

CIDSE, EEPA and Eurostep Media briefing on the External Action Service
EU Development Ministers meet HR Ashton Monday 10 May 2010

5 May 2010

Intensifying External Action Service negotiations need development perspective, CIDSE, EEPA and Eurostep say

As the division of development cooperation policy between the service and the European Commission is under discussion, development specialists should have a voice in the intensifying negotiations, CIDSE, EEPA and Eurostep say. As EU development ministers meet High-Representative Ashton on Monday to discuss the proposal, they stress that the development perspective is currently missing in the debate and that the current proposal goes against common EU interest and that of the world's poorest

The meeting between Ashton and EU Development Ministers takes place weeks after the Ministers of Foreign Affairs agreed to the outline of Ashton's EEAS proposal.

"We welcome this first informal exchange between Development Ministers and Baroness Ashton," said **Simon Stocker**, Director of Eurostep, on behalf of the confederation of European development NGOs CONCORD. "However, it's a shame Development Ministers have been watching from the side-line for so long. A broader debate with specialists from the development sector is needed to assess this proposal and its impacts on development objectives."

In April, a large number of development organisations signed up to a joint statement, warning that the current proposal for the External Action Service breaches the Lisbon treaty and puts development objectives at risk.

"The use of EU aid for poverty eradication is at stake and therefore merits a proper assessment," said **Bernd Nilles**, Secretary-General of the international alliance of Catholic development agencies CIDSE.

"Development aid should not be subordinated to Foreign Policy and Security interests of the European Union. Any arrangement for the EEAS should be in full compliance with the Lisbon Treaty, which clearly distinguishes between the objectives of development cooperation and foreign and security policy."

Following Ashton's proposal the European Parliament has positioned itself in favour of safeguarding development objectives. "We welcome this position, and hope the EP won't use development cooperation as a bargaining chip to affirm its influence on the EEAS set-up," Nilles said.

The organisations also maintain the division of development cooperation policy does the European Union no good on the international stage.

"The European Commission has attempted to create a strong development actor, which last year managed € 12 billion spent on development cooperation," said **Mirjam van Reisen**,



Director of the experts' centre EEPA. "EuropeAid was designed to be the full counterpart of an organisation like USAID. It would be against the interests of the European Union at the world stage to diminish or undermine its role now."

ENDS

Contact:

Roeland Scholtalbers, scholtalbers@cidse.org, +32477068384

Note to the editors:

According to latest OECD figures, in 2009 European Commission aid expenditures amounted to USD 15 billion, which is approximately € 12 billion.