Resolution on the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean

2008/2576(RSP) - 05/06/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean in response to the Commission Communication on this subject. The resolution had been tabled for consideration in plenary by the PES, Greens/EFA, UEN, EPP-ED and ALDE groups. It welcomes the Communication and shares the aim of this new initiative to give fresh political and practical impetus to the multilateral relations of the EU with its Mediterranean partners by upgrading the political level of relations. A reinvigorated Barcelona Process should remain the central element of EU cooperation with the Mediterranean region as the only forum where all its Mediterranean partners exchange views and engage in constructive dialogue. The Barcelona Declaration is a milestone in those relations. Members call on those countries which are not part of the Barcelona Process to share the Barcelona acquis so as to move forward towards the same goals.

Parliament welcomes the Commission's proposal to establish a **co-presidency** of the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean at head of State and Government and at foreign minister level. It also welcomes the Commission's proposal that the EU Co-presidency should be held by the competent EU institutions. The Mediterranean arm of the presidency should be appointed by consensus among the Mediterranean partners and that the country holding the presidency should invite all the States participating in the Barcelona Process to summits and ministerial meetings. Parliament endorses the Commission's proposal to establish a Joint Permanent Committee of representatives from all the participants in the Barcelona Process, which might play an important role in improving institutional governance.

It considers that the proposed new **secretariat** should be integrated in the Commission services, could comprise officials seconded from all participants in the process. The new secretariat should make the new Barcelona Process more visible on the ground and it should resolutely concentrate on regional projects and should also be able to take responsibility for whole series of tasks. The host country of the secretariat should, however, be required to be committed to the democratic and human rights values of the Barcelona Process.

Parliament goes on to welcome the Commission's proposal to strengthen relations with the EU's Mediterranean partners at political level by organising **summit meetings** every two years in the context of the Barcelona Process. It feels that the **EMPA** should be fully involved in the preparation of these summits. The resolution underlines the fact that enhancement of democratic legitimacy is necessary, as is strengthening of the role of the EMPA, the only parliamentary assembly uniting the 27 EU Member States and all the parties involved in the Middle East peace process. The EMPA, as a consultative body, should have the right to make proposals and assessments. Parliament supports participation in the EMPA by the parliamentary representatives of countries which are not part of the Barcelona Process.

It calls for a strong involvement of **civil society and social partners' representatives** in the institutional framework of the Barcelona Process. The credibility of the European policy of democratisation and promotion of human rights depends on strong and visible support for civil society and democratic political organisations on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. One of the main goals of Euro-Mediterranean policy is to promote the rule of law, democracy, respect for human rights and political pluralism. In this regard, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has not yet produced the expected results in the area of human rights. The **promotion of human rights and democracy** must be clearly enshrined in the objectives of this new initiative with a further strengthening of the implementation of existing mechanisms, such as the human rights clause included in the association agreements and the creation of a mechanism implementing this clause in the new generation of agreements, the ENP bilateral action plans and the setting up of sub-committees on human rights.

With regard to **projects,** Parliament expresses its interest in the opportunities for high-power solar thermal electricity generation in the North African desert and recommends that priority be given to discussion of

this at the initial meetings of the Union for the Mediterranean. It also supports other projects such as water desalination in order to facilitate access to drinking water. The projects under the Barcelona Process must be open to all EU Member States and Mediterranean partners, especially if they are stakeholders in specific projects or fields.

Members underline the fact that the EU-Mediterranean partnership cannot focus solely on economic and trade issues. The first pillar intended to contribute to 'peace, stability and prosperity', and the projected Charter for Peace and Stability have not made significant progress. The objective of creating a free-trade area and the liberalisation of trade are not goals in themselves, but have to be accompanied by a strengthening of regional cooperation as well as of social and environmental integration. There must be increased EU support for Mediterranean partner State programmes with the aim of facilitating the establishment of a favourable climate for increased investment and for encouraging young people to set up small businesses, including facilitating access to microcredit. Parliament feels that the support of the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP) should be enhanced. It points to its proposal for the **creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Development Bank** capable of attracting direct foreign investment, which the EU-Mediterranean region is lacking. Participation by the Gulf States, as the first investors in the region, could contribute to realising this objective.

Lastly, Parliament reaffirms the need to boost the **status of women** in the Mediterranean region through policies which give them a major role in their societies and by promoting gender equality. It stresses that respect for traditions and customs does not need to detract from their fundamental rights.