

*Working paper*  
**The Dutch EU Presidency from a development perspective**  
**Analysis & points of actions**

Draft study by NGO-EU Presidency campaign based on ECDPM research

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# **I. ISSUES OF CHOICE WITHIN A BROAD INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

## **I.1 European Development Cooperation: winds of change in EU external relations**

Dramatic changes in the context of international affairs have pushed the EU to review drastically the way it sees the role of both foreign policy and development policy and the contribution it can make to world affairs. While the Union already has a set of policy instruments on conflict prevention and experience of tackling security and conflict issues on its own doorstep it is in the process of strengthening its security policy. The new Security Doctrine however is not just about 'hard' security issues: the link is also being made with trade, development and foreign relations. While some may see in this an attempt to 'instrumentalise' development policy, others recognise that the days of an EC development programme completely separate from other more political considerations are long gone and that it is therefore better to focus on how to maximise the value of links between policy areas.

What is more the new EU Security Doctrine also stresses principles that are important for development cooperation: partnership and multilateralism. Working within the UN framework and espousing a multilateralist agenda is emerging as a solid axis in the Union's external relations and its chosen route for facing up to the challenges of the new global context. Besides, interactions between different aspects of EU external policy are being reassessed while awareness is growing that complex problems need integrated solutions. The quest is intensified for the right policy mix to deal with any specific external relations challenge and involve all sectors of EU external action: security; foreign policy; development cooperation and trade relations, as required and appropriate.

The most obvious change to launch this 'new era' in European external relations is the new Treaty and its provisions for new institutional arrangements for EU foreign policy, including a new post of European Foreign Minister, but that is far from being the only change. 2004 also brings in a new era in terms of new participants in the EU Institutions: 10 new Member States, a new College of Commissioners and a new legislature of Parliament. Such wholesale renewal poses challenges both in terms of innovation and of continuity in policy. Finally, it creates a dynamic institutional context for other events such as the negotiations on the next Financial Perspectives and the continuing reform of European Aid.

Fundamental questions however, remain to be resolved: What will the intended consistency between different elements of EU External Action mean for the position of Development Cooperation? What political balance will be struck in practice, between the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Development, Humanitarian Aid and Trade Policies? Will the call for coherence between external action and internal EU policies be enhanced or to the contrary, wither away in view of other global issues? How strongly will the EU pursue its multilateralist agenda? What influence can be expected from enlargement? And what will be the effects of the New Constitution on the architecture of EU development cooperation?

## **I.2 Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Development Cooperation**

The Netherlands plays a lead role in the world of development cooperation and is willing to make the necessary efforts to maintain it. Within an ever changing international context it has realigned its policy: the October 2003 policy memorandum Mutual interests, mutual responsibilities: Dutch development cooperation en route to 2015, stresses reciprocity among all development partners; continues to allocate 0.8 % of GNP to development cooperation; remains firm in its commitment to follow-up on multilateral agreements and to bring the Millennium Development Goals within reach; asking the same from its European and international partners. Cooperation with Africa receives particular attention. The Stability Fund supports an integrated foreign policy, in an attempt to fill the gap between actions for peace and security on the one hand, and development on the other.

At the European level, six Presidencies are coordinating their efforts for the period 2004-2006: Ireland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, the UK, Austria and Finland. In line with their joint program and given its own priorities, as expressed in the October 2003 policy memorandum, we assume that the Netherlands may therefore focus at least on the following areas to improve European development policy and practice:

memorandum, we assume that the Netherlands may therefore focus at least on the following areas to improve European development policy and practice:

- a) In line with its own policy of effectively combining different foreign policy instruments in an integrated foreign policy, the Dutch Government will focus on coherence in EU external action; it may want to take steps to ensure (1) equivalency of development cooperation vis-à-vis other areas of EU external action and (2) coherence between EU external policy instruments, designing a specific policy mix to address each region and sub-region. It will probably focus on Africa as a continent and focus on specific WTO and security issues so concrete results may be obtained.
- b) It is the Netherlands' Government explicit intention also to improve coherence between its internal and external policies, together with different responsible ministries; similarly, it will call for greater coherence at the European and international policy level. Its Presidency will seek ways to call for a stronger multilateral trade and investment system that takes account of disparities in levels of development between developing countries; and for strengthening support to developing countries. and private enterprises in operating competitively on regional and international markets.
- c) The Netherlands' Government will certainly continue to urge the Commission to improve quality, efficiency and effectiveness of European development policy and aid delivery; probably within the framework of the mid-term review of the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) planned for 2004; it may also insist upon closer cooperation and harmonization within the EU. It will probably pay attention to deepening the reform of EU development institutions and procedures. Naturally, accountability is a key issue.
- d) The Netherlands' Government will work with old and new partners to fight AIDS effectively. It will seek to include HIV/AIDS in the agenda of special meetings and a possible EU-Africa Summit. It may seek to use the momentum of the European Centre for Population and Development (ECPD)/Cairo + 10 years to achieve a renewed commitment in Europe to reproductive health rights and the position of women in society. It may want to insist upon stepping up cooperation and coordination in Europe to alleviate the social consequences of AIDS, such as loss of capacity in key sectors like agriculture, health care and education, and to provide care for AIDS orphans; to complement primary health care services with measures to improve reproductive health. Providing information on HIV/AIDS and readily available contraceptives are considered key elements.

e) The Netherlands will seek to enhance non-state actors' participation in European development cooperation; partnerships with citizens, knowledge and research institutes, civil society organizations, government authorities and private enterprises are a key priority of its policy.

f) The Netherlands' Government will stimulate dialogue and action on enhancing coherence, complementarity and coordination amongst European donors, member states and the commission. It aims at establishing an effective working level EU coherence network; this may be of particular interest in view of the integration of the new member states as donors in European development policy. It will continue to stimulate cooperation in designing ways to monitor, evaluate and report on the progress made on the 3 Cs, both in Europe and outside.

g) The Netherlands Presidency will seek to strengthen European support to reducing poverty and

promoting economic growth in Africa. It may review the various all-African and sub-regional initiatives for peace and development and enhance coordination among the European Commission and Member States to focus support on the most promising ones. The Netherlands Presidency will enhance her support to NePAD, an initiative by African leaders to take ownership of sustainable growth and development for Africa through democratic governance, sound economic policies, and peace building. It will also consider the mid-term review of the 9th EDF (European Development Fund) in this light.

h) The Netherlands' Government will pay particular attention to conflict and will seek to pilot proposals for a coordinated EU CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy)-Development agenda in particularly conflictive areas; making use of the opportunities provided by initiatives such as its own Stability Fund.

i) The Netherlands' Government will certainly emphasize the promotion of good governance and respect for human rights by all partners; where possible, the Netherlands also wants to contribute to a better business and investment climate, the fight against corruption, strengthening the financial sector and trade capacity and improving the macroeconomic position. It may therefore insist on new initiatives to coordinate EU support to international private sector initiatives emerging from developing countries.

j) In line with the joint Presidency program, the Netherlands' Government will certainly pay much attention to assisting the new Member States in defining their development policy and increasing their activity in this field. It is generally recognized that the possibilities of the EU to reach the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) and implementing the Monterrey commitments depend strongly on the new Member States' capacities and capabilities to contribute effectively.

### I.3 EU-NGO campaign

The EU-NGO working group aims to enhance the public debate in the Netherlands within the framework of the Dutch EU Presidency in the second half of 2004<sup>1</sup>[1]. The group chose to focus on issues close to the public interest in the Netherlands that may contribute to a further critical dialogue with the EU on global development. It will organize 8 public conferences and events in the Netherlands, between March and December 2004, on the following topics:

1 *European Development Policy and Human Rights.* Its aim is to give a strong national and international civil society input to the European Council on various aspects of EU Development Policy; it will be prepared in close cooperation with the Irish NGO-network; it will focus on the human rights deficit and more in general, on the consistency of EU development policy and external action in view of international human rights laws and standards.

2 *The enlargement of the European Union: what will be the impact on Development Policy?* The enlargement will alter the political, social, cultural balance in the EU; former aid recipients will turn into donors; some have a long tradition, but presently lack capacity to fulfill European development functions. What does this imply for European Development Policy? During the conference, discrepancies between EU development policy and the policies of the accession countries will be elaborated upon and proposals to diminish these differences will be brought forward.

3 *The European Union and NePAD.* The New Partnership for Africa's Development, is an initiative by African leaders to take ownership of sustainable growth and development for Africa. The EU regards itself as an external partner to both the African Union and NePAD. It supports the political values that are at the heart of NePAD and the AU, because it corresponds with the essential elements of the EU's own external Co-operation policy: good governance, strengthening democratic practises, respect for human rights and the rule of law. In addition, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) of NePAD can be used to hold governments accountable to their own people and indeed ensure more effective conflict resolution. How does the APRM work? How transparent and democratic is APRM? What role can the EU play in enhancing the APRM as an instrument to promote conflict prevention in Africa?

4 *Europe and health care/reproductive rights.* The Dutch Presidency coincides with the 10th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+10). It is taken as an opportunity to reflect upon EU policies in this area; it will pay particular attention to the effectiveness of progressive Reproductive Health policies contribute to the fulfillment of reproductive rights within the framework of women's right to health. How does the new political balance within the EU affect its position on reproductive health? A recommitment to ICPD and the right to health will be urged for. What can the development partners do to ensure that EU institutions and EU Member States actively respect, protect and fulfill the right to health, including sexual and reproductive rights worldwide?

5 *Coherence of European policies towards the South.* There is an alarming lack

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<sup>1</sup>[1] The Dutch NGO-EU working group includes ICCO, Novib, HIVOS, CORDAID, NiZA, Plan, WPF, TNI, WEMOS, NCDO and the policy institutes/networks ECDPM and SID.

of coherence between the EU development policy on the one hand and policy areas such as agriculture, trade, and external relations on the other hand. In order to improve the coherence of the EU's external policies, the EU should:

- use the Millennium Development Goals as a reference for all policy areas, including trade;
  - change its agricultural policies: phase out agricultural subsidies that lead to dumping within 5 years; provide better access to the European market for products from the poorest countries; and allow Southern countries to apply measures against dumping;
  - recognition of the LDC's demands concerning the 'Singapore issues' at the WTO.
- The conference will use the examples of agriculture and trade for debate.

6 *GATS and Dutch and EU development policies.* The General Agreement on Trade in Services in the WTO deals with the privatization of a wide range of (public) services like water, energy, education, health care, transportation and banking. The European Commission is in charge of preparing all requests and offers on behalf of the EU Member States. Also after Cancún, these negotiations remain mostly bilateral; putting lots of pressure on already scarce negotiation capacities, particularly in the many less developed countries. What are the potential impacts of the GATS, in North and South? How transparent and accessible are the negotiations? To whom? What are the European Corporate Ambitions with regards to the GATS? What role do the EC and the Single Market rules play? Where does European Development Policy fit in? Support for the "Water out of GATS" initiative will be sought.

7 *Public event on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).* Civil society groups and a wider public will be encouraged to reflect upon current trends in The Netherlands and in Europe with regard to CSR. Recommendations will be made that stress the need for public policy instruments to promote CSR, and call for an active engagement by the Dutch government and by other EU member states. The event will focus on the definition of corporate social responsibility, the role of governments and the EU, the role of the private sector in conflict areas, transparency and supply chain management & CSR. Similarly, attention will be paid to the outcome of the European Multistakeholder Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) which will be known by June/July 2004.

6 *Concluding international symposium.* This symposium will urge for a council regulation on a child centred approach to EU development policy, a coherent EU policy on the total elimination of child labor and the provision of full-time elementary education for all children up to 14 years of age. It targets the 246 million child laborers that exist world-wide between the ages of 5 and 17. The conference will focus on the position of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVCs), the elimination of child labourers, among whom prostitutes and child soldiers, and the results of the campaign Stop Child Labor: School is the best place to Work. Besides, NGO's from the South, European and Dutch policy makers, CONCORD members as well as MP's and MEP's, will coincide to review the conclusions of the previous debates and present a series of NGDO recommendations on EU Development Policy; if possible, recommendations will be directed at the informal Council of Ministers of Development to be held by the Dutch EU Presidency.

## MAIN POLICY AREAS AND POINTS OF ACTION

While it is recognized that the European Union faces multiple internal and external challenges, European EU-NGO networks are increasingly concerned with the emerging responses to these challenges and their potential impact on development cooperation. Not only the relative importance of development cooperation may be decreased in view of its “mainstreaming” within EU external action under the new EU Security Doctrine; also its spirit and delivery may be negatively affected by shifts in the political balance within the enlarged European Union. The focus of the campaign reflects diversity of interests among Dutch NGDOs and their constituencies yet at the same time a strong consensus on core issues: it is urgent to keep human interests at the centre of the European Union’s relationships with developing countries. Therefore, three main policy areas have been singled out:

1. The human rights deficit in development: non-fulfillment of economic, social and cultural rights; reproductive rights within an overall right to health; the rights of children and other vulnerable groups.
2. Coherence of EU internal and external policies, including EU representation at General Agreements on Trade in Services (GATS/WTO); agricultural subsidies and dumping; trade, investment and good governance in Africa, the EU and NePAD; and the EU and corporate social responsibility
3. The role and position of EU development policy in the new era: the impact of enlargement; the new Constitution; the new EU external relations doctrine and the reform of aid architecture.

One aim of the campaign is of course to inform and support the decision-making process of the European Council on development policy. However, given the scepticism among the Dutch population about Europe in general and European development cooperation in particular, to inform and involve the wider public in the debates is considered equally important. Therefore, each of the conferences is prepared and led by a different set of specialised NGDO’s, calling upon their constituencies to engage actively, while media support and the general debate is taken up as a joint responsibility of the EU-NGO network as a whole.

In the above mentioned three main policy areas, the following themes/sub-themes and points for action have been identified so far – the numbers between brackets refer to the respective conference where they will be treated:

## **II.1 The human and social rights deficit in development policy:**

### Thematic coverage

The protection of minorities (1)

The public/private divide; domestic violence and the non-fulfilment of ESC rights (1)

The importance of agriculture for economic growth and regional trade in Africa (3)

The rights-based approach in matters related to sexual and reproductive health; ICPD and the overall right to health (4)

The impact of incoherence upon aid effectiveness (5)

The impact of GATS in South and North (6)

EC single market rules effect on privatization of basic services (6)

Elimination of child labour and full-time elementary education for all under 14 years of age (7)

### Points for action

HR fully integrated into all aspects of EU policy: minorities; domestic violence; ESC rights; right to health, sexual and reproductive of women; elimination of child labour; full-time elementary education for all under age of 14 (1, 4, 7)

Commitment EU to support NePAD, as the main political framework for good governance and conflict prevention in Africa (3)

GATS impact on countries South and North widely known (6)

## **II.2 Coherence of EU internal and development policies:**

### Thematic coverage:

Widening chasm in public-private divide; paralyzing effect on struggle against domestic violence and non-fulfilment of ESCR (1)

Development impact of EU agricultural subsidies and dumping (3)

Commitment to ICPD and to overall right to health (4)

The need for a strong political mandate for monitoring policy coherence (5)

Exposure of incoherence in EU (EC and member states) policies on GATS (6)

Effect of EC Single Market rules on privatization of basic services (6)

Exposure of incoherence in EU (EC and member states) policies on the elimination of child labour and the provision of education for all under 14 years of age (7)

Support to new member states: drafting and implementing their own development policy together with NSA; participating actively in EC development policy formulation and implementation; extending towards Latin America, Africa and Sout-East Asia (2)

Points for action:

Re-thinking the public-private divide; the role of government, non-government institutions and private sector, with respect to domestic violence and fulfilment of ESCR (1)

Coherence between development, trade and agricultural policies: EU (EC and member states) agreement on allowing LDC to (temporarily) protect their agricultural markets from subsidised imports and dumping; EU donor commitment to financing agricultural and in general, rural entrepreneurship and productivity (food and non-food) through all-African and regional initiatives (3)  
Recommitment of diverse stakeholders, including EC and member states to ICPD and the overall right to health (4)

Agreement to set criteria for monitoring coherence of national and European policies; creation of policy coherence group with a strong political mandate within every ministry of development cooperation/EC DG Dev, relating to foreign affairs, trade and agriculture directly (5)

Identification of windows of opportunity to influence policy development on GATS (6)

A coherent EU and MS policy on the total elimination of child labour linked to the provision of full-time elementary education for all children up to 14 years of age; at least 8% of ODA to formal elementary education; strategy to integrate out-of-school (working) children into education system by 2005; special provisions to ensure integration of girls and young children from vulnerable groups (incl. absolute poverty) into formal school system by 2005 (7)

A comprehensive EU (EC and member states) programme to enhance the capacities of development administrations; to build civil society participation in DC policy formulation and implementation in new member states and to reach ODA level of 0.33% of GNP (2)

### **II.3 EU development policy in the new era:**

Thematic coverage:

The new EU Security Doctrine and its impact upon development: the protection of minorities (internal & near/far abroad) (1, 2, 5)

EU and the New Partnership for African Development – NePAD (2, 3)

CFSP – development policy coordination: including, the struggle against impunity of state-related perpetrators; (1)

Water out of GATS (6)

Points for action:

To avoid dominance of trade, security and foreign concerns over development issues in EU external action (1, 2, 5)

To boost cooperation with NePAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism initiative to create an effective instrument for good governance and conflict prevention (3)

To articulate trade, development and agricultural subsidies and achieve they are treated together (3)

To achieve a support base for “Water out of GATS” (6)