

A MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY FOR SPAIN

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Spanish development cooperation is immersed in a phase of ambitious reforms and changes aimed at making our aid and our presence increasingly greater and more efficient. Our development cooperation is already mature enough to contemplate a global and coherent strategy for action and participation in all of the multilateral aid forums where Spain is present.

A multilateral development policy must have a defined strategy that allows for decisions to be made and guidelines to be set in four sectors. Firstly, regarding participation and the level of support that can be given to multilateral organisations or funds that have specific mandates. This is the case of the organisations in the United Nations system.

Secondly, how to correctly outline our aspirations in the multilateral forums that coordinate bilateral policies as is the case of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD or the Paris Club.

The third facet of a coherent multilateral development policy implies that Spain must offer the same message in all of the international aid forums. In order to do that, the various Spanish delegates in multilateral organisations and forums of this area must receive similar instructions and have common goals.

Finally, Spain must have a specific human resources strategy in international development organisations that agrees with the goals set out in their multilateral development cooperation policy.

Participation Criteria

To build a coherent multilateral policy we need to know which organisations or forums Spain wants to concentrate on, what we hope to obtain and what results we can expect. There are two lines of action to achieve this. On the one hand, a first indicator should be coherence between bilateral policy and multilateral development policy. It is not possible that our bilateral development cooperation acts on objectives different from those that are expressed and supported in the multilateral forums. Vice versa, we must not be involved in initiatives or positions that do not correspond to the criteria and objectives set out by our bilateral actions.

Likewise, it is always necessary to have a clear idea of why and for what reason we support a forum or a specific initiative. It is necessary that our cooperation have indicators and pre-established results that allow us to measure the performance of a specific multilateral organisation. At the same time, if homogeneous groups of international organisations or multilateral funds are established, our development cooperation could compare their activity to the indicators chosen and compare them amongst themselves. So, for example, groups could be established by

development factors: health, education, environment or gender. By type of activity by, as for instance, Multilateral Development Bank groups. By mandate, such as technical assistance agencies or coordination agencies or humanitarian agencies. In any case, the objective is to choose representative criteria to compare and decide the degree of support and of voluntary contribution that Spain wants to concede at a given moment to a determined forum and to also compare the results reached a posteriori. We must try to have objective and up-to-date data of the results of the various multilateral bodies that guide our involvement and allow us to concentrate our voluntary contributions where they will do the most with respect to our lines of work, even if it is only to increase the efficiency of our aid. The worst solution, always, will be to distribute our voluntary contributions in small quantities in multiple forums without fixed criteria.

Coherence between Bilateral and Multilateral Aid

If the latter works for the forums and multilateral funds with their own mandates, as is the case of the UN development organisations, it can also be applied to those organisations or multilateral forums where various States join together to coordinate certain aspects and criteria of their development policies. We must keep in mind that vis-à-vis the multilateral organisations with their own mandates - defined and independent of the agenda of their members - there are others (the most important ones being the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD and the Paris Club) whose job is to coordinate and blend the bilateral policies of its members to establish a framework, that is in this case, multilateral. Spain wants its own multilateral policy so as not to just join the consensus of this or that group of countries. It is imperative that each sectorial and regional strategy systematically count on a multilateral chapter that conveys, at that level, what is normally designed for our bilateral policy. This way Spain will have a useful guide that will allow it to take a position on the coordinated proposals of bilateral policies that other countries launch and will be able to outline coordination and harmonisation solutions in those same forums that are in line with our aspirations. Above all, we will avoid the risk of once again confusing what is multilateral aid with bilateral aid.

The Same Discourse in all Forums

It is also necessary for Spain to be coherent and have the same discourse in all of the multilateral forums. This should be the third pillar of a solid multilateral development policy that has a future. Today, multiple actors represent Spain in the multilateral development forums. The people who go to Paris (CAD), Brussels (EU), New York (ECOSOC), Washington (World Bank), and Geneva (WTO), to mention only the most representative forums, are different and they do not come from the same Ministries or areas within a Ministry either. Besides those Ministries that have direct responsibility in development matters (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Secretary of State for Commerce), there are many others that deal with key matters for any development policy, especially the Ministry of the Environment or the Ministry of Social Affairs. Therefore, in matters of development, it is important to continue insisting on the coordinating role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and therein, the Secretary of State for International Cooperation. It is absolutely indispensable that a body, or in the lack of, an inter-ministerial commission, establish guidelines and instructions that guide the actions of the Spanish representatives in all of the multilateral development forums. The multilateral development policy is, without a doubt, a transversal policy. Spain's credibility in this area and the possibility of exerting long-term influence in the development forums in which we are involved depend on this.

Nevertheless, to receive homogeneous instructions and to work for common goals is only one of the reasons for Spain to give the same message in all of the multilateral forums. The other reason is the diffusion of information. Spanish delegates in the aforementioned organisations must know what is being debated in all of the organisations and how different countries push their positions forward in each one of the forums. If they do not achieve this it will be difficult to have a joint view and sooner or later they will act differently towards similar propositions.

A Human Resources Policy in Multilateral Issues

Finally, the fourth element upon which to reflect in order to give Spain its own multilateral development policy is the presence and support of Spaniards in multilateral development organisations. The administrative agencies of the international organisations play a decisive role when it comes to pushing ahead propositions in the multilateral forums. They are the ones who handle and prepare the minutes for meetings as well as the documents that support them and upon which the debates are based. They have a very important role arbitrating among States. Lastly, they guarantee the continuity of the initiatives. To put it in a very schematic way: it is not necessary to have their help to pass a proposal but it is very difficult to do so if they oppose it. Therefore, the presence of Spaniards in those administrative secretaryships that know and share our goals is fundamental. At the same time they are an excellent source of information and a necessary ally when it comes to understanding and correctly outlining any matter. Nevertheless, once again, it is necessary to have clear criteria to decide where they want to be situated, in which organisation as well as at what level, the reason why and what profile is the most appropriate.

A priori we should try to put our people in the organisations that we have determined as essential for our development cooperation. In the end, placing Spaniards into international organisations supposes human and financial costs for Spain. Therefore, the selection criteria of the organisations where they will make that effort must be very similar to those used to decide where the voluntary contributions will be allocated. With respect to the level into which these people should be placed, the best thing to do is to put them in positions that are really operative in those areas that are a priority for our development cooperation. Finally, the profile of the candidate is, perhaps, the most important thing. Evidently, he or she must meet the requirements demanded by the organisation, but beyond that they should be people who know and understand the workings of the multilateral forum. Above all, we must not make the mistake of thinking that a person with vast experience in the bilateral scenario will obtain good results in the multilateral scenario. Nothing could be further from the truth. Versatility is more important than specialisation in the multilateral scenario.

The multilateral arena has some rules of the game and timing that are different from those of the bilateral scenario. One must know how to reach consensus and alliances among various players who will have different and sometimes opposing interests. One must be extremely patient to get results as one's own interests are always subsumed in global proposals. One must avoid coalitions of countries that diametrically oppose our proposals. All of this is different from bilateral policies where the relationship is always 1 + 1. Perhaps the biggest difference is that in the multilateral world prestige and personal credibility are key points and can be enough to push certain initiatives ahead. Spanish multilateral development policy must transmit the same messages and act coherently regarding bilateral development policy. The opposite would carry an expensive price tag for the image and credibility of our development cooperation. Nevertheless, we must not make the mistake of thinking that it is possible to simply transfer bilateral initiatives to



multilateral forums or that the people who have obtained satisfactory results carrying out bilateral policies will necessarily achieve the same results in multilateral organisations. Finally, it comes down to giving the multilateral aspect of our development policy the same attention and care as we give the bilateral.

Foroaod – Spanish Development Aid

FRIDE organised the project “Spanish Development Aid - Mid-term Review and a Proposal for a Participative Consultation” between June 2006 and April 2007. This project aims to develop a consultation process about the current Spanish government’s development cooperation policy. We have created a forum for participation and debate, in order to assess the Spanish development cooperation reform agenda and to identify the main achievements and shortcomings in operationalising the initiatives based on the principle of “More Aid, Better Aid”. A set of recommendation guidelines were developed, through participative methods, with the objective of putting into practice the aspirations of the Spanish development cooperation policy.

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