Resolution on arms exports: implementation of Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP

2013/2657(RSP) - 04/07/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 369 votes to 109 with 166 abstentions a resolution on arms exports: implementation of Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled as a joint resolution by the ALDE, ECR, and EPP groups.

Recalling that Common Position 2008/944/CFSP is a legally binding framework laying down 8 criteria that must be met for an export licence, Parliament applauds the fact that the EU has a legally binding framework, unique in the world, through which arms export control is being improved, including in crisis regions and countries with questionable human rights records. It also welcomes the fact that European and non-European third countries have joined the arms exports control system on the basis of the Common Position. However, **Members call for more uniform interpretation and implementation of the Common Position** with all its obligations, noting that the eight criteria are applied and interpreted with varying degrees of rigour in the EU Member States. They regret that the EU still does not have a common policy on arms transfers to third countries.

The resolution notes that significant progress has been made on reaching agreement between the Member States with regard to applying and interpreting the Common Position's eight criteria thanks to the **Common Position User's Guide**, drawn up by the Council Working Party on Conventional Arms Exports (COARM). Nevertheless, Parliament is of the opinion that the language of the **User's Guide should be more accurate** and less subject to interpretation and that it should continue to be updated when needed.

Furthermore, the **European Parliament, national parliaments or specific parliamentary bodies** must ensure effective control of the application and enforcement of the Common Position's agreed standards at national and EU level and of the establishment of a transparent, accountable control system. Members call for the criteria of the Common Position to be better applied before new ones are suggested.

The resolution goes on to note that, whist COARM's annual reports have made Member States' arms exports more transparent, it is regrettable that **data sets are incomplete** and vary on account of individual Member States' differing data collection and submission procedures. Member States must make a full, annual submission of information on their arms transfers to COARM as agreed and laid down in the Common Position.

Parliament calls for the following:

- an analysis of how the Common Position is implemented in national systems;
- strengthening COARM's capacity to analyse arms export control;
- complementing the Common Position with a regularly updated, publicly accessible list providing information on the extent to which exports to particular recipient countries are, or are not, in line with the eight criteria;
- setting up an improved system allowing for regular, up-to-date exchanges of information between Member States on arms transfers to ex-embargo states;

- an annual debate in Parliament, together with an annual report, on the implementation of the Common Position, so as to ensure the appropriate degree of parliamentary oversight and transparency at European level.

Lastly, Parliament welcomes the conclusion of a legally binding Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on international trade in conventional arms, creating an effective international arms control system through greater transparency and accountability, and recognises the coherent and consistent role played by the EU and its Member States in support of the international process to establish binding rules governing the international arms trade.

It should be noted that a joint motion for resolution tabled by the S&D, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups was rejected by 269 votes to 365 with 12 abstentions.