Resolution on the situation in Burma/Myanmar

2012/2604(RSP) - 20/04/2012 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted 523 votes to 4 with 13 abstentions. a resolution tabled on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the situation in Burma/Myanmar. The resolution was tabled by the S&D, Greens/EFA, ALDE, EPP, GUE/NGL and ECR groups. It welcomes the transparent and credible conduct of the by-elections of 1 April, the first held in Burma for 40 years, and deemed to be free by international observers. Parliament also notes the reported irregularities in the run-up to the poll. It trusts that the newly elected parliamentarians will take up their duties as soon as possible, and supports the authorities in their efforts to guarantee that the reform process is sustainable and irreversible. These by-elections are an indication that Burma/Myanmar is on the path to democratic change.

Members express their great respect for the long struggle over decades of opposition leader and Sakharov Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, congratulating her on her party's victory in the April by-elections and applaud her courage and tenacity as an example of selfless courage and struggle for freedom and democracy in the face of tyranny. They also recognise the steps taken by President Thein Sein and other reformers in the Burmese regime to implement democratic reforms over the past year, and encourage the latter to continue this process as a matter of urgency, so that change becomes irreversible. Whilst welcoming the release of significant numbers of **political detainees**, Parliament calls on the Government of Burma/Myanmar to release all remaining political prisoners without delay and conditions, allowing free access for the ICRC and international human rights bodies to Myanmar's prisons. It urges the Burmese Government to **introduce amendments to the 2008 constitution**, prior to the 2015 elections, that would remove the military's role in civilian politics, notably its seats in both houses of parliament.

The resolution welcomes the EU's positive gestures in support of the beginning of the political transition in the country, including the pledging of EUR 150 million for humanitarian assistance, aimed in particular at developing the country's health and education facilities and assisting the displaced persons. It **calls on the Council to suspend the restrictive measures** currently in place, with the exception of the arms embargo, for an initial period of one year, and closely to monitor the situation in the country. The Commission and the Council are asked to **set clear timelines and benchmarks regarding the evaluation of the ongoing political and economic reform process** in Burma/Myanmar. Parliament also calls on the Council and the Commission to **consider allowing Burma/Myanmar to have privileged market access to the European Union,** stating that responsible and sustainable trade and investment will support Burma /Myanmar's efforts to fight poverty and to ensure that measures benefit broader sections of the population.

Members welcomes the EU's commitment to increasing aid to conflict-afflicted populations and call on the Government of Burma/Myanmar to allow aid agencies and the United Nations access to ethnic states, or to ensure that local community-based and cross-border aid is provided in order to reach these vulnerable populations. They warmly welcomes the efforts by the government, the parliament and the leadership of the armed forces to seek an end to internal armed conflicts waged over decades, and urges the rapid finalisation of peace negotiations with the Kachins. Parliament wants to see **changes to the 1982 law on citizenship** to ensure due recognition of the right to citizenship of the Rohingya ethnic minority.

It calls on Burma/Myanmar to:

- guarantee free and independent media and ensure that the new media law allows for unrestricted access to communication and information technology;
- initiate legal reforms in order to ensure a truly independent and impartial judiciary and to establish a process of justice and accountability for past human rights abuses;

- investigate allegations of sexual violence by the Burmese army and to prosecute those soldiers who have engaged in such acts;
- put an immediate end to the recruitment and use of child soldiers, to intensify measures to ensure the protection of children from armed conflict and to pursue its collaboration with the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict;
- consult the local communities affected by the planned dam projects and to carry out independent environmental impact assessments.
- Members welcome the forthcoming official visit by Baroness Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and her decision to establish a diplomatic presence in the country and to inaugurate the EU Office in Yangon on that occasion.

Lastly, they recall the invitation to the Sakharov Prize winner, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, to visit the European Parliament in order to be officially presented with the Sakharov Prize which she was awarded in 1991 for all she has done to promote democracy and freedom in Burma/Myanmar.