EU/Viet Nam Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Partnership and Cooperation

2015/2096(INI) - 24/11/2015 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Barbara LOCHBIHLER (Greens /EFA, DE) containing a motion for a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Partnership and Cooperation between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Vietnam, of the other part.

Members recalled that the Comprehensive Partnership and Cooperation Agreement aims to establish a modern, broad-based and mutually beneficial partnership, based on shared interests and principles such as equality, mutual respect, the rule of law and human rights. They stated that the EU is Vietnam's biggest export market and is the largest ODA provider to Vietnam and there will be an EU budget increase for this purpose of 30 % to EUR 400 million in 2014-2020.

A favourable agreement: Members welcomed the conclusion of the Agreement and underlined the major strategic importance held by Vietnam as a crucial partner of the EU in South East Asia and ASEAN. Vietnam and the EU are urged to continue economic, trade and new technology cooperation in multilateral fora; welcomes the near doubling of Vietnamese GDP per capita since 2010.

Human Rights: if Vietnam's economic growth is no doubt related to the implementation of the Agreement, Members hoped that it will also have a favourable impact on respect for democratic principles and human rights. They welcomed the decision of the Vietnamese authorities to lift the visa regime for citizens of five European countries and believes that this decision will stimulate stronger cooperation in the tourism sector.

Members welcomed the announcement by the Prime Minister of Vietnam of a 'master plan' for implementing the recommendations of the UNHRC's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), as well as the judicial reform strategy that should be concluded by 2020.

They encouraged the EU to continue support for Vietnam's capacity development in promoting respect for good governance and the rule of law and combating corruption. They called on Parliament and the Commission to evaluate in close consultation any human rights abuses in order to ensure the proper democratic oversight of the implementation of the Comprehensive Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

Moreover, they called on the EU and Vietnam to work towards creating an instrument to monitor developments on human rights in the context of the negotiations on the FTA.

They deplored the fact that more than 500 prisoners are estimated to be on death row and called on the Vietnamese Government to establish an **immediate moratorium on executions**.

Members urged the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court by Vietnam.

On the issue of workers' rights, Members took note that the **garment and textile industry**, which employs more than two million workers, is Vietnam's largest export sector, and is concerned about the

lack of mechanisms available for workers to defend their rights. They called for Vietnam to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Rights to Organise and Convention No 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining.

Members also called for:

- the respect the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- the respect for freedom of religion (for Buddhists, Hoa Hao followers of cults and Cao Dai, and Christians);
- the fight against human trafficking;
- resolute measures to protect children;
- the fight against land grabbing;
- measures against HIV/AIDS;
- the defence of the rights of LGBTI people.

Members urged the Vietnamese authorities to thoroughly investigate the abuses made against journalists, bloggers and whistle-blowers and to put in place greater anti-corruption efforts.

Sustainable development and respect for the environment: Members commended the inclusion in the future Free Trade Agreement of a chapter on trade and sustainable development, commitments to the core labour standards and Conventions of the ILO and the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources.

They expressed serious concern over environmental damage in Vietnam, in particular, pollution, **deforestation** and unsustainable mining activities that destroy whole regions. They urged the Vietnamese Government to introduce measures to guarantee the effective enforcement of legislation to protect the environment and biodiversity and called on the Commission to provide the necessary capacity-building support for this purpose.

Members noted that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment adopted a climate change adaptation strategy. They pointed out that the country is engaged in developing biomass and solar energy and welcomes the strong focus of the EU aid package (2014-2020) on sustainable energy development.

Furthermore, the Commission and the Member States are called upon, in view of the health and environmental legacy of the Vietnam War, to **consider setting up a fund to support victims and war veterans**, and also to step up action through the dispatch of specialist missions to decontaminate harmful substances and demine areas which even now, 40 years after the conflict has ended, continue to claim victims. Members called on the government to reconsider its decision to build and operate Vietnam's first nuclear power plant located in Ninh.

Conflict management: Members called on China and the neighbouring countries concerned including Vietnam to intensify efforts to defuse tension in the contested area in the **South China Sea**.

They considered that the situation risks jeopardising major EU interests in the region, including in terms of global security and the freedom of navigation of major maritime routes that are vital for EU trade. They urged the Commission and Vice-President / High Representative to actively monitor the situation and support a solution to the dispute in accordance with international law.

Lastly, Members called for the establishment of a **regular communication mechanism or forum between the EEAS and Parliament**, so as to ensure transparency and allow the latter to monitor the implementation of the Agreement's objectives notably by providing Parliament with information on the objectives pursued by EU actions and positions, and on all issues relating to Vietnam and by fully involving civil society.