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EU/ACP : TOURISM MUST WORK FOR DEVELOPMENT

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The tourism sector can play a key role in the development of poor countries and the EU must integrate it into its aid strategy for African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. This at least is the opinion of the EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly which, at its 12th session held from 20 to 23 November in Bridgetown, Barbados, urged the European Commission to integrate the issue into programming for the 10th European Development Fund (EDF). MEPs and parliamentarians from ACP countries identified four aspects in a report adopted on 23 November where tourism might play a role in encouraging development and on which the Commission should focus its efforts: tourism as a factor for economic development, for protection of the environment and heritage, for public health and education, and finally for reducing poverty.

Co-rapporteur **Hans-Peter Mayer** (EPP-ED, Germany) highlighted the pledge by European Development Commissioner Louis Michel to transcribe these conclusions in political and financial terms. "Tourism must not be an end in itself," he explained. "It has potential to combat poverty but it is not a panacea and requires adequate structures" to ensure sustainable development. The other co-rapporteur, Boyce Sebetela from Botswana, urged action to seize the opportunities offered by the sector, pointing to the example of Caribbean countries where the tourism sector accounts for almost 50% of GDP. This figure should not, however, hide the delay run up by ACP countries, which together accounted for just 10% of global tourism revenue in 2004, according to the World Tourism Organisation.

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