



COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION



**Council Conclusions on the  
EU Action Plan on Agricultural Commodity Chains,  
Dependence and Poverty  
and  
the EU-Africa Partnership in support of Cotton Sector  
Development**

*2869th GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting  
Brussels, 26 May 2008*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. Recalling its Conclusions of 27 April 2004 on an EU Action Plan on Agricultural Commodities Chains, Dependence and Poverty and an EU-Africa Partnership on Cotton<sup>1</sup>, the Council reiterates the crucial importance of agricultural commodities for poverty reduction in developing countries as well its support for the actions undertaken in this regard at all relevant level and fora.
2. While the situation of the commodities market has changed considerably since April 2004, mainly due to an increase in world demand for most commodities and a generalized increase in commodity market prices, price fluctuations remain significant and poverty among commodity producers continues to prevail. The Council reaffirms<sup>2</sup> the necessity to implement the 2004 EU Action Plans on Commodities and Cotton, but also the need to continuously reflect on relative priorities within both documents in the light of the market changes in the last four years and the current challenges faced by poor commodity dependent, food importing countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Doc. 8972/04.

<sup>2</sup> In line with the Progress Report of April 2006 Doc. 8044/06.

**P R E S S**

The Council therefore calls on the Commission and Member States to follow a coordinated and proactive approach to addressing the new challenges faced in the area of commodities in developing countries, with a special emphasis on the need to enhance synergies and coherence between trade, development and environmental and social issues and policies<sup>3</sup>.

3. As regards the EU Action Plan on Agricultural Commodities, the Council:

- Calls on the Commission and Member States to substantially increase their efforts in implementing the Action Plan and especially emphasizes the need for the Commission to coordinate regular reporting on the implementation of all actions taken at different levels and to assess on a timely basis the need for additional actions and/or adjustment of the Action Plan priorities.
- Takes note of the approval and launch of the EUR 45 million all-ACP Agricultural Commodities Programme, carried out through five international organizations, and invites the Commission to regularly report to the Council on its implementation.
- Invites the Commission and Member States to encourage developing countries to include adequate references to commodities in their national development strategies (PRSPs or equivalent) and in their prioritization for programming of EU development assistance.
- Calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure that the implementation of the Action Plan will contribute to achieving the overall EU development objectives, as set out in the European Consensus on Development<sup>4</sup>, and that the activities will be in line with relevant initiatives in the context of the implementation of the Joint EU-Africa Strategy, in particular the EU-Africa Partnership on Trade and Regional Integration.
- Welcomes the conclusions of the recent UNCTAD XII, and in particular the continued attention that UNCTAD will be giving to the matter of commodities as important factors in the efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals. In cooperation and complementarity with other international and regional actors, including relevant commodity bodies, UNCTAD can play a valuable role in addressing the trade and development problems of the commodity economy, particularly with regard to poverty reduction.
- In the light of the current world developments, encourages the Commission and Member States to provide additional resources to commodities, to be channelled in line with agreed principles for Aid Effectiveness, i.e. following national strategic priorities and taking into account opportunities for joint delivery. Care should be taken to involve all relevant organizations, in line with agreed objectives and in particular within the framework of the EU Strategy on Aid for Trade<sup>5</sup>.

4. As regards the EU-Africa Partnership on Cotton, the Council:

- Notes the progress reports on the implementation of the EU-Africa Partnership in Cotton, as produced by the Partnership Steering Body (COS-Cotton) in September 2005 and by the European Commission in April 2006 and November 2007.
- Underlines the continued relevance of the EU-Africa Partnership for keeping cotton development in Africa as a priority on the EU and Africa development agenda.

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<sup>3</sup> Such as EPA's accompanying measures.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 46, 24.2.2006, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> Council Conclusions of 15 October 2007 (doc. 14470/07).

- Calls for a widening of the involvement of EU Member States in the implementation of the Action Plan.
  - Invites the Commission to more regularly report on the state of play in implementing the Partnership, including - where feasible - on intended long-term effects and achieved objectives, especially with regard to competitiveness in Africa's cotton production, farmer's income and vulnerability.
  - Reiterates the invitation addressed to the Commission in the April 2004 Conclusions to consider EC membership of the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC).
5. As regards the future of the International Commodity Bodies (ICBs), the Council:
- Takes note of the evaluation study presented by the Commission within the framework of the EU Action Plan on the future of these organisations and takes stock of the reflections led by previous Presidencies on the future of ICBs.
  - Invites the Commission and Member States to continue playing an active role in the work and projects of the different ICBs, with a particular focus on key issues such as the promotion of decent work and sustainable production and trade in commodities.
  - Invites the Commission and the Member States to pursue their joint work within the ICBs on the basis of the following guidelines:
    - contributing to improve the efficiency of ICBs through the promotion of the necessary reforms aimed at the rationalisation and simplification of their objectives, structure and working methods, building upon recent experiences of ICB reforms;<sup>6</sup>
    - encouraging ICBs to enhance coordination amongst themselves as well as with other relevant international organisations;
    - preserving and, where necessary, improving the key role of ICBs as fora for dialogue and cooperation between producer and consumer members as well as with relevant private sector and civil society stakeholders;
    - improving the role of ICBs in the collection, dissemination and assessment of data and statistics as well as promoting and enhancing the use of available expertise from all relevant stakeholders;
    - promoting the definition and implementation of thematic programmes aimed at supporting in a predictable and systematic way the objectives and work of ICBs;
    - contributing where necessary to mobilise additional resources from financial institutions such as the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), from members as well as through new public and private sources of funding for the work of ICBs, in line with their priorities and the objectives of the EU Action Plan.
6. The Council invites the Commission to coordinate annual reporting on the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Commodities and the EU-Africa Partnership on Cotton, as well as on the implementation of these Conclusions."

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<sup>6</sup> Recent examples are the 2006 International Tropical Timber Agreement and the 2007 International Coffee Agreement.