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Facing climate change and biodiversity loss: new opportunities for EU development cooperation

- Député européen (Verts, France) - Mes initiatives - Effet de serre, biodiversité et coopération -
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The Chairman of the Subgroup Trade and Environment, Intergroup on Sustainable Development - Mr. Alain LIPIETZ, (MEP);

Representative of the Portuguese Presidency – Mr. João MENEZES;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Climate change and climate variability has been a major issue in the recent past. Vulnerability to climate change is closely related to poverty as the poor have fewer financial and technical resources available to cope with climate related changes. Developing and least developed countries, majority of which are members of the ACP Group are, and will continue to be greatly affected by climate change.

The poor have great dependence on climate sensitive sectors such as agriculture and forestry, and are closer to low tolerance level of change, often living on marginal land with fragile economic structure. Adaptation to climate change, as related to adjustment to ecological, social, or economic systems in response to actual or expected stimuli and their effects or impact is therefore crucial to the livelihoods of ACP countries population.

On the other hand, biodiversity, which is the aggregate of number, variety and variability of living organisms, is of crucial importance to man and the environment interface. For the developing countries, and particularly the ACP countries, the subject of biodiversity touches on the issue of survival.

In low-income countries, majority of the population living in rural areas rely heavily on forest resources (centre of biodiversity) for their livelihood. Biodiversity matters to this group of people, having providing:

- ▶ Food security and health
- ▶ Income generation and livelihood
- ▶ Fuel
- ▶ Water
- ▶ Reduced vulnerability to shocks and
- ▶ Cultural and spiritual values

It is noticeable, however, that unregulated human activities have directly or indirectly resulted in climate variability and loss of biodiversity and ecosystem degradation. More lands are being converted to cropland; mangroves and coral reefs are being lost and destroyed; deforestation, especially of the tropical and sub-tropical region is reaching alarming proportions, and animal and plant species extinction rates are increasing by the day.

To the entire humanity, climate change is a threat and biodiversity is in danger. The recent findings of the UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment shows that 70% of all ecosystem services worldwide are worsening and species are becoming extinct at up to 1000 times the normal rate.

These are challenges, in my opinion present new opportunities for development cooperation especially within the framework of the ACP-EU cooperation.

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Globally, it is acceptable that adaptation is fundamental to achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). More so is the relevance of biodiversity when the MDG 7 of 'ensuring environmental sustainability' is considered. For the ACP countries, especially those in economic transition, to achieve the MDGs, it is pertinent that they receive support, assistance and collaboration from the EU and other key partners in adapting to climate change and reducing biodiversity loss.

Priorities areas for assistance could include the following:

- ▶ Climate change key features that are related to variability and extremes, as against average conditions
- ▶ Develop and support the use of innovative financial mechanism for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and poverty reduction
- ▶ Enhancement of adaptive capacity which are necessary conditions for reducing vulnerability, particularly for the most vulnerable regions, nations, and socio-economic groups
- ▶ Knowledge sharing on adaptation and adaptive capacity
- ▶ Integrate environmental issues in national planning strategies for poverty reduction and macroeconomic policy instruments, and monitor progress of turning policy into action.

I would like to conclude with the words of the President of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and I quote, "Is development without biodiversity conservation an option? Evidence gathered from around the world shows it is not. Development, and in particular rural development, needs biodiversity and related ecosystem services if it is to be sustainable, and postponing biodiversity protection to a hypothetical brighter future makes that future less likely" end of quote.

Thank you.