Resolution on the seventh session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

2008/2526(RSP) - 21/02/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate which took place in plenary on 20 February 2008, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the seventh session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), pointing out that this session will be crucial, as it will be the first to examine a wide range of substantive issues under the new working methods stemming from the institution-building reforms adopted in 2006 and 2007. The credibility of the UNHRC rests on the implementation of these reforms and mechanisms in a way which will strengthen its ability to address human rights violations around the world.

Parliament underlines the crucial role of the Human Rights Council in the overall UN architecture and takes note of the results of the UNHRC's work, paying tribute to the positive achievements of the UNHRC presidency and in particular its good cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It is concerned, however, at the failure of the UNHRC to take action to address many of the world's most urgent human rights violations. It calls for competitive elections to be held in all regions, in May 2008, in order to provide real choice among UN Member States. Parliament regrets that some countries with problematic human rights records have so far been elected, since this means that slates have been wiped clean. The Council, the Commission and the Member States were asked to continue to press for the establishment of membership criteria for election to the UNHRC.

Parliament points out that the aim of the **Universal Periodic Review** (UPR) is to conduct an objective review of a country situation in order to identify areas of human rights violations which could be improved. It calls on EU Member States and the Commission to take the recommendations and conclusions into account when defining the objectives and priorities of EU assistance programmes. It also calls on EU Member States subjected to UPR to be self-critical and not limit their presentations to listing their positive achievements.

Members stress that **Special Procedures** are at the core of the UN human rights machinery, and that the credibility of the UNHRC will depend on the new nominations for Special Procedures mandate holders in March 2008. They call for the nomination, as mandate holders, of persons with recognised human rights expertise, relevant experience, independence, impartiality, personal integrity and objectivity as well as substantial knowledge of the Special Procedures system.

Parliament condemns the Human Rights Council's decision not to renew the mandates of the **Special Rapporteurs** on Belarus and Cuba. It regrets the EU's support for the UNHRC's decision to disband its expert group on Darfur. It calls on the EU Member States to ensure renewal of the mandates of the Special Rapporteurs on Burma and on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and extension of the mandates of the Independent Experts on Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The resolution encourages the holding, as soon as possible and at all events during 2008, of discussions on the question of violence against women.

Parliament calls on the EU to sponsor its own resolution seeking consensus in addressing the current violations of human rights in relation to the blockade on Gaza and rocket attacks against Israel. It points to the need for the EU to speak with one voice in addressing human rights issues, but also to the fact that it is important for each EU Member State to voice the EU position, in order to give it more weight.

Lastly, Members call on the Commission and the Council to adopt a 'common position' designed to ensure that EU Member States automatically sign and ratify all international human rights instruments.