Resolution on Laos, notably the cases of Somphone Phimmasone, Lod Thammavong and Soukane Chaithad

2017/2831(RSP) - 14/09/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Laos, notably the cases of Somphone Phimmasone, Lod Thammavong and Soukane Chaithad.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE, and Greens/EFA groups.

Members called for the **immediate release** of Mr Somphone Phimmasone, Mr Soukane Chaithad and Ms Lod Thammavong, who, in March 2017, were sentenced to prison terms of between. They noted that these verdicts add to a list of arrests and forced disappearances of activists and protesters who have expressed critical views on issues ranging from land disputes to allegations of corruption and abuse of power. They called on the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to urgently raise these cases with Laos. The EU Delegation to Laos should **specifically be present at any proceedings** held against Phimmasone, Thammavong and Chaithad, and continue to raise the cases of jailed and missing individuals. Members wanted the EEAS to put these issues high on the agenda of the future meetings of the EU-Lao PDR Joint Committee and of the next Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit, to be held in Brussels in 2018.

Parliament reiterated its call on the Government of Laos to stop the harassment and arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights defenders, independent journalists and social activists, and condemned the persecution of religious minorities, in particular Christians. It urged the Lao authorities to allow specialised UN agencies and representatives of humanitarian organisations **unrestricted access**, so that they can visit political prisoners and all ethnic and religious minorities in Laos.