Resolution on the situation in Burma

2008/2561(RSP) - 24/04/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 23 April 2008, the European Parliament adopted by 551 votes to 7 with 8 abstentions, a resolution tabled on behalf of the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, UEN, Greens/ALE, groups on the situation in Burma. It recalls that the Burmese State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) has announced that a referendum will be held on 10 May on a new constitution, with multiparty elections following in 2010.

Parliament deplores the fact that the **constitutional referendum process is devoid of any democratic legitimacy**, as Burmese citizens lack all basic democratic rights that would allow them to hold an open debate on the constitutional text, amend it and subsequently freely express themselves through a referendum. It condemns the rejection by the Burmese Government of the proposals made by the UN Special Envoy, Mr Ibrahim Gambari, to allow an open campaign in the run-up to the constitutional referendum, and supports the democratic transition through an inclusive process of national reconciliation and tripartite dialogue between the regime, the National League for Democracy and ethnic representatives.

Members seek from the Burmese Government guarantees that it will convene an independent election commission, compile a proper voter registration list, lift long-standing restrictions on media, allow freedom of association, expression and assembly in Burma, revoke new regulations that criminalise legitimate debate on the referendum, and agree to the presence of international observers. Parliament calls **for the immediate and unconditional release of more than 1800 political prisoners**, including Aung San Suu Kyi, the leaders of the '88 Generation Students, and the leaders of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy arrested in 2005. The regime is asked to account for all casualties and missing persons from last September's crackdown on protests by Buddhist monks and democracy activists.

Since China has recently ratified the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the **involvement of children in armed conflict**, Parliament draws attention to the deplorable abuses perpetrated in this regard by the Burmese military junta, and urges China to take action in this regard. Parliament also urges ASEAN to put substantive pressure on the Burmese authorities to bring about democratic change.

Recalling that the sanctions adopted by the EU against the Burmese Government have not been effective so far, Parliament urges the Council to **renew its targeted sanctions, and to broaden them**. The Council must focus on restrictions on access to international banking services for military-owned companies, conglomerates and businesses that are closely linked to the military or whose earnings benefit the military, and restrictions on access to personal business opportunities, health care, shopping, and foreign education for their children for selected generals and their immediate families. Parliament urges the Council comprehensively and explicitly to prohibit selected individuals and entities from making any financial transactions that pass through clearing-house banks or otherwise using financial services in the EU's jurisdiction.

Parliament calls on the Council to continue to review sanctions against specific **human rights** benchmarks that should include the following: the release of political prisoners and all other persons arbitrarily detained for exercising their basic human rights; an accurate official accounting of the numbers, whereabouts and conditions of individuals killed, arrested, and detained by the security forces, including in the recent crackdown; cessation of military attacks on civilians; and a transition to democracy. The Council is asked to consider further targeted sanctions, such as a complete ban on new investment, a ban on the provision of insurance services for investment in Burma, and an embargo on trade in key commodities that provide significant revenue to the military government. At the same time, the EU and

the wider international community are asked to offer incentives for reform in order to balance the threat and/or imposition of sanctions and provide the military leadership with positive motivation for change. Parliament notes that the EU arms embargo on Burma is ineffective, as the military government purchases its military goods in China, Russia and India. It urges the EU, therefore, actively to campaign for a **worldwide arms embargo** on Burma.

Lastly, Members call on the international community, Western governments and campaign groups to **scale up their humanitarian work**, particularly through existing programmes in the health sector, initiate new and broader programmes to support basic education, reaching internally displaced persons (IDPs) and others caught in the conflict zones, mainly along the Thai border. In this context, they call on the Commission to extend its humanitarian aid budget under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) for Burma (currently EUR 32 million for 2007-2010) and invest more in cross-border humanitarian aid for IDPs.