Resolution on EU priorities for the 25th session of the UN Human Rights Council

2014/2612(RSP) - 13/03/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on EU priorities for the 25th session of the UN Human Rights Council. The resolution was tabled by EPP, S&D, ALDE, and Greens/EFA groups.

Parliament expressed its **opposition to the arranging of uncontested elections by regional groups**. It emphasised that UNHRC members were required to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, and reiterated the importance of transparent criteria for reinstating **suspended members**. It continued to **oppose 'bloc voting'** in the UNHRC, urging member countries to remain transparent in their voting.

Noting that 14 new members were elected to the UNHRC in October 2013, Members expressed concern about **human rights abuses in a number of newly elected members of the UNHRC,** including Algeria, China, Cuba, Morocco, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam. They were very concerned about **Kazakhstan,** currently one of the 47 members of the HRC, where the human rights situation has deteriorated further since the brutal police repression of peaceful demonstrators and oil workers, their families and supporters in Zhanaozen on 16 December 2011. Parliament called on the HRC to implement without delay the call made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, for an independent international investigation into the killing of oil workers in Kazakhstan. It wanted Kazakhstan, as a member of the HRC, to repeal Article 164 of its penal code on 'inciting social discord', lift the administrative obstacles placed in the way of independent media, release political prisoners and drop all requests for the extradition of opposition politicians.

Parliament went on to state its **regret that NGOs were being offered fewer opportunities to speak at these session**s. Civil society must be allowed to contribute as fully as possible to the 25th session of the UNHRC, as well as to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process and other UN human rights mechanisms, **without fear of reprisals** upon return to their home country. Members condemned reports of such reprisals, and urged the EEAS and the Member States to ensure that such cases are followed up in a systematic manner.

The resolution went on to comment on certain **country-specific issues and thematic issues**. It noted that the EU Foreign Affairs Council of 10 February 2014 set out its priorities ahead of the 25th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council, which included the situation in Syria, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, Sri Lanka, Myanmar/Burma, Belarus, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Mali and Sudan.

The thematic priorities outlined by the Foreign Affairs Council included the death penalty, freedom of religion or belief, the rights of the child, women's rights, the post-2015 global agenda, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of association and assembly, NGO cooperation with UN human rights bodies, torture, LGBTI issues, racism, indigenous peoples, economic, social and cultural rights, business and human rights, and support for UN human rights bodies and mechanisms.

Parliament welcomed the priorities set out by the Council and urged the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Member States to **take into account its recommendations** when promoting the EU's priorities in the UNHRC.