

**Francis Wurtz**, *Opening address*

(I apologize for having to leave by lunchtime but I came all the way from France just to be able to attend this morning session because Africa is very important for us in the European Parliament. This is the last of the initiatives undertaken by the current parliament and they are very committed to development policies and redirection of North/South policies and relations. I would like to thank Erik Meijer for undertaking to organize this initiative.)

No discussion on Africa can take place today without mentioning two events:

The first of these events was terrifying – I mean the Rwandan genocide and the millions of deaths that resulted. The Belgian colonial past in Africa, the role of the French authorities, also the supply of arms and the training of the Rwandan army and the Presidential guards all played a role in the genocide. It happened despite the UN and the warning signs that were sent out before hand. After the Presidential plane crash took place the French troops were involved in the road blocks before the massacre. We must face up to the truth behind the genocide and ensure that such a crime against humanity never happens again.

The other event, one which we are celebrating, is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victory of the South African people against *apartheid*. Being the oldest amongst the MEP here I recall the first initiatives at the beginning of the 1980's in a poster exhibition against racism and apartheid. It was at the time, seen as communist propaganda by the right. In the ACP there was a shameful request for split votes, i.e. splitting the votes between the white and the blacks. At the time I opposed it and was labeled an ACP-donor. Most striking was my visit Lusaka to meet Mbeki and other ANC leaders at that time. I came back that time to attend the Swaziland session of the ACP and worked there against *apartheid*. We got petitions signed, organized protest marches and asked for the resignation of the government, for economic sanctions against the regime in Pretoria and for the release of Mandela.

Ten years after that time there are still lots of problems - the problems of poverty, AIDS, etc. that need our attention. The benefits are going to the international community which gained from the end of *apartheid*. All these problems need our attention. But looking at the townships there have been improvements – more employment, more electricity supplies, less discrimination, better health provision etc.

I apologize for this lengthy introduction but I wanted to say how important these above two events were for many of us, I had to say something.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century began for North/South with a real commitment by the International community with the Millennium objectives, to fight hunger, poverty, terrorism, AIDS. We want a two-thirds drop in mortality rates, the end of all hunger by 2015, all children in school. But we have a real battle to wage when it comes to a change in the basic human rights' situation. Four years after the initial solemn promises were made, less than half of the objectives set with regard to the GDP have been achieved; less than 0.3% with

certain exceptions, for example the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries. We know there is justifiable criticism of the way the world's affairs are managed.

If you look at private investment rates - the direct financial investment as they are called in Africa - this represents only 2.3% of world levels. So the alert has been raised now. Promising developments in recent years are the emergence of a worldwide awareness of the need to fight for justice and against poverty, discrimination, child labour. I am thinking particularly of the anti-globalist movements that have been initiated. We have to make public opinion aware of the failure of the Berlin accord, of the real need for stabilization. We see that the lack of progress here has made Africa a real victim. We also have to act against multinational financial markets. Financial institutions must be made more responsible for their practices. In many Southern countries we also have a corrupt public administration, and certain African government and leaders are implicated in this.

Looking at the wave of privatization, structural adjustment, pressure on prices and the debt explosion, the enormous pressure on public finance we know that what is needed is to change the rules. We need worldwide measures to fight endemic and pathological unemployment and the growing poverty and the flow of refugee question that continues. The international community cannot allow this situation to continue. We know that quite unacceptable motives are used for war to take place and arms to be supplied. The forces of good have to be used to fight the forces of evil or else we will get nowhere. We have to enforce basic human rights and this is where the EU must set its sights and ambitions. The international institutions and the European Union can, if they wish to, change the direction that the world is moving in. As to the IMF and the WB – the 15 votes of the EU member state which will become 25 can have an impact. If the EU wishes to it can use its weight to bring this about. The recent WTO-negotiations held in Cancun have shown us that Southern countries can resist the forces of globalization to stop the ravages of hunger and poverty. The EU must work in a strategic partnership with its partners in the South to change the rules for international relations so that globalization is more fair, more peaceful and respectful of future generations. It is this fight for civilization that our group is contributing to. Amongst the position that we have defended over the last five years and that we refer to in our report that will come out next week, we ask for the following:

- To recognize basic rights – the right to water, land, education, health, the right to food and so on. Besides, the right of African producers to protect themselves from imports. Also the abolition of debts of developing countries, the perverse mechanisms involved in this supported by the EU and its member state and by the international institutions;
- To look at structural plans and support public sector developments, allowing essential medical supplies without tax or duty; each government being obliged to support the health needs of its citizens; acting vis-à-vis international institutions to ensure that producers in developing countries get a fair return for their products and fair trade.
- To increase aid for development, particularly the share for development and health purposes; strengthening public services as an important factor to resolve the major problems of health and poverty.
- To ensure that there are checks and sanctions against multinationals that violate human rights and that harm the environment and internationally agreed principles.

So we have to prepare for the next stage of the battle of our time and it is in that spirit that we want to continue the discussion.

Thank you.