Resolution on the situation of the Jordan River with special regard to the Lower Jordan River area

2010/2775(RSP) - 09/09/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following a debate which was took place in plenary on 8 September 2010, the European Parliament adopted a resolution drawing attention to and expressing its concern at the devastation of the Jordan River, and the Lower Jordan River in particular.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens/ALE, ECR and GUE/NGL groups.

This is a cultural landscape of universal significance which has great historic, symbolic, religious, environmental, agricultural and economic importance in the Middle East and beyond, which has been devastated by overexploitation, pollution, mismanagement and a lack of regional cooperation. An estimated 98% of the river's fresh water resources have been diverted by Israel, Jordan and Syria, resulting in a 50% loss of biodiversity. Parliament **calls on the authorities of all the riparian countries to cooperate and rehabilitate the Jordan River** by implementing policies which focus on achieving tangible results in the areas of domestic and agricultural water-demand management, water conservation and the management of sewage and agricultural and industrial effluents and on ensuring that an adequate quantity of fresh water flows into the Lower Jordan River. Members recall that new waste-water treatment centres, which are designed to remove the pollutant effluents currently found in the Lower Jordan River, are due to begin operating in late 2011. If sound and sustainable water-management practices are not developed and fresh water resources are not allocated to the Lower Jordan River to coincide with the operation of these centres, long stretches of the river are likely to run dry by the end of 2011. This is of the greatest importance for the Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian local communities facing similar water challenges and offers tremendous economic and confidence-building benefits. Parliament welcomes the cooperation among Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian local communities facing similar water challenges in the Lower Jordan River area; calls on Israel and Jordan fully to honour commitments made in their Treaty of Peace concerning the rehabilitation of the Jordan River.

The resolution notes that EU funding has been contributing to attempts to alleviate the environmental challenges facing the Lower Jordan River area, and it calls on the Council, the Commission and EU Member States **to support a comprehensive plan to rectify the devastation of the Jordan River and to continue to provide financial and technical support** for the rehabilitation of the Jordan River, and the Lower Jordan River in particular, also in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean. Parliament takes the view, at the same time, that a **specific reference to the rehabilitation process for this area should be included in the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans** drawn up with Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. It strongly urges the Commission to initiate a joint study on the Jordan River.

It goes on to note that the Palestinian population in the West Bank faces serious water shortages. Palestinian farmers are seriously affected by the lack of water for irrigation, which stems from the use of most of the water in question by Israel and by Israeli settlers in the West Bank. The availability of sufficient water resources is essential to the viability of a future Palestinian State. Members call on the governments of Israel and Jordan and the Palestinian Authority to work in a spirit of cooperation in order to save the Lower Jordan River, and **urge them to establish, with the support of the European Union, a Jordan River Basin Commission**, which would be open to other riparian countries. They stress once

again that the issue of water management, and particularly the fair distribution of water in keeping with the needs of all the people living in the region, is of the utmost importance for lasting peace and stability in the Middle East.

Lastly, Parliament welcomes the application of advanced water-management methods and technologies in Israel, and urges the fair use of these methods and the transfer of the technologies involved to all countries in the region. It calls on the international community, including the European Union, to step up efforts to provide further financial and technical support for cooperative projects in this field.