EU's approach towards Iran

2010/2050(INI) - 10/03/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the EU's approach towards Iran.

Parliament recalls that Iran is facing an array of governance challenges – from power struggles between competing factions within the country's ruling elites to a crippling social and economic malaise, a problematic regional security environment and rising popular discontent at home – many of which are products of the Iranian regime's own making.

Faced with these challenges, it stresses that an EU approach should be defined towards Iran. The outline of this approach may be summarised as follows:

Internal situation: noting with concern the internal political situation and the aspirations for democratic change of the Iranian people, in particular the younger generation, Members underline that democratic change cannot be imposed from outside or even by military means but has to be achieved through a peaceful democratic process. The resolution recalls that, although President Ahmadinejad was elected in 2005 on a platform of social justice and economic populism, Iran's domestic problems have continued to worsen despite burgeoning oil prices. Members deplore Mr Ahmadinejad's aim of shoring up his political position at home by embracing a radical international agenda with the expectation that a stridently anti-Western, anti-Israeli stance will enhance Iran's leadership position in the Muslim world.

Members note that the reformist movement covers a spectrum of intellectual trends and political agendas ranging from a wish to gradually modernise Iran's governmental institutions to the aim of thoroughly overhauling the regime.

Expressing its solidarity with the millions of Iranians who have taken to the streets since the June 2009 presidential elections, Members strongly reject the regime's condemnation of protesters and opponents following the 2009 elections as 'enemies of Allah' ('muharib'), who, in accordance with Islam, should receive the severest of punishments. They warn that the development of an increasingly prominent role for the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Iranian society, in military, political and economic respects, raises fears of further militarisation of the state. They express their deepest concern at the fact that such tendencies might result in an escalation of violence and oppression against political opponents.

In an oral amendment adopted in plenary, Parliament strongly condemns the illegal detention of Iranian opposition leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi together with their wives by Iranian security forces and calls for their immediate and unconditional release. It condemns the attitude of the Iranian authorities to the opposition exercising its legitimate right to protest and declares its solidarity with the Iranian people in their democratic aspirations. It also deplores the hypocrisy of the Iranian government, which used excessive force, intimidation, and arbitrary arrests against peaceful demonstrators demonstrating in solidarity with Egyptian people on 14 February 2011, whilst claiming to support freedom in Egypt.

Human Rights: the High Representative should make the situation of human rights in the country a top priority. The resolution urges Iran to:

- put an end to all forms of discrimination in the country and to the discrimination and political and social repression affecting women in particular;
- stop discriminating against people on the basis of their sexual orientation;
- abolish definitively the death penalty for crimes committed before the age of 18;
-

- issue official statistics concerning the **application of the death penalty**;
- institute a moratorium on executions pending the abolition of the death penalty;
- put an end, in law and in practice, to all forms of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (stoning, flogging, etc).

Parliament firmly condemns the execution of Dutch-Iranian national Zahra Bahrami in Tehran on 29 January 2011 and is dismayed that the Iranian authorities denied consular access to Ms Bahrami and did not ensure a transparent and fair judicial process.

The resolution condemns the efforts of the Iranian Government to silence all political opposition, as well as its attempts to avoid all international scrutiny of the violations that occurred during the post-election unrest. The EU institutions are urged to present to the Iranian authorities a detailed list of all known incidents/violent actions against Iranian civilians in the aftermath of the election and insist that there be an **independent international investigation**, whose findings should be made public. It calls on the Iranian authorities immediately to free all those detained for peacefully exercising their rights to free expression, association and assembly, and to investigate and prosecute government officials and members of the security forces responsible for the killing, abuse and torture of family members of dissidents, demonstrators and detainees.

Parliament insists that in any future negotiations with Iran, the High Representative should make the situation of human rights in the country a top priority. It calls on the Commission to implement all the instruments at its disposal for the protection and promotion of human rights in Iran.

Parliament also condemn the Iranian authorities for the:

- systematic harassment of labour activists;
- campaign of dismissals of prominent university professors on political grounds;
- harassment of religious minorities;
- numerous exection of minors and the public stonings of women;
- deterioration of the situation as regards lawyers since the June 2009 elections as well as human rights defenders and women's rights defenders;
- repression of the independent media and internet control;
- repression of cultural, musical and artistic expression through censorship.

Members are concerned by the discrimination and political and social repression affecting women in particular in Iran. They call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to sign, ratify and implement the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). They stress that representatives of EU institutions should develop contacts with representatives of a broad range of Iranian political and social organisations, including prominent Iranian human rights defenders.

In addition, Parliament calls for **impunity to be brought to an end in Iran** through the establishment of an independent judicial review procedure inside the country or referral through the UN Security Council to institutions that operate under international law, such as the International Criminal Court.

The resolution calls on the High Representative to keep the Iranian nuclear dossier and the human rights of the Iranian people high on the agenda, and on Iran to engage in meaningful negotiations with a view to securing a comprehensive and long-term settlement of the nuclear issue. Members consider that the EU should devise a **broader strategy towards Iran** which goes beyond the nuclear issue and also addresses Iran's human rights situation and its regional role. They call on the High Representative and the EU Member States to assess all mechanisms for enforcing implementation of the EU common position – especially with regard to export licensing, customs and border controls, air cargo and shipping – **in order to prevent Iran from evading the sanctions regime**. Parliament reiterates its position that these measures should not negatively affect the general population and welcomes in this context the US

decision to impose targeted sanctions on Iranian officials deemed to be responsible for or complicit in serious human rights abuses in Iran since the disputed presidential election of June 2009. It calls on the Council to adopt similar measures. Parliament recalls that the issue of its nuclear programme pits Iran against the entire United Nations, not just against 'the West'.

Members welcome President Obama's appeal for **nuclear disarmament** and calls on the High Representative to make this issue one of her priorities, both in her dealings with Member States and in her contacts with governments in the Middle East and Asia.

Other measures proposed by the Parliament as regards the nuclear issue include:

- assessing trade relations with Iran beyond sanctions, with the goal of limiting human rights violations through the export of technologies meeting European standards, including mobile phones, communication networks, (dual-use) technologies, surveillance technologies; etc
- taking immediate steps to ban the export of surveillance technology (especially monitoring centres) by EU companies to Iran;
- expanding the list of Iranian individuals with links to Iran's nuclear and ballistic programmes and freezing their assets and preventing them from entering EU territory.

The nuclear dossier: the resolution reiterates, notwithstanding Iran's right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under the rules of the non-proliferation regime, that the **proliferation risks in connection with the Iranian nuclear programme remain a source of serious concern to the European Union and to the international community**. Members call on the Iranian authorities to fulfil Iran's obligations under the non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). They condemn Iran's continuing refusal to fully cooperate with the IAEA, obstructing the IAEA's work, denying full and unconditional access to key facilities and objecting to the appointment of inspectors.

The resolution supports the Council's twin-track approach aimed at finding a negotiated and peaceful solution to the nuclear stand-off, and commends it on its new common position of 26 July 2010 introducing new and far-reaching targeted autonomous measures applicable to Iran. Members regret the fact that Iran was not prepared to accept the offers on the table at the latest round of talks. They remain convinced, however, that the EU should devise a broader strategy towards Iran which goes beyond the nuclear issue and also addresses Iran's human rights situation and its regional role. They call on the High Representative and the EU Member States to assess all mechanisms for enforcing implementation of the EU common position – especially with regard to export licensing, customs and border controls, air cargo and shipping – in order to prevent Iran from evading the sanctions regime and to be able to make a realistic evaluation of whether or not sanctions produce the anticipated results.

External relations: Parliament strongly condemns the desire expressed by Iranian President Ahmadinejad to 'wipe out' Israel and his anti-Semitic rhetoric, especially his denial of the Holocaust. They call on the Council and the Commission to closely monitor the situation in the Gulf region and to do their utmost to promote peace and stability in this region.

Members also recognise **Turkey's role** as an influential regional actor and commends its joint efforts with Brazil to bring about a negotiated settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue even though Turkey's approach only partially meets the requirements laid down by the IAEA. They call on the Turkish authorities to follow the European approach towards the Iranian nuclear threat. There has been a remarkable deepening of relations between Iran and Turkey and Iran is using its state and non-state allies Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas, and also the Muslim Brotherhood, to destabilise the region.

The resolution calls forcefully on **Russia** to stop any kind of weapons proliferation and uranium exports to Iran, so that the effectiveness of the sanctions against Iran and the fulfilment of the non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) requirements may be ensured.

Lastly, Members takes note of the EU's and Iran's shared interest in securing peace and stability in **Afghanistan** and welcome the constructive role being played by Iran in refurbishing infrastructure and reviving the economy, as well as in preventing drug trafficking from Afghanistan.

It should be noted that a replacement resolution presented by the GUE/NGL group was rejected in plenary.