European Union's role in Iraq

2007/2181(INI) - 27/02/2008

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Ana Maria **GOMES** (PES, PT), addressing a series of recommendations to the Council aimed at reinforcing the role of the EU in Iraq. The Committee requests, in particular, the launch of a new strategy that will step up the **quantity**, but especially the **quality**, of EU support for UN efforts to build a safe, stable, unified, prosperous and democratic Iraq.

According to MEPs, EU aid provided to Iraq must be directed towards strengthening democracy at all levels of authority and capacity building in the fields of the rule of law, justice, human rights, good governance, financial and budgetary management, gender equality, health and education.

In particular, MEPs call for increased EU funding for bilateral technical assistance but especially for greater **transparency** and **effectiveness** of EU aid. Therefore, MEPs ask that measures be taken to: (i) improve information on the actual disbursement and implementation of EU assistance as well as on the channelling of funds through the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq; (ii) ensure that EU financial projects do not duplicate those already undertaken by other international donors; (iii) ensure that substantial EU assistance is provided to improve the management of public finances and budgetary control so that the Iraqi government is able to better disburse the bulk of public funds already at its disposal.

To **improve the overall strategy for Iraq**, MEPs propose a series of measures including those aiming to:

- Increase support to the rule of law and the Iraqi justice system;
- Strengthen the Iraqi police and legal system by using the provisions of the ESDP and other EU instruments;
- Assist in the organisation of free and fair elections;
- Support the process of reconciliation in the region of Kirkuk and the Assyrian regions to ensure dialogue with local Christian communities;
- Support the development of federal, regional and local democratic institutions, focusing on the Iraqi Council of Representatives;
- Focus DCI (Development and Cooperation Instrument) funding for Iraq on the Millennium Development Goals (in particular, universal access to essential public health care, improving education, especially for girls, re-establishing the environmental and social system of the marshlands in the south and protecting the heritage of the Marsh Arabs);
- Encourage European NGOs active in Iraq to use the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights by providing financial assistance to the organisations of civil society: action that could be taken in this field could focus on: (i) gender equality; (ii) combating violence towards women; (iii) improving the rights of minorities (Assyrians - Chaldeans, Syriacs and other Christian communities, the Yazidi and the Turkmen); (iv) improving the rights of the child; (v) combating torture and abolishing the death penalty;
- Assist, as a priority, **women without financial means** who are the head of the family;
- Strengthen the capacity of the Iraqi authorities to carry out effective border controls;
- Provide administrative and technical support in order to help the Iraqi government apply its programme of microcredits.

Measures have also been called for to help **Iraqi refugees** from Jordan, Syria and other countries. In particular, MEPs call for the EU to provide specific aid to NGOs which work towards helping Iraqi refugees of the bordering countries (including the 4 000 Assyrian families who have sought refuge in the plains of Nineveh). In addition, MEPs call on the Council to “give Iraqi refugees more opportunities to

seek refuge in EU Member States and to put an end to the current lottery system for granting protection". Moreover, they request that urgent action be taken to ensure the safety of Palestinian refugees on the border between Iraq and Syria.

Other more symbolic measures have been called for by MEPs, such as the implementation of measures to recuperate the antiques stolen from the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad or the granting of Observer Status to Iraq at the WTO. In addition, MEPs call for measures to be taken to increase European investment in Iraq and to ensure that Iraqi oil revenue is reinvested in Iraq.

In terms of **security**, MEPs call on the Multi-National Force in Iraq (MNF-I) to respond to the situation of the 24 000 people it currently detains in order to ensure they receive a fair trial. Moreover, MEPs call for dialogue with the United States to **search for a more multilateral role for the international community in Iraq, under the leadership of the UN**.

MEPs also request that information on the identity of military and private security firms ensuring the protection of EU personnel in Iraq be revealed. In particular, MEPs request clear guidelines on the use of these types of company by the EU institutions.

At **international level**, measures are also called for to strengthen the relations between Iraq and its neighbours, including Turkey. This country is therefore called upon by MEPs to respect the territorial integrity of Iraq and to not react to the terrorist activities by initiating military action in Iraq (while calling on Iraqi authorities to ensure that the country is not used as a base for terrorism). MEPs believe that it is also necessary to make the EU Code of Conduct on the export of arms legally binding and to **put a stop to the illegal inflow of light weapons** in Iraq. They therefore call on the Council to assist Iraq in ensuring its security by improving the supervision and destruction (by Althea of EUFOR) of stocks of weapons in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Lastly, MEPs stress the Parliament's commitment to support the Iraqi Council of Representatives by offering it specific assistance aimed at strengthening its powers and providing expertise on drafting legislation.