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**NOTE FOR THE ATTENTION OF MR A. MITSOS, DIRECTOR GENERAL, DG RESEARCH,  
MR K RICHELLE, DIRECTOR GENERAL, DG DEVELOPMENT, AND MR G. BONACCI, DG  
AIDCO**

**Subject: ACP-EU Joint Forum on Research for Sustainable Development,  
Cape Town, 29-30 July 2002**

On 29-30 July the first ACP-EU Joint Forum on Research for Sustainable Development was held in Cape Town, at the invitation of South Africa. Forty-one ACP States participated, and the EU was represented by eight Member States<sup>1</sup> plus the European Commission (DG RTD and DG DEV). The Joint Forum was preceded by an ACP-only meeting, first at officials level, and then at ministerial level.

The two events taken together represent a major achievement in that they have succeeded in highlighting the importance of research for sustainable development to ACP-EU co-operation, as well as providing a platform for ACP research ministers to reaffirm the critical role of research for sustainable development on the eve of WSSD. In opening the ACP ministerial event, South Africa's Deputy President Zuma strongly put the case that science, technology and innovation are both the rewards of development, and also the tools for achieving it.

Although not a fully formal event, the Joint Forum represented an important preparatory step in the ACP-EU joint decision-making process. It discussed and enriched the drafts of three key policy papers, namely the 'Shared Vision on Research for Sustainable Development', the 'Plan of Action' and the 'Ministerial Declaration'. The draft Plan of Action in particular, benefited from the inputs of the four Working Groups (on Social Development, Environment, Globalisation, Science and Technology for Development), which considered the thematic priorities identified in the Shared Vision.

The ACP side firmly put the case for a follow-up ACP-EU Joint Ministerial Conference before the end of the year. The apparent defensiveness of certain EU Member States present, on the principle of holding a Joint Ministerial Conference, provided an opportunity for the ACP side to strongly argue in its favour, on the basis of the EU's internationally-known stance for the inclusion of the developing countries in the global knowledge society. Agreement was reached on this issue, and expressed in the "Cape Town Consensus" (attached). A Road Map (also

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<sup>1</sup> A, B, DK, F, I, P, S, UK

attached) of the necessary activities and milestones from Cape Town to this meeting was also endorsed.

The Commission delegation was very active, and well coordinated, throughout the Forum. Our tasks in the coming two or three months are to continue preparations for the Joint Ministerial Conference, subject to formal consultation with Member States and the Presidency through the Research Group of Council; and to submit revised versions of the three above-mentioned policy papers for approval and onward transmission to the Joint Ministerial. This could take place in Brussels in November, as suggested by the Danish Presidency.

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Delegation South Africa: M Lake, N. September

## **DETAILED MISSION REPORT**

### **A. The ACP-only Meetings, 26-28 July 2002**

On the three days preceding the joint Forum, first ACP officials, and then ACP ministers, met to approve their own Vision on Research for Sustainable Development, which took the form of the 'Cape Town Declaration' (copy herewith).

This Declaration, which built on the draft 'Shared Vision', was considerably enriched by the ACP ministers. Indeed, the Cape Town Declaration was the product of a high quality debate among ACP research ministers, who forcefully highlighted the role of research in poverty alleviation and sustainable development. The often-heard argument that poor countries cannot afford the luxury of research was overturned, and replaced by confirmation of the strategic role of research as an instrument for effective sustainable development. The two strands, poverty-related research, and research for economic development and global competitiveness, were both identified as being important. Commitment to invest a minimum of 1 % of GDP in research within the next 10 years was stressed.

We will need to ensure that the Shared Vision incorporates all of the principles embedded in the ACP Cape Town Declaration.

### **B. The ACP-EU Forum on Research for Sustainable Development, 29-30 July**

The two-day Forum was attended by about 200 people, including ACP and EU officials, representatives of relevant regional organisations, and several ACP and EU researchers, who had been tasked with preparing background review papers. There were opening and closing plenaries, as well as four Working Group sessions, on Social Development (health and education), the Environment (agriculture, natural resources, and multilateral environmental agreements), Globalisation, and Science and Technology for Development Issues, respectively.

The Forum had no power to take formal decisions, which probably contributed to the richness and quality of the debates held in a seminar-type fashion. The ACP participants were well drilled, as they emerged from three days of meetings among themselves.

Good substantive work was undertaken by the four Working Groups, which benefited from the presence of the ACP and EU researchers who had drafted the technical review papers. The reports of the four Working Groups will be incorporated in the draft Plan of Action. However they first need to be further developed - and the researchers could be asked to contribute - in order to transform them into action-oriented Technical Annexes on each priority theme. It is important that the Ministers in November go beyond principles, and approve a set of 'deliverables'.

The closing session had its moment of suspense, as some EU Member States present had no specific mandate to endorse the Joint Ministerial Conference proposed by the ACP, and on this point they took a reserved position. This triggered a loud chorus from the ACP in favour of research and the Joint Ministerial Conference. South Africa, the main proponent of the initiative, was quite active in this respect, but several other delegations (including Gabon, Kenya, Nigeria, Mauritius, Mozambique, Senegal, Trinidad, and

Uganda) also joined in. The debate ended in agreement when acceptable wording was suggested by Denmark.

The timing of the Joint Ministerial was also discussed, and it was suggested to hold it before the end of the year, still under the Danish Presidency, possibly around the Competition/Research Council of 26 November. As from this month, the ACP Presidency will move to Mauritius, a strong backer of the initiative.

The question was raised whether EU research and/or development ministers should be invited. The matter was left open, while stressing the importance of close co-operation between the two Ministries/Departments in order to effectively prepare the Joint Ministerial. The Commission provided clarification on the internal EU arrangements (i.e. leadership by the Research Group with information sharing and close co-ordination with the ACP Working Group).

As some components of the Plan of Action, such as commitments under the 9<sup>th</sup> EDF, will have implications for the Cotonou Partnership, the conclusions of the Joint Ministerial Conference on research for sustainable development will have to be submitted to the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, scheduled for May 2003, for final endorsement.

The conclusions of the Joint Forum were expressed in the “Cape Town Consensus”, and the next steps were presented in the form of a Road Map from Cape Town to Brussels.

### **C. Bilateral consultations between the South African Department of Arts, Culture Science and Technology (DACST), and the European Commission, 31 July**

After the Joint Forum, bilateral consultations took place between South Africa and the European Commission. Ambassador Lake and Ms September, of the EC Delegation, were also present.

The key issues discussed were SA’s preparations for participation in the FP6; the new National Research and Development Strategy and subsequent restructuring; arrangements for the EU-RSA S&T side event at the WSSD; specific collaborations with the EC Delegation in SA; and continental/regional S&T co-operation. A full record of the meeting is being prepared by DASCT/the Department for Science and Technology.

### **D. Conclusions and Follow Up**

The Forum achieved its immediate objectives of providing the ACP with a platform to put the case in favour of research in their region-to-region co-operation with the EU, and of outlining its main components, as embodied in the draft policy papers discussed (Shared Vision, Plan of Action, Ministerial Declaration).

In particular, it also provided an opportunity to enrich the draft Plan of Action, through the contributions of four Working Groups held during the Forum. These will be further developed and annexed to the Plan of Action.

As with other regions (ASEM, ALCUE, MOCO), the Forum represented an important step in the organisation of an S&T dialogue with the ACP group of countries, to further the twin objectives of internationalising European research, and mobilising it towards global sustainable development.

Eight Member States were represented and played an active part in the substantive debates. They had however no specific mandate to endorse the Joint Ministerial Conference proposed by the ACP, and because of this they took a reserved position, pending consultations with their capitals.

The tasks ahead for the Commission are both manifold and urgent:

- Report to the Member States and the Presidency through the Research/Competition Group of Council (with information to the ACP Working Party), for confirmation of support for the joint Ministerial conference, as soon as possible after the summer recess;
- Improve and, following approval by DG Research and DG Development senior management, submit the three revised policy papers to the Research Group of Council, in preparation for the Joint Ministerial Conference. Relevant conclusions on research from the forthcoming WSSD will have to be fed into these policy papers;
- Plan the submission of the outcome of the Joint Ministerial Conference to the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, to be held in May 2003; and
- Operationalise the EC part of the Plan of Action, particularly in terms of the synergistic and complementary mobilisation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Programme and the 9<sup>th</sup> EDF.

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