Resolution on the death penalty

2015/2879(RSP) - 08/10/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 569 votes to 38 with 54 abstentions a resolution on the death penalty.

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

Parliament reiterated its condemnation of the use of the death penalty and strongly supported the introduction of a moratorium on the death penalty, as a step towards **universal abolition, which was the EU's ultimate aim.** It condemned all executions wherever they took place, recalling that the death penalty was incompatible with values such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, on which the Union was founded. Any Member State reintroducing the death penalty would therefore be in violation of the Treaties and of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Members continued to be deeply concerned regarding the imposition of the death penalty on minors and on persons with mental or intellectual disability, and called for an immediate and definitive end to such practices, which violate international human rights standards;

Parliament urged the European External Action Service (EEAS) and Member States to continue fighting against the use of the death penalty and to strongly support the moratorium as a step towards abolition, to continue to push for abolition worldwide, and to publish clear and accurate figures on the number of sentences and executions. EEAS must remain vigilant with regard to developments in all countries, in particular Belarus as the only European country which still had the death penalty, and to use all means of influence at its disposal.

The resolution invited the Commission to give **particular attention, as regards aid and political support, to countries that made progress in abolishing the death penalty** or which encouraged a universal moratorium on capital punishment. It also encouraged bilateral and multi-lateral initiatives between Member States, the EU, the UN, third countries and other regional organisations on issues relating to the death penalty.

Welcoming the abolition of the death penalty in certain US states, Members encouraged the EU to continue its dialogue with the USA with a view to total abolition.

Death penalty for drug-related offences: noting that 33 states applied the death penalty for drug-related offences, resulting in approximately 1 000 executions annually, Parliament remained fully convinced that **death sentences failed to deter drug trafficking** or to prevent individuals from falling victim to drug abuse. It reiterated its recommendation to the Commission and Member States that the abolition of the death penalty for drug-related offences should be made a **precondition for financial assistance**, technical assistance, capacity-building and other support for drug enforcement policy. It recalled that the Commission and Member States had given at least EUR 60 million to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) counter-narcotics programmes focused on drug enforcement in countries which actively applied the death penalty for drug offences. Members were deeply concerned by the **lack of transparency around counter-narcotics aid** and assistance provided by the Commission and the Member States to drug enforcement operations in these countries. They also noted that recent NGO reports had expressed concern at the fact that European-funded counter-narcotics programmes in retentionist states might be encouraging capital convictions and executions, and stated that those reports required assessment. Parliament requested that the Commission **publish an annual account of its funding for counter-narcotics programmes in countries which maintained the death penalty for drug offences**, outlining what human rights safeguards had been applied to ensure that such funding did not enable death sentences.

Members urged the Commission to comply with the recommendation in the **EU Action Plan on Drugs (2013-2016)** that a human rights guidance and assessment tool should be developed and implemented to ensure that human rights were effectively mainstreamed into EU External Drugs Action.

Guidance should also be given for a comprehensive and effective European death penalty policy with regard to dozens of **European nationals facing execution** in third countries, which should include strong and reinforced mechanisms in terms of identification, delivery of legal assistance and diplomatic representation.

Parliament called on retentionist countries to introduce **alternatives to the death penalty** for drug offences, which focused notably on drug prevention and harm reduction programmes.