Resolution on the recent earthquake in Haiti

2010/2518(RSP) - 10/02/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 648 votes to 1 with 33 abstentions a resolution on the recent earthquake in Haiti, which measured 7.3 on the Richter scale, causing catastrophic damage to Port-au-Prince, Jacmel and other settlements in the region. Parliament refers to reports of up to 200 000 dead, 250 000 people wounded and more than 3 million people directly affected, and it expresses its sincere condolences to the people of Haiti and of other nations, and to the staff of international organisations, including the UN and the Commission, for the massive loss of life and the devastation caused by the earthquake.

Members want a **comprehensive assessment to identify the population's short-term and long-term needs** and establish the EU's involvement in the reconstruction process, covering the three phases of emergency aid, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The Commission is asked to proceed as soon as possible to an evaluation of the European response to the humanitarian crisis in Haiti and present proposals with a view to further improving EU actions in respect of similar situations in the future. EU Priority must be to assist with the reconstruction efforts and improving the humanitarian situation. All Member States should be prepared to meet UN requests for further assistance.

Parliament welcomes the **Commission's preliminary commitments** to EUR 30 million in humanitarian assistance but expresses concern that the Haiti Flash Appeal launched by the OCHA for USD 575 million is 87% funded in terms of contributions. Such funding is crucial for sustaining operations in the long term. The Commission and all Member States are asked fully to honour the commitments they have made.

Pointing to the fact that Haiti is **crippled by foreign debt**, estimated at approximately USD 1 billion, which was an obstacle to its development even before the earthquake, Parliament welcomes the decision by the G7 countries to cancel their claims on Haiti's international debt. It expects all countries and international donors to do the same, and it also calls on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to provide full relief of the country's outstanding debt, including a USD 102 million emergency loan approved in January 2010. Members stress that any emergency earthquake assistance must be provided in the form of grants, not debt-incurring loans.

The resolution calls on the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and the Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response to play a leading role in coordinating the Union's crisis response, using the responsibilities created under the Lisbon Treaty to coordinate the Union's response to future crises more effectively, while building on what has already been achieved.

It recognises the work done by individual Member States through the **EU Civil Protection Mechanism** and the effective coordination of this assistance by the MIC (Monitoring and Information Centre) and ECHO teams which were deployed only hours after the earthquake. For the first time, the Commission successfully deployed two modules made available through a preparatory action on an EU Rapid Response Capability established with Parliament's support. Parliament calls for proposals as soon as possible for establishing an EU Civil Protection Force based on the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and enabling the Union to bring together the resources necessary for providing initial emergency humanitarian aid within 24 hours of a disaster. It gives certain conditions for such a European rapid response mechanism, such as the fact that the mechanism should be civilian and/or humanitarian and be capable of being mobilised at any time.

Turning to the needs on the ground, Parliament expresses grave concern about the **welfare of the vulnerable**, particularly women. It calls on the Commission and the UN to pay **special attention to women's participation** in reconstruction efforts by actively involving them in the rehabilitation, reconstruction and evaluation phases of all relief and rebuilding programmes. Members also stress that **unaccompanied and separated children** should be provided with services aimed at reuniting them with their parents or customary care-givers as quickly as possible. The EU and international community urgently are asked to assess the need for a coordinated plan to deal with the thousands of children left orphaned by the earthquake. Parliament highlights the grave risk of human trafficking incidents, and urges the EU to support a temporary moratorium on new adoptions of children from Haiti for up to two years after tracing efforts have begun. It calls for EU efforts to provide children with their basic needs, to bring temporary schools into operation and to provide counselling to children as a matter of urgency.

Noting that estimates that 235 000 people have left Port-au-Prince and up to one million people could leave cities for the rural areas, Parliament underlines the importance of providing local authorities with appropriate aid to enable them to stimulate the economy. It calls on the EU and other international donors wherever possible to purchase locally produced food for the relief effort.

Members emphasise the need for long-term investment in the construction of **earthquake-resistant buildings and in basic infrastructure**, such as water supply, roads and electricity, which was non-existent or largely inadequate prior to the earthquake, thus greatly exacerbating the potential impact of natural disasters.

They call on the Commission to present to Parliament a **comprehensive post-disaster needs assessment and a progress report on reconstruction**, and also call for an international conference and a coordinated post-disaster needs assessment, involving the UN and the World Bank, in order to establish long-term reconstruction once the emergency operation is over.

Lastly, Parliament wants the international community to keep Haiti high on the agenda, to use this as an opportunity to tackle the root causes of the underlying poverty in Haiti once and for all, and to assist Haiti in emerging from this disaster as a fully functioning democracy with an economy that can sustain its people.