

Resolution on human rights and the security situation in the Sahel region

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on human rights and the security situation in the Sahel region.

The resolution was tabled by the ECR, EFD, Greens/EFA, S&D, ALDE, and EPP groups.

Recalling that the **Sahel arc is a pivotal area between Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe** and that the situation in the Sahel-Saharan strip is therefore a key security issue for both Africa and Europe, Parliament expresses deep concerns about the deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel region. It notes that state fragility, poor governance and corruption, accompanied by economic underdevelopment resulting in chronic poverty, provide a perfect environment for terrorist groups, drug and human traffickers.

The Sahel is affected by both a political and a food crisis, where according to the UN 18 million people have been affected with more than 200 000 children dead of malnutrition in 2011 and where currently one million children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition.

Parliament notes that the region has been experiencing an alarming strengthening of linkages between drug traffickers in Latin America and in states in West/Central Africa, and the latter region now forms a key transit route for drug shipments to Europe, which accounts for more than 25 % of the global consumption of cocaine.

Members call on the EU to work in close cooperation with the authorities and parliaments of the countries of the region, civil society and regional and international bodies, including the African Union and ECOWAS, to **comprehensively address underlying political, economic, social and environmental root causes of poverty**, support economic development, good governance and improved access to key infrastructures and basic services for the local population, and help consolidate state institutions, justice, police and customs in order to strengthen security and the rule of law in the region. Parliament unequivocally condemns all attempts to seize power by force, any acts of terrorism and of pillaging of hospitals, schools, aid agencies and government buildings, all forms of cruel and inhuman punishments associated with the application of Sharia law, and all war crimes, kidnappings and serious violations of human right abuses directed at the population of Mali, especially in rebel-held northern areas, and **calls on the Malian authorities and the Tuareg liberation movement to reach a peaceful and lasting solution through a constructive dialogue.**

Parliament urges the Vice-President / High Representative to **speed up the implementation of the various components of the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel**, which identifies Mauritania, Mali and Niger as core Sahel countries. When implementing the EU Strategy (focusing on four groups of action: development, good governance and internal conflict resolution; political and diplomatic action; security and rule of law; action to counter violent extremism and radicalisation), Parliament urges EEAS to adopt as an **overriding principle the linking of security with development needs**, especially food security. The Strategy also needs to address the risk of fragmentation, and improve the synchronisation of actions undertaken by the EU within different instruments addressing Sahel-related issues.

Members welcome **the EU's humanitarian aid increase to the Sahel region from EUR 45 million to over EUR 120 million since the beginning of 2012**, and urge all sides to make sure that this aid benefits those in need. At the same time, they call on the international community to make the financial efforts needed to address the food crisis and the lack of security in the region.

Pointing out that the Sahel is one of the regions most affected by **climate change and loss of biodiversity**, which have a profound impact on agriculture, farmers and local people's lives, Parliament is convinced that it is indispensable for the international community to focus its actions on reinforcing the ability of the populations concerned to cope with future droughts and other shocks and thereby reduce their dependence on emergency aid, to improve hunger-response strategies and to fight against structural vulnerabilities, and in so doing tackle the problem in a more efficient way. It urges the EU and the international community to focus their activities on efforts to protect the livelihoods of the most vulnerable households, strengthen the resilience of pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and farmers, support the management /conservation of natural resources such as water, trees and soil, provide integrated emergency nutrition assistance to the most vulnerable families, especially women, reinforce disaster risk reduction all levels, and strengthen food security information management and early warning systems.

Members go on to note that the **Libyan conflict has given rise to the proliferation, in the Sahel-Saharan region, of huge quantities of arms**, and to a sudden influx of heavy weapons, which, in the hands of the various terrorist and criminal groups and drug traffickers that are rife in this region, poses a serious threat to the security and stability of the entire sub-region. They urge the states of the Sahel-Saharan region, the new Libyan authorities and the competent multilateral agencies to take all necessary measures to **stop the proliferation of arms** by establishing adequate mechanisms to control and secure national borders across the region, including mechanism to halt the transfer of small arms and light weapons, to implement programmes for destroying illegal small arms and light weapons, and to institute measures for exchanging information and launching joint security operations in the region.

Welcoming the establishment in 2010 of the Joint Staff Operations Committee (CEMOC) by Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger to coordinate the fight against terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking in the Sahel-Saharan region, Parliament wants the international community in general, and the EU in particular to **increase the resources available to CEMOC**.

Lastly, Parliament commends the actions taken by ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations and neighbouring countries with a view to facilitating **Mali's rapid return to constitutional order** and to initiating concrete measures to protect its sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.