



**COUNCIL OF THE
EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to : Delegations

Subject: Meeting of the European Parliament's **Committee on Development** (DEVE) on
8-9 July 2013 - Partial summary record (items 13 to 23 of the agenda)

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Deva, ECR, UK on 8 July (items 1-12), Mrs Striffler, EPP, FR on 9 July (items 13-22) and Ms. Cretu, S&D, RO (item 23).

1. Establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation

An exchange of views and feedback from the negotiations on the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) was held *in camera*. The rapporteur for the DCI M. Berman (S&D, NL) debriefed the committee on the trilogue of 27 June, which focused on the issue of Parliament's involvement in strategic decisions about thematic or geographic programming development assistance in partner countries, and for the pan-African programme.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted with the addition of an exchange of views with the second Vice-president of the Republic of Burundi on the occasion of the visit of a high-level Delegation from Burundi..

3. The minutes of the meeting on 24 June 2013 were approved.

4. Chair's announcements

There were no Chair's announcements.

5. Announcements by the Commission

There were no Commission's announcements.

6. Question Time

There were no questions to the Commission.

7. The future of EU-ASEAN relations

An exchange of views was scheduled, based on the draft non-legislative opinion for AFET prepared by Mr Cortés Lastra on the future of EU-ASEAN relations.

- Deadline for tabling amendments: **15 July 2013, 17.00**
- vote on **28 August 2013**

8. Protocol between the EU and the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the two Parties currently in force

An exchange of views took place following the presentation by the rapporteur for the opinion Mr Ponga (responsible committee: PECH) on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

- Deadline for tabling amendments: **15 July 2013, 17.00**
- vote on **17 September 2013**

9. Caste-based discrimination

- Consideration of DEVE oral question and motion for a resolution

The Chair recalled that caste-based discrimination was considered as one of the main causes of poverty and inequality in the countries concerned, and that this form of discrimination affected an estimated 260 million people worldwide. He said that despite efforts by governments and by international agencies, people affected by caste-based discrimination continued to suffer from severe forms of social exclusion, poverty, violence and segregation linked to prejudices and notions of purity and pollution. He added that the EP draft resolution was asking the Commission and the EEAS to design a comprehensive EU policy and action plan to address caste-based discrimination.

- Deadline for tabling amendments: **11 July 2013, 12.00**
- vote on **17 September 2013**

10. European Parliament Development Committee delegation mission to Zimbabwe (30 April - 2 May 2013)

The Chair welcomed the Ambassador of Zimbabwe Mrs Muchada. Mr Neuser, Head of the delegation to Zimbabwe presented the report and conclusions of the development committee delegation, which consisted of Mr Neuser, Mr Kaczmarek and Ms Sargentini and travelled to Zimbabwe on 30 April-2 May. The presentation was followed by an exchange of views.

11. The mandate and activities of the EIB in developing countries

The Chair welcomed the President of the European Investment Bank Mr Werner Hoyer. He underlined the attention paid by the committee to the EIB's external work and referred to the DEVE opinions on the issue, recalled the committee's MEPs' role as observers in the EU Platform for Blending in External Relations, and for outlining a position on the future external mandate of the EIB for the period after 2014. He stressed the specific interest of the committee in the way the EIB ensures that the EU's objective of poverty reduction is increasingly reflected in its work, including through due regard to social and environmental aspects, a greater attention to tax governance issues, and increased levels of project monitoring and evaluation.

The EIB President Mr Werner Hoyer made a presentation of the challenges ahead for the EIB in times of financial constraints. He referred in particular to the EIB's external lending mandate.

This was followed by an exchange of views with the EIB President, Mr Werner Hoyer.

Mr Preda, EPP, RO is the rapporteur on the DEVE opinion on the Budget Committee's report on the future EIB external mandate post-2014.

12. Coordinators' meeting

In camera

13. Priorities of the Lithuanian Presidency in Humanitarian Aid

Mr Rolandas Kriščiūnas, Lithuanian Vice-Minister of foreign Affairs responsible for humanitarian aid Policy, delivered the speech in Annex.

In the exchange of views which followed, the Chair Mrs. Striffler asked about the Council's priorities and position in view of the negotiations on the EU Humanitarian Aid corps, given the restricted budget available for this programme. The issue was also mentioned by Mr. Cortes Lastra, S&D, ES and M. Neuser, S&D, DE. Mrs. Striffler also mentioned the worrying situation in Mali, which was overlooked because of the electoral process under way. She asked the Presidency to organize a discussion in the Working Group of the Council on Humanitarian issues (COHAFA).

Other questions by MEPs included

- the importance of protecting and promoting human rights within the EU's development policy (Donskis, ALDE, LT), promoting relations with Latin America (Cortes Lastra, S&D, ES, Fisas Ayxela, EPP, ES);
- the definition of post-2015 MDGs objectives (Cortes Lastra, S&D, ES), and the need to take into account the issue of sustainability, of access to energy, of respecting the 0.7% ODA commitments (Neuser, S&D, DE);
- the better inclusion of civil society (Cortes Lastra, S&D, ES, M. Neuser, S&D, DE);
- the need to work on Disaster Risk Reduction, based on UN work, and on donor coordination as some of the obvious means to save money and get better value for the money spent on development (Mitchell, EPP, IE);

- the need to fight against discriminations against women and in particular "gendercide", which caused the death or prevented the birth of some 200 million women throughout the developing world (Mitchell, EPP, IE).

M. Cortés Lastra indicated in this regard that the S&D group considered the general issue of abortion as part of sexual and reproductive rights;

- the forgotten crisis of Western Sahara (Fisas Ayxela, EPP, ES)
- the issue of the conditions for the delivery of aid by some emerging donors such as China (Fisas Ayxela, EPP, ES).

In answer, Minister Kriščiūnas:

- confirmed that the EU Voluntary corps was high on the LT's Presidency agenda, and that the suggested cuts to the initial Commission proposal reflected the reality of austerity in the EU;
- considered however that the political deal on the overall development budget for the next MFF, which foresees a 2.6 % increase compared to its current level, as well as the humanitarian part of it, was rather satisfactory under the present circumstances;
- on Mali, considered that the EU had been acting in a consistent way and agreed that the EU ought to remain financially committed to help this country;
- agreed with M. Donskis that human rights ought to remain a precondition for the EU's development policy and for the granting of EU aid, and that humanitarian aid, though not made conditional given its specific features, was itself about upholding human rights in the countries concerned;
- on South Saharan Africa, agreed that LT should not only focus on its Eastern European neighbourhood, and that it had useful experience which it could offer to some countries of the region;
- on the post- 2015 MDG agenda, agreed that the focus should not only be on future objectives, but also on the objectives still to be reached and that both these should be politically balanced;

- on resilience, confirmed that this was an important agenda given financial constraints and the savings potential. In this context, agreed that Disaster Risk Reduction should be brought forward as part of that priority agenda;
- on the DCI, said that he was conscious that the discussion was a difficult and "principled one", whilst being "cautiously optimistic" on the possibilities of reaching an agreement between institutions before the end of the legislature. He considered it politically important for the EU's image to reach such an agreement;
- agreed on the need to better involve civil society, taking into account the important role played by NGOs in delivering EU aid;
- on donor coordination, he confirmed that this file was also a priority as part of the measures aimed at saving money and making a better use of the available funds;
- on gender issues, noted that all relevant issues, including gendercide, should be part of the discussions at Council level and agreed that gendercide could be specifically discussed at the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA);
- on ODA, stressed that only six Member States were reaching the objective of 0.7% of GNP in ODA and that the other Member States, including his, were nonetheless striving to improve their ODA contribution and/ or their national policies in various ways, despite very difficult fiscal constraints;
- confirmed that the EU was very committed to Latin America in that part of the world too;
- on China's policy and the issue of Western Sahara, suggested to refer the questions to the High Representative, whilst stressing that the EU was the biggest donor and had not forgotten the issue of Western Sahara.

14. Perspectives of the Global Fund for the next replenishment period

The Chair recalled that the EU had suspended its contributions to the Global Fund back in 2011 because of suspicions of poor management, and that the Global Fund had carried out a thorough reform of its financial management. She specified that Member States' contributions amounted to half of the Fund's total budget.

Mr Mark Dybul, Executive Director of the Global Fund, presented the new management Plan and priorities of action of the Fund. He also noted with satisfaction that scientific progress had been made on three diseases in the area of epidemiology, which allowed for new prospects and opportunities towards keeping them in check and even defeating them.

He however warned that this objective could only be reached with determined and immediate action, as there was otherwise the risk of a new outburst of the epidemics and of resistant strains of tuberculosis spreading.

He stressed the importance of women's education and health in particular in preventing diseases and saving lives.

M. Mitchell, EPP, IE asked whether proper education of women on sexual and reproductive health was being promoted, noted that women were increasingly dying from non-communicable diseases such as heart attacks without this phenomenon receiving proper attention, and wondered what the Global Fund was doing on this issue. He also asked whether patent issues had an impact on access to medicines to cure HIV, tuberculosis and malaria. M. Cortés Lastra, S&D, ES expressed support for the action by the Global Fund and for a resumption of the EU's funding. M. Neuser, S&D, DE wondered about the Fund's strategy to mobilize additional public and private funding.

The Commission representative clarified that the Global Fund had delivered on its management reform, that the Commission had been convinced by those efforts and had therefore resumed disbursements in favour of the Fund. He said that the financing provided by the Fund was integrated in the health plans by recipient countries in order to be fully effective.

Mr Dybul said that the Fund was buying generics, in line with international law, and that therefore there was no issue about patents, that HIV was still a major cause of death in low-income countries. On private funding, he referred to cooperation with Coca Cola and its supply chain, while clarifying that the vast majority of funds needed to come from the public sector.

15. European Parliament Development Committee delegation mission to Colombia (11-14 February 2013)

Mr Cortés Lastra (S&D, ES) presented the report of the DEVE delegation in Colombia on 12-14 February 2013 to study the difficult situations of the displacement of people and land grabbing. The delegation was headed by Mr Cortés Lastra (S&D) and comprised Mr Fysas Ayxela (EPP), Ms Greze (Verts) and Mr Diaz De Mera (EPP).

The items addressed during the meetings were the Restitution Law (*Ley de Víctimas y Restitución de Tierras*, Law 1448), the problem of Internal Displaced People (IDP), human rights violations, impunity, land grabbing and illegal mining exploitation.

M. Cortés Lastra highlighted some of the broad conclusions of the mission by referring to the armed conflicts fuelled by some criminal organizations such as the FARC, which had affected Colombia for decades, had had deep humanitarian consequences and had led to internal displacements of population, insecurity and had limited the freedom of circulation within the country.). He referred to the EP delegation's meetings with senior representatives of the government, local authorities, civil society organizations, EU Member State embassies in Bogotá, and UN agencies. He said that the EU support to peace-building, development and humanitarian assistance was acknowledged and highly appreciated by all stakeholders, and that Colombia was among the main recipients in Latin America of European Development Cooperation. The indicative amount allocated for cooperation with Colombia in 2007-2013 amounted to EUR 160 million. He further explained that Law 1448, adopted on 10 June 2011, establishes various forms of reparation, including economic compensation and other benefits with regard to access to education and health, and sets out rules for restitution of land to IDP and of land illegally occupied by criminal organizations. He referred to the social conditions and persisting inequalities in Colombia, despite an encouraging economic outlook, and to the recommendations and conclusions of the delegation.

M. Fisas Ayxela, EPP, ES expressed satisfaction at a highly valuable and interesting mission, referred to some six million IDPs, considered that Law 1448 was well drafted, but that its implementation was difficult, notably because of extracting firms which had no interest in facilitating the restitution of certain areas.

The EEAS representative welcomed the findings and recommendations of the mission, which he considered were to a great extent in line with what the EEAS was already doing. He said that the human rights dialogue should be intensified and referred to the most recent one held on the issues of impunity, on the situation of women and children, as well as of indigenous people, and on the threats to human rights in the context of the extractive industries. He referred by way of conclusion to the major challenges still to be faced by Colombia.

M. Cortés Lastra agreed and referred to the so-called "bacrim", i.e. the criminal gangs operating in the field of drug trafficking and in the extractive industries, which involve paramilitaries and create a climate of insecurity. He paid tribute to human rights activists, who risk their lives every day in a country where assassinations and murders are reported every week.

16. The 2014 EU Budget

The rapporteur M. Cortés Lastra considered the budget proposal received the week before to be unacceptable. He disapproved of the presentational changes compared to previous budgets, which he considered were making the budget less transparent, as well as of the cuts proposed on a great number policy lines (minus 12.5% on the ICD, minus 4.5% on payments for humanitarian aid, reduced budget for Latin America). He welcomed the increase on emergency aid from 80 to 150 million euros.

He said that the proposal was raised a number of questions. He referred in particular to the merging of some budget lines, such as those on poverty eradication and on governance, and to the removal of the references to policy priorities, notably with regard to education, as well as to the absence of reference to the development of civil society, trade unions and NGOs. He asked why the budget for Asia was increased and the one for Latin America being reduced without any explanation. He criticized the lack of transparency on the proposed breakdown of aid for the various regions and thematic priorities. All in all, he considered that the way the budget was presented was a bad omen.

He advocated using the funds where there could be best value for money, using the margins and ceilings to the full on the DCI, creating new budget lines, and restoring a balance between the budgets allocated respectively for Asia and Latin America. He also asked for a statement reaffirming that the 2005 EU Consensus on development remained the basis for the EU's development policy. He said that the vote on his report would take place at the committee's meeting on 28 August 2013.

M. Goerens, ALDE, LU said that the figures did not allow for a better understanding on the way the principle of differentiation would be implemented. He added that the budget was to be seen within the context of the discussion on the next MFF, and that the flexibility introduced in the MFF deal was to compensate the credits cuts included in the next MFF. He therefore asked the Commission to provide the committee with a simulation which would allow to see to what extent the flexibility would enable an actual increasing of the payments. He said that the leverage and the blending were fine, but would not be sufficient to compensate for the budget cuts, and that the committee needed to know what the development budget would look like before giving their consent to the next MFF in September.

The Commission representative indicated that the intention of the Commission in presenting the proposal in line with the budgetary nomenclature was to make the budget more transparent and regretted that this objective was not accepted by MEPs.

He said that the Commission had sought to replace activity statements by programme statements; that thematic and geographic policies had to be combined; that all the lines were grouped within a single chapter; that the DCI's main objective was to eradicate poverty, as well as promoting social development, the protection of the environment, democracy and the rule of law; that the geographical lines were to be combined with two lines for the promotion respectively of public goods and civil society; that the approach was to cover all thematic aspects with a single funding payment; that the differentiation was to be implemented based on the needs identified per country in the Agenda for Change. He acknowledged that the budget foreseen for bilateral aid to individual Latin American countries had been drastically reduced, but that this would be somewhat compensated by regional programmes; that as far as Asia is concerned, Bangladesh and Myanmar and to a lesser extent Central Asian countries would receive more aid, whereas other recipient countries such as China and Brazil would see a decrease of EU aid.

M. Goerens stated that he still did not know what the actual aid levels would be and insisted on a simulation from the Commission services. He said that the committee had tried to work in close cooperation with the Commission, but that the Commission should also be responsive to the needs of the European Parliament. Ms. Striffler supported this statement and added that the European

Parliament was also politically answerable to taxpayers for its decisions and needed therefore to have full access to the relevant information to take informed decisions. The rapporteur M. Cortes Lastra also considered he did not get any answers to his questions and asked the Commission to respond in writing. He reiterated that the Consensus for development was the reference document guiding the EU's development document, and not the Agenda for Change.

The Chair said that the deadline for amendments was expiring on 17 July at noon.

16 a. Exchange of views with the second vice-President of the Republic of Burundi

M. Rufyikiri, second vice-President of the Republic of Burundi, said that he was visiting Brussels to attend a Conference on the follow-up to the Framework for growth and development.

He made an overview of the political, economic and social situation in Burundi, where peace has returned. He referred in particular to the disarmament of the civilian population, the repatriation of refugees, the reconciliation process and fight against impunity, land issues, the strengthening of security, the rationalization and professionalization of the defence and security forces, the consolidation of democracy and of the rule of law, the dispute settlements and the strengthening of institutional capacities.

He also mentioned the roadmap towards the 2015 elections and amendments to the elections law, transitional justice, the commission for truth and reconciliation, the notable progress on social and economic issues, the improvement of the access to primary and secondary education, health issues and the remarkable increase in life expectancy from 45 years in 2005 to 50.5 years in 2013 thanks to a decrease in mortality of women giving birth and improved services in hospitals.

He said that the situation of women had improved, that the GDP per capita had increased from 110 \$ in 2005 to 300 \$ today; that the business environment had improved thanks to an administrative reform, but that despite efforts, there was still a long way to go since Burundi remained the poorest country in the world despite its huge potential for development. He referred to a recent Donors Conference in Geneva, to be followed by two additional Conferences, the first on infrastructure, transports, communication, trade, tourism, employment, education, water on 15-16 July, and the second on six further thematic issues (including good governance, health and energy) on 28-30 October. He said that needs were huge and called for the EU to provide further financial support to his country.

M. Berman, S&D, NL strongly criticized a recent law which he considered was violating the freedom of the press, which is a cornerstone of democracy, and asked for the law in question to be abolished. Ms De Keyser, S&D, BE noted that Burundi was considered to be a country with a high level of corruption and asked what had been done to counter that.

In response, the Vice President explained the context and reasoning behind the press law, reassured MEPs that there was no attempt to violate human rights, but that the main objective was to preserve peace and security in the country and to upgrade the quality of the press information. On the fight against corruption, he referred to good progress made in this regard, as shown by the better ranking in the classification of Transparency International.

17. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

The draft opinion (Rapporteur for the opinion: M. Cashman, S&D, UK, responsible committee: FEMM) was adopted.

18. Follow-up on the Delegation of Legislative Powers and the Control by Member States of the Commission's Exercise of Implementing Powers

The rapporteur for the opinion on delegated acts M. Mitchell (EPP, IE) (responsible committee : JURI) considered that the hopes generated by the provisions of the Lisbon treaty had not yet materialized and that there needed to a process compatible with the EP's working methods.

He stressed that the EP would not give up on its powers as legislator. M. Goerens also regretted the lack of progress on the issue.

- Deadline for tabling amendments: **15 July 2013, 17.00**

19. The cost of Non-Europe in development policy: Increasing EU donor coordination

The Chair indicated that the study to be presented aimed at providing a base for asking the Commission to present a proposal for a better coordination of aid between the Member States. The Rapporteur for the legislative initiative M. Mitchell said that 6 billion euros could be saved each year thanks to a better aid coordination and 850 millions on transaction costs. The Head of Unit of the recently created Value Added Unit of the European Parliament presented its report on the issue, followed by a study presentation by a researcher of the Südwind Institute M. Klingeweld.

M. Goerens and Ms De Keyser both referred to the limits to coordination related to the national agendas and to possible solutions to be found via a specialization per Member State.

The Commission representative confirmed that there was progress on the issue thanks to joint programming, which was already under way for some forty recipient countries, and which allowed for the visibility of individual Member States in the implementation phase. He highlighted the advantages of the process in reducing aid fragmentation and in improving transparency, efficiency and reinforcing the EU's external action.

20. The efforts of the international community in the area of development and of 'state building' in South Sudan

The EU Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan Ms Marsden gave an overview of the political and economic situation of both countries. This was followed by a Commission presentation on South Sudan, a new State born a year ago which without oil revenues could not develop. The Commission representative said that the country had to ratify the Cotonou agreement as without it there was no possibility for the EU to provide the relevant aid.

The Rapporteur Ms De Keyser (S&D) presented her working document. She deeply regretted the fact that Ms Marsden' mandate was ending at a moment which was not ideal. She said that South Sudan was like a premature baby since the independence of the country had been declared before some major issues have been solved. She considered that little progress had been made in the last two years, despite major efforts, money and attention dedicated by the international community.

She said that her report aimed at taking stock of what had been done so far and what could be better performed in future. She noted that there was a great deal of instability in the region and that war could resume at any moment, but that fortunately nobody wanted this.

She added that the oil issue was still pending, despite the Addis Abbeba agreement in October 2012, and that until a solid agreement was found on this issue, it was being used as a negotiating tool by both parties. She commented that agriculture had not been developed and that there were no infrastructure, roads nor any administrative structures. She regretted the limited visibility of the EU despite the money and efforts invested.

Ms Cretu, EPP, RO referred to human rights issues and to the harassment of journalists and human rights activists. M. Preda, EPP, RO stated that issues around state building and fight against corruption should be the EU's top priorities.

The Special representative said that the two Sudans were part of an "arch of instability" which went from Mali to the Sahel region and that instability would have very negative effects; that the international community had invested 1.5 billion and that Sudan was a test case for the EU's action. She also referred to the considerable trade and investment opportunities offered by the region.

21. Any other business

22. Next meeting(s)

- 28 August 2013, 9.00 – 12.30 and 15.00 – 18.30

23. Communication of the Commission on Maximising the Development Impact of Migration

Joint meeting with the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs committee

The Commission representative in presenting the Communication jointly prepared by DG HOME and DG DEVCO stated that the objectives of the text were to prepare a common EU position in view of the New York event in October 2115, to look beyond on what could be done in the medium term and to share between Member States the experience of EU internal mobility trends.

There was a presentation by the Commission DG Home representative M. Rosenberg, followed by a presentation by the DG DEVCO's representative Mrs Bourgade on the key elements of the text.

A representative from the International Migrations Organization (IOM) made a presentation on ways to improve the governance of migrations. He highlighted the 2013 conclusions of the high level dialogue on the issue as important and the key elements of a comprehensive approach to migrations as follows: improve public perception of migration, better planning, protection of human rights for migrants, migrations' management in crisis situation, enhancement of knowledge-based governance.

Mrs Keller, Greens/EFA, DE considered that more research was needed on south-south migrations and on how to deal with refugees.

**Speech of the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Rolandas Kriščiūnas to the
DEVELOPMENT Committee of the EP
(check against delivery)**

Madame la Présidente, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

It is a great honour for me to appear before you today, in my new capacity as a President-in-office of the Council of the European Union.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to share with you the Lithuanian Presidency's priorities for the next six months under our planned work programme for humanitarian affairs.

I would like to assure you that my colleagues and I are strongly committed to working closely with you in the European Parliament on this agenda. We look forward to deepening the productive working relationship that exists between the Parliament, Council, and the Commission in this vital aspect of the European Union's external action.

Madame la Présidente, Honourable Members,

The aim of the Union's humanitarian aid is to provide assistance, relief and protection for the victims of natural or man-made disasters in third countries. We are convinced that our humanitarian action must be needs based. It must conform to internationally agreed humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

We are proud that today, the European Union as a whole is the world's biggest humanitarian aid donor and a key international actor in providing disaster relief. Taken together, the Union and its Member States represent some 45% of the global funding for humanitarian aid.

Notwithstanding the current economic crisis, this European expression of solidarity with people in need around the world is steadily increasing: a recent Eurobarometer survey suggested that, in 2011, EU humanitarian assistance was supported by 79% of its citizens, while by 2012 that support had increased to 88%.

Whilst recognizing accomplishments, we must always seek to achieve more; to deliver assistance more effectively; to ensure that our assistance is delivered in a targeted and principled manner; and to ensure that we are fully accountable, both to our citizens and to the vulnerable populations we seek to serve.

With those imperatives in mind we were setting the course of the six month of Presidency.

Before introducing **Lithuania's Presidency Work Programme**, I would like to congratulate the previous Presidency – Ireland – for its significant achievements. Ireland was the first to implement our jointly prepared Trio programme. Based on solid foundations that our Irish partners have laid Lithuania in close coordination with Greece, will continue to work on current and ongoing dossiers.

Madame la Présidente, Honourable Members,

In particular, **the Lithuanian Presidency will aim to deliver on three main priority action areas:**

Firstly, we plan to start and conclude the negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council on the Regulation Establishing a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps;

Secondly, we will seek to generate inclusive discussions on the effectiveness and coherence of EU humanitarian aid;

Thirdly, we will seek to continue EU efforts on building the Resilience agenda.

The negotiations on European Aid Volunteers Initiative

Lithuania is expecting to immediately start negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament on the legislative proposal establishing the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps. We consider this piece of legislation as one of the most important within the sphere of humanitarian aid and, we are fully aware that it is of particular interest to the European Parliament.

I am pleased to note that there is already a considerable common ground between our positions and I can ensure you Council did its utmost to safeguard that the Proposal identifies highest quality EU volunteers, maximizes advantages for beneficiaries on the ground; that is cost-effective and needs-based.

We believe that this initiative will provide an invaluable opportunity for enhanced citizen participation in the overall EU humanitarian effort and we greatly look forward to working with the European Parliament and in particular with you, Madame la Présidente, and your Shadow Rapporteurs in reaching the final agreement.

The effectiveness and coherence of EU humanitarian aid

Bearing in mind our responsibility and accountability to our citizens and to those whom we seek to serve, the Lithuanian Presidency as a second priority set the objective to move forward discussions on the effectiveness and coherence of EU humanitarian action.

First of all, the effectiveness means sound coordination and information sharing between various EU actors; operational discussions; interaction with relevant humanitarian actors; and a coordinated response, where appropriate, to other key humanitarian decision-making fora.

The EU guiding document setting out values, guiding principles and policy scope for humanitarian action is the EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. In 2008 Commission adopted a five-year Action Plan outlining practical measures to implement the provisions of the Consensus which is expiring this year. An evaluation of the implementation of the Consensus is already launched and the final report is to be expected by January 2014.

The main objective of the evaluation is to deliver an independent assessment on the implementation of the Consensus at the European Union level, and on ways to strengthen EU's capacity to help people suffering in crisis zones across the globe.

In this context, the Lithuanian Presidency considers that this process must be complemented by in depth discussions at the Council level together with the Commission, involving various relevant regional and international stakeholders. Within the Councils Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid we will engage in comprehensive discussions on best practices, lessons learned, on how to improve the fulfillment of obligations under the Consensus and on how to strengthen the overall effectiveness of EU humanitarian aid.

Humanitarian needs are dramatically growing, the budgets are shrinking and violation of humanitarian space and non-respect for humanitarian principles constantly challenge international humanitarian action. Therefore we must keep discussions on those and other pressing humanitarian issues high on our internal and international agendas.

The Presidency intends to continue disseminating values of the Consensus within and outside the EU by raising awareness on the importance of humanitarian principles and the underlying rationale for the humanitarian approach.

We invite the European Parliament, as a dedicated advocate for a principled humanitarian action, to actively engage with us in our discussions on evaluating the EU humanitarian assistance and on reflecting the ways forward for our common action in the future.

Resilience

And that brings me to our third priority that we have set for our Presidency which is very much related to the effectiveness and coherence of our humanitarian action, which is Resilience.

As it is globally recognized, the chronic nature of poverty and vulnerability, and the increasing frequency and severity of natural and man-made disasters points to the need to ensure a coherent, collaborative approach on the part of both humanitarian and development actors.

It is essential to forge stronger links between the EU's development and humanitarian policies and programmes. In this area, the Lithuanian Presidency will build upon solid foundations that have been laid by Irish Presidency. In May, the Council adopted Conclusions on the EU Approach to Resilience, which recognized that resilience provides an opportunity to bring together political dialogue as well as humanitarian and development aid to achieve better results on the ground.

Consequently, those Conclusions underlined the need for a Resilience Action Plan, prepared by the Commission this June.

In the implementation phase of the Action Plan the Lithuanian Presidency will facilitate discussions in the framework of the Council Working Party on modalities and ways to effectively implement the Plan and on the lessons emerging from the EU's SHARE and AGIR initiatives.

The Lithuanian Presidency will also provide a forum for regular exchanges on Resilience, by examining the situation in selected countries, and giving Member States the opportunity to coordinate their efforts to strengthen Resilience as part of their humanitarian assistance.

The Lithuanian Presidency welcomes the European Parliament's input to the Resilience agenda, and looks forward to future dialogue on this issue over the next six months.

Madame la Présidente, Honourable Members,

Before concluding, allow me to touch upon current crises.

The first that comes to our minds is of course Syrian crisis. Two years of civil war in Syria has produced a regional humanitarian disaster with a deplorable level of violence and suffering experienced by millions of innocent civilians.

The immediate humanitarian needs are more that we can comprehend. UN revised budget amounts to 1.4 billion US dollars to assist 6.8 million people inside Syria; 1 billion US dollars in unmet requirements until end 2013.

The EU has already allocated over 678 million Euros and, as you know, on 24 of June, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions through a Joint Communication “Towards a comprehensive EU approach to the Syrian crises” committed to provide additional 400 million Euros.

It is therefore essential that the EU, as a leader within the international community, continues to strive to respond to the overwhelming humanitarian needs of the populations affected by the conflict, whilst working simultaneously to support efforts to find a sustainable political solution.

The Lithuanian Presidency will consistently call upon all parties to abide by International Humanitarian Law, to respect humanitarian principles, to facilitate humanitarian access and aid delivery to the people in need. During our presidency, we will aim to ensure that the EU will continue to address the situation in Syria as matter of priority.

Yet, while attention is rightly placed on Syria, this must not mean that we forget about other places in the world where people die and suffer due to natural disasters, armed conflicts, or both.

The Lithuanian Presidency will hold timely discussions on the most pressing humanitarian and food-security crises - such as those in Mali, in the wider Sahel, Sudan and South Sudan, the DRC, the Central African Republic, Haiti and others. Together with the Member States, we shall also keep high on the Council’s agenda some of the world’s protracted and “forgotten” crises, such as those in Pakistan, Myanmar/Burma and others.

In conclusion, I would like to once again underline the Lithuanian Presidency’s commitment to progressing the humanitarian assistance agenda, and our keen desire to work closely with your Committee to achieve the priorities I have outlined today.

As you may see, the Lithuanian Presidency set an ambitious agenda for six month to come but we also know that six month is not an entire path but just one step on the road that we are all in.

I remain at your disposal for any questions that you may have, and I thank you for your kind attention.
