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## Foreword

At the request of the Minister for Development Cooperation, the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) has produced an advisory report on the Minister's letter of 5 November 1998 (no. 98183/DGIS) to the Lower House of the Dutch Parliament, in which she laid out her policy proposals relating to the criteria for structural bilateral aid. The Minister's request is enclosed as Annexe 1. The report was prepared by the Development Cooperation Committee (COS), which consists of the following persons: Prof E.J. de Kadt (chair), Dr O.B.R.C. van Cranenburgh (deputy chair), Dr J. Bunders, Prof F. van Dam, I.E.M. Dankelman, Dr de Gaay Fortman, Prof J.W. Gunning, F.D. van Loon, Prof R. Rabbinge, A.H. Roemer, E.M. Schoo, Prof. N.J. Schrijver, Prof. J. Th. Schrijvers, J. F. Timmer and Prof. I. Wolffers. The secretary was C.E. van Dullemen.

The AIV approved this report on 20 November 1998. Considering the limited time available to draw up the report, the AIV had to restrict itself to providing a preliminary response to the policy proposals contained in the letter.

## Comments on the criteria for structural bilateral aid

The AIV largely endorses the Minister for Development Cooperation's aim of increasing the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of structural development assistance. The Council also supports the proposal to concentrate the aid and to reduce the number of countries with which the Netherlands enters into, or already has, a structural bilateral relationship, in the belief that this will improve the quality of implementation. This report focuses on the one hand on the consistency of the argument (the tension between concentrating aid and enhancing ownership in the recipient country, the pros and cons of donor coordination, the extent to which multilateral channels are used) put forward by the minister to achieve her stated aims, and on the other hand on the substantive choices made in relation to the criteria themselves (sound socioeconomic policy and good governance). At the same time, comments are made concerning the assumptions underlying these choices. A number of effects of the proposed policy are also examined in brief.

The policy proposals concern between a fifth and a quarter of the budget. In the letter to the Lower House, 11 programmes are exempted from the proposals. This is somewhat surprising; if the three proposed criteria are expected to have a positive impact, why should they not be applied to all forms of aid (with the exception of emergency aid, or contributions to multilateral organisations and the co-financing organisations)? The AIV believes that the criteria should also apply to the following programmes: the research programme, debt relief (unless there are multilateral arrangements based on sound conditions), the experts programme<sup>1</sup>, non-sectoral programme aid, target contributions and special activities. There may of course be other considerations, which have perhaps become significant since the programmes were created and which are still relevant for future policy.

### Implementation - delegation to the Embassies

It is important that the proposed concentration leads to strengthening of the implementation capacity at the Embassies. After the foreign policy review the Embassies were given greater decision-making powers, but were not always sufficiently prepared to exercise them. Concentration of aid must therefore go hand in hand with a reformed personnel policy that encourages and rewards country/regional expertise and specific sectoral knowledge<sup>2</sup>.

There is a risk that concentration will compromise the control and responsibility of the recipient country and may, in some cases, even encourage paternalism on the part of the donor. The downside of intensive, long-term aid relations is that they can lead to automatism and mutual dependency. It is therefore advisable to monitor the aid regularly and to subject it periodically to thorough evaluation.

1 This programme was critically reviewed in an advisory report from the former National Advisory Council for Development Cooperation. See NAR recommendation No. 105: Review of foreign policy: a changing approach to development cooperation in a changing world. The Hague, 1995.

2 *ibid.*, page 26ff.

#### The pros and cons of donor coordination

In addition to concentrating the Netherlands' aid effort, the minister also wishes that, in weighing up the aid requirement of a certain country, the total package of assistance received from the international community be taken into account. It is however unclear which criteria are to be used to determine whether a country is being 'overloaded' with aid. Although donor coordination is required to prevent an accumulation of aid, it is arguable whether coordination by definition leads to more efficient implementation.

A significant side effect of donor coordination is its effect on the relations between donors and the recipient country. Overly close cooperation between donors may be seen as a conspiracy by the recipient. In countries with sound policies and good governance, donor coordination is generally unnecessary. Any coordination that may be required is done by the country itself. Far-reaching (internationally) coordinated donor policy can easily lead to erosion of the activities and functions of the recipient country. In countries with weak governments, close donor coordination can present an obstacle to the development of a government apparatus and of domestic policy, and therefore counteracts the objective of good governance and greater control by the recipient.

Coordination of aid by the recipient country itself could be one condition for the provision of assistance by the Netherlands. Where a weak government apparatus renders this impossible, aid should be aimed specifically at building up sufficient capacity.

#### The extent to which multilateral channels are used

The choice of a particular aid channel is not a matter of principle. It is a decision based on implementation of policy in a certain country. Bilateral and multilateral policy should be judged on their own merits.

The AIV has a number of reservations concerning the proposal contained in the letter that more aid should be provided through multilateral channels. On the other hand, the Council welcomes the decision to assess the effectiveness of multilateral aid more strictly.

The Minister's letter does not address consortia through which donors act together in a certain sector in a certain country. This form of cooperation between a number of large donors, which is essentially a kind of middle way between multilateral and bilateral aid, can sometimes be very efficient.

#### Criterion 1: good socioeconomic policy

Of course, the better a country's performance in the fields of "macroeconomic and financial-monetary stability, policy on economic structure and reform, and socioeconomic policy" (*page A of the letter*), the more effect aid will have. Quantified performance is, however, also linked to the selection process. In the same way that hospitals will have a higher success rate if they refuse to treat patients who are seriously ill, excluding certain countries from receiving aid is not by definition evidence of good aid policy.

It should be made clear on a case-by-case basis which “relevant multilateral organisation” is best placed to judge a country’s social and macroeconomic policy. Every organisation has its own mandate, which gives it a certain perspective from which it can conduct analyses and make policy recommendations. This partly explains why organisations often reach different conclusions - you only have to compare the standpoints of the IMF, the World Bank, the relevant UN Regional Economic Commissions or UNICEF on a certain country at any given time.

#### Criterion 2: good governance

The Minister’s letter addresses two aspects of good governance and good policy: *governance* in the original sense, as introduced by the World Bank, (with the emphasis on upholding the rule of law) and the complex issue of human rights and democratisation.

The first would appear simple to assess on the basis of performance indicators. It would, however, be advisable - in addition to the necessary audit - to use more qualitative indicators where possible.<sup>3</sup>

The second aspect (human rights and democratisation) is more difficult. The Minister does indicate that this implies more than just assessing the situation at any given moment. It requires analysis of long-term trends and determining whether the government is actively trying to improve the situation. The main problem here is ultimately how to determine the threshold for entering into or ending a bilateral cooperation relationship. The latter requires an exit strategy, bearing in mind the long-term view and accepting the possibility of complications or a relapse in the country concerned. Corruption also requires attention in this respect. It is important to emphasize the degree of corruption: treating all forms of corruption as equal only renders discussion impossible and interferes with all efforts to prevent it from spreading.

#### Other aspects relevant to the criteria

The letter also refers to international conferences relating to the social, ecological and cultural aspects of policy. The emphasis is placed firmly on administrative and economic aspects. It should be noted that per capita GNP alone cannot provide a general picture. It would be better to use it together with the UNDP’s HDI-I (human development index/ poverty profile), which takes account of factors relating to income distribution. This would give a more differentiated picture of the situation in any given country. The number of people living in absolute poverty can also be used as an indicator.

In addition it is advisable to take account of a rights-based approach. This means that countries, NGOs and perhaps even aid activities should be assessed in the light of the extent to which they respect not only civil and political human rights, but also rights in the economic, social and cultural sphere.

3 Donor coordination is also relevant to the audit. It is preferable to use a common format, so that it is easier for the recipient country to meet the auditing requirements.

### Closing remarks

Countries that meet the criteria for continuing aid are to be assessed in the light of additional criteria relating to a variety of factors, including “the quality of the current development cooperation programme”. Does this mean that a poor country with a sound policy can expect no further assistance if the programme is not of a sufficient quality? In the AIV’s view, this should be seen more as an incentive to improve the programme.

In assessing the quality of the recipient government’s policy, how it implements this policy and its development strategy in the sector concerned, the Minister says that it is important to examine the ways in which the government contributes to the investment and running costs of activities supported by the Netherlands. This is an understandable condition in principle but, since Dutch policy is aimed especially at poor countries, it should not be applied too mechanistically.

“Optimal synergy will be achieved between NEDA funds and private capital if the development of the local private sector is supported by a flanking government policy that provides a good climate for investment” (*page D*). The positive merger of different cooperative relationships, mentioned in the letter, is important but insufficiently elaborated. Investment by Dutch companies in very poor countries can have a down side. In many cases, the local private sector is badly underdeveloped. Although it is one of the aims of development cooperation to strengthen local private sectors, most Dutch investors will have no direct interest in doing so. Encouraging Dutch companies to enter into capacity building relationships would be an important step. Infant industry protection in such poor countries is also necessary - and not for the multinational companies investing in these countries, but for national entrepreneurs.

NGOs have an important role to play in building a democratic civil society. Even where the government is repressive, they can fulfil important development functions. But NGOs should never be used as an excuse, or take the place of an absent or withdrawing government.

If the criteria mentioned in the Minister’s letter are applied in the future, a certain number of countries will no longer be eligible for aid. Many of them will be in a post-conflict situation, with their economies completely disrupted and an almost complete absence of good governance. While, politically speaking, it is often impossible not to give a country aid after a crisis. With post-conflict aid, other factors often play a role, such as demobilisation or mine clearance, the fight against epidemics or trauma, or building up the police, the law courts and public utilities. This requires a different kind of know-how. In the AIV’s view, it must continue to be possible to add countries in post-conflict situations to the list of countries receiving aid.

As stated in the foreword, this report is nothing more than a response to a request for advice, drawn up in a short time to enable it to contribute to the debate on the issue in parliament.

## **Annexes**

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*Concerning:* Letter to the Lower House of 5 November 1998, ref. 98183/DGIS;  
policy proposals on application of the criteria for structural bilateral aid

Dear Ruud,

I would be pleased to receive the comments of the AIV/COS on the proposals contained in my letter to the Lower House on application of the criteria for structural bilateral aid.

I have sent a copy of this request to the chairman of the Development Cooperation Committee.

Kind regards,

Eveline Herfkens  
Minister for Development Cooperation





Ministerie van

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*Concerning:* Letter to the Lower House of 5 November 1998, ref. 98183/DGIS;  
policy proposals on application of the criteria for structural bilateral aid

Dear Mr De Kadt,

I would be pleased to receive the comments of the AIV/COS on the proposals contained in my letter to the Lower House on application of the criteria for structural bilateral aid.

I have sent a copy of this request to the chairman of the Advisory Council on International Affairs.

Yours sincerely,

Eveline Herfkens  
Minister for Development Cooperation



## SELECTION CRITERIA FOR COUNTRIES RECEIVING STRUCTURAL BILATERAL AID

Below is the text of a letter which Minister for Development Cooperation Eveline Herfkens sent to the Lower House of the Dutch Parliament on 5 November. The letter outlines the criteria which the minister wishes to apply in selecting countries to receive structural bilateral aid.

During the term of office of the previous government, a series of documents were published on Dutch foreign and development policy. 'The Foreign Policy of the Netherlands: A Review' covered Dutch foreign policy as a whole and introduced the concept of 'decompartmentalisation', which comprised removal of the 'partitions' between the previously separate areas of foreign policy. Decompartmentalisation had far-reaching consequences, not only for policy but also for the organisation of the foreign ministry in The Hague and its missions abroad. A second document, 'Aid in Progress', took an important first step towards improving the Dutch aid effort in terms of both policy and management. These documents will continue to provide a frame of reference for further improvements in the implementation of Dutch development policy in the future.

In its coalition agreement, the new government states that "support provided to foreign governments within the framework of development cooperation depends on the presence of sound policy (including economic policy) and good governance, as measured by international standards". The budgetary framework laid down for development cooperation in the coalition agreement also has consequences for development policy. New obligations in the areas of international environment policy and the reception of refugees from developing countries, as well as a commitment (made since the new government came to office) to contribute to debt relief to Indonesia, have necessitated tough decisions as to which countries, sectors and channels are to receive aid.

The proposals for restructuring policy relate to structural bilateral aid, i.e. that part of the budget that has been delegated to the embassies (approximately 1.3 billion guilders). The main objective of bilateral aid is to give concrete expression to the international consensus embodied in the final declarations of a series of global conferences in the early 1990s, such as the UN Conference on Environment and Development, the International Conference on Population and Development, the Human Rights Conference, the Social Summit, the World Conference on Women and the Habitat Conference. On the basis of this consensus, the donor community has formulated its aid objectives in a number of documents, such as 'Shaping the 21st Century', published by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Others include the UN's "Financing for Development" and the European Union's standpoint on it, as well as various reports from the World Bank. All of these documents agree that the effectiveness of aid depends largely on the degree of sound policy and good governance in the recipient country. The main criteria are the quality of government policy in a variety of areas (macroeconomic and financial/monetary stability, economic structure and reform, socioeconomic policy) and the transparency and integrity of the apparatus of government, the separation of powers, political freedom and

respect for human rights. The better a country's performance in all these areas, the greater will be the impact of aid, in terms of economic growth and the alleviation of poverty.

Against this background, the criteria for selecting countries, sectors, channels and working methods must be reviewed to ensure that Dutch aid can make an optimum contribution to poverty reduction in developing countries. Restricting the number of countries and sectors receiving structural aid from the Netherlands will make it possible to increase the efficiency of the aid effort.

This letter will outline the criteria to be applied in the future in deciding whether aid to the countries currently receiving development assistance from the Netherlands will be continued, provided in a different form or stopped altogether (perhaps by being phased out). At the same time, the options for reshaping the Dutch aid programme by making more targeted or intensive use of multilateral channels will also be examined.

It recently became apparent that there was some confusion about the number of countries receiving development aid from the Netherlands. The confusion arose because of the way in which the development relationship is defined. In 1997, bilateral development funds were used to finance activities in 119 countries (this excludes funds allocated to asylumseekers, the co-financing organisations and the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba). In some cases, the sums provided were very small and incidental in nature. The review of countries and sectors therefore focuses on the 78 countries which received more than a million guilders in bilateral aid in 1997 (including emergency aid and assistance in the context of international nature conservation and environment policy). These countries are listed in the appendix. They are assessed initially on the basis of three criteria. The remaining countries are then reviewed to determine whether any additional considerations originally taken into account in entering into the development relationship still apply, or whether new factors need to be considered. The Netherlands will continue to maintain a structural bilateral development relationship with the countries that satisfy all of these criteria. The final selection will be made after agreement has been reached with the Lower House on the criteria outlined in this letter.

Cooperation with countries which are not eligible for long-term structural bilateral aid may continue in a more limited or incidental form through the application of specific aid instruments. The main criteria in these cases are the aid requirement in the recipient country and the impact of the instrument to be used.

Where activities in certain countries or sectors are to be phased out, a careful exit strategy will be devised to prevent the unwarranted destruction of capital. It is of paramount importance here that the reputation of the Netherlands as a reliable international partner, in the broadest sense of the word, is maintained. All developing countries, of course, remain eligible for emergency aid and assistance in the context of international nature conservation and environment policy.

**The criteria for selecting countries for structural cooperation: level of poverty, quality of policy and the aid requirement**

The coalition agreement specifies the following two criteria for entering into or continuing a structural bilateral aid relationship: 1. the social and economic policy of the recipient country; 2. the situation with respect to good governance.

The level of poverty and the aid requirement in the recipient country will serve as a third criterion. A significant component of the international consensus is that, due to the shortage of concessional resources, aid must be focused on the poorer countries. With this in mind, an upper limit of USD 925 GNP per capita (the International Development Association (IDA) operational cut-off threshold for 1999) is used to determine the level of poverty in a country.

The first criterion is assessed on the basis of the views of relevant multilateral organisations regarding social and macroeconomic policy in the country concerned. If this does not provide sufficient information, the Netherlands makes its own assessment.

The second criterion, good governance, requires assessment of the quality of the management of public funds (including the extent of corruption in the country). The level of democratisation and respect for human rights is also taken into account. This is not a question of assessing the situation at a given moment in time but of examining trends over a period of years, to determine whether the government is actively working towards improvement in both areas.

The third criterion entails determining whether the country is eligible for IDA funds, including the extent to which it has access to the capital market. In establishing the aid requirement, the total aid received from the international community is taken into account. The degree to which this aid is coordinated is also taken into consideration, since donor coordination is a crucial element both in effective poverty reduction and in ensuring that the total volume of aid does not exceed the country's capacity to absorb it.

Countries which are eligible for structural bilateral aid from the Netherlands on the basis of this initial selection are then assessed against a series of additional criteria. These might include the quality of the current development programme in the country, the role played by the country in upholding the legal order in the region (e.g. in the form of peace initiatives), or relations with the Netherlands in other areas, such as social, cultural or economic ties.

For countries which, on the basis of these criteria, prove to be no longer eligible for structural bilateral aid, a carefully prepared and, where necessary, long-term exit strategy must be pursued to prevent the unwarranted destruction of capital or a loss of confidence in the Netherlands. All of these countries will, of course, remain eligible for more restricted assistance through multilateral or NGO channels or through the use of specific aid instruments.

For each country which receives, or continues to receive, structural bilateral aid from the Netherlands, a strategy will be drawn up focusing on a limited number of sectors. In principle, the entire range of aid instruments can be used to implement this sectoral strategy, using all available channels. The central element in the aid relationship is demand in the country itself (ownership), with the government of the recipient country playing a leading role and bearing responsibility for its own sectoral policy. The strategy is based on the country policies of the World Bank and UN agencies. Based on a thorough sector analysis and in close consultation with the recipient country, a dialogue will be set up with the government and other actors in order to set priorities and reach agreements on the coordination and implementation of multiyear sectoral aid programmes.

Once a country has requested aid for a certain sector, the importance of the sector for the country's overall development strategy needs to be established or reconfirmed. The quality of government policy and its implementation, and of the development strategy, within the sector itself is then assessed. A major consideration is the extent to which the recipient country contributes to the investment and running costs of activities supported by the Netherlands. The proportion of Dutch assistance within the total aid provided to the sector by the international donor community is also taken into account. If there is an efficient multilateral channel already in place, it could act as a framework for the structure of the bilateral relationship. Donor coordination is equally important at sector level, especially as it provides an opportunity for donors to review their aid efforts in consultation. An oversized donor population and excessive donor dependence should both be avoided.

The possible impact of Dutch assistance to a given sector on the socioeconomic development of the country should also be considered. The added value of the assistance in respect of aid provided by other donors is important in this context, as is the scope for extending the aid relationship to, or integrating it with, ties in other areas.

Within this sectoral framework, special attention will be given to opportunities to give concrete expression to the new 'decompartmentalised' development policy. The main elements here are investment in people and the promotion of sound government policy. In addition, explicit consideration will be given to the contribution of the private sector to reducing visible and invisible unemployment, and thereby to poverty alleviation. More than before, embassies will seek to interest Dutch companies in investing in growth sectors. The synergy between development funds and private capital will be optimised if the development of the local private sector is supported by a government policy that provides a favourable investment climate. Aid to a specific sector can be said to be effective if, after initial support from development funds, it proves capable of independent growth, providing sustainable employment and reducing poverty. It is within this framework that closer cooperation is being sought with the business community.

### **Assistance provided through specific instruments and channels**

Countries which, on the basis of the criteria outlined above, are no longer eligible for structural bilateral aid will still be able to obtain restricted assistance through the use of specific aid instruments. These instruments include the private sector programme, the Embassy Projects Programme, cooperation with international institutes, the research programme, emergency aid, non-sectoral programme aid, debt relief, the experts programme, contributions to specific projects, the special activities programme and the democratisation and good governance programme. In deciding which, if any, of these instruments are appropriate, their development potential in the country concerned will be examined. In addition, assistance can be provided to these countries on a limited scale through other channels, such as multilateral organisations.

### **Conclusion**

The quantified aid targets agreed internationally apply to the Dutch aid effort as a whole, but do not need to be achieved in individual countries. In addition to bilateral aid, activities and funds channelled through multilateral organisations can also contribute to achievement of the quantified targets.

Given the cross-border nature of activities in the field of international nature conservation and environment policy, they may be carried out in all DAC countries.

All DAC countries also remain eligible for emergency and humanitarian aid (including initial steps towards rehabilitation and peace-building). The need to preserve the distinction between humanitarian, rehabilitation and structural bilateral aid shall continue to receive constant attention. Humanitarian and emergency aid must not be provided for longer than is necessary. Nor should false expectations be created in countries receiving humanitarian, emergency or rehabilitation aid that the assistance may become more structural in the long term.

## Appendix

COUNTRY ELIGIBLE FOR DEVELOPMENT AID	*1)	BNP/cap US\$ 1997 *2)
1 Afghanistan		<b>n.a.</b> *3)
2 Albania		750
3 Algeria		1490
4 Angola		340
5 Armenia		530
6 Bangladesh		270
7 Benin		380
8 Bhutan		400
9 Bolivia		950
10 Bosnia & Herzegovina		<b>n.a.</b>
11 Brasil		4720
12 Burkina Faso		240
13 Burundi		180
14 Cambodia		300
15 Cameroon		650
16 Cape Verde		1090
17 Chile		5020
18 China		860
19 Colombia		2280
20 Congo, DR (ex-Zaire)		110
21 Costa Rica		2640
22 Cote d'Ivoire		690
23 Ecuador		1590
24 Egypt		1180
25 El Salvador		1810
26 Eritrea		210
27 Ethiopia		110
28 Federal Republic of Yugoslavia		<b>n.a.</b>
29 Gambia		350
30 Georgia		840
31 Ghana		370
32 Guatemala		1500
33 Guinea-Bissau		240
34 Haiti		330
35 Honduras		700
36 India		390
37 Iraq		<b>n.a.</b>
38 Jamaica		1560
39 Jordan		1570
40 Kenya		330
41 Korea, Democratic People's Republic		<b>n.a.</b>

42	Laos	400
43	Liberia	<b>n.a.</b>
44	Macedonia-FYROM	1090
45	Madagascar	250
46	Malawi	220
47	Mali	260
48	Moldova	540
49	Mongolia	390
50	Morocco	1250
51	Mozambique	90
52	Myanmar	<b>n.a.</b>
53	Namibia	2220
54	Nepal	210
55	Nicaragua	410
56	Niger	200
57	Pakistan	490
58	Palestinian Authorities	<b>n.a.</b>
59	Papua New Guinea	940
60	Peru	2460
61	Philippines	1220
62	Rwanda	210
63	Senegal	550
64	Sierra Leone	<b>n.a.</b>
65	Somalia	<b>n.a.</b>
66	South Africa	3400
67	Sri Lanka	800
68	Sudan	280
69	Surinam	1240
70	Tajikistan	330
71	Tanzania, United Republic	210
72	Thailand	2800
73	Tunisia	2090
74	Uganda	330
75	Vietnam	320
76	Yemen	270
77	Zambia	380
78	Zimbabwe	750

\*1) Source: DAS (Data Analyse System)

\*2) Source: The World Bank Annual Report 1998 Appendix 6,  
used upper limit 925\$ BNP per capita  
(definition IDA operational cut off FY 1999)

\*3) n.a. = precise figures not available



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