Resolution on the situation in the Horn of Africa

2008/2688(RSP) - 15/01/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following a debate which took place during the sitting of 14 January 2009, the European Parliament adopted by 570 votes to 11against with 27 abstentions a resolution on the situation in the Horn of Africa. The resolution had been tabled for consideration in plenary by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, UEN, Greens /ALE and GUE/NGL groups. It notes that unresolved border conflicts between that Ethiopia and Eritrea and between Eritrea and Djibouti are negatively affecting peace and security in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia and Eritrea ended their war by signing the internationally brokered 'Algiers Agreements' providing for a UN peace-keeping operation mission (UNMEE) and the setting-up of the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC), but there are still differences between the two sides regarding the implementation of the agreements and of the decision of the EEBC. The mandate of the UNMEE ended on 31 July 2008 as Eritrea was obstructing the mission and Ethiopia had refused to enforce the EEBC ruling in relation to the contested Badme area. There have subsequently been violent outbursts between the sides in the region.

Regional security: Parliament calls on the government of Ethiopia formally to endorse the EEBC's demarcation by map coordinates between Eritrea and Ethiopia as final and binding. It calls on the Eritrean government to agree to a dialogue with Ethiopia, which would address the process of disengagement of troops from the border and physical demarcation in accordance with the EEBC's decision, as well as the normalisation of relations between the two countries, including reopening the border for trade. The international community and the EU must put pressure on both sides to overcome the current impasse. The resolution asks the Council to nominate an EU Special Representative/Envoy to the Horn of Africa region. It calls on the Council and Commission to identify projects of common interest which could trigger functional cooperation between Eritrea and Ethiopia, for instance in the areas of energy supply, cross-border trade and ports. The Eritrean government is asked to agree to invite, jointly with the Djibouti government, an independent fact-finding mission to look into the situation in Ras Doumeira.

Parliament asks the Council and Commission to continue their support for institution-building in Somalia, the implementation of the Djibouti peace agreement and the IGAD's efforts in the peace process. Members urge the reinforcement of AMISOM and the deployment of the UN stabilisation force in a timely manner as soon as political and security conditions allow. They condemn the ever more frequent attacks on humanitarian workers over the last few months, which have gravely constrained aid operations and have helped worsen the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

With regard to Sudan, Parliament calls on the Council and the international community to step up their support for implementation of the north-south Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan and to secure the full deployment of the UN-AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).

Food security and development: the Eritrean government is asked to cooperate more closely with international organisations in the assessment of the food security situation. It must allow the Commission unhindered access to the Commission-funded projects and also adapt the NGO Proclamation with a view to easing the financial requirements for NGOs willing to engage in development activities in Eritrea. The Ethiopian government should grant full access for humanitarian organisations to the Ogaden region of Somalia. Parliament draws attention to the importance of water security. It calls on the Commission to verify that none of its assistance programmes, including 'cash for work', are being implemented by forced labour.

Human rights, democracy and governance : Members call on the Eritrean government to make a public declaration as to the whereabouts of prisoners and their state of health and to either charge and

immediately bring before a court of law all political detainees and imprisoned journalists or unconditionally release them. Parliament goes on to express its deep concern at the continuing imprisonment in Eritrea of the Swedish-Eritrean journalist Dawit Isaak, held in jail since his arrest in September 2001, without having been tried by a court of law. It demands the immediate release of Dawit Isaak and other imprisoned journalists.

The EU should reconsider its approach to Eritrea if no progress is made towards compliance with the essential elements of the Cotonou Agreement, in particular on core human rights issues (access for the International Committee of the Red Cross to prisons, release of the "G11" prisoners). Parliament calls on the governments of Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti and the Council, in accordance with Article 8 and Annex VII of the Revised Cotonou Agreement, to agree to deepen the political dialogue on human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law, with a view to defining benchmarks and attaining tangible results and progress on the ground.

MEPs also express their outrage at the imprisonment in Ethiopia of the leader of the opposition party Unity for Democracy Justice (UDJ), Birtukan Midekssa, demanding her immediate and unconditional release.

Parliament recognises that elections are due to take place in Sudan in 2009, but notes that the amendment of the laws which restrict freedom of expression and organisation for individuals, political parties and the media, and which contravene the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the Interim National Constitution (INC), has not yet taken place, nor has a National Human Rights Commission been formed. These are necessary preconditions to free and fair elections.