (with specific emphasis on the inclusion of the trade unions); (iii) the ministry(ies) concerned; and (iv) parliamentarians, both national MPs and Euro-MPs. It was stressed that effective involvement of the private sector was highly desirable, yet it was recognised that if at all, the private sector would be involved by virtue of its being part of the 'social partnership'. In any event, the dialogue should be a genuine two-way consultative process with a regular interchange of information.

The idea was mooted of organising a one-day retreat for all the parties in the process of dialogue in order to increase awareness of the crucially important issues pertaining to Lomé 2000 and beyond.

At the European level, the principle of clarity and transparency of information held equally true, if not more so, especially at the level of the European Union. The information provided should not be restricted to retrospective data, but should also include progress reports and indications of projected courses of action, as well as information on all stages of individual projects. As at the national level, the process should not be uni-directional, but should provide for an effective exchange of views on all related developments. Full use should be made of existing mechanisms such as the Liaison Committee Secretariat in Brussels.

The information flow would be greatly enhanced by holding regular fora that could provide all parties from both the EU and ACP countries with an opportunity to discuss current negotiations and work in progress in an atmosphere of partnership.

Working group no. 3 worked on "*Lomé in the international context of development theories and doctrines*":

The basic questions asked:

- 1) Does the Lomé development co-operation simply follow conventional development theories?
- 2) Does the Lomé development co-operation provide the ACP countries with a better chance than other donors and partners?

The group started with an analysis of past development theory and the shift that took place between 1955 and 1990: the structural functionalism theory; the neo-Marxist political economy theory; the neo-liberal political economy theory and the new institutionalism theory (in all these mention was made of the political and economic aspects of development, especially W. W. Rostow's "Economics of Take-Off", André Gunter Frank, Fernando H. Cardoso and Kwame Nkrumah

and others). The group also analysed shifts in ideological perspectives on development between 1955 and 1990: the trickle down concept; the basic needs; small is beautiful; and the enabling environment.

The group came to the following conclusions: The development theories as reflected above were all ideologically loaded both as expressions against colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism, as well as against socialist oriented strategies.

The period reflected above coincided greatly with the Cold War era, therefore conventional development theory and doctrines were also to be viewed as serving the vested interests of this period.

The main objective of the conventional development theory and doctrines is "economic growth" and not development. Less attention was placed on human and people's development.

The failure of conventional development theory and doctrines is to be found around the above mentioned issues, although not exclusively.

Looking back into the past and reviewing the Lomé conventions both in theory and practice as well as its aims and objectives, the group compared the Lomé conventions with other international development theories and practices and came to the following conviction:

Lomé followed the general trend of conventional development theory, which means it agrees with growth theory (economic growth-oriented), dependency theory (it keeps the ACP countries totally dependent on the EU countries) and it was ideological (the neo-liberal political and economic ideology was the driving motor behind Lomé, especially after the end of the Cold War).

Lomé's emphasis on trade and the instruments devised for the implementation showed that it was more of an economic growth oriented convention than a development oriented treaty.

The group acknowledged the fact that the Lomé-partnership process was unique among other international development doctrines, especially the chances it offered for interaction with other actors within the civil society, but how far representatives of civil society from the ACP countries could directly interact was very questionable.

That EU and ACP representatives should show more commitment to ensuring greater female participation, as well as provide more seats for females at all negotiation tables.

Finally the Lomé convention like all other conventional development doctrines following the trend of time and was adjusting itself to global political and ideological as well as populist demands. It had not changed with respect to development demands or the needs of the ACP countries and their peoples. Lomé was just like a fashion show. Therefore the group concluded that the Lomé convention in no way differed from other conventional development theory and doctrines. It did not provide better chances for ACP countries than other donors and partners. Lomé was therefore an inappropriate instrument for development and the eradication of poverty.

The topic "*Lomé in the international economic and trade context*" was discussed in working group no. 4:

This group focused on the interaction between "globalisation" and EU-ACP economic relations. For a start the following questions were formulated:

- 1) Who is setting the conditions (the external environment) for the Lomé negotiations?
- 2) Is sustainable development, an aim recognized by the international community, compatible with the current global framework?
- 3) Are market principles compatible with the inclusion of marginalized countries and population groups?

The above questions led to a lively and controversial debate on aspects of international trade in goods. Issues such as financial market liberalization, foreign debts, trade in services were barely touched. Thus, it was not possible to agree on specific options for future EU-ACP trade co-operation (as, for example, a coordinated effort to change WTO rules so as to make them more development-friendly).

The participants agreed nevertheless on the following:

- The trade preferences and special protocols secured by the ACP states represented the best access to the EU market ever enjoyed by developing countries.
- Those preferences had been utilized only selectively and are eroded by the ongoing general trade liberalization.
- A WTO waiver should be requested for a term of 10 years rather than for the 5 year period proposed in the EU mandate.
- An effort should be made to create conditions in ACP countries as are necessary to enable the countries to benefit from trade liberalisation (and from trade in general), including institution building, capacity building (educational efforts) and diversification of the export/production base.

A majority of participants displayed a rather critical attitude towards free trade, although China's historical achievement in reducing poverty levels by introducing market principles was mentioned as well. The following demands were made:

- The effects of free trade on the environment, poverty eradication and gender issues had to be taken into account.
- "Fair trade" had to be supported as far as possible.
- Conditions for investors e.g. by Codes of Conduct were a necessity.
- The introduction of social and environmental clauses in trade agreements should be considered, especially where possible through co-operation with local producers and workers' organizations.
- Poverty eradication, gender equality and sustainable development, included as general principles for co-operation in the EU's Lomé mandate, should be specifically mentioned as objectives in the chapter on trade co-operation.

Working group no. 5 had the title "*Women and the Lomé Co-operation*":

The participants looked at possibilities of strengthening the position of women. In order to reach that goal, there had been a call for the establishment of a just

economic system so as to win the fight against poverty. That call shouldn't remain a mere empty phrase, but be pushed for eminently.

It was concluded that countries were still ruled by a patriarchy and work was still distributed inequitably. Nevertheless, unpaid women's labour produced an estimated output equivalent to US\$ 11 billion in 1995!

Women worked hard and long hours without being paid. This surely contributed to the fact that women had no or only little time to spend on education for themselves. Therefore, the fight against poverty had to encompass the realities of the situation facing women.

The working group advanced the idea, that the basis for establishing a just economic system could be formed by private households at the village level and be regarded as the starting point of any just economic system, as one important pillar of sustainable development was the return to a small community-approach.

As to the question of how the establishment of a just economic system could work, the participants argued that women from the South had to be included in the negotiation process of a new Lomé Convention under any circumstances. They should also actively participate in all decision-making processes once the new convention had been drawn up.

Furthermore, the group called for the right of civil society to participate at all levels and to institutionalise that right, taking women into special consideration (because it is more difficult for women to have access to resources and information).

Another important area dealt with was coherence between development policy and trade and economic policy. Current practice in the EU however, seemed to be destroying what had already been achieved with EU funds. Policy-makers were called upon to act and ensure that all human rights were being preserved, especially the economic and social rights of women.

The concluding demand of the group was to strengthen women in the South, their NGOs and regional networks, so that the eradication of poverty could be enhanced by their effective participation and inclusion.

The results of working group no. 6 "*Lomé and ecology*" brought the following results and demands:

„Up to now, ecological aspects have *not been mentioned adequately* in the Lomé Treaties. Lomé IV, Article 37, requires that projects likely to have a significant environmental impact, undergo Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) "where appropriate". The mandate for Lomé V includes ecological sustainability as a principle, but does not go into detail.

Is economic growth threatened by the implementation of ecological criteria? No, the question is wrongly put since it implies that economic (= GDP) growth needs to take priority over all other aspects. In order to achieve ecologically (and socially) sustainable development we have to look at other aspects as well: *We need growth of quality of life and not just of (financial) quantity.*

Implementation of ecological aspects (as well as poverty eradication) *is not possible* when the main aim is integration of national economic production into

the world market. The focus of economic development has to be first on food and income security for local and regional markets and only secondly on export and world market integration. Also needed is *debt cancellation* for least developed countries and the large-scale reduction of debt for other developing countries. The latest round of debt-cancellation for Honduras and Nicaragua by numerous industrialised countries after Hurricanes Mitch has shown that debt can indeed be cancelled. Do there have to be more hurricane or other catastrophes in order for debt cancellation to become true also for other least developed countries?

In any case: EU-governments as well as the EU institutions are to be reminded that they agreed to the *Agenda 21* at the 1992 UNCED-conference in Rio de Janeiro, calling for ecologically sustainable development.

Demands in detail

1. Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)

- for all projects and programmes (mid-term perspective)
- for exports of products (e.g. industrial equipment) to developing countries before leaving the EU
- in the EU in order to increase EIA-standards within the Union and to harmonize the same
- models and other expertise (e.g. in EU member states and the World Bank) to be used for Lomé-negotiations

2. Ecological Sustainability

A proposal based on the reciprocity necessary in a partnership was formulated by the working group:

Both the EU and the ACP countries agree to raise their ecologically sustainable agricultural production (organic farming etc.) at a certain rate within a specified period of time. The rates are higher for the EU since its economic capacity is higher.

The working group proposal for those rates was:

Increase in ecologically sustainable agricultural production for European Union countries by 30% within the next 5 years, for ACP countries by 15% within the next 5 years.

3. Forests

It was agreed to incorporate the recommendations made by Greenpeace to the Austrian EU Presidency in respect of forestry and fisheries.

Industrial-scale activities have to be phased-out and, as provided for in the Protocol on Sustainable Management of Forest Resources to the Lomé IV Convention, "special priority will be given to community-based and small-scale forest operations" which are to be administered, wherever possible, by local populations.

4. Fisheries

Fisheries agreements within Lomé have to be based on environmentally sound and precautionary approaches which are also socially sustainable. Furthermore the EU has to ensure that its member states adhere to the quantitative limits set for fishing in the Lomé Convention and other treaties.

5. TRIPS (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights)

In the chapter on trade related rights the following demands have to be incorporated:

- No patenting rights for plants and seeds, especially not for transnational corporations.
- Indigenous peoples – and among them especially women – have to be provided with the right to preserve and make use of the plants and seeds in their environments.

6. The abolition of STABEX can – if at all – only be carried out within a long-term perspective which has to fulfil at least the following three prerequisites:

- a) Increase in agricultural production for local and regional markets
- b) Increase in small-scale industries, e.g. for food processing
- c) Increase in building up local and regional means of transport instead of focusing on transnational networks.

7. Tourism

Tourism should only be promoted if it is planned on a small scale and with ecologically and socially sustainable perspectives, including the provision that profits remain within the respective country and flow back to local and regional populations.

Institutional aspects

(Some of the group's demands are taken from the European NGDO Position Statement of Sept. 1997, chapter on environmental sustainability.)

The European Development Fund (EDF) is to be included in the regular EU-budget so it would no longer depend on individual member states' budgetary decisions.

Ecological principles are to be included in all steps of planning, implementation and evaluation of projects and programmes.

The qualitative and quantitative capacity of the Commission and its delegations has to be enhanced since the recent level is insufficient. Better use has to be made of existing expertise and experience within developing countries and institutions. Capacity building and institution building in the developing countries has to be promoted. Environmental education in both the EU and ACP countries has to be increasingly supported and financed.

Steps should be taken to implement more and better participatory decision-making between the EU and its southern partners as well as between governments and NGOs in South and North."

Working group no. 7 debated about "Lomé, human rights and democracy":

"The revised version of the LOME IV Convention represents a consensus between the European Union Member States and the ACP Countries concerning the central role of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in their joint co-operation.

These principals should have equal relevance in all member states and in all areas. Especially, there should be no selective European Union action against individual ACP Countries in order to avoid calling into question the consistency of one's own policies.

As comprehensive implementation of the mentioned principles is still inadequate, concerted efforts are required to reach that goal.

Thus it does not appear to be convenient at the present juncture to introduce good governance, an additional, broad and not always precise term as a further 'essential element' of co-operation.

Lomé IV offers a mechanism for the use of 'negative measures' in instances of flagrant violation of human rights and the process of democratic development.

However, the problem at hand is the decision-making process itself (who actually decides, based on what mandate, when and how to implement negative measures?)

In order to achieve a strengthening of the democratic elements in the decision-making process, the formal inclusion of the European Parliament as well as of the ACP-EU Joint Assembly would be regarded as a positive step.

As for civil society, an expansion of dialogue should be promoted on multiple levels. Especially, greater efforts should be undertaken in order to permit and promote direct co-operation between NGOs of both ACP and EU States.

Furthermore, the application of the new instruments, so-called 'decentralised co-operation', should not be made dependent on the agreement of the respective ACP governments.

In the field of 'positive measures', initiatives should be intensified in regard to a general awareness and sensitivity of the multiple aspects and concerns of democratisation and human rights. Training, education and further education of governmental and non-governmental bodies should be the emphasis of measures taken."

Notes

1 See EU-Commission: Negotiating Directive for the negotiation of a Development Partnership Agreement with the ACP Countries, Council Document No. 100017/98, published June 30, 1999.

2 See UNCTAD: Handbook of International Trade and Development Statistics 1995, Tab. 5.3, Foreign Direct Investment, 241 f.

3 See Kappel, R. 1994. "Krise und erzwungene Abkopplung. Zur wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung der AKP-Länder". In: WEED, Informationsbrief, Sonderdienst 10, 3–4, 1994, 4.

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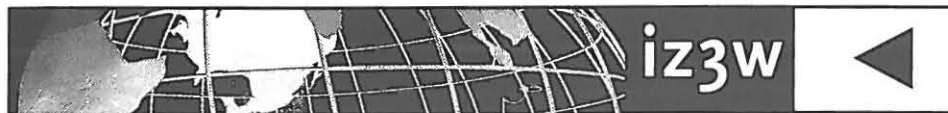
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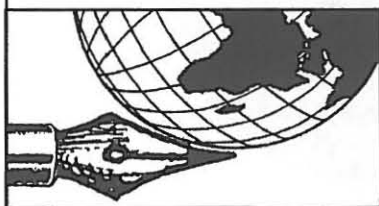
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