Annual report from the Council to the European Parliament on the main aspects and basic choices of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) in 2009

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Gabriele ALBERTINI (EPP, IT) on the annual report from the Council to the European Parliament on the main aspects and basic choices of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in 2009, presented to the European Parliament in application of Part II, Section G, paragraph 43 of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 17 May 2006.

Whilst welcoming the Council's annual report, the committee reiterates its position in favour of developing a **coherent EU foreign policy strategy** which should clearly identify the common foreign and security policy interests of the EU. It calls on the Vice-President/High Representative (VP/HR) to involve **Parliament's** relevant bodies fully in that endeavour.

The report stresses the need to enhance coherence between the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Commission and the Member States under the leadership of the VP/HR with a view to better integrating all relevant instruments and policies and delivering a single EU message on key political issues.

The report expects the EEAS, by promoting closer coordination between the CFSP and other external policies, to help strengthen the EU's role and influence on the global stage and enable it to project its interests and values more efficiently, in a manner commensurate with its existing international trade and economic status. It calls on the VP/HR to set up the necessary coordination structures and mechanisms inside the EEAS.

It stresses that the role of EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) should generally be to represent and coordinate EU policy towards regions with specific strategic or security interests for the EU which require a **continuous EU presence and visibility**. Close coordination must be established between the EUSRs and the relevant EEAS departments and that important thematic issues should be reconsidered and proposals put forward for this role to be taken over by high-ranking EEAS officials or EUSRs.

Members recall the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) prerogative to be consulted in the CFSP and CSDP spheres and have its views duly taken into account and make recommendations. In this context, Members underline that in order to enhance the efficiency and accountability of the CFSP, **a new culture of dialogue, reciprocal trust and exchange of information** should finally pervade interinstitutional relations, both in the defining phase and in the conducting and a posteriori assessment phases.

(1) Main CFSP thematic issues: the report emphasises that CSDP actions should be embedded in a comprehensive policy **targeting countries and regions in crisis** where the EU's values and strategic interests are at stake and where CSDP operations would provide a real added value in promoting peace, stability and the rule of law. Members stress, further, the need for a lessons learnt process more accurate in assessing the successful implementation of each operation and its lasting impact on the ground.

The committee considers that the **main strategic priorities** for the Union are as follows:

- the need for optimal coordination between **EU disaster responses** and other EU instruments – such as CSDP civilian and/or military missions – which are already being deployed on the ground or which could be set up in the aftermath of a crisis;
- strengthen international **crisis-management** partnerships and enhance dialogue with other major crisis-management actors – such as the UN, NATO, the African Union (AU), the OSCE and third countries such as the USA, Turkey, etc;
- further expand the EU's capacity to **prevent conflict** as an alternative to crisis management;
- reduce EU **energy dependence** on third countries: in this regard, the committee calls on the VP/HR to pursue with determination Parliament's recommendations for the development of a coherent and coordinated policy, in particular by promoting EU cohesion in constructive dialogue with energy suppliers, and especially with Russia as well as with transit countries;
- formulate strategies which draw attention to a new generation of **security** challenges and risks, e.g. cyber-attacks, social unrest, political insurgencies, global criminal networks and economic activities endangering the rule of law and the principles of democracy;
- point out that European foreign policy must take account of the external dimension of the European area of freedom, security and justice; reiterates the importance of orderly **migration management**;
- strengthen the EU's role in the area of global climate governance and further develop a dialogue with other key actors, such as the emerging powers (China, Brazil, India), Russia, the United States and developing countries, given that **climate change** has become a key element of international relations;
- firmly mainstream **human rights** into EU foreign policy;
- urge the VP/HR to ensure that CFSP policies and actions fully implement UNSCR 1325 on **women, peace and security**.

(2) Main CFSP geographical priorities: the report emphasises that effective **multilateralism** should be the overriding strategic concern of the Union and that, in this context, the EU should take a leading role in international cooperation, support international institutions, facilitate international consensus and advance global action.

Transatlantic relations: Members invite the Union to reconfirm its commitment to the transatlantic partnership with the US and the goal of a barrier-free transatlantic market, which should provide the basis for reinforced transatlantic partnership. They urge the development of a comprehensive EU-US strategy for the improvement of the security situation throughout the greater Middle East, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan which involves cooperation with Turkey, Russia and China.

Western Balkans: the report confirms the EU membership prospects of all the Western Balkan countries and underlines the importance of a continuous commitment to the process from both the countries of the region and the EU. It notes, however, that political instability and institutional weaknesses, together with unresolved bilateral issues, are hampering the further progress of some countries towards EU integration. It stresses that the Union needs a clear and common vision towards the region and calls on the VP/HR and the Commission to actively engage in solving the persistent problems.

Eastern Partnership: Members encourage the VP/HR and the Commission to pursue their commitment to the Eastern Partnership with the eastern European neighbours, with a view to their political association and economic integration, including in the area of energy, on the basis of shared European values and within a framework of conditions and incentives intended to trigger reforms. Members reaffirm the necessity of a coherent approach in the regional cooperation processes through the operationalisation of the initiatives and instruments proposed by the EU for its Eastern neighbourhood (European Partnership, Black Sea Synergy/EU Strategy for the Black Sea, etc.). They call for the prompt establishment of the EU-Neighbourhood-East Parliamentary Assembly (EURONEST), without the participation of the Belarusian Parliament.

Russia: the VP/HR is called upon to: (i) ensure that the EU's approach towards Russia, including in the negotiations on a new EU-Russia Agreement, is coherent; (ii) ensure that enhancing the rule of law, including international law, the principles of reciprocity and transparency, as well as a commitment to the values of pluralist democracy and respect for human rights, constitute the core of the new comprehensive agreement; (iii) assure the unconditional fulfilment and implementation of all the provisions of the six-point agreement of 2008 between Russia, the European Union and Georgia as well as to work towards an ultimate solution of this conflict which respects the territorial integrity of Georgia.

Turkey: Members stress the need for a renewed momentum in Turkey's accession negotiations to avoid a potential standstill in EU-Turkey relations. They deplore the virtual stagnation of Turkey's accession process; recalls that the EU and Turkey are both responsible for overcoming the obstacles on Turkey's path towards membership of the EU. They hope in any case that Turkey will continue its modernisation along European lines.

The Middle East: the report supports the resumption of direct peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) and stresses the need for meaningful negotiations to be conducted within a limited time frame and in a climate of mutual trust, a climate which can only exist if the policy of continuing to build settlements is immediately stopped by Israel.

Given that the EU is the largest contributor to the PA and Israel's main trading partner, it has a direct interest in persuading both parties to address as soon as possible the fundamental questions to be settled (namely refugees, borders and the status of Jerusalem) and in having a viable State of Palestine living in peace, side by side with the State of Israel. Members call on the EU to assume a stronger political role commensurate with its financial involvement in the region. They call on the VP/HR to present a new European strategy for the region outlining the EU's interests and aims and the means it can employ, promoting democracy and the rule of law in the region.

The Mediterranean region: Members call on the EU to offer unequivocal and prompt support to new aspirations to democracy, freedom and social justice. They remain concerned by the absence in the EU's Mediterranean policy of a clear long-term strategic vision for progress and development in the region and call for clarification and improvement of the rationale, goals and working methods of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

The report calls on the EU to build up a **partnership based on mutual interest** and focusing on employment, education and training in order to help alleviate the current social and economic crisis in these countries, and to provide appropriate assistance that may be needed to support the ongoing political reforms and social and economic development. Members urge the authorities of Syria, Bahrain and Yemen to refrain from the use of force against protesters and to respect their right to freedom of assembly and expression.

Asia: Members stress that the starting point for any long-term solution to the **Afghan crisis** must be the Afghan citizens' interests as regards their internal security, civil protection, and economic and social progress, and should include concrete measures for the eradication of poverty and discrimination against women, for enhancing respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as reconciliation mechanisms, an end to opium production, a robust state-building exercise, the integration of Afghanistan into the international community and the banishing of al-Qa'ida from the country. The report reiterates its view that Pakistan has a key role in the region and that a stable, secular, democratic and prosperous Pakistan is of vital importance to stability in Afghanistan and the wider region.

The committee fully endorses the commitment to seek an early negotiated solution to the **Iranian nuclear issue** and supports the Council's twin-track approach aimed at finding a diplomatic solution, as that is the only viable option for a response to the Iranian nuclear issue. It strongly condemns the continuing provocative, inflammatory and anti-Semitic rhetoric of the Iranian President, who has called for Israel to

be ‘wiped out’, and particularly deplores the threats made against the very existence of the State of Israel. It is very concerned by the exponentially rising numbers of executions in Iran, which come down to extrajudicial state murder in view of the lack of any due process, as well as by the continued systematic repression of citizens aspiring to more freedom and democracy.

Members express their satisfaction at the intensification of sectoral dialogues with **China** and call for concerted joint work on the controversial issues highlighted at the recent EU-China Summit. They expect the EU to show solidarity and provide support in order to help **Japan** and the Japanese authorities following the terrible earthquake, tsunami and subsequent nuclear catastrophe which has struck the country. Members also recognise the enormous importance of **India** as an emerging regional economic power and as a great democratic partner for Europe.

Africa: the report supports the partnerships with the African Union (AU) and other African regional organisations in addressing stability and security concerns on the African continent and in ensuring progress in other key areas, such as democratic governance and human rights, climate change and the achievement of the MDGs. Members express support for the decision to devise a comprehensive EU approach to the Horn of Africa region. They believe that the EU should adopt a comprehensive approach to security and stability concerns in the Sahel region.