PUBLIC CONSULTATION

On the programming of European Union's development cooperation in Bangladesh under the Development Cooperation Instrument for the years 2014-2020

PUBLIC CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

The consultation seeks stakeholders' views on three aspects of the debate on the post-2013 development agenda in Bangladesh:

A. On the basis of Vision 2021 and the corresponding 6th 5 year plan, the EU is proposing to focus on three sectors for the period 2014-2020:
   - Good governance and human rights
   - Food security and nutrition
   - Education and skills training

What do you think about these priorities?

B. The EU is committed to address a number of important cross-cutting issues. Within these three focus sectors, how best can we address the following?
   - Gender equality and women empowerment
   - Environment protection, climate change prevention and adaptation
   - Fight against corruption in partnership with the Government
   - The needs and protection of minorities (including indigenous people)

C. How best can the respective stakeholders (government, international organisations, private sector, civil society organisations) contribute to these priorities?

Contributions should be sent to: DELEGATION-BANGLADESH-PP2013-consultation@eeas.europa.eu

(Please limit your responses to max 3 pages)
Introduction
Bangladesh’s partnership with EU dates back to the early days immediately after the country's independence in 1971. The EU now plays a leading role in the country's trade, aid and development. Bilateral relations between the European Union and Bangladesh, including development cooperation, are governed by the EU-Bangladesh Co-operation Agreement.

The EU provides most of its development assistance for Bangladesh under the financing of the Development Cooperation Instrument. This instrument has as its main objective the eradication of poverty in the context of sustainable development, including the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals. The EU's development cooperation shall also encourage the integration into the world economy, the promotion of good governance and human rights, and the strengthening of the relationship between the EU and Bangladesh. The EU seeks to align the development activities with Bangladesh's policies, as well as to coordinate and harmonise its funding with that of other development partners.

Programming exercise
The programming of the European Union's development cooperation under the Development Cooperation Instrument for the years 2014-2020 is based primarily on Bangladesh' current national development policies. These are set out in the country’s Vision 2021, in the corresponding Sixth Five-year Plan, and in a number of complementary sector policy documents. However, whilst these national policy documents are reasonably comprehensive, they do not adequately address certain development policy issues in Bangladesh which are of particular concern to the EU. These issues are: implementation of the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord; judicial reform and access to justice for rural poor; and food security.

Apart from the Bangladesh's policy priorities, the EU’s programming must also be aligned with the strategic objectives of the EU development cooperation. These are set out in the 2012 Agenda for Change and include: human rights, democracy and other key elements of good governance (including gender equality and women empowerment), and inclusive and sustainable growth for human development. In addition, due account must be taken of capacities of the Government and other stakeholders; lessons learned from past cooperation; comparative advantages of aid managed by the European Commission; and complementarity with other donors.

In view of this range of considerations, it is proposed that the EU’s 2014-2020 Country Strategy Paper for its development cooperation with Bangladesh should focus on support for the following three sectors:

**Good governance and human rights:** The EU will build on previous successes in the fields of electoral assistance, local governance and access to justice, and provide continued support to the development of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in the context of implementation of the CHT Peace Accord. New areas of support to good governance and promotion of human rights will also be identified in the future.

**Food security and nutrition:** The EU will focus its support for activities which promote food security of the most vulnerable women-headed households, in highly food-insecure areas of the country which are particularly prone to natural disasters and the consequences of climate change.

**Education and skills training:** The EU will continue its financial support development, building on successful past actions in the field of technical and vocational training. Building human capital through education and skills development is seen as a key to success of the Bangladesh aspiration of becoming a middle income country in the years ahead. The linkages between education/skills and jobs will therefore be emphasised.

Prioritisation of these three sectors for Bangladesh has already been established in the Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013 and the Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2011-2013. The selected sectors would thus draw on past experience and the Delegation in-house capacity and expertise.
Through its past involvement the EU is also recognised by the Government, civil society and development partners as a key player in these sectors.

Past support for the selected sectors:

**Human rights, democratic values and good governance principles** underpin the partnership of Bangladesh and the EU. The EU financial support was instrumental in creating electoral roll with photographs for Bangladesh in 2008, which involved the issuing of voter identity cards with photographs for more than 80 million people. The EU is continuing to support:

- the strengthening of election management bodies, notably the Bangladesh Election Commission;
- the implementation of the Peace Accord in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the development of village courts, and the implementation of the 2011 census;
- a number of projects geared at increasing the performance, transparency and accountability of central government ministries and local government institutions, major examples being the Strengthening Public Expenditure Management Programme and the Local Governance and Decentralisation Programme for Union Parishad and Upazilla Parishads, and the Access to Land and Property Rights Project. All of these are seen as crucial for improving service delivery, making growth sustainable and reducing poverty.

The EU supports a wide range of **food security and nutrition** programmes in Bangladesh:

- programmes which focus on eradicating malnutrition by targeting the most vulnerable people, in particular women-headed households. These have approximately 1.5 million direct beneficiaries.
- activities which improve nutrition such as supplementary feeding, school feeding and nutritional surveillance. At the policy level, the focus of support is upon decentralisation, policy formulation, dialogue and monitoring. To broaden its reach and to consolidate ownership, the EU collaborates with a wide range of partners-Government, International Organizations, local and international NGOs and other development partners.

The EU is supporting **education and skills training** in Bangladesh through:

- the third Primary Education Development Programme for improving primary education at national level, in cooperation with the Government and other development partners;
- non-formal education, facilitated by non-governmental organisations, for children who are not within reach of the government system. The ‘Supporting the Hardest to Reach Children through Basic Education’ is helping enable an estimated 650,000 marginalised and hard to reach children to complete their primary education;
- educational initiatives in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. These are helping increase literacy rates in this culturally and linguistically diverse region, as well as fostering progress of the 1997 CHT Peace Accord.
- reform of the technical/vocational education and training system. Support – which is channelled through both public and private entities - focuses on the development of better skills for the labour market and creation of greater employment opportunities in Bangladesh and abroad, increasing the beneficiaries’ prospects of obtaining higher pay and better working standards.

**Further Support for Bangladesh outside the selected sectors:**

In accordance with the internationally agreed principles of aid effectiveness, donors should reduce the number of priority sectors for their development assistance. Therefore certain sectors, which were previously categorised as priorities for bilateral funding under the Development Cooperation Instrument, would no longer be priorities under this proposal. However, this does not necessarily
mean that the EU considers these former priorities to have become unimportant. In some sectors circumstances may have changed, so that other donors or the Government are now better placed to take over support. In other cases, the EU’s support will be done through other EU thematic and regional funding.

- **Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to natural disasters.** Floods and cyclones are recurring problems, and climate change will intensify Bangladesh’s vulnerability to such disasters. Instead of seeking specific development projects in these sectors, all interventions in Bangladesh will be screened for their resilience to the effects of climate change and disasters during the programming phase. The EU will ensure that environmental protection, the effects of climate change and disaster management are given proper consideration and are mainstreamed throughout its programme. If funds are available, the Global Climate Change Alliance could also add to its present contribution to the Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund. In the area of disaster prevention, separate EU humanitarian assistance (DIPECHO) will also continue for Bangladesh as well as the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme.

- **Bangladesh is confronted with the dual burden of disease and the consequences of the related epidemiological and demographic transition. Health** and education have been the major areas of EU cooperation to Bangladesh. However, in order to ensure coherent commitments in the overall framework of the future EU assistance to Bangladesh and for attaining synergies with development policy objectives, EU will be reducing its support to health. Nevertheless, EU will still continue to be involved in some areas of health aspects of Bangladesh through its thematic, regional and global initiatives along with addressing nutrition under its food security programmes.

- **Energy** is a sector specifically highlighted in the Agenda for Change. This area is likely to be covered by the European Investment Bank under its Climate Change mandate.

- **Trade Related Technical Assistance** and **Private Sector Development** were significant programmes under the previous Country Strategy Paper (e.g. trade policy, SME support). However, whilst the strategic focus and design of these programmes have been evaluated as appropriate, the implementation of the programmes has seen a slow uptake and several of them are only starting and will continue implementation for the years to come. Furthermore, some of these issues may be addressed by an EU regional programme and enjoy economies of scale and support to integration through regional cooperation. Furthermore, the prioritised skills component will contribute significantly to private sector development and employment.

- Regional development programmes may also be the most effective form of support for the **sustainability of growth** in Bangladesh. The SWITCH Asia programme should continue to promote sustainable consumption and production and should foster green and inclusive growth in Bangladesh. Subject to good performance, the recently-established Asia Investment Facility could also complement the proposed bilateral strategy of extending support to climate change mitigation and promotion of the green economy.

- **Higher education** is another former priority where regional programmes will remain crucial. Bangladesh should remain a strategic partner in the extended Erasmus for All programme.

- Relevant **cross cutting issues** for Bangladesh will be taken into account (children’s rights, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, environmental sustainability and climate change, etc). In the context of Bangladesh, gender will be mainstreamed in the programmers through its EU Plan of Action 2010-2015.

Thank you in advance for your contribution.
Sources of European Union funding for development in Bangladesh

This working paper refers to several sources of funding through which the EU can support development and humanitarian needs in Bangladesh.

The consultation itself focuses on national/country-based funds for Bangladesh financed by the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). This is the main source of the European Commission development funds in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh can, however, also benefit from the DCI regional programmes. The recent examples of regional programmes include SWITCH Asia (promoting the development of small and medium-sized enterprises), the Asia Investment Facility (supporting climate change mitigation and promotion of the green economy), Global Climate Change Alliance (supporting support initiatives to tackle climate change) and Erasmus for All (helping students to study in universities in the EU).

In addition to country-based and regional approaches to development, the European Commission operates programmes with a specific thematic focus. The thematic programmes used in Bangladesh have included: Non-state Actors & Local Authorities; Investing in People (human and social development); Food Security; Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources; Migration & Asylum; EU Food Facility; European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR); and Instrument for Stability.

Additionally, ECHO (The European Community Humanitarian Office) provides humanitarian assistance when needed and works on disaster preparedness (the DIPECHO programme).

The European Investment Bank provides loans for investment in any country.