

Sustainable Development and Spanish Cooperation

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Law 23/1998, of 7th July, on International Cooperation for Development, in Article 1, defines the sustainability and regeneration of the environment as the teleological purpose of Spanish Cooperation, and establishes in Article 3 that “the policy on international cooperation for development will determine strategies and acts aimed at the promotion of human, social and economic sustainable development in order to contribute to the elimination of poverty in the world”.

The environment is also the subject matter of specific programmes and projects with sector priority nature of the Master Plan for the Spanish Cooperation 2001-2004, approved at a cabinet meeting held on 24 November 2000, which was adapted to the contents of Agenda 21 and which establishes an integral framework for global action in every sphere of sustainable development with a view to satisfying basic needs and to promoting production and consumption models that are more efficient and ecologically sustainable for present and future generations.

The Spanish Cooperation has established three types of action within the field of sustainable development:

Firstly, two ambitious biannual integrated regional programmes financed by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Spanish Agency for International Cooperation), Ministry of Environmental Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Finance and Ministry of Science and Technology. Spain has designed two programmes, Araucaria for Latin America and Azahar for the Mediterranean, as efficient support instruments so as to promote in a sustainable manner human development of their least favoured populations while ensuring conservation of their natural resources and protection of their local environments. The following principles are to be followed:

1. Human development of local populations: every activity in these programmes must have a direct impact on the improvement of the quality of life of the population. The programme assumes that economic and social development and elimination of poverty are basic and fundamental priorities for developing countries. The protection of the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources are - and must continue being - a source of present and future development. Every project and action must pay special attention to the improvement of the situation of women; a gender-based approach is intimately linked with the concepts of political, social and economic development and its incorporation into the programme is a key factor, given the central role of women in every activity related to natural resources and the environment.
2. Protection of the environment and conservation of natural resources: all programme activities must have as their central goals: to achieve a positive balance in respect of environmental quality in connection with a prior situation; to prevent any damages being caused to the region's ecosystems and to its biological diversity; to contribute to putting on a

sound basis the environment and to fight pollution; sustainable planning and zoning of the territory, particularly the implementation of regional, national and local Agendas 21; the incorporation of sustainability and biodiversity conservation to sectoral policies of any beneficiary countries.

3. Organisational and institutional strengthening: Spanish cooperation must be a complement to local initiatives and to local planning and management capacities so that it does not replace, but rather complement, the earlier efforts and commitments of any beneficiary countries. The participation of the said countries must be effective throughout the whole cycle of projects and activities including identification, planning, management and evaluation.

The Araucaria and Azahar programmes look to achieve a positive impact on the reversion of the situation in areas degraded by human activities, in the protection of those ecosystems and species that are most threatened in those areas and in the transfer of cleaner technologies which are eco-efficient and adapted to the socio-environmental and cultural reality of the relevant regions. In order to achieve these goals, R&D in sustainable development, conservation of natural resources and protection of the environment will be encouraged.

Both programmes encourage, in the last instance, those activities that result in dialogue and consensus between government and non-government sectors (companies and private citizens), so that all social sectors shall participate in the search for solutions to the problems implicit in the protection of the environment, the conservation of natural resources and a sustainable development.

Secondly, specific sectoral activities. Here we should mention that many projects being carried out in different countries within the scope of activities of Spanish cooperation (Latin America, Africa, Asia and Pacific), through annual grants of subventions to non-government development bodies, as well as those projects that are channelled bilaterally in joint activities of cooperation between Spain and the governments of the relevant countries, particularly those projects that have been carried out in the fields of Energy and Environment.

Thirdly, support to multilateral activities. In addition to Spanish dues and contributions arising from its status as a party to various international environmental agreements and instruments, different voluntary contributions have been channelled through the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (*Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional*, AECI) in order to reinforce key sectors which are important for the objectives of Spanish cooperation:

Two important activities have been sponsored within the context of the Convention on Biodiversity: the Madrid Workshop on Traditional Knowledge held in November, 1997, and the first Meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biodiversity in March, 2000, in Seville. In 2001, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI) conducted a short survey regarding the possible establishment of a focal point on traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities within the clearing-house mechanism in fulfilment of Task 8 of the Programme of Work adopted by the Conference of the Parties in May 2000 in Nairobi. This survey involved different experts from

the indigenous world and from international bodies such as the World Bank and the GEF through a brainstorming session organised by the AECI and the Convention Secretariat. AECI planned to organise and sponsor a meeting of experts on this subject if the next Conference of the Parties requests the Convention Secretariat to do so.

Another important contribution is that since 1996, the AECI's Indigenous Programme has supported the participation of indigenous representatives in the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, which was called upon to advise the Conference of the Parties on the implementation of Article 8(j) and related provisions.

Another related activity is the support given to the Seventh Regional Meeting of Countries Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification in Latin America and the Caribbean in preparation for the fifth Conference of the Parties held in La Serena, Chile, from 21 to 24 August 2001.