

Common foreign and security policy in 2012.

Annual report from the Council to the European Parliament

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Elmar BROK (EPP, DE) on the Annual Report from the Council to the European Parliament on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

Members highlighted that the first quarter of the twenty-first century is characterised by a period of prolonged structural change that is transforming the global order which demands a **fresh approach to shaping a new multi-polar world order that is inclusive** and underpinned by the rule of law and a pluralist democratic model as well as universal values, including human rights. They noted that many obstacles lie ahead, not least in engaging with emerging powers in reforming the multilateral system. The world financial crisis and the growing assertiveness of new emerging economies pose major political, economic, social, cultural and environmental challenges, including internal problems, for all parties. Members stressed that addressing such challenges requires **collective and united EU action**.

Defend the interests of the EU: Members considered that the EU must defend its citizens' interests in the world in a determined, unified manner, while always basing its policies on the promotion of the fundamental values on which the Union is founded. In this respect, Members underlined the need for **EU foreign policy to be flexible** in responding to emerging threats and challenges in many areas. The EU needs not only to be coherent and consistent in its external action, but, also develop a **common vision**. It is for this reason that Members demanded that the instrument of enhanced cooperation be used to secure greater capacity to act, and to overcome the inappropriate use of the veto within the Council. A joint or unified approach should give the EU the strength to pursue its interests and defend its values in this world.

Members stressed that the effectiveness of the EU's external action also depends on the full support of its **citizens** and on the legitimacy it acquires by being anchored in the EU's fundamental values of democracy. They called for Parliament to be regularly informed of foreign policy priorities of the Union.

Building a new, comprehensive approach to the EU's foreign policy: Members urged the Member States to play a constructive role in the Union's foreign and security policy and to improve the Union's effectiveness as a cohesive global actor. The need to develop closer cooperation in order to guarantee military security is stressed.

Overall, Members regretted the fact that the EU has not yet developed a clear strategy for its relations with the rest of the world and that its activities are defined more by reaction than by action. They demanded, therefore, a **fundamental strategic debate, which should include the Council, the Commission and Parliament** and welcomed the European Global Strategy initiative pursued by the foreign ministers of Sweden, Spain, Poland and Italy.

Members stated that there should be closer coordination of EU internal policies and Member States' policy choices in key areas such as connectivity, trade, transport, energy, the environment and communication. They called on the Council and the VP/HR to respond to Parliament's recommendation on the 2013 review of the organisation and the functioning of the EEAS in order to ensure the further development of an appropriate structure within the EEAS in which geographic and thematic expertise are integrated and drive a comprehensive approach to policy planning, formulation and implementation.

Providing leadership and coherence in EU foreign policy: stressing the political leadership role that the VP/HR is expected to play in ensuring the unity, consistency and effectiveness of Union action, Members congratulated Mrs Ashton on her success in bringing the parties together in the EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. They considered that these examples of leadership should be applied to Central Asia to the Middle East and from the Horn of Africa across the Sahel. Members called for a review of the infrastructure distribution and staffing of EU delegations in order to ensure that the Union's efficiency, visibility and representation in third countries reflects the EU's political ambitions and expected priorities. They **regretted the Council's rationale for cutting the multiannual financial framework**, which will reduce the Union's capacity to promote peace, security and sustainable economic development and its credibility in respect of such efforts. They stressed the importance of ensuring that the new external relations financial instruments under consideration by Parliament and the Council are fully funded, tailored to furthering the Union's strategic interests.

Assessing the achievements of the VP/HR and of the Council in 2011: Members welcomed the steps taken by the Council, with the VP/HR's support, in the 2011 Annual Report towards mapping out the Union's foreign policy in a forward-looking and strategic policy document. They considered, however, the Council's Annual Report still falls short of the ambitions of the Lisbon Treaty in important ways, and therefore called for the following in future:

- establish clear priorities and strategic guidelines for the CFSP;
- set out a framework for assessing existing strategic partners and developing new partnerships, including with international and regional organisations;
- set out a roadmap for making progress on important innovations of the Lisbon Treaty, in particular (1) by making operational the assignment of **special tasks and missions to a core group of Member States**, (2) through the establishment by capable and willing Member States of **permanent structured cooperation in defence**, and (3) by enhancing the role of, and providing more resources for, the **European Defence Agency**;
- address acute problems in CSDP decision-making, inter alia in relation to **funding procedures** and the financing of operations, that result in incomprehensible delays between the taking of political decisions to launch a mission and the actual deployment of that mission on the ground (Libya and Mali being the most recent in a long line of examples).

In this respect, Members called on the Council to request that the VP/HR set out in the next Annual Report her foreign policy objectives for the years 2014 and 2015, along with the timeframe and necessary resources for their implementation. These priorities should focus on the EU's strategic aims, starting with the transatlantic partnership, the economic and political development of its Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods, and the Middle East Peace Process.

They called on the Council and the VP/HR, when drawing up future Annual Reports on the CFSP, to engage with the Committee on Foreign Affairs at an early stage in order to discuss foreign policy objectives for the coming years. Members also welcomed the initiative of holding a **European Council Summit in December 2013**.

Strategic priorities: Members welcomed the development of 'strategic partnerships' as a format for the EU's engagement with both established and emerging powers. These partnerships should focus on:

- **USA** in order to cooperate closely with regard to the peaceful resolution of the conflicts and crises arising as a result of Iran's nuclear programme and the transition process in the Arab Spring countries and the Middle East;
- **Russia** in order to strengthen the dialogue with this country with regard to Syria, discrimination of LGBT communities, as well as restricting the freedom of expression;

- **China** to further develop its comprehensive, strategic partnership with this country, promoting both parties' global interests, joint projects based on geostrategic standards, and mutual respect;
- **Turkey** given its status as a candidate country and its growing international standing as regards providing vital humanitarian assistance to Syrians fleeing violence across the borders.

Members considered that **enlargement remains an important tool of EU foreign policy** and is in the EU's long-term strategic interest. However, they stressed, that the enlargement policy needs to take into account the EU's own integration capacity and the genuine commitment of the Western Balkan countries and of Turkey to take up their responsibilities and address outstanding concerns.

The report stressed that the EU needs to put further effort into, place a higher priority on, and show greater commitment to, the **European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)** at a time when this policy is in difficulty. It called for the principles underlying the new ENP approach, as set out by the VP/HR and the Commission in the relevant joint communications, in particular the 'more-for-more', differentiation and mutual accountability principles and the 'partnership with society', to be fully operational and for Union assistance to be fully aligned to this new approach.

As regards the Southern Neighbourhood, Members called for further actions with the Arab Spring countries.

Members regretted the fact that the EU gave up its common policy of an arms embargo on Syria, thereby undermining a common approach on the matter. They invited the Member States to show **solidarity and to provide help to refugees from Syria** and displaced persons within Syria.

Members also made a number of recommendations with a view to strengthening the EU's position in South Africa, Latin America, Asia and Afghanistan.

The called on the EU and the Members States to reconfirm the EU's commitment to advancing effective multilateralism, with the UN system at its core and called on the VP/HR to take stock of the effectiveness of the **EU's Strategy Against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction** and its policies for tackling conventional weapons, including arms exports.

It should be noted that this report is subject to a **minority opinion** which rejects the approach which is based on promoting the militarisation as the core element in CFSP. It preferred a CFSP based on peaceful principles.