European Union's role in Iraq

2007/2181(INI) - 13/03/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted, by 506 votes in favour to 25 against with 26 abstentions, a resolution on the European Union’s role in Iraq.

The own-initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Ana Maria **GOMES** (PES, PT), on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

In the resolution, Parliament addresses a series of recommendations to the Council aimed at reinforcing the role of the EU in Iraq. It 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, federal and democratic Iraq.

The Council was asked to focus EU aid in Iraq on relevant technical assistance and capacity-building in the fields of the rule of law, justice, human rights, good governance, financial and budget management, gender equality, health and education, and on the strengthening of federal, regional and local government institutions.

Parliament asks the Council to ensure the **transparency and efficiency** of EU assistance for Iraq by: (i) providing complete, regular and transparent information on the actual disbursement and implementation of EU assistance, especially the funds being channelled through the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI) (ii) operating directly on the ground if and where the security situation permits, namely in the Southern Marshlands, with its particularly neglected population, and the Kurdish region; (iii) increasing the proportion of EU funding for bilateral technical assistance and capacity building, and improving direct EC control of funding; (iv) switching the main focus of EU support to bilateral projects focussed on technical assistance and capacity-building in the fields of the rule of law, financial management, democratic governance and human rights; (v) 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 substantial and increasing public funds now available to it.

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 funding for Iraq on the Millennium Development Goals;

-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 micro-credits.

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, Parliament asks the Council to improve the possibilities for Iraqi refugees to find refuge in EU Member States through resettlement programmes agreed with the UNHCR (25 000 cases) or through individual asylum requests, end the current arbitrary criteria for the granting of protection and prevent any forced return to any part of Iraq. It also asks the Council urgently to address the plight of Palestinian refugees stranded in the border region between Iraq and Syria.

The Council is asked to encourage European firms to invest in the reconstruction of Iraq, and encouraging the Iraqi government to use the revenue from the sale of petroleum in such a way as to ensure that it is reinvested in Iraq and that it is managed by public procurement bodies under the final authority of the Iraqi government. Parliament felt that this approach must be an essential precondition of EU support for the reconstruction and development of the Iraqi economy.

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 respect for due process and their basic human rights. Moreover, Parliament calls for dialogue with the United States to seek enhanced multilateralisation of the role played by the international community in the country, by using the UN framework.

At international level, measures are also called for to strengthen the relations between Iraq and its neighbours, including Turkey, which is called upon 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). Parliament believes 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.

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