

legge: Brady T=4140<sup>4</sup>

**ESAMI FINALI - Int. Simultanea inglese-italiano - 26 novembre 2003**

**ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly**

14 October 2003

ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Rome, Italy

**Commissioner Poul Nielson**

1195/D

390 - 01-1195 D fin 5 sim

Co-Presidents,  
Honourable Members,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a distinct pleasure to be here today to present the Commission's perspective on the state of ACP-EU co-operation.

In order to have more time available for a constructive exchange of views, I will just highlight a few key developments since the last time I addressed this Assembly in Brazzaville in April this year.

First of all, I would like to reaffirm the full commitment of the European Commission towards an improved, more effective and well-timed development aid. Much remains to be done, but I am now able to say that we are moving in the right direction. We continue to actively promote better co-ordination and harmonisation of procedures among all donor countries in order to reduce the transaction costs for ACP countries.

In this process, EC delegations play a crucial role, as we need to push decision-making closer to the reality on the ground.

Needless to say that this exercise comes with a cost. I here address the European Members of the Assembly who exercise power over our budget. Without the necessary financial means for our delegations we will not succeed in making sure that Community aid is delivered in a better, faster and more effective way.

Moving to the substance of the **Cotonou Agreement**, we are all aware that it is a very comprehensive text and that there are still provisions which we haven't fully explored yet. Article 11 on peace building is a clear example. We have seen how conflicts block so much of our co-operation, and destroy too much of what we have managed to build. We have to have an instrument to support peace.

In Africa, the African Union has a strong political mandate in the field of conflict prevention and conflict management and is now creating an operational capacity for planning and conducting Peace Support Operations.

As Africa takes up this formidable challenge, Europe has a duty to stand at its side. As requested by the African Union's Assembly in Maputo earlier this year and endorsed by EU ministers, the Commission is working to set up a Peace Programme to support peace operations.

Support to peace and security is an important innovation in our co-operation. In this sense, I am confident that there will be support for the financial proposal the Commission will make in the coming weeks.

In the trade area too, we have good reason to look to the future with confidence and in a spirit of innovation. In spite of the recent setback in Cancun, we have just successfully reviewed the first stage of negotiations for economic partnership agreements with the whole ACP group. We have also begun regional negotiations with Central and West Africa.

I was pleased to attend those negotiations in Brussels, Brazzaville and Cotonou to underline, with my colleague Pascal Lamy, that the main objective of EPAs (**Environmental Agencies**) is the promotion of sustainable development in ACP regions and countries. As outlined in the Cotonou Agreement, EPAs will be a flexible instrument to the benefit of the ACPs, both in terms of product coverage and of transitional periods (for tariff abolition.)

From a development perspective it will be important to anticipate the effects of the necessary policy changes to prepare for a smooth and gradual adjustment process. Considerable resources have been earmarked for the preparation of EPA negotiations, notably at the regional and intra-ACP level.

Some are expressing apprehension that these negotiations are not taking place between equal partners and, therefore, cannot lead to a positive outcome for the ACP's. But this is a totally wrong logic. The truth is, that without the EU being a stronger partner we wouldn't be able to offer and deliver what these negotiations are about: deliberately placing EU-ACP trade issues as part of our common fight against poverty. This was the rationale behind Cotonou and this is the task in front of us today.

EPAs will have to be implemented at national level. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that national strategies and indicative programmes support the EPA process. This will be systematically assessed at the 2004 mid-term review.