Resolution on the annual debate on the progress made in 2008 in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (AFSJ) (Articles 2 and 39 of the EU Treaty)

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Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 17 December 2008, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the annual debate on the progress made in 2008 in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (AFSJ) (Articles 2 and 39 of the EU Treaty). It calls on those Member States which have not ratified the Treaty of Lisbon to do so as soon as possible, as it will overcome the more significant shortcomings in the AFSJ by, inter alia: creating a more coherent and legally sound framework, and strengthening the protection of fundamental rights by giving binding force to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.

Parliament Calls on the European Council, the Council and the Commission to:

- involve formally the newly elected European Parliament in the adoption of the next multiannual AFSJ programme for the period 2010-2014, as this programme, after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, should be mainly implemented by the Council and Parliament by way of the codecision procedure. National parliaments should also be involved as they should play an essential role in shaping the priorities and in implementing them at national level;
- focus on the future multiannual programme, and primarily on the improvement of fundamental and citizens' rights, by developing the objectives and principles laid down in the Charter.

The Commission is asked to carry out a number of urgent actions, including the following:

take urgent initiatives to improve the protection of citizens' rights such as data protection, diplomatic and consular protection and freedom of movement and residence;

- develop a mechanism to ensure a more extensive involvement of citizens in the definition of the content of citizenship of the Union by developing consultation mechanisms and supporting stakeholder networks;
- submit a fully fledged programme of EU measures strengthening the procedural rights of defendants and the necessary safeguards in the pre-trial and post-trial phases, notably when they involve a non-national of the country concerned, and more generally develop screening of EU criminal justice and security measures with regard to the protection of citizens´ rights;
- present as soon as possible the pending legal instruments on other 'EU blue card' categories of third-country workers such as seasonal workers, intra-corporate transferees and remunerated trainees and on FRONTEX's mandate; in particular, ensure that FRONTEX has adequate resources in order to meet its objectives and keep Parliament fully informed of the negotiations on agreements in the field of immigration with third countries;
- invite the Council to consult Parliament regularly even in the case of international agreements dealing with judicial and police cooperation in criminal matters, as the current refusal by the Council to do so is contrary to the principle of loyal cooperation and of the democratic accountability of the EU;
- establish more extensive coordination between EU agencies such as Europol, Eurojust, FRONTEX and Cepol, as these bodies should go beyond their embryonic and uncertain cooperation and

establish closer links with the corresponding national services by reaching higher standards of efficiency and security and being more accountable and transparent before the European Parliament and national parliaments.

Lastly, Parliament urges the Commission to make all necessary efforts to ensure that the Visa Information System (VIS) and the second-generation Schengen Information System (SIS II) can enter into force as quickly as possible. It recommends that the Commission refrain from prematurely submitting any legislative proposals to introduce new systems - in particular the Entry/Exit System - until the VIS and the SIS II are up and running. It advocates evaluating the actual need for such a system, given its evident overlap with the set of systems already in place.