Resolution on Zambia, particularly the case of Hakainde Hichilema

2017/2681(RSP) - 18/05/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 489 votes to 31, with 67 abstentions, a resolution on Zambia, and in particular the case of Hakainde Hichilema.

The text adopted in plenary was presented as a joint resolution by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE, GUE /NGL, Greens/EFA, EFDD and Barbara KAPPEL.

Members recalled that Zambia has long been a model of democracy with a record of 25 years of peaceful transitions. However, they deplored the fact that the last election campaign in 2016 was marked by violent clashes between supporters of the two main parties, the Patriotic Front and the UPND.

On 11 May 2017, UPND leader Hakainde Hichilema was also detained following a search by heavily armed police officers. The latter was accused of attempting to take the life of the President by allegedly arresting the presidential cortège in Mongu on 9 April 2017. His party, the UNPD, considered that the accusations were due to political motives.

In this context, Members called for fairness, due diligence and transparency in the application of the law and throughout the judicial proceedings concerning Hakainde Hichilema.

At the same time, Members were concerned about reports of increasing restrictions on freedom of expression and association in the country.

They urged the Zambian authorities to promptly launch an impartial and thorough investigation into allegations of ill-treatment suffered by Mr. Hichilema in prison.

They also encouraged all political actors to use the remedies provided by law and the Constitution for the resolution of any dispute and to lift restrictions on freedom of assembly.

Members stressed the urgent need for a peaceful and constructive dialogue between the Patriotic Front and the UPND to restore political confidence and stability. They supported the call for peaceful dialogue between opposing parties launched at the initiative of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Zambia.

Lastly, they reiterated their firm opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances and without exception and called on Zambia to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which aims to abolish the death penalty.