Resolution on democracy building in the EU's external relations

2009/2718(RSP) - 22/10/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 20 October 2009 on Oral Question O-0093/2009 to the Council on democracy building in external relations, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on democracy building in external relations in the EU.

The resolution had been tabled by the Greens/ALE, S&D, ECR, EPP and ALDE groups.

Parliament shares the view that there is a need for a more coherent and uniform framework to make EU support for democracy-building, and, above all, the promotion of democratic values and respect for human rights throughout the world, more effective. Members note that there is a need for a better overview of the democracy support currently provided by the EU, of how the EU's large arsenal of tools and instruments to support democracy worldwide delivers in partner countries, and of how those various instruments and actors operate, complement and connect with each other. They welcome the efforts by former and current EU Presidencies to implement a cross-pillar initiative on democracy-building in EU external actions with the aim of refining EU policy, and they underline the need for sustained action in this field as part of the Council Conclusions to be adopted in November 2009. Some key principles, such as transparency, access to documents, consultation and accountability must be duly taken into consideration by the Council in addressing this issue.

Parliament recommends that the forthcoming Council conclusions should include concrete suggestions for improving the coordination of democracy-building measures in EU foreign, human rights and development policy instruments. It reiterates that the adoption of a **Country Strategy on Human Rights and Democracy**, to be regarded as a reference document establishing country-specific priorities in this field and mainstreamed into all relevant external EU policies with the third country concerned, could substantially improve the consistency and effectiveness of EU external action. Members recommend that an action plan be included in the November Council conclusions and that a review of the progress made be carried out by the end of 2010. They request the current and forthcoming EU Presidencies to present the outcome of the General Affairs and External Relations Council meetings to its competent committees.

The resolution stresses that democracy **cannot be exported or imposed from the outside** and that a successful strategy for democracy promotion must be based on dialogue and entail broad efforts to strengthen civil society and raise democratic awareness in developing countries. It underlines the EU's continued commitment to the principles of ownership of development strategies and programmes by partner countries, pointing out, however, that these processes can be supported by all the various EU instruments, adapted to the specific situation of each country. Parliament underlines the need for better coordination of the activities carried out under the various external financial instruments and for complementarity between geographical and thematic instruments to be fully explored.

Parliament calls on the council, Commission and Member States as appropriate:

- when designing the new external action service, to ensure the effective mainstreaming of human rights and democracy-building in all policy areas and to draw lessons from current processes and experience;
- to proceed with a comprehensive, detailed analysis of all forms of EU support for democracy in a sample of partner countries, with a view to making practical recommendations;

- to implement the OECD Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action in their democracy support work, and suggests, in particular, that joint EU democracy assessments, joint EU programming and burden-sharing be introduced with a view to increasing the impact and visibility of the EU's work to support democracy;
- to carry out broad-based consultation with all EU and third-country stakeholders, including institutional and regional and local actors, human rights defenders and independent civil society groups, before launching new democracy-building initiatives;
- to involve democratic institutions at all levels, particularly parliaments and regional and local authorities, more systematically in the preparation and implementation of country-specific instruments, such as agreements between the EU and the country concerned and Country Strategy Papers;
- to consider the establishment of a volunteer European Peace Corps, while taking into account the positive experience of the European Voluntary Service (EVS).

Strengthened cooperation with the United Nations: Parliament calls on the Commission to build further on its successful cooperation with the UN on election observation missions and to strengthen common strategy-building and project design with the UN and other regional organisations, such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the African Union, in connection with the promotion of democracy and human rights.

Supporting parliaments and the electoral process: Parliament recommends the introduction of a specific strategy to support newly democratically-elected parliaments with a view to permanently entrenching democracy, the rule of law and good governance. It calls, further, for the development of a peer-to-peer instrument involving parliamentarians of different nationalities with a view to determining what constitutes efficient and effective representation of the interests of the electorate, efficient and effective oversight of the executive and ways and means of maintaining a flow of information between all parts of the governance system.

Lastly, Parliament confirms its own determination to contribute to the strengthening of democratic processes by enhancing its involvement in election observation, follow-up to EU EOMs and parliamentary capacity-building. It calls on its Office for Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy (OPPD) to present a comprehensive action plan to the relevant parliamentary committees which should necessarily include a clear mechanism for cooperation with interparliamentary delegations and joint parliamentary committees, and stresses the importance of involving parliamentary assemblies, such as the ACP-EU, EUROLAT, EUROMED and EURONEST assemblies, in this process.