

POSITION PAPER BY ITALY

Proposals for a new European Consensus on Development

1. General Remarks

Italy has welcomed the presentation of the Commission's proposals for a new European Consensus on Development, as a tool **to support the implementation of Agenda 2030** in a crucial dimension of EU foreign policy, where the EU has a global leading role and must lead by example.

The link with the Global Strategy must be strengthened accordingly, with a view to highlight the qualitative relevance, coherence and added value of development cooperation with respect to the other fields of EU external relations – while at the same time pursuing **coherence** among the internal and external policies of the Union as a horizontal objective.

The aim of development cooperation is and will remain **to eradicate poverty and contribute to sustainable development**, in all its three dimensions (social, economic and environmental), including a fourth transversal pillar based on the promotion of transparent and participatory institutions, respect of all human rights and the rule of law. To achieve this goal, the EU Institutions and Member States must act as one: unity of approach, also through **joint programming and joint implementation**, is key to increase the responsiveness, effectiveness and visibility of EU action.

Our vision must fully integrate **the voice of our partners**. In an increasingly interconnected and globalized world, challenges are shared and efforts must be shared too. Common solutions need to be found, respecting the principle of ownership, for development cooperation to be a win-win process.

The **development – humanitarian nexus** will be placed high on our agenda: the increasing relevance of protracted crisis calls for a change in our approach. Humanitarian and development assistance should be designed and delivered in a more coherent and integrated way, exploiting the flexibility of the external financing instruments and lessons learned in resilience building also through the recent experience of the EU emergency trust funds.

With a view to strengthen the impact of the future Joint Declaration, we advocate the importance to explore the most suitable form **to associate the all relevant actors of development cooperation**, including civil society and the private sector, to the revised Consensus, in light of the increased role that Agenda 2030 assigns to non-governmental actors in its implementation.

In drafting the Declaration, it will be important to take into account the **medium-to-long term perspective** of the new Consensus and prioritize issues having structural nature and lasting effects on the way we work, within the EU and with our partners, in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond, to address common challenges.

2. Priorities

We welcome the structuring of the future Joint Declaration **along the 5 “Ps”** of Agenda 2030, while giving prominence to corresponding and meaningful **“key drivers”**. The aim of such key drivers should be to lead the way showing how to operationalize our priorities through a common approach. Among those, we recognize special value to **gender equality, youth and migration**. Under these headings, we must look for innovative actions, to be built around the principle of **“leave no one behind”** and the urgency to address the issue of **inequalities**. Combating social and economic inequalities should represent a strategic priority of our action, in light of the new impetus given to this objective by Agenda 2030.

PEOPLE

Investing on women and youth is a pre-condition to reach most of the SDGs, as well as to address the root causes of migration and instability. More emphasis needs to be put on access to **education** (in particular in emergency situations); **food security** and nutrition; access to basic **health** services; protection and socio-economic inclusion of the most vulnerable, including persons with **disabilities**; the role of migration as **“development enabler”**; the importance to address situations of forced and protracted **displacement** (with particular reference to unaccompanied minors) and related effects on hosting communities; the role of **culture** and the safeguard of cultural heritage.

PLANET

The Communication has the merit to connect in a very pertinent and effective fashion all the challenges related to climate change, protection of biodiversity, adaptation, access to energy and renewable energy, **addressing the protection of the environment in an integrated way** with respect to the social and economic objectives of development. The **nexus between climate change and migration** needs to be further explored and incorporated in our methodology and policy tools.

PROSPERITY

Creating decent jobs, especially for women and youth, and promoting inclusive growth and sustainable investments is our main challenge for the future, and should be given more prominence in our Declaration. All our endeavors must converge towards that aim. With no prejudice to the crucial role of ODA and our political commitment to increase its levels, the **mobilization of domestic resources**, the shaping of **innovative financial instruments** and the **private sector role and engagement for development** should become three fundamental pillars of our approach, to be reflected and enhanced also at the **regional level**. In particular, recalling the Council Conclusions of December 2014 on *“A stronger role of the private sector in development cooperation: An action oriented perspective”*, in exploring new ways of working with the private sector, we will need to identify the approaches and models for collaboration that ensure effective guidance, respect of human rights, mutual accountability and alignment of interests in terms of development benefits and development impact.

Access to financial services is also key for the development of micro and small enterprises and the role of social enterprises and **cooperatives** (notably in the rural sector) should be strengthened. A more effective way to tackle **remittances** and their potential re-investment into income-generating activities should be explored, together with the role that the **diaspora** can play in this process (with special reference to the creation of micro and small enterprises).

Innovative tools, like the **European Investment Plan**, should be presented not only "*per se*", but also as a reference to confirm a forward-looking approach, based on multi-stakeholder dialogue and the capacity to design instruments aimed at leveraging the contribution of the private sector. The **Energy sector** could be a test-case: the Italian experience of the Energy Platform for development is showing all the potential of engaging a plurality of actors with a view to merge their qualified experience to the benefit of a common objective.

PEACE

The spirit of SDG 16 is well captured in the Communication, and properly translated into the EU language on the "**comprehensive approach**". The security-development nexus reflects the level of cooperation among actors on the ground, within the perimeter of the DAC directives. The need to **preserve the nature and final objectives of development funds** must be recalled under all circumstances. Assistance to the military should be considered exceptional, must be offered under specific and pre-established conditions and be in line with international humanitarian principles and OECD/DAC guidelines.

We support the role of **migration** as a key driver, which clearly catches the **structural nature** of the phenomenon of migratory flows and its long-lasting character, showing that a consistent EU approach has been built (through the Partnership Framework) to lead the way for the years to come. However, a few but meaningful elements could be incorporated in the final draft: the notion of **development benefits** of migration and the role of diasporas (in terms of skills, know-how), in line with the Valletta Action Plan; the **south-south dimension** of migration (both in terms of regional labor mobility and forced displacement, and in line with the Commission Communication of April 2016); the need to systematically incorporate migration in the **political and policy dialogue** with partner countries and the role of **positive incentives**. In this spirit, our approach for the future shall remain firmly grounded on addressing the root causes of migration – as an important component of our fight to poverty, conflict and instability. The use of positive targeted incentives can in fact enhance the full adherence to the principles of development cooperation, while punitive measures that might undermine the partnership must be avoided.

PARTNERSHIP

Working together better is a common challenge that requires the full commitment by all MS, a shared vision with the EU Institutions and a parallel effort to ensure the ownership of partner countries. The EU and its MS should work in this spirit for the promotion of joint programming and joint implementation.

Increased impact and effectiveness in implementation shall be pursued **through the right combination of different aid modalities available**, including emergency and thematic trust funds and blending schemes, to be modulated according to specific contexts and objectives. In particular, the recent experience of EU trust funds gives greater flexibility to EU interventions, alongside the possibility to leverage additional funding from other donors. Unity of approach should be granted by a strategic vision, to let complementarity and synergies among instruments and tools emerge.

Differentiation should be a guiding principle and the use of ODA and/or no concessional assistance should be balanced against the local context, capacities and needs of partner countries.