

# ANNUAL REPORT 2017



**act**alliance eu

## CREDITS

**Publisher** ACT Alliance EU

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**Cover Photography** Paul Jeffrey / ACT Alliance

**Graphic Design / Layout** Lana Lile

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# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Reader,

2017 has been an active year for those engaged in EU development advocacy. At a time of key EU decision making – on for example the 2020–2027 budget or on the nature of EU relations with the ACP countries – EU development risks moving away from having global solidarity at its core to being inspired by perceived European self-interest. Security and anti-terrorism, border control and restricting entry and presence of migrants and refugees, using development monies to stimulate European economic activity through private sector investments and access to natural resources and land bring the risk of instrumentalisation of development funds. New financial instruments and a move to fund ‘non-traditional’ actors such as the private sector could push aside what the development community - NGOs and donors - have learned about the principles underlying development effectiveness. All this while a new political context increases pressure on Civil Society not only outside Europe but also within.

In this setting ACT Alliance EU has been working to keep the EU’s development focus on poverty eradication, with efforts, for example, to ensure that the European development consensus truly is a consensus on development and true to Agenda 2030, and to maintain civil society’s role in EU development programming including safeguarding its voice within Europe, fending off - for now - attempts by some voices within the European Parliament to restrict EU funding for advocacy. Civil society’s role is as important as ever to ensure that EU development cooperation focusses on poverty, Agenda 2030, climate change and small local actors.

Within the ACT Alliance EU network we have sought to increase synergies between our thematic areas. Ahead of the COP 23 climate negotiations we brought together our food security and climate expertise to develop a position on climate, agriculture and land use. Events around a visit by Guardians of the Forest, a partner of several of our members, usefully played into the work on Central America, on climate and on food security. We organised the first workshop for ACT Alliance EU / ACT Europe Forum members on climate justice and Disaster Risk Reduction. More generally, our understanding of the intersection of food security and trade, and of EU development policy strengthened our geographical work in Central America and the Middle East and on climate justice, and vice-versa. And we have sought to deepen our ties with the global ACT Alliance of which we are a part.

The political context in and outside Europe will pose challenges to civil society actors and our role in keeping the focus of development on poverty eradication and on the SDGs. Now is as important a time as any to pull together, as a European network and as part of the global ACT Alliance, to collectively face up to these challenges. With this in mind, I commend to you the work of our policy officers as found in the following pages and their vital work in moving the ACT Alliance EU agenda forward during 2017.



Floris Faber  
Director, ACT Alliance EU

# GOVERNING AND ADVISORY BODIES & SECRETARIAT STAFF

## BOARD AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### Departures from the Board:

- Christine Allen Dench (Christian Aid), chair, mandate ended June 2017
- Bo Forsberg (Diakonia), member, resigned June 2017

### Board membership from June 2017:

- Marinus Verweij (ICCO), chair
- Michael Bubik (Diakonie Austria), treasurer
- Birgitte Qvist-Sørensen (DCA), member
- Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel (Bread for the World), member
- Rudelmar Bueno de Faria (ACT Alliance), observer

### Membership changes:

- NCA left membership on 31/12/2016

### New members in 2017:

- Diaconia ECCB-CRD
- Diakonie Austria (replaced EAEZ from 1 January 2017)

### Permanent observer organisations to ACT Alliance EU:

- The World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, and the ACT Alliance

## ADVISORY GROUPS

- The Policy and Advocacy Group (PAG) met twice in person (March in Utrecht & November in Brussels) and had online calls in February, June & November.
- Miges Baumann (BfA) and Cecilie Bjørnskov-Johansen (DCA) were the co-chairs until Cecilie left the PAG in the autumn to take on a new role in DCA. Katri Suomi (FCA) co-chaired the November meeting.

## SECRETARIAT STAFF

### Departures/Changes:

- Sophie Huguenet (EC Project Officer Central America) left when the EC project ended in March 2017.
- Agnes Bertrand Sanz (ACT Alliance European Refugee Crisis Advocacy Officer) left at the end of the EUR Appeal 161 period in August 2017.
- Julieta González Ocampo (Senior Policy Officer, Central America) left in September 2017 and was replaced by Adrián Tuñón Jimenez as Policy Officer until 31 December 2017, to finish the year's work and close the project.



Sophie Huguenet

Agnes Bertrand Sanz

Julieta González Ocampo

Adrián Tuñón Jimenez

### At the end of 2017 the secretariat was composed of the following staff:



Floris Faber,  
Director

Susie Wilkinson,  
Office Manager

Karine Sohet,  
Senior Policy Officer, EU Development Policy & Practice

Karin Ulmer,  
Senior Policy Officer, Food security



Bruno Nicostrate  
Policy Officer,  
Climate Change

Esther Martinez  
Advisor, EU & the Middle East

# EU DEVELOPMENT POLICY & PRACTICE

## **OBJECTIVES:**

SEEK TO ENSURE EU POLICIES ARE ALIGNED WITH AGENDA 2030 TO SECURE BENEFITS FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. ADDITIONALLY, MAKE SURE THAT EU INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ACTION INSTRUMENTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE REALISATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG), IN A WAY THAT IS COHERENT WITH OUR OBJECTIVES AROUND CLIMATE JUSTICE

MONITOR AND INFLUENCE THE LEVEL AND INTEGRITY OF EU AND MEMBER STATE OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE. IN DOING SO, SAFEGUARD PUBLIC FINANCE FOR LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN AID, INCLUDING SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY ALONG WITH SMALL SCALE FARMERS AND ENTREPRENEURS

MAINTAIN A CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP AND DIALOGUE WITH MEPS AND EU OFFICIALS TO IMPROVE THE ROLE AND SPACE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN ALL EU COOPERATION AGREEMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS, AS WELL AS IN THE SDG FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW PROCESSES



Perhaps 2017 could be described by the adage, “put your money where your mouth is”. This bold phrase dares its listener to invest in their promises.

From the adoption of the new EU Consensus on Development to the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework, ACT EU spent 2017 advocating for EU policy to stay focussed on promoting sustainable development and human rights while realising Agenda 2030<sup>1</sup>. We cautioned a misplaced focus on using financial instruments to safeguard EU interests of security and economics at the cost of universal human rights and sustainable development.

As Civil Society space came under fire both in the European Parliament and at the Abidjan EU-AU Summit, we met with top officials to directly address concerns and to promote the real-life perspective that civil society offers on policy issues.

Thanks to active participation in NGO networks such as CONCORD, our work was able to reach wider audiences and create greater impact as we worked toward urging the EU to hold its budget accountable to Agenda 2030.

## EU Development Policy (in the Framework of Agenda 2030)

act eu in brief

Prepared analysis of the Consensus through the lens of ACT EU to inform member and CS advocacy on Africa-EU relations and post-2020 EU cooperation instruments

The New EU Consensus on Development  
After months of negotiations and targeted advocacy by ACT EU together with other CONCORD members, the new consensus was formally adopted by the institutions at the European Development Days in the beginning of June.

The new European Consensus on Development (later referred to as Consensus) is a non-binding document adopted by the four main EU institutions: the Commission (EC), the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Council of Ministers and the Parliament (EP). It provides a

shared vision and framework that will act as a guide for EU and Member State development cooperation throughout the world. The Consensus contains important principles, objectives and priorities of action that will contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and to the EU objective of eradicating poverty. It also emphasizes the role of civil society as an asset for democracy and a partner for dialogue and implementation. In several places related to security, migration, trade and investment, however, the Consensus recommends a worrying approach to policy coherence for development that seems to be more focused on safeguarding EU security and economic interests than promoting sustainable development and human rights.

We prepared an in-depth analysis of the Consensus through the lens of ACT EU’s aspirations and principles for development cooperation and shared it with members and civil society partners. It serves as a basis for promoting the Consensus’ positive elements, while mitigating the problematic ones in our future advocacy work on Africa-EU relations and post-2020 EU cooperation instruments.

## Future of EU Relations with Africa

act eu in brief

Made recommendations on what should underpin the EU partnership with Africa in preparation for the Abidjan Summit

Met with MEPs and EC and EEAS officials to explore securing dedicated space for CS action in future EU-Africa relations as a result of CS repression during the summit

Engaged in the ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement process in order to influence the EU negotiating mandate and final outcome

## Abidjan EU-AU Summit

From November 29 to 30, African and European Heads of State and Government gathered in Abidjan for the 5th EU-Africa Summit under the central theme, “Investing in youth for a sustainable future”. The preparation of the summit offered a key opportunity to debate the current EU policies, agreements and instruments of cooperation with the African continent and to assess how far the two partners take people’s aspiration and needs into account in their joint strategy. Together with various NGO networks

and coalitions, ACT EU worked out a number of recommendations on what should underpin the EU partnership with Africa in the areas of human development, migration, security, investing in youth, investments and business, and trade and taxation.

In spite of civil society's active engagement in preparation of the Summit, it was not possible to present the joint EU-Africa CS declaration which was adopted at the CS Forum organised in Tunis in July. Moreover, the civil society summit organised in Abidjan ahead of the official summit was repressed by police. These unfortunate events, which illustrated once more the deteriorating dialogue between civil society and officials, were followed by several meetings with MEPs and EC and EEAS officials. The meetings explored ways of securing a dedicated space for CS action in future EU-Africa relations and to strengthen EU and EP support for an independent and vocal civil society in general.

### **Post 2020 Agreement Between the EU and the ACP Group**

Another important process that will impact future development cooperation and trade between the EU and Africa is the renewal of the ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement which will end in December 2020. Based on its long-standing work and its knowledge of ACP-EU cooperation, ACT EU is heavily engaged in this process to ensure that civil society effectively influences the EU negotiating mandate and the final outcome of the negotiations. This will be a major working priority in 2018.

### **EU Development Practice, Finance and Instruments**

- Conducted an in-depth advocacy campaign at the EP and succeeded to integrate demands into the new EFSD regulation
- Shared recommendations on the EIP in a joint letter to the Director General of DEVCO, followed by a seminar to discuss concerns with EC and EEAS officials
- Pressed the EP development committee to prevent IeSP move toward military spending; they guaranteed that resources would not be taken from the DCI
- Met with EC and MS officials to gather intelligence and advocate for a future EU budget that focuses on Agenda 2030 and the EU Consensus on Development

act eu in brief

*“IN A CLIMATE OF FEAR, WHERE MIGRANTS FEEL CRIMINALIZED, THEY ARE NOT LIKELY TO DENOUNCE ABUSES AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, OR EVEN VISIT A HOSPITAL WHEN THEY HAVE A PROBLEM”.*

*- Tcherno Boulama, Niger Case Study, CONCORD report EUTF on migration*

### **The New EU External Investment Plan**

In September 2017 the regulation for the new European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) was formally adopted by the Council and the Parliament. The EFSD is the first pillar of a new External Investment Plan (EIP) that will combine existing blending facilities for neighbouring countries and sub-Saharan Africa with a guarantee fund aiming at leveraging private finance for "risky" investments in the two regions.

As part of a temporary coalition of Brussels-based NGOs, ACT Alliance EU conducted an in-depth advocacy campaign directed mainly at the European Parliament. We succeeded to integrate the following demands into the document: more focus on poverty, climate change and small local enterprises; more stringent safeguards, transparency requirements and eligibility criteria; and key references to the protection of human rights and gender equality. The coalition also shared recommendations on the implementation of the two other pillars of the EIP, technical assistance and policy reform, in a joint letter to Mr. Manservisi, Director General of DEVCO. The letter was followed by an in-depth seminar to discuss our concerns with EC and EEAS officials.

### **Mid-term Review of EC Cooperation Instruments**

During 2016 and 2017 all EU cooperation instruments, including the European Development Fund (EDF), were evaluated by external consultants. The subsequent reports reflect many civil society concerns about the way current funding instruments function and how their priorities have changed under political pressure. In particular, CSOs expressed their serious concerns regarding the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa in a report published by

CONCORD, sponsored by ACT EU.

In spite of these concerns, the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) is the only one that has been revised during the mid-term review. The objective of the revision was to integrate activities relating to Capacity Building in support of Security and Development (CBSD), which in fact opens the door for the financing of military actors. ACT EU opposed this move toward military spending and together with its German member, Bread for the World, pressed the development committee of the EP to prevent it. They were able to obtain a guarantee that the resources would not be taken from the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) whose main purpose is the reduction of poverty.

### **Post 2020 Multiannual Financial Framework**

On June 28, the Commissioner for Budget, published the EC reflection paper on the future of EU Finances. This marked the beginning of the reflection and negotiation process of the future EU budget. In the area of external action, the driving objectives are to simplify the existing cooperation instrument's architecture; to increase the flexibility of EU response; and to give more prominence to new EU priorities, namely, migration, security and investments/private sector. At the official level, there is agreement on the need to increase the resources allocated to stemming illegal migration included in the external action budget.

ACT EU advocacy focuses on making sure that EU development policy and aid is not further instrumentalised to serve EU interests in the area of security, migration control and economic competition. On the contrary, we will push for it to stay focussed on the realisation of Agenda 2030 and the EU Consensus on Development. Our EU Development policy officer plays a leading role in CONCORD's work on the MFF and starting in June 2017 took part in a number of informal meetings with EC and Member State officials to gather intelligence and prepare advocacy messages.

A first CONCORD position paper was adopted at the end of November as a basis both for advocacy meetings with EC and Member State officials as well as for recommending specific amendments to the EP Development Committee

and Budget Committee reports.

Close monitoring of this process and targeted action at the member state level will be necessary in 2018.

### **Civil Society Space**

act eu in brief

Responded to, and raised awareness of, attacks on CS advocacy work within the EP

Invited to present position and recommendations of development NGOs at the EP Committee on Development

Contributed input to the Council conclusions on EU engagement with CS in May

Chaired CONCORD EU Delegation group

Prepared concrete suggestions on CS space to be integrated into the future ACP-EU agreement as part of cooperation within CONCORD

### **Working with the European Parliament on Civic Space**

ACT EU addressed attacks on CS advocacy work originating from select European Parliament members. Together with CONCORD and Civil Society Europe (CSE), ACT EU joined EP members for informal dialogue in order to raise awareness of the situation.

At the same time, the "Report on addressing shrinking civil society space in developing countries" was produced by the Development Committee and the Subcommittee on Human Rights. The report process started in April at a hearing of the European Parliament Committee on Development when ACT EU's policy officer presented the position and recommendations of development NGOs. ACT EU members contributed greatly to CONCORD and CSE recommendations for the rapporteur and the report was subsequently adopted by the Parliament in October. The EP report contains strong recommendations to all EU actors -- including Member States, the EC and the EEAS in the areas of diplomacy, foreign policy and development cooperation -- to support and operationalise an open space for civil society in their relations with partner countries.

ACT EU additionally contributed input to the Council conclusions on EU engagement with CS,

produced in May.

### **ACT EU Advocacy Work on CS Space**

As chair of the EU Delegations group, our EU Development policy officer supervised the updating of the CONCORD training toolkit on engagement between CS and EU Delegations. The toolkit provides resources for CSOs to learn how to improve their engagement with the EU and was used by our Central America policy officer to co-organise and facilitate a training workshop in San Salvador.

ACT EU is also a member of the (new) civic space group of CONCORD which drafted a policy paper on promoting civic space and enabling environment in EU external action. ACT EU members were consulted and a number of them (Bread for the World, DanChurchAid, Finn Church Aid, Church of Sweden and ICCO Cooperation) provided useful comments and inputs to improve the draft. This paper, published in early 2018, helps all CONCORD members in their awareness raising and advocacy on civil society space and enabling environment at both the EU and national level.

ACT EU is preparing, together with other CONCORD members, concrete recommendations to secure civil society space and formal dialogue mechanisms in future EU agreements with regional bodies such as the African Union and the group of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. In particular, our policy officer prepared concrete suggestions on civil society space to be integrated in the future ACP-EU agreement.

### **Footnotes**

1. Agenda 2030 is a United Nations initiative that introduces the Sustainable Development Goals which seek to end poverty and hunger, protect the planet from degradation and foster peaceful societies while working in global partnership. Learn more at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

## **ACT EU PUBLICATIONS**

### **A CLOSE LOOK AT THE NEW EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON DEVELOPMENT**

July 2017, ACT Alliance EU Analysis

### **CONCORD'S ALTERNATIVES TO FIVE EU NARRATIVES ON THE EU-AFRICA PARTNERSHIP**

September 2017, CONCORD with ACT EU coordination

### **COMMON STATEMENT EU/AU STEERING GROUPS**

30 November 2017, Joint Letter

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CSOS FOR THE FINALISATION OF THE EFSD REGULATION**

April 2017, Joint Paper

### **EUROPEAN UNION EMERGENCY TRUST FUND FOR AFRICA: PARTNERSHIP OR CONDITIONALITY?**

November 2017, CONCORD Report / ACT EU sponsorship

### **MAKING THE CASE FOR STRONG EU DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION BUDGET IN THE NEXT MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK**

November 2017, CONCORD Report / ACT EU sponsorship

## **EXTERNAL REFERENCES**

### **EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON DEVELOPMENT**

June 2017, Joint Statement by EU Council & MS Representatives

### **FROM SHARED VISION TO COMMON ACTION: IMPLEMENTING THE EU GLOBAL STRATEGY YEAR 1**

June 2016, EU Global Strategy/HRVP

### **AFRICA-EU CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM DECLARATION**

12 July 2017, [africa-eu-partnership.org](http://africa-eu-partnership.org)

### **INVESTING IN YOUTH FOR ACCELERATED INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - DECLARATION**

November 2017, [africa-eu-partnership.org](http://africa-eu-partnership.org)

### **CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS PROTEST EXCLUSION FROM AU-EU SUMMIT**

14 December 2017, [devex.com](http://devex.com)

### **EU ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

19 June 2017, Council (of the EU) Conclusions

# FOOD SECURITY

**OBJECTIVES:**

ENSURE EU POLICIES COVERING TRADE, INVESTMENT AND LAND ARE COHERENT AND SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION, INCLUDING FAIR MARKET ACCESS AND SUBSIDY ALLOCATIONS

ENSURE EU AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND SEED POLICIES ARE OF BENEFIT TO POOR AND SMALL-SCALE FARMERS, ESPECIALLY RECOGNISING THE GENDER DIMENSION OF FOOD PRODUCTION

ENSURE EU DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE, AS IT RELATES TO AGRICULTURE, INCLUDES SUPPORT FOR AND CONSIDERATION OF THE ROLES OF WOMEN FARMERS AND SMALLHOLDERS IN FARMING SYSTEMS AS WELL AS THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRO-POOR AND INCLUSIVE MARKET SYSTEMS



**F**ood Security is an issue that embraces the three ACT Alliance objectives of human dignity, resilience, and a sustainable environment. It is at the very heart of poverty reduction and development and is directly linked to human rights, gender justice, increasing inequalities, the nature of economic development models and environmental sustainability. In a context of climate change, increasing degradation of natural resources and projected population growth, resilience in the area of food security presents a huge challenge for the future.

## Trade, Investment and Land Rights

### actions in brief

Advocated for preventing and redressing situations of land conflict in Cambodia

Hosted and lobbied with a Cambodian CSO delegation in Brussels

Sent lobby letter to EU officials with information from the ground on the lack of progress of independent audits to assess land dispute complaints

Commissioned with ACT Forum Myanmar the study *The Pending EU-Myanmar Investment Protection Agreement: Risks and Opportunities*

Highlighted findings of Myanmar study in advocacy towards DG Trade officials and MEPs

Co-drafted CSO GSP joint statement as the basis for work on human rights monitoring

At the intersection of trade, investment and land rights lies the possibility to either promote sustainable development or create conflict over resources. Fueled by resource grabs of communal land with weak tenure rights, or the selling of ancestral lands to the highest bidder, conflict from competition can put the livelihoods of rural communities and sustainable food systems at risk. Two countries where ACT Alliance EU (ACT EU) was especially active in preventing or redressing situations of land conflict through advocacy were Cambodia and Myanmar. Conflict resulting from land grabs in these countries occurs when trade deals incentivise companies to invest and make arrangements which ignore or violate the tenure rights of local communities in order to get access to land. ACT EU was key in ongoing lobbying efforts toward the EU, calling for the

*"CONFLICT RESULTING FROM LAND GRABS IN THESE COUNTRIES OCCURS WHEN TRADE DEALS INCENTIVISE COMPANIES TO INVEST AND MAKE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH IGNORE OR VIOLATE THE TENURE RIGHTS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES..."*

investigation of human rights violations and land grabs in Cambodia under the EU's Everything But Arms<sup>1</sup> (EBA) initiative. Advocacy work aimed toward the European Investment Bank, and as part of the new Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) platform, focussed on indigenous peoples' right to Free Prior and Informed Consent<sup>2</sup>. This right requires the consultation with and consent of affected peoples prior to development on their lands. In order to promote safeguards on land, labour and enforceable human rights, ACT EU also input in various EU trade policy areas through meetings with European Commission officials, DG Trade Civil Society Dialogue meetings, and as a member of the new GSP advocacy platform which is designed to influence EU preferential trade schemes.

### Cambodia in the Spotlight

The space for CSOs in Cambodia continues to shrink, putting community leaders and land rights defenders at the forefront of risks and oppression. Land dispossessions originating from sugar cane plantations are particularly an issue. ACT EU led lobbying actions which called upon the EU to uphold both human rights and its commitment to a comprehensive and independent remediation framework regarding these dispossessions. The framework should include external oversight in line with the 2015 EU-supported Terms of Reference. Notably, exposure of human rights violations resulting from the impacts of the EBA trade preferences occurred as early as 2012. Now, years of advocacy are coming together to make the case for triggering the activation of a human rights clause in the EBA trade preferences and a formal investigation into human rights violations in Cambodia. While the EU already appears in public as the "guarantor" of a remediation process on land dispossessions, in reality that process is

broadly flawed and taking place in an intimidating environment. Additionally, the EU has failed to speak out in public on its previously clear upholding of a fair auditing process on land remediation.

In July, a lobby letter was sent to EU Trade Commissioner Malmström and the EU Ambassador to Cambodia expressing deep concern over the lack of progress with the independent audit to assess complaints about land disputes in the sugar sector. It was followed up by lobbying over the summer related to the crackdown on Cambodia's opposition party. The crackdown was geared toward silencing land rights defenders, (suspended CSOs) during the pre-election phase in Cambodia. September ushered in a full week of lobbying as ACT EU co-hosted a Cambodian CSO delegation in Brussels. Together with the Cambodian delegation, a Brussels-based CSO coalition in which ACT EU and Bread for the World play a leading part attended a follow up meeting to the July letter with DG Trade. Efforts continued to focus on the plight of land rights defenders, challenging the European Commission's ambivalent position toward CSOs, and successfully urging two resolutions in the European Parliament in September and December.

A further letter was sent in December to continue applying pressure. The letter provided detailed and comprehensive accounts of the major flaws and lack of progress on the current situation.

### **Myanmar in the Spotlight**

At the beginning of 2017, the EU and Myanmar entered the final negotiations on an Investment Protection Agreement (IPA). The agreement aimed to promote EU investment protection in Myanmar for investments intended to bring foreign capital, employment, new technologies, skills and know-how to the country. A new report commissioned by ACT EU and ACT Forum Myanmar, however, warns that the agreement, alongside stimulating investment, is likely to lead to human rights violations and hinder future equitable development prospects. As a result, we published joint research in April on the pending IPA and its impact on risks and opportunities for land rights. The study elaborates on the current situation of land

rights and land conflicts. Additionally, it creates awareness on the need to empower and secure land rights for vulnerable communities before creating further incentives for EU foreign direct investment. The study was sent to DG Trade officials, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and press contacts, highlighting the risk the IPA negotiation presents to land conflicts and the peace process in Myanmar. Thanks to in-country lobbying the study also made headlines in one of Myanmar's largest English language newspapers.

Although a vote of consent was expected last Autumn, negotiations on the IPA were put on hold due to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Myanmar regarding what is now called a genocide of the Rohingya people. In the meantime, the EU private sector took its own initiative with the European Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar signing their own Memorandum of Understanding with the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization. ACT EU and the ACT Myanmar Forum will continue to advocate in support of safeguarding land rights, particularly in conflict situations.

### **GSP Platform**

The Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) allows "vulnerable developing countries to pay fewer or no duties on exports to the EU", with one of its objectives being the promotion of sustainable development and good governance<sup>3</sup>. In anticipation of its forthcoming revision in 2019, a new Civil Society Organisation (CSO) GSP advocacy platform was set up to advance and enhance human and labour rights in these EU preferential trade schemes and ensure that timely input from CSOs will influence the policy making process. ACT EU co-drafted a joint statement published in November which will be used as the basis for ongoing advocacy work on enhancing human rights monitoring in the GSP regime and its review in 2019.

Based on insights and lessons from work on Cambodia and Myanmar, two nations categorised as least developed countries (LDC) and which benefit from the GSP's EBA initiative, ACT EU is focussing on expanding enhanced human rights monitoring systems to LDCs. A particular focus is, for example, on local communities and indigenous peoples' right to Free Prior and Informed Consent.

## Agricultural Research and Seed Policies

### actions in brief

Presented on "The Promise of Agrobiodiversity" at a DG Research and Innovation stakeholder meeting

Strengthened a position paper by TP Organics by bringing an international dimension, and adding a focus on African food systems and cooperation facilities for CSOs

ACT EU is a member of the steering group for Technical Platform (TP) Organics, a platform that "identifies the research needs of the organic and agroecological sector and then relays research priorities to the policy-makers in Europe and beyond."<sup>4</sup> ACT EU brings an international dimension to their work, strategic planning and gatherings with particular input at meetings on African Food Systems that are part of the Joint Africa EU Strategy and includes both African Union and EU delegates.

Last January, ACT EU participated in a DG Research and Innovation stakeholder event on future calls for research on African food systems. At the second meeting in October, ACT EU led a 90-minute presentation, "The Promise of Agrobiodiversity", which focussed on community farm-based seed systems and ACT's on-the-ground work and support of these systems and breeding techniques. ACT EU and its partners are involved in or support community seed work in Kenya, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Ivory Coast, Brazil and India. The presentation was given in consortium with the World Agroforestry Centre, SEKEM Egypt, and Demeter International. The objective was to insert seed biodiversity as a research focus area in the forthcoming calls on African Food Systems in 2019. Together with the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), the biggest organic research outfit in Europe, we are looking into research focussing on participatory seed breeding and seed diversity in Africa. Agrobiodiversity, with seed diversity and the custodians of farm-saved seed systems at its core, is one of the most important insurance policies for coping with, and adapting to, climate change.

ACT EU additionally strengthened the international dimension of TP Organics by adding a special focus on Africa and cooperation facilities for CSOs to a new position paper on the 9th EU Framework Programme on Research and

*"AGROBIODIVERSITY, WITH SEED DIVERSITY AND THE CUSTODIANS OF FARM- SAVED SEED SYSTEMS AT ITS CORE, IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT INSURANCE POLICIES FOR COPING WITH, AND ADAPTING TO, CLIMATE CHANGE."*

Innovation for Sustainable Food and Farming. A final strategy was presented in November at a Stakeholder Forum during the Organic Innovation Days. Overall, the aim was to strengthen research elements that contribute to the transition of unsustainable food systems toward the vision of sustainability and agroecology.

Additionally, the finalisation of the Bayer-Monsanto merger provoked a reaction by the CSO community. ACT EU responded to the merger announcement by signing letters which brought awareness to the risks that an ever-increasing market concentration on seed and pesticides presents to global food security and equitable food systems.

## Development Assistance & Environmental/Climate Impacts

### actions in brief

Published position paper linking food security and climate change

Raised the voices of indigenous people, farming communities and female custodians of seeds through COP23 side events

COP23 events led to the creation of an ACT Climate Campaign sub-group on agriculture

Took a lead in CONCORD's work on CAP; resulting in a submission to public consultation and an open letter

## 23rd Conference of Parties (COP23) and Climate Resilient Agriculture

In preparation for COP23 the Food Security Working Group (FSWG), together with member agencies, drafted an ACT EU position paper. It focussed on the link between Food Security and Climate Change, especially looking at climate resilient agriculture. This position paper serves as the basis for further advocacy and lobbying,

engaging those working on climate change and food security to consider both the risks and opportunities on the road ahead for low carbon development, land use and tenure rights.

The 23rd annual Conference of Parties met in Bonn in November 2017 for the international climate negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The negotiations focussed on defining the rules of the Paris Agreement and preparing the first global stocktaking of climate actions for 2018. ACT EU facilitated the link of side events organised by member organisations (Bread for the World and Bread for All, in cooperation with others) with ACT Alliance activities. These side events shared the vital voices of marginalised indigenous people, farming communities and female custodians of seeds and the debate highlighted their contribution to solutions for adaptation and the mitigation of climate change.

As an outcome of these events an ACT Climate Campaign sub-group on agriculture was created. Pressure from climate change impacts and extreme weather events on direct and indirect land use changes will continue to be a major source of conflict, armed wars, migration and food insecurity beyond 2017. This group allows us to bring ACT EU expertise to the work happening on climate change and agriculture in the UNFCCC as part of the global ACT Alliance. When it comes to making choices on land use for food, energy, or climate mitigation and adaptation, this development is indispensable for understanding and addressing the future challenges of scarce and depleted natural resources.

### **EU Agricultural Policies and Common Agricultural Policy Reform 2020**

During 2017 the European Commission consulted widely on the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) with an aim to modernise and simplify it. ACT EU took a lead in CONCORD's work on CAP, leading on a CONCORD submission to public consultation on the CAP 2020 reform proposal in May as well as a CONCORD open letter on CAP in December. As ACT EU we also made our own submission building on our extensive work from the 2012 CAP reform including advocacy issues which remain highly relevant.

## **Networking and Coalition Building**

### **actions in brief**

Prepared and organised the Civil Society Land Strategy Workshop

Created a space for different sectoral CSOs to share their experience and insight on how (and if) EU institutions can bring about change to secure land rights for vulnerable communities

Improved quality and impact of EU joint advocacy by signing letters, supporting campaigns and hosting gatherings of relevant EU advocacy CSOs to exchange on strategic insights and positioning

Reached out to academics to improve the evidence base for advocacy by development NGOs

Participated in a panel discussion at Sussex University on trade policy advocacy work

### **Land Strategy Workshop**

On October 18 the ACT EU Food Security Working Group convened a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Land Strategy Workshop. This provided a learning platform on advocacy strategies and lobbying achievements across sectors. It also allowed groups working on the regulation of EU private finance, regulations for EU import commodities (such as illegal timber, conflict minerals and fishing), and safeguards and due diligence for EU public finance to share their insights and experiences with other CSOs. The workshop emphasised how these EU mechanisms can be used to safeguard against land grabs. It also identified provisions from existing EU regulations that can be used in future advocacy. ACT EU's policy officer led in preparing and organising the event which was well attended and appreciated by human rights, environmental, forest, development, food and campaign CSOs.

### **Coalitions to Influence Trade and Investment**

Networking and coalition building is a necessity to successfully influence EU trade and investment policies. As trade is an exclusive EU competence (while investment is a competence shared with member states) these networks are particularly important given the increasing number of bilateral EU trade deals with developing countries now entering implementation following years of negotiations. During 2017, EU negotiations on TTIP and CETA<sup>5</sup> brought increased public awareness of the impact of EU trade policies on social,

environmental and economic issues. The European Commission's introduction of Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapters in Free Trade Agreements (FTA)<sup>6</sup> led a number of CSOs and stakeholders to become part of CS consultative bodies related to the EU FTAs.

ACT EU is able to provide EU institutions with feedback on issues relevant to the development community through its work as a member of the DG Trade Contact Group, CARIFORUM EU EPA Civil Society Consultative Group, CONCORD and the DG Agriculture Civil Society Dialogue Group on the International Dimension of Agriculture. These advisory groups cover a range of subjects that relate to a series of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) such as no poverty (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), gender equality (SDG 5), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), climate action (SDG 13) and life on land (SDG 15).

Coalition building also includes academics. Our policy officer actively pursued and maintained networking relationships with academics interested in insights from NGO advocacy practitioners on EU trade policies or food systems which enrich and contribute to evidence-based advocacy and lobby work. For example, the policy officer presented insights from our ongoing EU advocacy and lobby work on trade policy during a panel discussion in July at Sussex University. The Human Rights and Investment Trade Seminar looked at the enforcement of human rights conditions and provisions in external territories of EU policies.

#### Footnotes

1. <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/tradehelp/everything-arms>
2. <http://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/our-pillars/fpic/en/>
3. <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/development/generalised-scheme-of-preferences/>
4. <http://tporganics.eu/about-us/>
5. Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).
6. The Commission is committed to including a chapter on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) in trade agreements as part of the EU's value-based trade agenda ... The EU works with trade partners to ensure that the sustainable development aspects of the agreements are enforced and that workers' rights and other labour standards, as well as commitments to protect the environment and natural resources are respected. It includes civil society in the process and funds projects to help with implementation. Read more: <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1689>

## ACT EU PUBLICATIONS

### OPEN LETTER TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRI-BUSINESS MERGERS

27 March 2017, Joint Letter

### OPEN LETTER ON THE REFORM OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURE POLICY

29 November 2017, CONCORD Letter

### GOOD FOOD, GOOD FARMING – NOW!

March 2017, Civil Society Statement

### THE PENDING EU-MYANMAR INVESTMENT PROTECTION AGREEMENT: RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES

April 2017, Joint Study

### TOWARDS CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

October 2017, Position Paper

## EXTERNAL REFERENCES

### COP23 | FIJI - ACTALLIANCE

2017, Coordinated Advocacy & Media Work, ACT Alliance (Global)

### LAND RIGHTS MAJOR RISK FOR EU-MYANMAR IPA

12 May 2017, Myanmar Times

# CLIMATE JUSTICE

## OBJECTIVES:

A MEANINGFUL & HOLISTIC RIGHTS-BASED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT, WHERE THE EU CONTRIBUTES TO THE ADOPTION OF A FAIR & TRANSPARENT GLOBAL STOCKTAKING MECHANISM, AND WHERE A SERIES OF SAFEGUARDS & PROCESSES ENSURE THE CLIMATE REGIME IS COMPATIBLE WITH SUSTAINABILITY & SOCIAL INCLUSIVITY

A ZERO CARBON DEVELOPMENT MODEL BY 2050 FOR WHICH MEMBER STATES & NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES ADOPT A LONG-TERM LOW CARBON DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND AGREED CLIMATE TARGETS FOR 2020 & 2030 ARE REASSESSED TO ACCOMPLISH THE NEW OBJECTIVE OF 1.5C

THE EU & MEMBER STATES SUPPORT AND BUILD RESILIENT SOCIETIES FOR ALL THROUGH SOLUTIONS FOR LOSS & DAMAGE BEYOND CLIMATE RISK INSURANCE; THAT THEIR WOULD BE STRONG PRO-POOR ADAPTATION GOALS AND INCREASED BALANCE OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR ADAPTATION WITH MITIGATION

THE EU INCREASES THE LEVEL & QUALITY OF LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUPPORT ACROSS FINANCIAL SECTORS, FROM PUBLIC BANKS TO PRIVATE COMPANIES' FINANCIAL MODELS, TO HELP THE POOREST & MOST VULNERABLE COUNTRIES ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE



According to the the World Meteorological Organisation, greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise globally. 2017 broke records for weather-related disasters ranging from wildfires across southern Europe and the northwest of Canada and USA; to massive, lengthy floods in India and Bangladesh; and a hurricane season of unusual impact in the Caribbean. These events are partly attributed to global warming and show that we are now truly experiencing the impact of climate change, a reality that urges us to action.

Through media work and lobby meetings ACT Alliance EU (ACT EU), together with our member organisations, has taken this reality as an opportunity to raise awareness of climate impact, wrongdoing and solutions for resilience and relief. Our efforts have spanned from Brussels to European capitals and internationally.

### Climate Finance, Loss & Damage

actions in brief

Highlighted climate impacts which require different policies than market-based solutions in a joint study

Brought awareness to climate risk insurance, renewable energy and low carbon policies at the EDDs

Hosted a workshop looking at the overlaps in climate resilience, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian policies

Worked with members to develop research papers focussing on climate adaptation and finance accounting rules

To date, very few solutions or financial opportunities have been delivered to help poorer countries to cope with the impacts of climate change. Rather, the main mechanisms of support offered by the European Union (EU) and other wealthier countries are financial solutions such as insurance for climate risks. Such products, however, fail to respond fully to the needs of populations facing sudden extreme weather events as described in our joint study with Bread for the World. Because of this, it is crucial to start addressing all aspects of climate loss and damage, including the non-economic. In October, a joint study was released listing climate impacts which cannot be valued in monetary

*"FOR THE FIRST TIME... THE EU CLEARLY MENTIONED LOSS AND DAMAGE. THIS IS A SMALL BUT SIGNIFICANT SIGN THAT OUR REPEATED INITIATIVES TO MAKE LOSS & DAMAGE THE THIRD PILLAR OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT ARE HAVING AN IMPACT."*

terms, such as the loss of biodiversity, and thus require different policies and approaches than simple market-based solutions.

In June, we co-led a Brussels coalition of development NGOs focusing on climate and development advocacy to take part in the European Development Days (EDDs). Our goal was to promote climate resilience and low carbon development in all development work, policies and practices. We used this annual event to highlight two main concerns for developing countries:

- the opportunities and limits of climate risk insurance as a non-sufficient and exhaustible response to impacted communities; and
- the real opportunities that renewable energy and other low carbon policies can provide to a country to bring it out of poverty, as is happening with Tanzania.

Additionally, it has become clear that the many consequences of a changing climate are so varied that a comprehensive re-think of our human development planning in rural and urban areas is necessary. Somewhat timidly, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has just initiated discussions bringing together humanitarian policy, community resilience and disaster risk reduction (DDR) experts. In order to prepare our own advocacy activities, ACT EU organised an internal workshop in July on the overlaps in these three areas. The workshop targeted the development of financial support for climate-induced loss and damage from donor countries to the poorest and most vulnerable nations.

An important cause of poor disaster management and preparedness is the non-fulfilment of financial pledges and a climate finance architecture which is too burdensome for countries with low institutional

capacities, especially when they are faced with crises following extreme weather.

ACT EU responded to this issue while contributing to the ongoing negotiations surrounding the Paris Agreement rule book. We worked with our members to develop research papers focussing on the EU and select member states' climate adaptation finance accounting rules. Hard facts helped us to highlight the countries' lack of accounting transparency and accuracy -- the result of which undermines the real support provided to the poorest countries. This exercise triggered a lot of interest from recipient countries and other NGOs and we expect more studies to be released next year. These contributions are actively building pressure toward the adoption of new climate adaptation finance rules by the end of 2018.

## Conference of Parties (COP)

### actions in brief

Developed a position on climate, agriculture and land use in preparation for COP23

Created awareness of climate change impacts in the media and with European negotiators resulting in official decisions addressing "loss and damage"

Realised the success of indigenous people's rights and climate aid transparency becoming key issues in the negotiations

The 23rd annual climate rendezvous took place in Germany with a small island state, the Republic of Fiji, presiding for the first time. Fiji took advantage of their leadership opportunity and used it to bring awareness to the hard consequences of climate change which they already face.

COP23 allowed for greater advancement on additional development issues, such as land use, while keeping its focus on adaptation and specific disaster risk reduction recommendations. In anticipation of these new policy developments, we developed an ACT EU position on climate, agriculture and land use in October. This paid back immediately as agriculture and land use became an official item of the November negotiations. It is essential that this sector, representing 40 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, is incorporated into the UNFCCC to prevent

false solutions, tackle systemic issues like food security and promote nature-based solutions

As part of the global ACT Alliance, we increased and improved our coordinated advocacy and media work for COP23. ACT EU contributed by raising awareness of climate change impacts in the media and among European negotiators. Consequently, some of the decisions made in Bonn were in line with our advocacy. Examples include:

- Several European member states took further commitments to support impacted countries. A new expert dialogue on loss and damage support, including finance, will be organised next year.
- For the first time, in its final intervention, the EU clearly mentioned loss and damage. This is a small but significant sign that our repeated initiatives to make loss and damage the third pillar of the Paris Agreement are having an impact.

Finally, progress was made on the Paris Agreement rule book with specific rules and processes for gender and indigenous people's rights, as well as for climate aid transparency, becoming a key issue of the climate negotiations.

## Low Carbon Development

### actions in brief

Successfully lobbied the EC to constructively participate in the set-up of the AREI

Stressed the importance and economic opportunities of renewable energy investments in a joint study

Celebrated integration of better climate change risks in the annual reporting of multilateral development banks as well as their divestment from fossil fuel assets

The African Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI) is meant to deploy renewable energy to all, including to off-grid and poor communities throughout the continent.

We actively lobbied the European Commission (EC) to constructively participate in the set-up of the AREI. Our efforts were rewarded with the AREI board adopting new rules of procedure and allowing greater African civil society participation. In addition, the joint report A Virtuous Circle: scaling up investment in low

carbon energy, was published by Christian Aid to stress the importance and economic opportunities of renewable energy investments.

While it is essential that developing countries avoid the dirty energy production systems of Western countries, it is clear that such transition can only happen with massive financial investments and support.

The extraordinary One Planet Summit, held in France last December, helped bring about positive changes in the financial sector. These included the integration of better climate change risks in the annual reporting of multilateral development banks as well as their divestment from fossil fuel assets. The World Bank's announcement that it would stop all funding for oil and gas from 2019 triggered a wave of positive reactions that compelled the European Investment Bank to delay its decision on funding a new gas pipeline. This was welcome news for ACT EU as we, together with other NGOs, have been working for a significant amount of time to influence this project.

### **Informing our Future Work**

Domestically, the European Union has finalised several new pieces of legislation (with a few more to come in 2018) concerning the implementation of the EU climate mitigation targets for 2030. The EU is not reducing its own greenhouse gas emissions quickly enough, however, nor is it deploying enough resources for the renewable energy transition. Unfortunately, the EU has postponed the preparation of its mid-century low carbon strategy which must be handed to the UNFCCC in 2020. Nevertheless, several government and parliamentarians have been calling publicly for the scaling up of both EU 2030 and 2050 climate targets.

Internationally, the EU has formed an alliance with China and Canada to fill the vacuum left by the United States' pulling out of the Paris Agreement. At the Ministerial on Climate Action (MoCA) in September, this new climate G3 invited thirty other major economies for its last meeting before COP23. These actions showed a clear commitment from the EU to prevent any crumbling of the post-2020 climate era and to finalise the Paris rule book by the end of 2018 as agreed.

## **ACT EU PUBLICATIONS**

### **TOWARDS CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS**

October 2017, Position Paper

### **A VIRTUOUS CIRCLE: SCALING UP INVESTMENT IN LOW CARBON ENERGY**

November 2017, Joint Report

### **EU NEEDS TO RECONSIDER THE APPROACH TO CLIMATE FINANCE**

2017, Online Article

### **BRIEFING NOTE ABOUT EU CLIMATE FINANCE**

December 2017, Briefing Note

*"TO LIMIT CLIMATE CHANGE TO 2°C, THE I.E.A. ESTIMATES THAT FROM 2017 TO 2040, \$40 TRILLION IN ENERGY INVESTMENT AND \$35 TRILLION IN ENERGY EFFICIENCY INVESTMENT WILL NEED TO BE DIVERTED FROM HIGH CARBON FOSSIL FUELS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE ENERGY."  
- A VIRTUOUS CIRCLE*

## **EXTERNAL REFERENCES**

### **PROTECTED AGAINST CLIMATE DAMAGE?**

September 2017, Bread for the World

### **NON-ECONOMIC LOSS AND DAMAGE**

October 2017, Joint Discussion Paper, ACT Alliance (Global)

### **POLICY ROADMAP FOR 100% RENEWABLE ENERGY AND POVERTY ERADICATION IN TANZANIA**

May 2017, World Future Council

### **COP23 | FIJI - ACTALLIANCE**

2017, Coordinated Advocacy & Media Work, ACT Alliance (Global)

### **AREI INTERNATIONAL CSO STATEMENT**

May 2017, Joint Statement, ActionAid International

# THE EU & THE MIDDLE EAST

## OBJECTIVES:

TO BRING AN END TO IMPUNITY BY GARNERING SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MECHANISMS

TO CHALLENGE POLICIES AND PRACTICES LEADING TO FORCIBLE TRANSFERS AND FACILITATING THE CREEPING ANNEXATION OF SETTLEMENT-CONTROLLED AREAS TO ISRAEL

TO PROMOTE DIFFERENTIATION IN EUROPEAN/MEMBER STATE CONTRACTUAL RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL AND RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS BEHAVIOUR IN ISRAEL/OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

TO SAFEGUARD SPACE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND TO ENSURE SECURITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS



## SPECIAL PROJECT

**A**CT Alliance EU's (ACT EU) Middle East Working Group strives toward achieving a just peace that ends the occupation of Palestine. We advocate a rights-based approach to development and emphasise respect for international law and an end to the military occupation of Palestine as the first steps toward a solution to the conflict.

In 2017, we focused our efforts on ensuring that EU diplomatic and humanitarian actions contributed to the prevention of internal forcible transfers of Palestinian populations; and challenged Israeli policies, practices and laws that are paving the way for the annexation of vast expanses of the West Bank. In close relation to this, we worked to ensure that the humanitarian needs of Palestinians (particularly of the residents of Gaza and Area C) would be met in a principled manner and that European Union (EU) aid would shift to a more developmental approach.

Last, but not least, we brought the mounting attacks against civil society and human rights defenders (HRD) into the diplomatic spotlight and worked to ensure that the EU put in place policies for their protection.

During 2017 ACT EU facilitated a total of 12 advocacy visits for our member agencies and their local partners, and briefed over 200 decision makers in private meetings.

### Garnering Support for Justice Mechanisms

act eu in brief

Provided specific IHL input for the review of the EU's "Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy"

Successfully urged EP & HR/VP to appoint a Special Representative

Continuing work into 2018 on the basis of commissioned legal opinion advocating for the EU to strength its IHL practice

In 2017, there was no accountability breakthrough for the victims of the multiple, serious and recurrent international crimes committed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

More specifically, the International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor is still to launch a formal probe into the situation caused by both the Israeli military and Palestinian groups (Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad [PIJ]) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). The wait continues despite ever-mounting evidence, and the well-established unwillingness of both the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) to hold wrongdoers accountable for past international humanitarian law (IHL) transgressions through their own national judicial mechanisms.

*ACT EU FACILITATED A TOTAL OF 12 ADVOCACY VISITS FOR OUR MEMBER AGENCIES AND THEIR LOCAL PARTNERS, AND BRIEFED OVER 200 DECISION MAKERS IN PRIVATE MEETINGS.*

Given the lack of progress on that front during 2017, rather than attempting to rally EU support to the ICC action on the situation in Palestine, ACT EU worked to strengthen general EU policy on IHL promotion. We did so by providing specific IHL input for the review of the EU's "Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy" and by successfully urging the European Parliament (EP) to call the High Representative/Vice President to appoint a separate Special Representative for International Humanitarian Law.

Unfortunately, in spite of the brazen disregard for IHL in conflicts today, it appears unlikely that the EU will significantly strengthen its IHL practice in the near future. This objective will be re-explored in 2018 on the basis of legal opinion to be commissioned by Diakonia on the specific responsibilities of the EU under IHL.

### Challenging Policies & Practices That Lead to Forcible Transfers and the Annexation of Settlement-Controlled Areas

act eu in brief

Updated officials; resulted in preventive demarche against forcible transfer & construction of EI

Helped to secure plenary debate on settlements in the European Parliament

Advocated for accountability on destruction of humanitarian aid; resulted in compensation

Worked to successfully postpone EU-Israel AA

*OUR ADVOCACY EFFORTS ON ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE YIELDED TANGIBLE RESULTS IN 2017, AS ALL EU MS PROVIDING AID IN AREA C HAVE NOW STARTED COMPENSATION FOR THE DESTRUCTION/CONFISCATION OF AID BY THE MILITARY.*

Last but not least, we have pioneered a sorely needed conversation with EU donors regarding the need to shift from relief to development programmes in Area C in line with their commitment under the humanitarian development nexus. This will be a major focus of our work in 2018.

**Promoting Differentiation and Responsible Business Behaviour**

- act eu in brief** Researched cases of insufficient implementation of the differentiation requirements at both the EU and MS levels
- Asked the EC and the EEAS for an audit of the level of implementation of differentiation requirements and of the labelling of settlement products by member states

Between 2012 and 2015, ACT EU was instrumental in the adoption of a number of measures by the European Commission (EC) which excluded Israeli settlements from the privileges granted to the State of Israel by the EU. Unfortunately, MS have neither fully honoured their responsibilities under the measures nor sought to replicate those policies at a national level.

In 2017, as part of supporting ACT EU members and other organisations with their on-going work on differentiation, we researched cases of insufficient implementation of the differentiation requirements at both the EU and MS levels.

In meetings with the EC and the European External Action Service (EEAS), we continued to ask for an audit of the level of implementation of differentiation requirements across the full scope of EU-Israeli relations, and of the labelling of settlement products by member states, with no tangible results so far. We will continue our

In 2017, the State of Israel took unprecedented steps toward the annexation of important expanses of the West Bank. This manifested in an alarmingly high number of demolitions of private property and humanitarian assistance in Bedouin and herder communities slated for forcible transfer into relocation sites; the adoption of legislation to facilitate the take-over of privately owned Palestinian lands by settlers; and an unprecedented upsurge in the advancement of settlements including E1 and Givat Hamatos. Those settlements are commonly referred to as doomsday locations because construction there will preclude the possibility of a territorially contiguous future Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Israeli officials confirmed that they coordinated, to varying degrees, those developments (which qualify as international crimes) directly with the current U.S. administration.

In response, ACT EU disseminated updates amongst Members of the European Parliament (MEP) and senior officials of the EU and EU Member State (MS) diplomatic services regarding relevant forcible transfer, settlement construction and legislative developments. This work resulted in a preventive demarche by all 28 EU Member States; a cross-party group of circa 100 MEPs; and a statement by the S&D against the forcible transfer of both Bedouin and herder communities, and the construction of E1. ACT EU also helped to secure plenary debate on Israeli settlements and cross-party condemnation of settlement construction and forcible transfer.

In addition, our advocacy efforts on the issue of accountability for the destruction of humanitarian assistance yielded tangible results in 2017. At this point, all EU MS providing aid in Area C have now started demanding compensation for the destruction/confiscation of aid by the military.

ACT EU also worked to ensure that EU policy on settlements will stay fully in line with IHL (in the face of pressure to espouse the Trump administration view on settlements) and to postpone the EU-Israel Association Agreement (AA) until the government of Israel demonstrates respect for international human rights and humanitarian law. Notably, now one year later, the Agreement has yet to take place.

advocacy into 2018, providing updates on results as they occur.

### **Safeguarding Space for Civil Society (CS), Ensuring Security of Human Rights Defenders**

act eu in brief

Brought legislation and cases of local partners to the attention of EEAS/MS decision makers to protect and safeguard CS and democratic values

Ensured cross-party support for call on EU/MS to grant public recognition to affected human rights NGOs and human rights defenders

Advocated for ensuring a broad diplomatic presence at the hearing and public condemnation of HRD, Issa Amro

Pressure on the space for civil society continues to intensify due a political climate dominated by an illiberal cabinet in Israel, and Palestine's lack of democratic checks and balances and rule of law.

#### **Israeli Authorities' Treatment of Civil Society**

Last June, marking the first anniversary of the passing of the Foreign Agents/Transparency law, the Prime Minister of Israel vowed to pass legislation to stop foreign funding for Israeli NGOs. He eventually settled for an intermediate package of measures that included the establishment of a parliamentary probe into foreign funding for human rights NGOs. Legislation to ban the organisation Breaking the Silence was debated and a bill was drafted that would allow settler-owned companies to sue individuals and organisations (without proof of damages) who advocate for severing investment and trade ties with settlements on the basis of existing business advisories from the EU and international standards of responsible corporate conduct.

Israeli embassies across Europe also delivered a series of demarches demanding that EU governments stop funding and meeting a list of Palestinian and Israeli human rights NGOs, and reprimanded EU leaders (including the Foreign Minister of Germany and Prime Minister of Belgium) who refused to comply. Israeli authorities have also tried to establish an internal database to monitor Israeli citizens who support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS), and imposed an entry ban on

foreign individuals and organizations who publicly back calls for sanctions or who boycott Israel or its illegal settlements.

In Europe, there has been an intensification of pro-Israeli government pressure groups who participate in efforts by the Israeli government to cut European funding to human rights organizations in Israel and Palestine. These efforts have adverse repercussions for public trust in those organizations and European civil society at large.

At the EU level, this manifested in repeated attempts by the largest political family in the European Parliament (which the European press has traced back to the Jerusalem-based group NGO Monitor) to establish a governmental authority to police civil society opinions and the spreading of falsehoods. The latter including that the EC is attempting "to transfer power from an elected parliament to unelected NGOs" and that there are "black sheep in the NGO lobbying family, [which], must be held liable".

#### **Palestinian Authority's Treatment of Civil Society**

In Palestine, there has been a sharp escalation in attacks on freedom of expression and political dissent by the Palestinian Authority (PA) which culminated in the adoption of the Cyber Crimes Law last summer. Since the introduction of the law at least seven people, including prominent HRD Issa Amro, have been arrested in the West Bank. The law imposes heavy fines and permits the arbitrary detention and incarceration of anyone criticising the governmental actions of the PA online.

Early in the year, the PA also sought to interfere with the independence and autonomy of Palestinian NGOs by again attempting to require international donors to funnel their support to NGOs through a government-controlled bank account.

#### **Responding to the Treatment of Civil Society**

During 2017, ACT EU brought the legislation and cases of individually affected local partners in Israel and Palestine to the attention of External Action Service / Member State decision makers to ensure their protection and to safeguard an environment in which civil society and democratic values are respected.

ACT EU also worked to ensure a positive outcome of the report on shrinking civil society space in developing countries. We ensured cross-party support for a call on the EU/Member States to grant public, high-level recognition to affected human rights NGOs and individual HRDs whose work was affected by rapidly shrinking spaces. Examples of these shrinking spaces include both publicly orchestrated defamation campaigns and campaigns rolled out by private organizations and Government Organised Non-Governmental Organisations.

So far, the EU has not succumbed to political pressure from the State of Israel, or pro-Israeli government pressure groups, to stop contact with, or funding to, Israeli and Palestinian NGOs. That said, it seems increasingly vulnerable to doing so, as is demonstrated by the fact that the above-mentioned attacks have only been condemned privately by the EU.

With regards to attacks by the PA, ACT EU successfully advocated for ensuring a broad diplomatic presence at the hearing and public condemnation of the arrest of prominent human rights defender, Issa Amro, and the passing of the Cyber Crimes Law by the German Human Rights Commissioner, the Chair of the Human Rights Subcommittee and the S&D group (Fatah's sister group in Europe). The EU has also condemned the developments privately before the joint PA/EU Committee and Prime Minister Hamdallah.

### **Additional Advocacy Efforts, Future Work**

#### **Review of EU Aid**

In early September, HR/VP Mogherini announced a review of the modalities used for the EU's engagement on the ground in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The intention of the review is to ensure a direct link between EU financial support and the goal of achieving the two-state solution. The modalities being reviewed include the EU's development aid to Palestine and the entirety of EU bilateral relations with Israel, since Israel, as a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, only receives very limited financial assistance from the EU. ACT EU will continue to input on that process moving forward.

#### **Palestinian Reconciliation**

Hamas and Fatah announced an initial partial reconciliation agreement on October 12th. ACT EU will be raising awareness on the content of the initial reconciliation agreement and what will be needed to move it forward.

## **ACT EU'S INFLUENCE**

**ADDRESSING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF WAR CRIMES, AND CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, INCLUDING GENOCIDE**

4 July 2017, EU Parliament Resolution

**S&Ds CALL FOR SAVING KHAN AL-AHMAR - STOP THE DEMOLITION OF PALESTINIAN COMMUNITIES AND PROPERTY!**

March 2017, SocialistsandDemocrats.eu

**SITUATION IN THE WEST BANK, IN PARTICULAR SETTLEMENTS**

14 February 2017, EU Parliament Agenda

**IN UNPRECEDENTED MOVE, EIGHT EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TO DEMAND COMPENSATION FROM ISRAEL FOR WEST BANK DEMOLITIONS**

October 2017, Haaretz.com

**ADDRESSING SHRINKING CIVIL SOCIETY SPACE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

3 October 2017, EU Parliament Texts Adopted

## **EXTERNAL REFERENCES**

**ACTION PLAN ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY (2015-2019)**

April 2015, Joint Communication EU/EC

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER ON THE ARREST OF THE PALESTINIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ISSA AMRO**

2017, German Federal Foreign Office Press Release

**OECD GUIDELINES FOR MULTINATIONAL ENTERPRISES**

2011, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**EU MEMBER STATE BUSINESS ADVISORIES ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS**

November 2016, European Council on Foreign Relations

**PALESTINE: DANGEROUS ESCALATION IN ATTACKS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

August 2017, Amnesty.org

**NETANYAHU PUSHES FOR BILL TO BAN BREAKING THE SILENCE, BDS NGOS**

17 October 2017, The Jerusalem Post

# THE EU & CENTRAL AMERICA

## OBJECTIVES:

FOR EU POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO SAFEGUARD THE RIGHT TO JUSTICE, PEACE AND SECURITY; AND THAT THEY WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO A REDUCTION OF CORRUPTION AND VIOLENCE IN CENTRAL AMERICA

FOR EU POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO REINFORCE THE REALISATION OF CLIMATE JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

FOR THE EU TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE, USING POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL POLICY INSTRUMENTS, IN ENLARGING THE SPACE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA

THAT ADVOCACY PROGRAMME ON CENTRAL AMERICA (PICA) CAN COUNT ON THE SUPPORT OF MEMBERS TO BECOME FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE, AND THAT ADVOCACY, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICE WILL STRENGTHEN MEMBERS, ACT ALLIANCE EU AND THE ACT ALLIANCE IN CENTRAL AMERICA



## SPECIAL PROJECT

**A**CT Alliance EU (ACT EU) advocated for European Union (EU) policies in Central America to be based on the respect and realization of human rights, democratic principles and transparency, and that these policies help to improve the lives and self-determination of people in Central America.

Over more than 13 years of work, ACT EU established very positive relationships with EU institutions, especially the Mexico, Central America and Caribbean Division of the European External Action Service allowing us to carry out this important work. Sadly, due to funding constraints, ACT EU's Advocacy Programme on Central America (PICA) was suspended at the end of 2017. Thankfully, the work of member organisations continues and the important relationships which ACT EU forged remain.

### **Safeguarding the Right to Peace, Security and Justice**

act eu in brief

Presented the report, *The Scandal of Inequality, in a September policy debate together with Christian Aid*

Met with the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development and the EEAS to make the issue of inequality a priority in the EU agenda

Put issues, such as the situation of human rights defenders in Honduras and Guatemala, on the agendas of the EP Delegation for Relations with the Countries of Central America

As the EU reflects on the future of development cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), their relationship has moved into a transition period. With many LAC countries now considered middle income or upper middle-income, traditional development is phasing out and cooperation is transforming into a horizontal partnership.

Due to this new context, ACT EU members in Central America reported a decline in development cooperation in the region, impacting the work of both them and their partners. In order to analyse and frame policy

*"A DELEGATION OF 20 INDIGENOUS LEADERS MET IN BRUSSELS TO ASK FOR INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT ON THEIR STRUGGLE TO CONSERVE SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST THREATENED TROPICAL FORESTS."*

messages on this situation ACT EU conducted a study on the withdrawal of development cooperation. While its conclusion was that the European Commission (EC) will continue to maintain funding at the same level until at least 2020 (due to existing commitments from 2014), member states are clearly shifting their priorities and funds to other regions. This makes advocacy at the European level vital if we wish to keep Central America high on government agendas.

PICA advocated for the maintenance of EU development cooperation with Central America and highlighted the pressing issues remaining in the region, such as high levels of inequality. ACT EU, together with Christian Aid, presented the latter's report, *The Scandal of Inequality: the multiple faces of inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean*, in a policy debate organised in September. The debate was attended by 25 high-level officials from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the EC, plus NGOs and European Parliament (EP) representatives. Additionally, the report was widely disseminated to Members of European Parliament (MEPs), the EC and EEAS. Furthermore, several meetings with the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) and the EEAS were carried out in order to make the issue of inequality a priority in the EU agenda.

In our work with the European Parliament, we put several subjects on the agendas of the EP Delegation for Relations with the Countries of Central America. These included the situation of human rights defenders in Honduras and Guatemala, the implementation of trade agreements and the involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in those agreements.

## Reinforcing the Realisation of Climate Justice and Sustainable Development

### act eu in brief

Made recommendations on the implementation of the Association Agreement (AA), ensuring the EU's commitments to sustainable development, the environment, and social and human rights

Provided translation for a report on the monitoring of the EU-Central America AA and disseminated the report to the EU institutions

Successfully demanded that the EC support Central American CS in the monitoring of the AA

Participated in the development and follow up of the CS hearing, *The Role and Influence of Civil Society in EU - Latin America Trade Agreements*

Hosted and supported the the global coalition of indigenous organisations, Guardians of the Forest, during their advocacy tour toward COP23

Work continued in 2017 between the EU and Central American joint institutions based on their 2012 EU-Central America Association Agreement (EU-CA AA). The comprehensive agreement includes three pillars: development cooperation, trade and political dialogue. Once it is fully enforced it will be the main framework for relations between the two regions in all areas of work. PICA, as a full voting member of the European component of a Domestic Advisory Group (DAG) for Central America<sup>1</sup>, made recommendations to European officials on the implementation of the AA to ensure that the EU's commitments to sustainable development, the environment, and social and human rights were fulfilled.

Thanks to the DAG, we could access high-level, up-to-date information which underpinned our strategic advocacy actions. We also provided entry points for lobbying the EU institutions on sustainable development. It also helped us to support our members' and Central America partners' advocacy work, in particular the Regional Observatory on Free Trade and Corporate Responsibility in Central America<sup>2</sup>, as they monitored the implementation of the AA. Specifically, ACT EU supported the Observatory with an English translation of its report on the monitoring of the EU-CA AA, and with dissemination of the report to the EU

institutions. In addition, we contributed to the civil society group "DAGs for Change"<sup>3</sup> by utilising examples from our participation in the Central America DAG to help develop overarching messages and recommendations to improve the work of this space.

Even though the fourth EU-CA bi-regional CSO forum on implementation of the AA was postponed to 2018, ACT EU actively contributed to the development of messages from the civil society perspective targeting the AA's governing board. Our demands to the European Commission to support Central American civil society in the monitoring of the AA were successful. Starting in 2018, DG Trade will support the participation of civil society through a specific project. In addition, we strongly advocated for DG Trade to allow the participation of civil society in the definition of the Terms of Reference for the AA's five year evaluation, to be defined in 2018.

In parallel, we pushed for, and participated actively in, the development of the Civil Society Hearing, *The Role and Influence of Civil Society in EU - Latin America Trade Agreements*, held in the European Parliament. ACT EU defined the concept note for both the panellists and the overall event. Afterward, we participated in follow-up meetings with the EP and the issue continued to be present at the EuroLat EP Delegation meeting in Rome last May. It remains on the EP's agenda.

As a key actor in civil society on the EU-CA AA we met with experts, academics and representatives of civil society from Central America last October to exchange views on the impacts of the AA and civil society participation.

We were also very active in defending the rights of indigenous peoples and their contribution to facing climate change. We hosted and supported the visit of the Alianza Mesoamericana de Pueblos y Bosques (AMPB), ICCO's partner, and the global coalition of indigenous organisations, Guardians of the Forest. The October visit of Guardians of the Forest to Brussels was part of their European tour toward COP23 in Bonn. A delegation of 20 indigenous leaders met in Brussels to ask international support for their struggle to conserve some of the world's most threatened tropical forests. The campaign and advocacy actions included an open conference

with NGOs, a public event in the EP with MEPs and political advisors, and advocacy meetings with both the EEAS and the EC. These actions were held together with both our Food and Security working group and our Climate Change working group. ACT EU led these actions and collaborated with other NGOs in Brussels, such as Fern and Oxfam EU.

During these advocacy actions, the indigenous leaders called for an end to the criminalisation and murder of environmental defenders; respect for their right to free, prior and informed consent; and access to climate funds.

### **Enlarging the Space for Civil Society Participation in Central America**

- Facilitated work with networks and human rights organisations resulting in the EP passing the Resolution on Guatemala, notably the situation of human rights defenders
- Contributed to the script of a video in which MEPs shared their support for the demands of COPINH
- Helped organise the Civil Society Forum EU-LAC in El Salvador, gathering more than 150 CS representatives from the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean
- Promoted dialogue on the space for civil society and human rights with EU Delegations
- Included the example of Honduras in CONCORD's EU Delegations report, provided examples of CSOs and EU Delegations working on issues together

Concerns regarding the shrinking space of civil society in Central America continued to be well-founded in 2017. The most targeted individuals turned out to be those protesting against big infrastructure and development projects taking over their territories and natural resources. Due to our in-depth knowledge of EU policy in the region, and access to relevant contacts, ACT EU was able to facilitate work with other regional networks and human rights organisations resulting in the EP passing the Resolution on Guatemala, notably the situation of human rights defenders. Together with other civil society

*"BETWEEN JANUARY AND NOVEMBER 2016, 223 ASSAULTS WERE REGISTERED AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AS WELL AS 14 KILLINGS AND 7 ATTEMPTED MURDERS. SINCE THE BEGINNING OF [2017], 2 HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS WERE KILLED IN GUATEMALA."*

*- Feb 2017 Press Release,  
EP Resolution on Guatemala*

organisations, we launched a press release to welcome and promote this resolution. In addition, a letter signed by several MEPs was addressed to the Guatemalan Parliament expressing concern over the death of 14 human rights defenders in 2016.

One year after the assassination of Berta Cáceres in Honduras, an advocacy visit by COPINH (Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras) was organised in Brussels. Together with other NGOs, we launched a video in which MEPs shared their support for the demands of COPINH. PICA contributed to the script of this video which was widely disseminated throughout the European press and within the European institutions.

In September, an EP Delegation visited Honduras with the goal of discovering the situation of workers and human rights defenders, of democracy and the rule of law, and ultimately to evaluate the programmes of the European Union in the country. ACT EU contributed directly to their final report with comments and input.

Intensive advocacy around ILO 169, the International Labor Organisation's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, was done to the EEAS, EC and EP during 2017. Advocacy included organising several visits to Brussels by Central American CSOs (AMPB, Guardians of the Forest, JOTAY: ACTing Together, etc.) and targeted work within the DAG.

Due to the Venezuelan crisis, the 3rd EU-CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) Summit was cancelled. CONCORD and Mesa de Articulación, however, held the Civil Society Forum EU-LAC in El Salvador and ACT EU

played a major role in organising the September event. The Forum gathered more than 150 civil society representatives from both regions. The main output was the El Salvador Declaration, which was widely distributed afterward to key EU and Latin America and Caribbean decision makers. Furthermore, ACT EU prepared a letter, which included the declaration, that was sent to the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Neven Mimicia. Moreover, a MODES (El Salvador NGOs National Platform) representative presented the civil society declaration at the EuroLat meeting in El Salvador later that month.

To amplify the impact of this work, ACT EU members and partners continued to promote dialogue on the space for civil society and human rights with EU Delegations. We systematically engaged with the delegations in order to monitor the EU's commitments to support human rights and the space for civil society, and to extend the CSO outreach work of other networks such as CONCORD and the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN).

ACT EU continued to lead work on CSO and EU Delegation engagement, winning recognition from both sides. Our core programme, together with PICA, leads CONCORD's work on this issue. In 2017 the EU Delegation Report was released with our active contribution. As a result of PICA's involvement, the example of Honduras was included, providing evidence of how CSOs and EU Delegations can work on issues together. Notably, the EU Head of the Honduran Delegation responded to the report. The report analyses the relations between EU Delegations and civil society, with an emphasis on the implementation of road maps. Due to the inclusion of the Honduras case, the relationship between this EU Delegation and civil society will continue to be monitored into the future.

### **Becoming Financially Sustainable; Strengthening Members**

- act eu in brief** Led a workshop for Bread for the World's partners in Central America
- act eu in brief** Led a workshop for CSOs focussed on civil society participation and engagement with EU Delegations

**Shared and disseminated the Training Guide on Advocacy Towards the European Union**

**Coordinated joint lobbying efforts with CIDSE, CIFCA and Grupo Sur and Oidhaco**

**Paved the way for the presence of Central American partners at forums organised by the EU**

**Mapped institutional and private donors interested in projects related to Central America and the Caribbean**

The support given to PICA's members, partners and ACT Alliance Forums in terms of their lobbying capacities was important in 2017. In September, we led a workshop for Bread for the World's partners in Central America. Additionally, through CONCORD, we led a workshop for CSOs focussed on civil society participation and engagement with EU Delegations. This workshop was also used to test the methodology of CONCORD's global Trainings of Trainers workshops. Our work contributed to improving the tool, its methodology and influenced the content of future workshops. Moreover, we widely shared and disseminated the Training Guide on Advocacy Towards the European Union, an important tool that consolidates information and materials produced during both a series of training workshops held in Europe and Central America, and during our day-to-day efforts to strengthen our institutional work.

PICA worked to improve communications with members and partners in Central America. In 2017, we published a final issue of our joint newsletter with CIFCA and two internal newsletters. Since networks focused on Latin America are rare, speaking with one voice is vital; hence joint lobbying efforts were coordinated with CIDSE (Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité), CIFCA (Iniciativa de Copenhague para Centroamérica y México) and Grupo Sur and Oidhaco. In addition, strategic participation in thematic working groups of CONCORD and HRDNs 'networks of networks' -- regarded as leaders on development and human rights issues -- helped to get our positions and case studies included in their global positions. Our positions on creating an enabling

environment and cases on dialogue between CSOs and EU Delegations were shared via these networks' advocacy documents. This paved the way for the presence of Central American partners at forums organised by the EU. The forums focussed on collaboration with these networks of networks, notably the EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights.

In 2017, PICA's advocacy strategy was implemented in the context of declining donor funding for the region. In fact, it was the last year of activities supported by ACT EU's external funding from the European Commission. Internal ACT EU discussions focused largely on the future of its advocacy work on issues related to Central America. While there is recognition of the importance and the impact of PICA's work in Brussels, and political support from agencies and partners in the region, this could not translate into sufficient financial support to maintain the programme beyond 2017.

Measures to attain financial sustainability of the programme were, sadly, unsuccessful; but will, we hope, be of use to our members. These included a mapping of institutional and private donors interested in supporting projects related to the region as well as seeking to ensure continued contact within the ACT EU constituency.

We are sad to see the sunseting of PICA but we are grateful for the support and engagement of our members during more than 13 years, and for the impact we have been able to have.

#### Footnotes

1. This means that PICA not only had access to privileged information but also that: 1) it positioned ACT Alliance EU as a relevant actor working on Central America; and 2) PICA could influence discussions, agendas and recommendations of this civil society group as well as propose forms of action to DG Trade concerning sustainable development.
2. In 2013 the Regional Observatory to Monitor FTAs and Corporate Responsibility in Central America was established in order to continue monitoring trade agreements so that organisations and social movements could increase their knowledge of trade policy to assist them in their related work. <http://www.cifcaeu.org/en/our-work/issues/trade-agreements/>
3. Informal group made up of NGOs and trade union organisations, with the goal of analyzing the DAGs and making proposals.

## ACT EU PUBLICATIONS

### EP MOBILISES FOR HRDS IN GUATEMALA

February 2017, Joint Press Release

### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SUPPORTS DEMANDS OF COPIHN, HONDURAS

May 2017, Joint Advocacy Video

### EU DELEGATIONS REPORT, COUNTRY BRIEF: HONDURAS

February 2017, Report with CONCORD

### TRAINING GUIDE: EU ADVOCACY ON CENTRAL AMERICA

2017, Training Resource

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### EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON DEVELOPMENT

June 2017, Joint Statement by EU Council & MS Representatives

### THE SCANDAL OF INEQUALITY

March 2017, Christian Aid

### RESOLUTION ON GUATEMALA, NOTABLY THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

February 2017, European Parliament

### EL SALVADOR DECLARATION

September 2017, European, Latin American and Caribbean Civil Society

# EUROPEAN REFUGEE CRISIS

## **APPEAL OVERVIEW:**

THIS FINAL REPORT COVERS ACTIVITIES IN THE ACT APPEAL EUR161; BETWEEN JANUARY AND AUGUST 2017.

THE ACT EU COMPONENT OF THE APPEAL FOCUSED ON ADVOCACY AND WAS LED BY THE EUROPEAN REFUGEE CRISIS POLICY OFFICER.

THE INSERTION OF A FORMAL ADVOCACY COMPONENT FOR THE FIRST TIME WITHIN AN ACT APPEAL PROVIDED A USEFUL OPPORTUNITY TO TEST HOW WELL ADVOCACY CAN WORK WITHIN AN APPEAL MECHANISM.



# SPECIAL PROJECT

## **O**perational Context

The overall objective of the ACT Alliance advocacy project on refugees in Europe was to see tangible improvements to the conditions facing refugees coming to (or already in) Europe, as a result of policy and practice changes by EU member states and institutions.

The policy officer thus focussed her activities on political advocacy and engagement with government institutions, chiefly the EU and its member states, to achieve improvements in their refugee reception policies and practices.

### **Spring/Summer 2017 Landscape of EU Migration Policy:**

Domination of the political agenda by the French and German elections plus Brexit negotiations, meant less space was given to issues of migration and solidarity. The overall discourse was mainly focussed on portraying the success of the 2015 European Agenda on Migration, especially based on a reduction of numbers of migrants reaching EU member states. The focus also shifted from the Turkey/Greece/Balkans routes to the Central Mediterranean route where higher numbers of migrants were recorded.

Ongoing criticism by humanitarian and human rights organisations highlighted poor reception conditions in several locations (such as the Greek islands, Hungary, and reception facilities in Italy), delays in asylum and other procedures, a lack of information, and the impact of all of this on migrants' mental health. It was communicated that only a political solution would bring improvements.

Italy's role in restricting rescue missions in the Mediterranean Sea and the support from EU member states to the Libyan government and coastguards despite known risks for migrants stranded in Libya exposed human rights violations and a further externalisation of border controls by the EU.

Several reports by humanitarian NGOs during this period brought awareness to the failure of protection mechanisms designed to ensure the safety, security and mental health in particular of children and minors.

As the international focus moved to more recent, larger (in terms of numbers of people affected) crises, the funding landscape also changed with several donors stopping their support for programmes in Greece and the Balkans. Additionally, ECHO funding in Greece was progressively channelled through the Greek government rather than UNHCR and INGOs, supporting a more sustainable response but also bringing concerns over timeliness and relevance of the response. Furthermore, several INGOs ceased supporting partners or implementing projects across the region.

### **Emergency Response Achievements**

act eu in brief

Assisted the preparation of parliamentary questions on the situation of refugees in Greece

Published a well-read blog post calling for improved conditions for refugees in Greece

The policy officer operated from Brussels and connected with a range of coalitions and groups. These included the EU migration discussion group led by Oxfam, the Christian group and the European NGO Platform on Asylum and Migration. They also attended meetings with the EU and MEPs, and coordinated with ACT EU colleagues.

The officer wrote and contributed to lobby and policy papers; assisted an MEP in the preparation of parliamentary questions on the situation of refugees in Greece, in consultation with Norwegian Church Aid; and took part in drafting letters with other civil society actors. In January, ACT EU attended two meetings with UNHCR, as the agency seeks to foster exchanges and cooperation with CSOs on the UN and EU compacts. The policy officer additionally published a well-read blog post calling for improved conditions for refugees in Greece as a follow up to her December 2016 visit to Thessaloniki with Christian Aid.

The first quarter of the year ushered in a change of direction as the policy officer presented her document, "Resetting the priorities of the ACT Alliance advocacy project on refugees," to the

steering group. To keep pace with the rapid development of EU policies in this field, the steering group reviewed the original objectives of the officer's work in order to focus on policy aspects where the ACT Alliance could bring unique added value. The resulting new objective being that cooperation agreements with third countries, in relation to migration, are implemented in accordance with international law and human rights standards.

## Under the New Objective

act eu in brief

Assisted the preparation of parliamentary questions on the situation of refugees in Greece

Published a well-read blog post calling for improved conditions for refugees in Greece

## Identifying Needs

The policy officer worked together with CONCORD, the EU Migration Discussion Group and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles to move the ACT agenda forward. This work highlighted the need for:

- EU migration policies that are based on solidarity and fair responsibility-sharing, as opposed to externalisation of the management of EU borders to non-EU countries.
- The EU to stop conditioning development aid to developing countries on compliance with readmission agreements and/or those with migration control indicators.
- Promoting transparency in the development of all instruments to manage migration.
- Accountability for human rights violations resulting from EU migration policies.

## Responding with Actions

ACT EU took specific action during the springtime to advocate for these issues.

On March 9 the European Council discussed migration policies. It clearly endorsed the Communication on Libya and expressly stated the need for high vigilance vis-à-vis any other migration route. It endorsed the Commission communication on returns and recalled the need to pursue work on existing readmission agreements.

As a result, ACT EU endorsed a statement

***"60,000 REFUGEES ARE TRAPPED  
IN GREECE, SOMETIMES IN  
SUBSTANDARD HUMANITARIAN  
CONDITIONS."***

-ACTAlliance.eu Blog, Feb 2017

together with 160 other organisations asking European leaders to stand up for humanity and dignity and to foster and promote the European Union's commitments to human rights and international law at home and abroad. We additionally wrote and published a blog post, "Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye?" to accompany the statement.

ACT EU also endorsed a call to EU leaders warning that a focus on anti-smuggling policies and cooperation with Libyan authorities would expose people to ill-treatment and arbitrary detention.

Meanwhile, our policy officer worked intently on the EU Trust Fund for Africa with active participation in the CONCORD steering committee for this advocacy project. This included the organisation of an info-sharing meeting with Brussels-based NGOs working on the EU Trust Fund for Africa as well as providing input to the project's Terms of Reference. ACT EU also met with Ignacio Corrao, MEP and rapporteur on the Trust Fund. Following the meeting, our policy officer worked on parliamentary questions regarding the fund.

The Brussels policy officer position, with the ACT EU network's and the the global ACT Alliance's weight behind it, gave us entry to influential working groups and meetings, adding weight to the debates while raising the profile of ACT EU and ACT Alliance. Advocacy was a crucial element in ACT's European refugee response due to the politicisation of the issues within the European context and the direct impact of member states' policies and behaviours on the refugees and migrants' situation. Furthermore, the work under the EUR161 appeal laid an important foundation for the ongoing coordinated work between ACT EU and the ACT Alliance on migration and displacement.

## **ACT EU PUBLICATIONS**

### **A CALL FOR IMPROVED CONDITIONS FOR REFUGEES IN GREECE**

1 February 2017, Blog, ACTAlliance.org

### **WHY DO YOU LOOK AT THE SPECK IN YOUR BROTHER'S EYE?**

8 March 2017, Blog, ACTAlliance.org

### **LETTER TO THE EUROPEAN HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

8 March 2017, Joint Letter

### **LIBYA: FOCUS ON ANTI-SMUGGLING POLICIES AND COOPERATION WITH LIBYAN AUTHORITIES WILL EXPOSE PEOPLE TO ILL-TREATMENT AND ARBITRARY DETENTION**

22 February 2017, Endorsed Letter

## **REFERENCES**

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27 September 2017, Communication from the European Parliament



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