Resolution on the EU's priorities for the UNHRC sessions in 2016

2015/3035(RSP) - 21/01/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 335 votes to 230 with 102 abstentions, a resolution on the EU's priorities for the UNHRC sessions in 2016. The resolution was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens /EFA and EFDD groups.

UN Human Rights Council: Members reaffirmed the importance of the universality of the **Universal Periodic Review** (UPR), with a view to reaching a full understanding of the human rights situation in all UN member states, and reiterated their support for the second cycle of the review. They called again, however, for the recommendations that were not accepted by states **during the first cycle to be reconsidered** in the continuation of the UPR process.

Human rights: Members considered all human rights analysed by the UNHCR, including civil and political rights. They called for the UN member states, including the EU Member States, to implement the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

They **condemned the continued harassment and detention of human rights defenders** and opposition figures by government forces in a number of third countries. Parliament considered that the continued harassment and detention of human rights defenders and opposition figures by a number of UNHRC members **undermines the credibility** of the UNHRC. It urged the EU and its Member States to promote an initiative at UN level to outline a coherent and comprehensive response to the major challenges that human rights defenders face worldwide.

Death penalty: Members recalled the EU's position on zero tolerance for the death penalty and reiterated its long-standing opposition to the death penalty, torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment in all cases and under all circumstances. The EU must continue to advance the moratorium on the death penalty as a **first step towards its permanent abolition**. Members reiterated that the abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity.

Freedom of religion: Parliament recalled that freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief is a **fundamental human right recognised by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. It recalled its interrelatedness with other human rights and fundamental freedoms encompassing the **right to believe or not to believe**, and the right to adopt, change and abandon or return to a belief of one's choice. However, some countries still use state repression, which may include the death penalty, in violation of freedom of religion or belief. Members requested concrete action to protect religious minorities, non-believers, apostates and atheists **who are victims of blasphemy laws.**

Social and economic rights: Parliament was of the opinion that corruption, tax evasion, mismanagement of public goods and lack of accountability are threats to the **equal enjoyment of human rights** and undermine democratic processes, the rule of law, and the fair administration of justice.

On economic rights, Members called on the UN and the EU also to raise with multinational and European enterprises the issue of land grabbing and land rights defenders, who are victims of reprisals.

Migration and refugees: Members were alarmed by the most serious humanitarian crisis since the Second World War. They called on all countries to adopt a **human rights-based approach to migration,**

which safeguards the rights of migrants and refugees in migration policies and management, paying particular attention to the situation of marginalised and disadvantaged groups of migrants and refugees, such as women and children. They recalled that a global strategy on migration is closely linked with development and humanitarian policies.

Rights of women and children: Parliament expressed its dismay at the fact that since the emergence of violent extremist groups such as Daesh in Syria and Iraq or Boko Haram in West Africa, violence against women has taken on a new dimension. It asked the Commission, the EEAS and the Vice-President/High Representative (VP/HR) to continue promoting the political and economic empowerment of women and girls by mainstreaming gender equality in all their external policies and programmes.

With regard to children, Members supported the EU's efforts to promote children's rights, but also recalled that a number of persons have been sentenced to death for crimes committed while under the age of 18 and have been put to death in countries around the world in 2015.

EU human rights mainstreaming and coherence: Members called on the EU to promote the universality and indivisibility of human rights, and reiterated their call for the EU to adopt a rights-based approach. They stresses also that the EU's human rights policy should ensure that its **internal and external policies are coherent**. They requested the EU Special Representative for Human Rights to continue to enhance the effectiveness, coherence and visibility of the EU's human rights policy.

Drones and counter-terrorism: Parliament reiterated its call on the EU Council to develop a EU common position on the use of armed drones, addressing issues such as the legal framework, proportionality, accountability, the protection of civilians and transparency. It also stressed the need to develop effective communication strategies for countering terrorist and extremist propaganda and recruitment methods, notably online.

Lastly, Members took stock of all the **countries under the Universal Periodic Review** (UPR), stressing the situation in certain countries:

- **Syria:** Parliament condemned the deliberate targeting of civilians, indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, attacks on civilians and the persecution of religious and ethnic minorities;
- **Burundi:** Members remained deeply concerned about the humanitarian impact of the crisis on the civilian population in the country.