4.5. The Committee also undertakes to follow the progress of the programme, so as to inform the socio-occupational organisations of the Mediterranean countries with which it has built up close, fruitful cooperation over a period of years, and encourage them to take part in Tempus MEDA.


The President
of the Economic and Social Committee
Göke FRERICHS

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the 'ACP-EU Partnership Agreement'

(2002/C 149/11)

On 28 February and 1 March 2001, in accordance with the third paragraph of Rule 23 of its Rules of Procedure, the Economic and Social Committee decided to draw up an opinion on the ‘ACP-EU Partnership Agreement’.

The Section for External Relations, which was responsible for preparing the Committee’s work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 11 April 2002. The rapporteur was Mr Baeza Sanjuán.

At its 390th plenary session of 24 and 25 April 2002 (meeting of 24 April 2002) the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 101 votes in favour with two abstentions.

1. Introduction

1.1. ACP-EU cooperation has its roots in the Treaty of Rome where the signatories expressed their solidarity with the overseas colonies and territories and undertook to contribute to their prosperity. The Yaoundé I and II Agreements (1963-1969 and 1969-1975 respectively) regulated relations between the EEC Member States and the ACP countries for the first time. In 1975 the Lomé I Convention was signed; it was revised every five years until the expiry of Lomé IV in 2000.

1.2. For a long time the Lomé Convention was regarded as a model for international cooperation agreements because of its innovative nature. The principle of equality between partners, the linking of trade and aid (with price stabilisation mechanisms and protocols on specific products), the gradual introduction of reciprocal political commitments and the creation of a joint institutional framework made the Lomé Convention a yardstick in international relations.

1.3. However, the political changes which occurred during the 90s called into question this model of EU/ACP relations. Some of the provisions which formed the fundamental commercial basis of the Lomé Convention were incompatible with the new rules established by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The practical implementation of the Convention turned out to be difficult because of complex procedures which prevented full use of the resources potentially available. Despite the Convention’s provisions, the relative share of the ACP countries in EU trade continued to fall and the outlook for the development of these countries was, with a few exceptions, bleak. Poverty increased, exacerbated by a proliferation of armed conflicts. The increase in emergency humanitarian aid bore witness to the shortcomings of long-term development policies, not to mention the fact that some aid did not reach its final destination, not infrequently because of corruption. The end of the bipolar international order favoured the emergence of two aspects where Lomé was clearly deficient: a political dimension and its democratisation, through the effective participation of non-governmental players. Finally,
many ACP countries felt that the EU was losing interest in them and turning to the applicant and Mediterranean countries.

1.4. Against this background the European Commission launched a wide-ranging process of consultation and discussion on future EU-ACP relations, revolving around a green paper published in 1996 on which the EESC issued an opinion (1). The negotiations for the conclusion of the new agreement began formally in September 1998.

1.5. The Partnership Agreement was finally signed in Cotonou (Benin) in June 2000 by the 15 EU Member States and 77 ACP countries (2). It will run for 20 years with five-yearly reviews and financial protocols. The Agreement strengthens political dialogue and rests on two fundamental pillars: trade and aid, matched by two main instruments: investment facilities and subsidies for promoting long-term development (national/regional indicative programmes — NIPs and RIs). To these two pillars a third, equally essential, pillar must be added, namely the political dimension. The Agreement will run under the supervision of the ACP-EU joint institutions.

1.6. The Committee welcomes the conclusion of the Agreement which avoids the possibility — advocated by some — of dispensing with a common regulatory framework for ACP-EU relations. This would have called into question one of the principal distinguishing features of EU external policy. The Committee also acknowledges the effort made to come up with a more readily understandable text than the previous conventions.

2. Objectives and principles of the Cotonou Agreement

2.1. The ultimate objectives of the Agreement are poverty eradication, sustainable development and the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy. ACP-EU cooperation rests on certain fundamental principles:

— equality of the partners and ownership of the development strategies, i.e. it is for the ACP countries to define their own economic and social development strategies in all sovereignty;

— participation of other actors (private sector, economic and social players — including trade union organisations, civil society in all its forms), in addition to central government, in the ACP-EU partnership;

— pivotal role of dialogue and mutual commitments;

— differentiation according to characteristics and needs of each partner (3), and regionalisation.

2.2. It is particularly appropriate and consistent that the Agreement should have as a reference framework (as is stated in the preamble) the international agreements adopted by most of the Member States and ACP countries, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the relevant ILO standards, and the commitments emanating from various UN conferences.

2.3. The Committee also welcomes the express recognition of the fact that the Agreement’s objectives can only be attained by an integrated approach which takes account of the political, economic, social and environmental aspects.

2.4. From the text of the Agreement it may be deduced that one of the partners is basically a donor (EU) and the other a beneficiary (ACP). It should have spelt out clearly the importance and benefits to the EU of the full integration into the world economy and the sustainable development of the ACP countries. This would have underlined the solidarity and reciprocity of the ACP-EU partnership.

3. The role of the new actors in the ACP-EU partnership

3.1. Generally speaking, while the Lomé Conventions were in force the role of non-State actors was limited to the implementation of small-scale projects financed under the ‘decentralised cooperation’ budget line. Even then, the organisations representing economic and social groups encountered great difficulties in accessing the Convention’s resources, on account of both the complexity of the procedures and the widespread lack of political will to facilitate their participation.


(2) Cuba is the only ACP country which has still not signed the Cotonou Agreement.

(3) The differentiation applies particularly to the LDCs.
3.2. The Cotonou Agreement marks a turning point in this respect. Among the main innovations which it introduces, its participatory approach should be highlighted. This is manifested in the desire to broaden the ACP-EU partnership to embrace a whole range of non-State actors, including local authorities. The provisions relating to the participation of non-State actors are contained in more than thirty articles, in a final declaration and in Annex IV on implementation and management procedures. The references most representative of this new approach are included in the 'Fundamental principles' (Article 2) and in Chapter 2, devoted entirely to 'the actors of the partnership'.

3.3. The Agreement provides for the full participation of the new actors in ACP-EU relations, in particular by means of:

— consultation on cooperation policies and strategies, and on political dialogue;

— provision of financial resources;

— involvement in the implementation of cooperation projects and programmes in areas that concern them or where they have a comparative advantage;

— provision of capacity-building support in order to reinforce their capabilities and establish consultation mechanisms.

3.4. The provisions of the Cotonou Agreement represent a major step forward on the road towards more democratic ACP-EU relations in that they envisage the involvement of new players in the definition of development policies and strategies. The complementary role of the new actors and of the government should be — and indeed is — specially stressed: they are not competing for the same space but each should provide their own added value in those areas where they can show they have a comparative advantage, thus contributing to the economic development and social well-being of their respective countries. The positive contribution of non-State actors to the consolidation of stable and democratic political systems cannot be underestimated. It should also be stressed that the full involvement of non-State actors in framing national development strategies and sectoral strategies in focal sectors is a sine qua non for the implementation of effective anti-poverty policies, the integration of the ACP countries into the global economy and for sustainable development — central objectives of the Agreement. For this reason it is hard to understand why broad consultation is provided for in national programmes, but is seen as merely a possibility at regional level. Finally, it is a good thing that new actors are explicitly not equated exclusively with NGOs.

3.5. Nevertheless, the involvement of new actors as envisaged in the Agreement also raises a number of serious questions. Firstly, the definition of the actors — which is always difficult — is imprecise and has overlaps, and could therefore lead to arbitrary choices by some governments. There is no denying the difficulty of establishing traits which identify clearly and unequivocally the representative non-State actors of 77 different countries. Even so, it is unacceptable that it may be inferred from the Agreement (Article 6b and declaration on the actors of the partnership) that the private sector does not belong with the economic and social partners and that the latter, for their part, are not included in civil society. Such a definition clearly runs counter to current practice in the EU and is merely likely to sow confusion.

3.6. More worrying is the lack of instruments to bind non-State actors into the ACP-EU partnership. It is true that the Agreement provides for incentives and it is unrealistic to expect overnight changes in the political culture of many governments, traditionally little inclined towards power-sharing with organisations representing civil society. Nevertheless, the legitimacy of the Agreement would be seriously jeopardised if one of its central and most innovative planks were infringed with impunity.

3.7. It should be stressed that the Agreement (or its application, through the programming guidelines) expressly provides for the access of non-State actors to three kinds of financial resources: strictly Community budget lines, European Development Fund (EDF) resources earmarked for the focal sectors identified in the National Cooperation Strategy, and EDF funds which can be accessed directly by non-State actors, with a ceiling of 15 % of the total allocated to the National Indicative Programme. Their primary use will be to finance information, consultation, dialogue promotion and capacity-building activities. The possibility for non-State actors to access directly some of the resources allocated to the NIPs (another innovation in the Cotonou Agreement), and for these to be managed directly by the European Commission delegations in each country, is a highly positive step. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that uncertainties persist: the choice of actors eligible for the funding requires the express consent of the national authorising officer (NAO), the government representative who traditionally has had a proprietary perception of the funds and may be tempted not to share them with players who have a critical or merely differing opinion of his activities. It is therefore essential to ensure that all the representative actors have the chance to access, without discrimination, the resources flowing from the Agreement. Nor should the principle of focusing resources work against the access of new actors to these resources.
3.8. The programming exercise is currently still in its infancy. Nevertheless, an initial assessment may be made of this process on the basis of the information gathered by the EESC (1). Although there has been an increase in information and consultation of non-State actors, much remains to be done: in general terms, information on the Agreement has not been adequately disseminated or is still difficult to access; consultation — where it has taken place — has not as a rule been systematic or regular and in some cases representative organisations have been excluded. The current programming should be used to initiate a learning process for all parties, which will not be easy, and to check whether they are actually beginning to move in the right direction. For this reason a specific assessment of the level of consultation and use of resources by non-State actors should be included in the annual, mid-term and end-of-term operational reviews. Similarly the international organisations representing civil society, together with the European Economic and Social Committee, could cooperate effectively with the European Commission and the joint ACP-EU institutions in identifying the difficulties encountered and highlighting the most fruitful experiences.

4. Political dimension

4.1. The Cotonou Agreement, compared with previous conventions, substantially reinforces the political dimension of ACP-EU relations. Political dialogue, a commitment to respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms (with a specific mention of fundamental social rights, democracy based on the rule of law and good governance), peace-building policies and conflict prevention occupy a central place in the political dimension of the Agreement. This is a new approach, based on shared values reflected in key elements of the Agreement.

4.2. The Committee welcomes the boost given to the political dimension in the present Agreement and in particular the unequivocal link established between the afore-mentioned commitments and sustainable development. This is an explicit recognition of the fact that development is a concept which cannot be confined to purely technical considerations. The reference to the involvement of civil society as an element contributing to the consolidation of a stable and democratic political environment, and its role in peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution, along with its involvement in the political dialogue, should also be highlighted. In this connection, the implementation of the Agreement should encourage the effective involvement of non-State actors in the consultation procedures concerning respect for human rights, democratic principles, the rule of law and corruption, as provided for in Articles 96 and 97.

4.3. The Agreement does not, however, contain instruments for guaranteeing the effective protection of the political principles enshrined therein; because of their general wording, different criteria can be applied in different countries. Although recourse to sanctions should be an exception, more precise criteria should have been established for the protection of emergent democracies, with sanctions against gaining power through violence (especially against democratic regimes), measures for combating corruption and respect for basic standards established by the ILO. These are fundamental principles of the Agreement which deserve greater support; their practical application should have been guaranteed.

4.4. The political dimension of the Cotonou Agreement means putting into practice new working methods, forms of cooperation, indicators and channels of dialogue. The great challenge will be to involve all of society in sharing and implementing the values expressed in the Agreement. To this end it will be essential to promote dialogue between State and non-State actors.

5. Development strategies

5.1. The development strategies, along with economic and trade cooperation, constitute the cooperation strategies of the Cotonou Agreement. The principles, objectives and approach of the development strategies are appropriate. Similarly, the focus on four selected areas of support (economic development, social and human development, regional cooperation and integration, and cross-cutting issues — gender issues, environment and institutional development) should be welcomed.

5.2. Generally speaking, however, there is a question-mark over the degree of coherence between the two pillars which comprise the development strategies; in particular the links between economic and social development, especially as regards training (basic and vocational) and health protection, should have been highlighted more precisely.

5.3. With regard to economic development, the Committee regards the important role assigned to the private sector throughout the Agreement as appropriate, including the measures designed to strengthen that sector. Similarly, the structural policies mentioned include strengthening labour market reforms, which, thus formulated, seems excessively vague and likely to be interpreted in very different, even contradictory, ways. Again, while agreeing with the objective of promoting employment, the Committee would have liked to see the adjective ‘decent’ added in accordance with ILO recommendations.

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(1) The information that the Committee has on the involvement of civil society organisations — especially economic and social groups — in the current programming exercise comes from the European Commission, international socio-occupational organisations and the conclusions of the regional seminars organised by the ESC itself in various ACP countries.
5.4. It is worrying that the Agreement is less sensitive to environmental issues than its predecessors. For example, the Lomé Convention explicitly prohibited all direct and indirect exports of hazardous or radioactive waste between the EU and the ACP countries, while the Cotonou Agreement merely ‘takes into account’ issues relating to the transport and disposal of hazardous waste. The Agreement should have included an explicit reference to the relationship between environmental protection, food safety and poverty reduction, or — more broadly — studied in depth the concept of sustainable development. Just as it aspires to coherence and compatibility with international economic institutions, the Cotonou Agreement should have taken into account the objectives and instruments of international environmental conventions.

6. Economic and trade cooperation

6.1. While the various Lomé Conventions were in force (1975-2000), the ACP countries benefited from the most favourable trade arrangements granted to third countries by the EU: non-reciprocal trade preferences for most primary, industrial and processed products (1), commodity protocols and price stabilisation mechanisms for certain agricultural products (Stabex) and mining products (Sysmin). Nevertheless, the general reduction in customs tariffs in the wake of global trade liberalisation and the preferences granted by the EU to other developing regions (Mediterranean third countries, Mercosur, etc.) have meant that the ACP preferences have become relatively less valuable. It is estimated that after the Uruguay Round the ACP countries lost a preferential margin of over 30 %.

6.2. The record of these 25 years is disappointing: trade with the ACP countries has fallen from 8 % to 3 % of total EU trade. With a few exceptions, the ACP countries have not been able to increase, improve or diversify their products, unlike some other countries with fewer preferences. In general terms ACP trade has four distinctive features: marginalisation, dependence on raw materials, static specialisation and dependence on the European market. But, especially, Lomé demonstrated that a few percentage points of tariff preference cannot offset the shortcomings of other supply-side factors (lack of investment, inadequate infrastructure, low technological level, poor training, etc.) which determine the competitiveness of export products.

6.3. The Cotonou Agreement attempts to respond to WTO provisions which, in broad terms, prevent non-reciprocal trade preferences or preferences limited to a specific group of countries. This means that the trade arrangements granted to the ACP countries will have to be extended to all developing countries or be brought into line with free trade agreements. Strictly speaking, therefore, Cotonou comprises not so much a trade agreement as a commitment to undertake the negotiation of trade agreements compatible with WTO rules.

6.4. Thus Cotonou stipulates that between 2002 and 2008 negotiations are to be held to conclude economic partnership agreements (EPAs) — free trade agreements — between the EU and the ACP countries. The present trading system will continue until 2008, thanks to a derogation granted by the WTO. The characteristic feature of the EPAs will be reciprocity, with the accent on negotiations with regional integration groups. The period 2008 to 2020 will be a transitional period for the implementation of the agreements.

6.5. With a view to facilitating the conclusion and implementation of the EPAs, a number of support measures have been provided for: partial compensation to offset the fiscal and balance of payments adjustments necessitated by liberalisation (financed by the EDF and EIB), cooperation on adjusting national to multilateral rules, and creation of a ministerial joint committee responsible for monitoring the negotiation of the EPAs and cooperation in international fora, especially in the WTO, which seems an excellent initiative.

6.6. The Agreement allows LDCs to decide that they are not in a position to negotiate an EPA. Whatever the case, the EU wishes to find a formula which, while compatible with WTO rules, enables products from these countries to have access to the European market without quantitative or tariff restrictions, in line with the ‘Everything But Arms’ initiative. Hence the Cotonou Agreement puts an end to non-discrimination between ACP countries, providing for different treatment for LDC and non-LDC countries.

6.7. The approach has changed radically. For 25 years Lomé placed considerable confidence in trade preferences as an engine of economic growth. Cotonou seems to transfer the same confidence to trade liberalisation, linking it to integration into the world economy, sustainable development and poverty eradication. The main dynamic effects expected from the EPAs are: promoting the process of regional integration; enhancing belief in the ability of the economic and trade policies of the ACP countries to remain ‘anchored’ to multilateral agreements; improving internal competitiveness; encouraging modernisation of tax systems; boosting investor confidence; and facilitating integration into the global economy. These dynamic effects could come to act as genuine catalysts for development.

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(1) 92 % of ACP exports enter the European market duty free. 100 % of industrial products and 80 % of agricultural products are exempt from duty. If those products covered by protocols are added, only 1 % of products are subject to tariff protection.
6.8. Nevertheless, the EPAs raise not a few concerns, despite the long time-frames envisaged to negotiate and implement them, which would seem absolutely appropriate.

6.9. Firstly, the EU has expressed a wish that the EPAs be negotiated with ACP regional integration blocs. To date, however, these groups have been fragile; frequently their members do not share clear common interests or are involved in armed conflicts; furthermore, few of them have an adequate supranational structure to negotiate free trade agreements on behalf of their members. Plus the fact that both non-LDCs and LDCs are involved in regional integration, further complicating the negotiation of EPAs.

6.10. Secondly, about 20 % of government revenue in many ACP countries comes from customs tariffs. The abolition of duties on European imports (which could reasonably be expected to increase relative to other countries after the EPAs are signed) would roughly halve this revenue. Bearing in mind how difficult it is to diversify fiscal resources, national budgets could face serious problems (1). Besides, there is no guarantee that the fall in customs tariffs will be passed on in lower prices for ACP consumers and importers. For this reason the EPAs should identify those sectors and social groups potentially most affected by a possible reduction in public revenue and adopt appropriate corrective measures. Support should also be provided for the introduction of adequate tax arrangements based on a fair distribution of the burden between citizens in accordance with their income.

6.11. As far as trade is concerned, the main challenge facing the ACP countries will be their ability to respond to European competition. Numerous ACP countries have expressed anxiety at the difficult situation facing some sectors (especially agriculture) which could be at risk on account of their lack of competitiveness and the production, processing and export aid enjoyed by European products, even taking into account that the Agreement (Article 37(7)) allows for the protection of certain sensitive products.

6.12. For these reasons there is a risk that not only the LDCs but also an unspecified number of non-LDCs could avail themselves of the possibility of not signing an EPA and opt for the System of Generalised Preferences (SGP). The SGP would offer reduced access to the European market, but would require less opening up of their own markets.

6.13. At all events, the liberalisation of trade must not be an end in itself. The principal objective of the EPAs must be to promote forms of sustainable development designed to combat poverty. To this end, appropriate machinery must be established (including capacity building) which enables the representatives of organised civil society — and in particular the economic and social groups — to be properly informed and consulted during the negotiation of the EPAs. Similarly, before the negotiations start an analysis should be carried out of the impact of the EPAs in each ACP country, pinpointing those economic sectors and social groups potentially most at risk.

6.14. The EPAs must help to attract foreign, especially European, investment. For this it will be necessary to adopt simple, transparent and non-discriminatory regulations and to create broader and more integrated regional markets.

6.15. In any case it should be pointed out that to guarantee the success of the EPAs all possible resources will have to be mobilised to put an end to the armed conflicts besetting certain African countries. For its part the European Union will have to pioneer a debt relief initiative (as it did in the trade sphere with the ‘Everything But Arms’ initiative), since repayments preclude any possibility of development for many ACP countries.

6.16. With regard to the other provisions included in the Title of the Agreement devoted to trade cooperation, the EESC also welcomes the inclusion, in connection with trade policy, of a specific reference to the commitment to core labour standards — as defined by the ILO — and the decision to enhance cooperation in this area, especially as regards the exchange of information on labour regulations, the formulation and strengthening of labour legislation, education and awareness-raising programmes, and enforcement of adherence to national labour regulations.

6.17. On the other hand, the Committee regrets that the article on maritime transport refers to cooperation to promote cost-effective and efficient services, but omits to mention that they should also be safe and of high quality. Some ACP countries act as flags of convenience and their registers do not include conditions ensuring compliance with international rules, nor do their crews always have the proper certificates.

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7. **EESC proposals for the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement**

7.1. The Cotonou Agreement provides an appropriate legal and political framework for developing an effective partnership between the ACP countries and the European Union. Its provisions are a clear advance on Lomé since they build on an approach which integrates political, economic and social factors, while at the same time aiming to involve the whole population of the signatory countries. Nevertheless, the Agreement will only achieve full legitimacy when it is implemented; when it demonstrates that the principle of the ACP States determining their own development strategies is more reality than rhetorical device; when it provides tangible proof that the whole of organised civil society has the opportunity to participate actively in the preparation of the strategies for the development of their country and to access the resources released by these strategies.

7.2. The EESC would wish to contribute to the practical implementation of the Agreement in that area where it can best add value: proposing specific measures for the full participation of organised civil society in the furtherance of ACP-EU relations. First, however, the Committee welcomes the official recognition which the Cotonou Agreement accords it by entrusting it with the organisation of consultation meetings and meetings of ACP-EU economic and social operators. This recognition has strengthened the EESC's role vis-à-vis the Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the ACP-EU Council of Ministers (1).

7.3. Beyond this institutional recognition, the EESC should continue disseminating information on the opportunities offered by the Cotonou Agreement to the representatives of civil society and drawing attention to any shortcomings in its implementation. The regional seminars already held have shown themselves to be a very useful tool in this respect, but if the Committee is to develop this role to the full it needs to take its cooperation with the international socio-occupational organisations a stage further.

7.4. As a preliminary comment, the EESC would express its concern that the implementation of the Agreement could be complicated unnecessarily and lose its coherence because responsibility for its implementation is shared between different directorates-general in the European Commission. The political dialogue is the remit of the External Relations DG, but the Development, Trade and AIDCO DGs also have major tasks in the future development of the Agreement. It is essential that this multiplicity of responsibilities does not impede full and effective application of the Agreement. The EESC is also confident that the new management procedures adopted by the European Commission will help to ensure that greater and more effective use is made of the resources released by the Agreement. In particular the Committee hopes that, as anticipated, those ACP countries which adhere most closely to all the provisions will benefit from increased resources.

7.5. With a view to ensuring that the provisions of the Cotonou Agreement are implemented effectively, the EESC proposes the following:

7.5.1. with regard to the dissemination of information:

— the EU and the ACP States should ensure that the contents of the Agreement are widely publicised by all suitable means (information meetings at different levels, publications, new technologies, etc.);

— the European Commission should reinforce the delegations in the ACP countries, in line with the Agreement's new political guidelines. In particular, the representatives of civil society organisations should be guaranteed direct access to EU representations so that they can be fully informed about participation in drawing up development strategies and access to funding:

— the delegations of the European Commission and the ACP States should cooperate with the socio-occupational organisations so that the latter can circulate information on the Cotonou Agreement among their members.

7.5.2. with regard to capacity building:

— establish a regulatory framework that helps civil society organisations to flourish, in particular access to financing and local resources, and prevent these organisations being supplanted by non-representative organisations that are linked to a particular government;

— encourage and support the efforts of civil society organisations to strengthen their structures, build up networks, improve their representativeness and analytic capabilities;

— promote dialogue between organisations in the ACP States and between these organisations and their European counterparts, supporting the creation of networks, with special attention to the processes of regional integration, respect for labour rights, support for the private sector, protection of rural areas and of the environment;

— simplify the machinery whereby the representatives of civil society organisations can access the resources released by the new Agreement ensuring effective access for the representatives of economic and social interest groups;

— allocate, in the programming of each country, direct funding for non-State actors, as provided for in the programming guidelines, ensuring non-discriminatory access for the most representative organisations.

7.5.3. with regard to strengthening the consultative function:
— involve the representatives of civil society organisations from the outset in the process of applying the Agreement and in programming, so that they can contribute to drawing up development strategies in each of their countries;
— create or strengthen arrangements which enable the representatives of civil society organisations to be involved in the ACP-EU political dialogue and the negotiation of the EPAs;
— adopt or strengthen a participatory approach, establishing national and regional structures which promote dialogue between organisations representing civil society, and between these organisations and the public authorities;
— include a specific assessment of the level of consultation and use of resources by non-State actors in the annual, mid-term and end-of-term operational reviews;
— in turn, the ACP-EU Follow-up Committee will draw up an action plan for assessing the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement, the adoption of which will be submitted to the delegates participating in the 23rd meeting of ACP-EU economic and social interest groups, to be held in Brussels in the second half of 2002.


The President
of the Economic and Social Committee
Goke FRERICHS