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Press release

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Population Survey on Development Policy: Development Cooperation deeply embedded

A clear majority of the Swiss population views development assistance as an effective strategy in combating world-wide poverty and tackling development problems. Urgent action is deemed necessary in the areas of enhancing fair trade and addressing global issues. These were the results of a representative population survey commissioned by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss Alliance of Development Organizations (Alliance Sud).

Despite the economic slump, solidarity with the populations living in regions marked by poverty has not suffered a decline. In fact, 53% of those interviewed were in favour of maintaining the current level of assistance, while 30% went so far as to endorse an increase. In contrast to the last survey conducted in 2004, this represents a rise of 8%. In general, both private and public actors were credited with a high degree of professionalism. Furthermore, the premise of development assistance as a task of the State was uncontested. A majority, however, greatly overestimated the amount of Swiss expenditure on development cooperation both in absolute terms and in relation to other countries of the OECD.

Among proposals for the enhancement of development assistance, measures to strengthen fair trade and to tackle global challenges predominate. In particular, the survey revealed that those under the age of thirty believe it a top-priority task of private and public development cooperation to address global issues such as climate change and the food crisis. A majority of those surveyed held the opinion that the Swiss economic sector could make an effective contribution to the fight against poverty by means of increased trade and investment.

The effectiveness of Swiss development assistance was rated the highest in situations where it unfolded either in cooperation with Swiss relief agencies or directly (bilaterally) with the countries of the South. Cooperation with organizations of the UN system was applauded by the majority of those surveyed, while a certain scepticism continued to reign with respect to cooperation with the World Bank.

The survey also revealed a dwindling thematic interest and a declining awareness of the issues. Today's Swiss are less well informed on North-South issues as was the case five years ago during the last survey. In addition, development policy is more starkly placed within a context of domestic-policy themes. There is no longer any stigma attached to invoking the economic benefits for Switzerland or linking development policy with asylum policy.

Since 1985, every four to five years, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Alliance Sud sound out the Swiss population on various aspects of development policy. The results of the latest "development monitor" are based on a survey of 1205 entitled voters throughout Switzerland. This latest survey was conducted by the public opinion research institute gfs.Bern, and took place in August 2009.

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