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" Development and human rights in the Lome Convention"

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DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE LOME CONVENTION

The European Community's relations with Africa are governed by the Third Lome Convention, to which all Independent Subsaharan states are signatory. The Lome Convention is essentially concerned with development, but development in a sense that must go beyond mere technical and financial instruments of economic cooperation.

At the heart of our cooperation is man and woman, as the principal object of development, with the greatest possible participation in the process of development, whether at the level of groups or associations or at the level of individuals. Our cooperation attempts in its modest way to contribute towards people, men and women, enjoying the greatest possible measure of economic, social and cultural rights. This in itself implies respect for human rights in the broadest sense, notably the fundamental rights of life, freedom, the right not to be tortured, or treated in a degrading manner.

The diverse aspects of human rights are intertwined and inseparable.

We are morally obliged in our development cooperation to favour activities and actions which express the economic and social rights of people. We hope and trust that such cooperation permits the fulfilment of human rights in the wider sense, and allow the individual man and woman to bear his or her own proper contribution within the whole of their particular society.

That is not to say that we oblige ourselves to be the policemen of human rights across the globe. That is not our role. The text of Lome Convention in this sense is applicable as much to the twelve member states of the European community as to the African signatories. Though where violations of human rights have been extreme, the EC has taken a positive position, and suspended all but direct humanitarian assistance.

Lome Convention is thus based on "equality between partners, respect for sovereignty, mutual interest and interdependence, and the right of each State to determine its own political, social, cultural and economic policy".

This aspect of mutual respect is a fundamental principle of the Lome Convention. But we are anxious to see that the individual may play a proper respected role in development. If development is to proceed, it must be with the fullest participation of individuals, groups, association of individuals at any economic, social, professional or political level, including NGO's, trades unions and so on, since it is only through participation and direct involvement that the right of people may be expressed and satisfied.