

Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FCSD)

Opinion on the policy note by Minister Verwilghen "Putting business to work to combat poverty and favour development"

- **At the request of Minister for Development Cooperation, Marc Verwilghen**
- **drafted by the International Relations Working Group**
- **approved by the General Meeting on May 12, 2004 (see Annex 1)**
- **original language: French**

I. Summary

- [a] The FCSD welcomes the Minister's request to the Council for an opinion on the policy note entitled "Putting business to work to combat poverty and favour development". It nonetheless regrets that it was given very little time to issue its opinion. Indeed, the extremely brief lapse of time given for such an important subject prevented the Council from addressing angles it considers important and greatly limited its chances of building consensus.
- [b] The FCSD appreciates that the note brings to the fore and acknowledges the important role the private sector plays in the development process. It considers that promotion of that role must be part and parcel of the sustainable development framework (three pillars). In this context, the Council makes suggestions for clarifying the basic principles that should serve as a framework for the government's action. It puts the accent, among other things, on the difference between development cooperation and external trade, while acknowledging that these can be complementary, and on respect for international principles in the context of projects receiving support from Belgian Development Cooperation. It then makes a number of suggestions on the instruments to be used. The Council concludes its opinion with a few observations and proposals in matters of countries and target groups, as well as assessment.

II. Introduction

- [1] The Minister for Development Cooperation, Marc Verwilghen, drew up a policy note aimed at encouraging the role of the private sector in development cooperation. On March 24, 2004, the Minister asked the FCSD to issue an opinion on the note within one month.
- [2] The note describes the international commitments and fundamental principles that underpin the proposed action, the instruments, target public and geographical area, and concludes with the assessment and monitoring method used.
- [3] The FCSD welcomes the Minister's request for the Council's opinion, but regrets the inadequate time (one month) allotted for its task. This limited time prevented it from examining the question as thoroughly as it would have liked.