Resolution on the Middle East

2007/2560(RSP) - 12/07/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 11 July 2007, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Middle East.

Firstly, it expresses deep concern about the possible grave consequences of the current crisis in the Middle East, including further military and terrorist attacks, and increased radicalisation undermining the fragile political situation in the region. It condemns Hamas's seizure of military control over the Gaza Strip and calls for the resumption of the internal political dialogue between Palestinians, in a spirit of reconciliation and national unity, in order to prevent the geographical and political division of the West Bank and Gaza.

The Parliament stresses that the support of the international community for President Abbas must be accompanied by a concrete and realistic political plan leading to a permanent status agreement. It believes that the current crisis is not an excuse to undermine the prospect of peace and may provide a new basis for re-launching a clear agenda to reach a comprehensive agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority based on the existence of two democratic, sovereign and viable states whose people live peacefully side by side within secure and internationally recognised borders in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

The Council decision of 18 June 2007 is welcomed to resume normal relations with the Palestinian Authority immediately and, to this end, to develop the conditions for urgent practical and financial assistance including direct financial support to the new government, as well as to ensure the provision of emergency and humanitarian assistance to the population of Gaza.

The Commission and the Council are called upon to involve the Palestinian authorities and all sides in efforts to facilitate emergency humanitarian aid and enable it to reach people living in the Gaza Strip.

As regards tax and customs revenues, the Parliament welcomes the decision of the Israeli Government to partially restart the transfer of the withheld tax and customs revenues. It calls for the complete and proper transfer of these revenues.

The Parliament stresses that a series of confidence-building measures should be taken by both Israelis and Palestinians with the assistance of the international community, including the immediate release of all imprisoned Palestinian former ministers, legislators and mayors and the Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit. It welcomes the release of the BBC journalist Alan Johnston and appreciates it as a positive step forward. On the other hand, it calls for a sign of life from the two abducted Israeli soldiers, Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser, to be given by their kidnappers, and calls for their immediate release.

The EU, Israel and Egypt are called upon to take all the necessary immediate measures to reopen the Rafah border crossing, particularly as 6 000 Palestinians are stranded there in appalling conditions, and to facilitate the movement of people and goods between Gaza and Israel.

The UN Security Council resolution setting up the international tribunal to try those responsible for the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and other politically motivated assassinations in Lebanon has been welcomed. Parliament calls on the Council and the Commission to provide all necessary means to enable this Tribunal to work effectively and carry out its mandate.

The terrorist attack on the Spanish contingent of UNIFIL, which killed 6 soldiers and injured others, has been strongly condemned by the European Parliament. The Lebanese authorities are called upon to do their utmost to undertake a clear and prompt investigation in order to prosecute those responsible.

Parliament stresses that political stability in Lebanon can be built neither on violence nor on external influence. It calls, in this regard, for a re-launch of the dialogue for national unity in order to reconcile differences and prevent a governmental vacuum in the run-up to the presidential elections scheduled for autumn this year.

The Lebanese Government is urged to make every effort to put an end to all discrimination against Palestinian refugees. The prompt reaction of the Commission, which has decided to allocate EUR 370 000 to the provision of humanitarian support to them in order to help meet vital needs has been welcomed.

The role of, and the dialogue with, Syria is classed as one of the key factors to improve regional cooperation and to secure lasting peace in the Middle East.

The Council is urged to ensure that the EU finds its voice, also in the framework of the Quartet, in the efforts aimed at restarting genuine negotiations on the various tracks of the peace process in the Middle East. The report stresses that, in this political context, moving towards an international peace conference for the Middle East should become a viable prospect; calls on the Council to move in this direction in the framework of the Quartet.

The Parliament expresses its support for future intensified actions to be taken by the Quartet in the region. It considers the letter of the Foreign Ministers of Mediterranean EU Member States of 6 July 2007, addressed to the recently appointed Quartet representative Tony Blair, an encouraging message and support for his mission.