Position Paper of Romania on a Post-Cotonou Framework for EU-ACP Relations

It is a strategic moment for the relations between the European Union, as well as the member states, and the developing African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, as Cotonou Agreement will come to an end in 2020. Respond to the changing nature of the global economy while taking account of new linkages –– between trade and development, environment and development, security and development and so on, it is time to think about the question: what kind of relationship between the EU and the ACP countries we want to build in the future.

Development assistance is one of the critical areas in the European Union external relations. Development policy has a long history and is the one in which the EU can claim global leadership. The EU is a Union built on values. In this respect, EU development cooperation is succeeding in spreading European values across a fast-changing world, gaining influence and respect for the EU.

Romania became a donor of official development assistance in 2007, after having joined the EU. Its national policy on internal cooperation for development complies with the values, principles and goals of the European agreement on the cooperation for development.

Romania has made efforts in taking action for international development cooperation and humanitarian aid that are financed from the state budget. It also contributed to debates on the communications adopted by the European Commission in 2016. It will be heavily involved in identifying solutions to the new global challenges, as well as in supporting other states on the road to economic, political and social development.

Given that Cotonou Agreement will expire in 2020, Romania proposes an umbrella agreement with the ACP linked to regional agreements with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

For the ACP groups and the regions, this framework will be a continuing existence of an all-ACP structure linked to the EU through a legally binding agreement. It will keep the ACP and the joint institutions largely intact. Based on the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity, however, it will sort out a functional task division between the all-ACP level and the regions. At the same time, it will increase the policy space for the continental/ regional structures to further develop their external policy towards Europe while benefitting from being part of a wider tri-continental Group and promoting South-South cooperation. The ACP countries will address global public goods through the ACP- EU framework in close cooperation with regions.

For the EU and its member states, this framework will maintain the acquis of the CPA, including its legal status, the established channels for bilateral political dialogue and the provisions regarding migration or EPAs in the umbrella agreement. Through it, the EU will deepen and widen the political partnership with Africa as a whole. It will allow the EU to use Official Development Agreement to tackle core EU interests, for instance, security, migration, etc., through a targeted set of regional and sub-regional strategies and structures (e.g. EU-Sahel, EU-Horn of Africa). At the same time, the EU will continue to dispose of an Economic Development Fund that allows to flexibly fund EU priorities, without lengthy internal negotiations. Moreover, the EU will have credible regional partners to jointly deliver on the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. And the Brexit will have no major impact on continuing relations with ACP as a Group and on possible future regional partnerships.

Romania thinks there are some reasons for this umbrella agreement with the ACP linked to regional agreements with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

It modernises the ACP-EU partnership by putting ‘regionalisation first’. This is consistent with the evolution of international politics, the 2030 Agenda, and dynamics within the EU and the ACP. It also caters for those who are keen to preserve the all-ACP approach and related legally binding deal with the EU.

Most of current ACP- EU institutional structures can be kept as well in this way. These joint institutions have played the critical role during the decades. They will continue to work under the umbrella framework.

There is also the potential for the clear distinction between principles in umbrella agreement and specific regional arrangements in the related implementation agreements with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

The political partnership between the European Union and the African Union will continue to be of primary importance for addressing specific shared interests. Even there is still a long way to go for the African Union before the announced reforms are fully implemented, but with every step, the AU is becoming a more credible and legitimate pan-African institution. It is in the interest of the African Union and regional bodies to engage in the negotiation process on the future of ACP-EU cooperation.

The currently observed weaknesses related to the implementation of the ACP-EU framework (e.g. regarding political dialogue, joint action at international level, intra-ACP cooperation, co-management, etc.) will be addressed through a new umbrella agreement and related set of regional partnership agreements

Romania also proposes the justification of ‘Everything But Arms’ initiative. It breached the long-established policy of offering the ACP preferential advantages over all other developing countries. Under an umbrella agreement with the ACP linked to regional agreements with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, some dogmatic ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach needs to be replaced by the differentiated content which matches the individual development requirements of the ACP regions.

As a new EU member state since 2007, Romania has been striving to adapt to its new identity as an ODA donor. It has been through a legislative reform dedicated to setting out an institutional framework in the country’s international development cooperation policy since 2016. Through this new ODA programmatic and institutional framework, it reassured the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the principal coordinator of the national policy on development cooperation and established our first ever public institution in the field – Romania’s Agency for International Development Cooperation (RoAid) to work beside the Ministery.

Against the backdrop of a more challenging global political and economic circumstance, Romania agrees that there is a need for increasing the ODA funds. Apart from the ODA legislative reform, Romania is trying our best in increasing significantly the number of funds (0.11% of GNI in 2014, 0.09% in 2015, 0.14% in 2016) to support the OECD-DAC list of ODA recipient countries, under its capabilities.

However, Romania believes that there is a broader need in integrating the developmental goals in the current ODA system as they can boost the aids to yield a more profound, long-term result. Whereas Romania agrees that trade provides economic incentives, it also highly emphasise on the role democratic building and good governance play in making a better state, and Romania has the first-hand experience in which. In practice, ODA beneficiaries of Romania have benefited in the areas of good governance (63% of Romania ODA) and education (26%) in 2016.

Romania believes that the EDF has been kept separate from the EU budget for many reasons. An autonomous EDF budgeting framework will keep benefit:

a) The EU-ACP relations given that it guarantees the efficiently operating of a model/principle/practice of joint ownership and mutual accountability owned by a joint EU-ACP Council of the minister and an EU-ACP Parliamentary Assembly, which could not be provided by the EU budget system

b) The EDF per se since bringing the EP on board would complicate the status quo that has been adopted by both the EU and ACP for over a decade

c) The ACP as the amount of the funds provided by the EU ODA would stay constant, instead of going through a possible drop due to the budgetisation

d) Romania and the other new EU member states, given the traditional ODA allocation framework has taken into our respective capacities in the field of assistance for development and budget allocation processes, hitherto Romania has strived to increase its ODA to 0.14% of GNI in 2016, a drastic increase of over 1% of GNI in ODA suggested by budgetisation will significantly worsen the fiscal situation.

In sum, Romania is not in agreement with the proposed budgetisation of the EDF.

Romania contributes to the implementation of the sustainable development goals not only at a national level but also internationally, following the support granted to the partner countries, through the official development assistance. Among 17 SDG and 169 specific goals, Romania supported the following five sustainable development goals predominantly:

a) # 2 – Zero Hunger

Famine and hardships are the most overt symptom of poverty, which deprives the most fundamental aspect of human right. The government of Romania highly emphasises on eradicating famine and providing food security. Furthermore, values the role promoting sustainable agriculture plays in ACP and other LDC.

b) # 4 – Quality Education

Romania believes that supporting education in its partner states on all continents is a long-term endeavour, which would not yield an immediate but profound result in the future. It plays the role of hope for our next generation.

c) # 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy

Access to energy at accessible prices, a safe, sustainable and modern way, in our perception, meets the most fundamental demand of economic development and social stability. Except granting 2.5 mils. RON for the construction of the Ungheni – Chisinau gas pipe in our largest beneficiary – the Republic of Moldova, Romania has also been generous in investing in the use of solar power in Armenia.

d) # 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Romania has significantly benefited from the democratisation of domestic regime due to its accession in 2007. For over a decade, the government of Romania has accumulated valuable experiences in democracy transformation especially in the fields of civilian protection and conflict prevention, anti-corruption and legal and juridical development, and election. We are fully aware what those meant for our society and economy and are willing to share our experiences with the rest of the world.

e) # 17 – Partnerships for the Goals

Global partnership for sustainable development provides a multilateral platform efficiently tackling challenges on a worldwide scale. Multilateralism is of both the EU and Romania’s value, and we are keen to share our expertise and information with other partner countries multilateral contributions and cooperation.