

## **RESULTS OF THE ACCRA SUMMIT ON THE EFFICIENCY OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION 'POLITICS PUTTING ITS OAR IN'**

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The result of the third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra, the capital of Ghana, was anything but a lasting breakthrough in development cooperation. However, the agreement to assign more responsibility to the developing countries, to render assistance more transparent and interactive, to emphasize the concept of partnership, and to fight corruption together may be regarded as a substantial step that was achieved not least thanks to the consensus among the Europeans.

Today, development cooperation is caught between criticism of its past efficiency and the need to solve new problems in the future. The question is whether the results of Accra do justice to these challenges, which include globalization as well as new geopolitical, economic, and strategic constellations. One important aspect is to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable development to avoid hunger and misery as well as cross-border conflicts and civil wars. Others include the impact of climate change and energy scarcity, rising food prices, and the disappearance of entire ecosystems. It is all about insecurity and development delay, inter-religious and/or intercultural tension, and growing streams of migrants and refugees. And, not least as a result of all this, there is political and religious extremism and terrorism. Today's development cooperation cannot ignore challenges of this kind.

The advance of development cooperation is threatened by the growing interest of powerful states, such as the USA and China, in the natural resources of the developing countries. Moreover, as the tools these countries use to secure their influence are quite similar to those of the Cold War, it is to be feared that just those countries that are most affected by extreme poverty might fall behind in their development.

Furthermore, the discussion about aid efficiency is growing more acrimonious because of the calls for more funds which, voiced more and more boldly, also address the Federal Republic of Germany whose government accords high priority to austerity as one of its budget targets. The discussion is lively and should be taken seriously by German as well as international development politicians, especially as the donors are basically agreed on the targets of joint development cooperation which were formulated in Rome in 2003 and in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of 2005.

Development policy is criticized mainly from two sides: Some argue that the formula 'more money = more development' does not work out, and that no

more funds should flow to the governments of the developing countries because, in most cases, only corrupt leaders profit from this money, which is nothing more than a crutch anyway. Supported by music-industry and show-business celebrities for maximum media appeal, others demand more social commitment from the representatives of prosperity, often conveying the impression that increasing money transfers can guarantee the survival of the people living in the receiving countries by itself.

Today, many people talk about budget assistance, a new tool whose generous use is supported by the World Bank, the European Commission, and states such as Great Britain and the Nordic countries. In concrete terms, it is planned to provide the budgets of the receiving countries with financial aid which requires only low transaction costs and/or rather inconsiderable harmonization efforts to enable them to implement their own policies. However, budget assistance must be handled with care: it can strengthen self-responsibility, but it also flows to countries whose governance structures do not ensure that funds reach those who really are in need.

If we analyze the current tendencies and tasks of development cooperation, the results of the Accra summit appear rather modest. To be sure, the summit does not constitute a step backwards, but neither can it be considered a breakthrough. There were no binding agreements, nor were there any concrete timetables for implementation. One of the positive aspects doubtlessly is the consensus among the Europeans on the division of labour. If Europe continues to speak with one voice, more binding agreements on the division of labour and on how to strengthen self-responsibility might be achieved at the meetings that will follow. This would be desirable, as a comprehensive political approach of national governments to overcome development barriers is overdue. Fragmentation must end, and coherence must rule.

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