Resolution on Uzbekistan

2007/2661(RSP) - 15/11/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a joint resolution by the EPP-ED and UEN groups by 39 votes in favour to 27 against with 1 abstention and reaffirmed its serious concerns about the human rights situation in Uzbekistan. It reiterated the importance of EU-Uzbekistan relations and acknowledged Uzbekistan's crucial role in the Central Asia region, but stressed that those relations must be based on mutual respect for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, as is clearly laid down in the EU-Uzbekistan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

Parliament recalled that the General Affairs and External Relations Council imposed and extended sanctions on Uzbekistan following the events of May 2005 in Andijan, and that the Uzbek Government has not addressed all the conditions which the Council set out when sanctions were applied. The Council, at its meeting of 15-16 October 2007, lifted for six months the visa ban on Uzbek officials as set out in the annex to Council Common Position 2007/338/CFSP in order to encourage the Uzbek authorities to take further positive steps to improve the human rights situation. Parliament pointed out that the policy of targeted sanctions had not produced positive results so far. It considered it justified, therefore, to encourage the Uzbek authorities by lifting for six months the visa ban on Uzbek officials as set out in the annex to Council Common Position 2007/338/CFSP. It invited the European Council to monitor and clearly evaluate after six months the effects of this measure on EU-Uzbekistan relations and, possibly, to draw the relevant conclusions on the basis of this evaluation.

Parliament welcomed the general progress in EU-Uzbekistan relations which has taken place in the course of 2007. It noted in particular the willingness shown by the Uzbek authorities to engage in dialogue with the EU by holding two rounds of experts' talks on the events in Andijan, as well as the first round of the human rights dialogue between the EU and Uzbekistan, and encouraged the Uzbek authorities to make further progress in the area of human rights.

Members expressed concern at the refusal by the Ministry of Justice in Uzbekistan to recognise officially the Human Rights Watch office, and called on the Uzbek authorities to reconsider this decision in order to show their commitment to the development of civil society in their country. The Uzbek Government was also urged to release the fifteen Uzbek human rights defenders, given that the EU had made the protection of human rights defenders a central concern of its external policies, in particular through the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders adopted in 2004.