



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Doc. GA22/CC21/REC74/03

RECOMMENDATION 74/2003*
ON
THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation is fully aware that poverty continues to present a serious problem for the BSEC region, especially for the transition countries, where the economic decline and structural changes on the way to the free market economy brought to severe human development costs. One of the biggest costs has been the extreme rise in poverty.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly notes with grave concern that poverty, encompassing inability to satisfy basic needs, lack of education and poor health, is persistent and widespread. The social composition of the poor people cover such broad social layers as the working poor, unemployed, pensioners, disabled, internal displaced persons, refugees and other groups of society.
3. Considering that these inadequate living conditions represent a violation of fundamental human rights, the Parliamentary Assembly reaffirms its attachment to the principles proclaimed in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and in the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) of the UN, which provide that everyone has right to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, medical care and necessary social services, the right to security in the event of unemployment, old age or other lack of livelihood circumstances beyond his control. The Assembly reaffirms its attachment to the principles of the European Social Charter and other international documents in this field. The Assembly shares the goals, proclaimed in the First United Nations Decade for Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006).⁷

* Rapporteur: Mr. Shaitdin Aliyev (Chairman of the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee, Azerbaijan).

The Assembly debate on 10 December 2003 (see Doc. GA22/CC21/ REP/03 – Report on “The Fight against Poverty in the BSEC Member States”, discussed by the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee at its Twenty First Meeting in Athens on 1 October 2003; Rapporteur: Mrs. Lilia Grygorovytch - Ukraine).

Text adopted by the Twenty Second General Assembly in Bucharest on 10 December 2003.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly considers the increasing gap between the rich and poor within the BSEC member states as an obstacle for the sustainable development of the peoples of the region. The Assembly stresses that the elimination of poverty constitutes the greatest challenge faced by the BSEC member states, since poverty threatens to limit both the progress and the stability in the societies, as well as functioning of democratic institutions, the security of individuals and the economic development.
5. The “*BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future*”, representing the strategy on short and long-term cooperation in the region, highlights the need to focus on improving legislation on social policies aimed at coping with poverty, growing unemployment and other hardships of the transition period.
6. The Assembly recognises that poverty alleviation remains a difficult and a long-term task. Within this context the Parliamentary Assembly welcomes the adoption by the PABSEC member countries of poverty reduction programs and strategies, as well as legislation aiming to increase the labour market flexibility and establishment of institutional framework to fight against unemployment, having direct impact on poverty alleviation. At the same time the Assembly emphasises that further legislative and institutional work is necessary aiming to reduce poverty.
7. Within this context the Assembly recalls its Recommendation 67/2002 on Social Reintegration of Jobless People, which proposes measures to fight unemployment and underemployment, integrating the jobless people into the social life.
8. Poverty is a call to action for the governments and parliaments to ensure that many more people have enough food, adequate shelter, access to education and health, protection from violence and a voice in what happens in their communities. Today, it is clear that strong and distinct policies are required to address poverty.
9. The Parliamentary Assembly underlines that the main strategy in fight against poverty must be the strengthening of the civil society and development of democracy as a main tool for ensuring the welfare of people.
10. Poverty reduction strategy should be founded on three main pillars: sustainable economic growth and inclusive development that will provide the population with productive employment; human development policies providing increased access to basic services (especially basic medical services and education); social protection policies targeting those most in need.
11. **Therefore, the Parliamentary Assembly recommends** the Parliaments and Governments of the BSEC Member States:

A. At the legislative level:

- i. *to provide* legal basis, necessary for the implementation of national anti-poverty strategies and programs which will focus on fair distribution of benefits of the economic growth for the entire population;
- ii. *to adopt or improve* legislation regulating the labour markets, as well as institutions and policies in order to create pliable labour markets, playing an important role in job creation;
- iii. *to adopt* laws, simplifying the procedures for company registration and licensing, in order to increase domestic and attract foreign investments which will promote economic growth and create new employment;
- iv. *to apply* parliaments' oversight responsibilities influencing on budget matters to see that the needs of the poor are heard and met and to insist on serious follow-up of the commitments made to reduce poverty.

B. Sustainable economic development

- i. *to adopt* measures to remedy the decline in economy as a result of which large number of people are unemployed, underemployed or low-paid. To implement policies directed at sustained economic growth and stable macroeconomic performance which are crucial components of any anti-poverty strategy;
- ii. *to facilitate* activities of the private sector which is essential for sustainable and rapid economic growth, as well as for the creation of the market economy and for the appearing of benefits associated with a well functioning market system;
- iii. *to attract* foreign investments, as well as to increase domestic investments to support the economic growth strategy. To this end to undertake efforts and measures that would ensure a major improvement in the business and investment climate, eliminating barriers for the entry of new enterprises and creation of new jobs.
- iv. *to attach* particular attention to the development of economic policies having a priority creation of employment in the state and private sectors as a means of eradicating poverty;
- v. *to support* the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, having big potential for job creation, removing barriers on the way of creating new SMEs, such as excessive fiscal pressure, and offering to unemployed persons who wish to set up their own business financial assistance and advisory services;
- vi. *to pay* particular attention to the development of agricultural sector, which is of particular relevance to poverty reduction given the absence of employment alternatives in the rural areas.

C. Human development policies

- i. *to promote* human development through the design and implementation of comprehensive and integrated strategies aiming at sustainable improvements in health and education which have direct effect on poverty reduction;
- ii. *to eliminate* existing shortfalls in the governmental program on health, giving priority to the development of basic medical care, aiming to provide maximum protection to the entire population, including increasing the scope of publicly financed medical services and initiating the creation of a new health system that combines both market mechanisms and social guarantees;

- iii. *to provide* sustained efforts to improve the country's educational standard while maintaining fiscal sustainability, having as a main priorities of the preschool, school, special and vocational education maintenance and improvement of the existing system, modernization of teaching methods and curriculum, and improvement of the legislative framework, ensuring affordability and maximum enrollment for the poor.

D. Social protection policies

- i. *to strengthen* public protection against unemployment and focus on policies which assist people in finding jobs, such as job search assistance and career counseling;
- ii. *to take* measures on wage adjustment, revising the minimum wages in accordance with economic growth, first of all for the public servants working in the budgetary sector;
- iii. *to pay* special attention to the social assistance programs in order to provide fiscally sustainable and well-targeted assistance to those in need, improving the system of targeting of the beneficiaries, through careful screening of the applicants, so as to ensure that the benefits are received by the most vulnerable groups of population;
- iv. *to pay* particular attention to the welfare of disabled. To create training centers for rehabilitation of the disabled to work;
- v. *to place* particular emphasis on alleviating child poverty through well-targeted interventions, including interventions aiming at ensuring adequate levels of food security and childcare, within the limits imposed by the country's financial situation;
- vi. *to concentrate* on regular payment of pensions, as well as their increase in accordance with the economic development;
- vii. *to pay* particular attention to the problem of internal displaced persons and refugees, in order to curb down poverty among them and to undertake task-oriented actions aimed at their welfare and job occupancy.

E. Statistics

- i. *to improve* statistics on poverty, launching a nationwide survey of household incomes and expenditures, in order to have real figures on the extent, depth and other characteristics of poverty, which will help to develop an effective poverty reduction strategy.

F. International cooperation

- i. *to establish* a network among the BSEC Member states to fight poverty, the main purpose of which will be helping to formulate and implement effective social policies to alleviate poverty and social exclusion through cooperation and exchange of experience, developing studies both at country and regional levels, organising training programs in order to get acquainted directly with the local centres, services and programs, issuing an information bulletin of the network etc.;
- ii. *to develop* cooperation with international agencies and non-governmental organisations dealing with the problem of poverty alleviation.

11. **The Parliamentary Assembly** invites the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to consider this Recommendation.