Gender mainstreaming in EU external relations and peace-building / nation-building

2008/2198(INI) - 07/05/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 459 votes to 25, with 43 abstentions, a resolution on gender mainstreaming in EU external relations and peace-building/nation-building.

The resolution recalls that although the Member States are party to all major international frameworks on gender equality and women's rights, **the practical commitment to furthering gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment in external policies is still weak**. Therefore, the main EU institutions – the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission – do not have enough staff appointed specifically to implement the declared gender objectives in the areas of external policy and enlargement.

In this context, the Parliament stresses the importance of adequate funding and of staff responsible for implementing gender objectives and they recalls that gender mainstreaming requires not only high-level policy statements but also the political will of the EU and the Member States' leadership.

United Nations resolutions on women and peace: the Parliament welcomes the adoption of a "Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the UNSCR 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security", as well as guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them. It calls on those Member States which have not yet adopted their national action plans on UNSCR 1325 to comply as a matter of urgency. The Commission is invited to provide technical assistance and aid to third countries willing to develop national strategies for the implementation of the above-mentioned Security Council resolutions.

Women’s empowerment in EU external action: the Parliament calls on the Commission to speed up its work and to propose by July 2009, in close cooperation with the Member States and the Council Secretariat, an "EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action", to be applied in the 27 Member States and in negotiations with third countries. It calls on the Commission and the Council to systematically include gender equality and women’s empowerment in the EU's political dialogue and policy discussions with partner countries. Parliament's delegations are called upon to address the issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment in its relations with third-country parliaments. To strengthen this approach, the Parliament underlines the importance of civil society organisations in women’s empowerment. In this context, it calls on the Commission to channel adequate financial support to them and to promote the participation of women’s NGOs in political dialogue processes with partner countries. In the interest of coherence, the Parliament asks that the existing diverse policy frameworks be collated into an EU Consensus on Gender, covering both internal and external policies.

Prioritising gender inequalities: the Commission is asked to address and prioritise, in a more consistent and systematic manner, gender inequalities in the programming and implementation of the external assistance instruments, in particular as regards the provision of assistance for the reform of the security sector. The Parliament insists that gender-specific objectives, activities and funding must be included in country strategy papers and that mainstreaming of gender issues through those strategy papers must be improved. It considers that the **resources allocated to the health sector, and consequently to girls' and women's health, are insufficient** in view of the EU's development policy commitments. According to the Parliament, there is a need to earmark further financial resources under the external assistance instruments for women's health programmes. It also points out that effective gender mainstreaming requires enhanced coordination between donors and actors, accountability mechanisms and increased ownership of the

development process by national governments. It highlights, in this regard, the added value of the EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace, and of gender-responsive budgeting initiatives.

Highlighting the needs of the most vulnerable women: the Parliament stresses that the EU should pay special attention to the needs of the most vulnerable and socially excluded women, in particular disabled women, refugees and women from minority groups. The Commission is called upon to:

- further develop procedures, benchmarks and indicators in order to ensure that it fulfils its commitments with regard to gender equality in its external policy;
- implement the Brussels Call for Action to Address Sexual Violence in Conflict and Beyond;
- take action to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings.

Moreover, the Parliament underlines that **rape** and sexual violence are used as a weapon of war and that they should be punished as **war crimes and crimes against humanity**.

Gender mainstreaming in the EU's decision-making: the Parliament considers that the number of personnel currently working on gender issues within the Commission and the Council is inadequate. It calls on those institutions to allocate more staff to the structures in charge of the EU's external action with specific responsibility for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. It calls for greater efforts to boost the number of women among the heads of EU delegations and the EU Special Representatives. Member States are also called upon to include more women in ESDP missions and operations, and the participation of women at all levels and in all phases of the planning and implementation should be increased.

Women and the ESDP: the Parliament stresses the need to develop the qualitative conceptual framework required in order to understand the socio-economic context in which ESDP missions are deployed (i.e. areas of conflict) and gender-sensitive concerns in the implementation of operations and programmes. Moreover, the Parliament welcomes the appointment of a gender adviser to nearly all ESDP missions. However, it emphasises that the work of such gender advisers may be undermined by the lack of a concrete EU gender policy – in particular, a lack of gender awareness and/or an unwillingness to consider its importance – and the **lack of gender-specific budget lines in the financing of ESDP missions**. Although the Parliament commends the initiatives to provide gender-related training to staff, it suggests that compulsory training be provided for **all staff in missions and delegations**, including the management, and that they are given guidance on gender issues and women's empowerment.

Involving civil society: the Parliament is convinced that ESDP mission planning should take account of the inclusion of local women's organisations in the peace process. It stresses that, currently, **quotas are an indispensable means of ensuring gender equality** in peace and security missions and in decision-making in national and international reconstruction processes. Lastly, the Parliament underlines the importance of gender-sensitive budgeting and that **special appropriations** should be earmarked for gender issues and that benchmarks should be defined in order to measure how efficiently the funds provided are being used.