Annual report on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by David MCALLISTER (EPP, DE) following the Council's annual report on the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

In a context where the EU's security environment is now more volatile, unpredictable, complex, Members stressed that the time has come for the European Union to take its destiny into its own hands and embrace its role as a fully-fledged, sovereign political and economic power in international relations.

Convinced that no single EU Member State can respond effectively to today's global challenges on its own, they called for a **genuine common European foreign and security policy**, based on strategic autonomy and its integration, including in terms of capabilities, in the areas of industry and operations.

Members regretted that Member States all too often prioritise their national interests, regardless of the possible consequences at a European level, thereby undermining the EU's unity, consistency and effectiveness. They called for **greater solidarity and enhanced coordination** between the EU and the Member States in order to safeguard our democracy, common values, freedom, and the Union's social and environmental standards.

The report called on the EU to stay true to its principles of **democracy, human rights and the rule of law** and encouraged consideration of the policy of 'less for less' for those countries which go into reverse in terms of governance, democracy and human rights.

It called on the institutions and the Member States to act strategically by following an integrated approach and by using all the means at their disposal to strengthen the EU's geopolitical influence and overall image in the world and to protect its interests.

Members called for **adequate financial resources** to be made available for the EU's external action under the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) (2021-2027) and for the EU to focus its resources on strategic priorities, while stressing the need to involve Parliament in the scrutiny and strategic steering of external financing instruments.

The report called on the EEAS to develop '**issue-based coalitions**' with like-minded countries and engage with emerging powers in the provision of global public goods such as peace and security. They also called on all Member States to respect the **principle of solidarity** enshrined in the Treaties (Article 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) and to take the necessary measures to deal with the migration crisis.

Members recommended, *inter alia*:

- to strengthen the EU's internal resilience to external interference and to establish a **common strategy with international partners**, both when it comes to protecting critical infrastructure as well as the basic institutions and hallmarks of our democracies;
- to invest in the stability and prosperity of the **Western Balkans**, reaffirming that the European perspective for the countries of the Western Balkans must lead to their full membership, provided that they meet all the criteria;

- to encourage closer relations within the framework of the **Eastern Partnership** by strengthening economic ties through trade and association agreements, access to the single market and closer people-to-people contacts, including visa facilitation and liberalisation, when all requirements are met;
- to promote economic and social development on the **southern Mediterranean basin** and in sub-Saharan Africa to help countries address the root causes of instability.

Deeming the transatlantic partnership essential for security and prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic, Members regretted the progressive retreat of the US from the multilateral, rules-based world order, namely its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. They called on the EU to show unity, firmness and proportionality in its responses to such decisions in order to reaffirm its full support for the **joint comprehensive action plan with Iran**. They also reaffirmed their determination to support the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Union's partners, condemning Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and its military intervention in eastern Ukraine.

Stressing that the EU must play a leading role in the **Middle East** and the Persian Gulf, Members regretted the US government's decision to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and urged the EU to take a leading role in relaunching real peace in the Middle East peace process aimed at establishing a two-state solution. They called on the Union to do its utmost to put an end to crimes and the use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people. They also condemned Russia's repeated use of its right of veto in the UN Security Council as undermining international efforts for peace and conflict resolution.

Members considered that the establishment of Permanent Structured Cooperation (**PESCO**) on defence projects and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) will help the Member States deepen their defence cooperation and spend their defence budgets more effectively. They are favour a strong defence industry, including the promotion of a single market for cybersecurity products.

Lastly, the report pointed out that the establishment of new formats, such as an **EU Security Council**, as advocated by Chancellor Merkel and President Macron, and new and more advanced methods of coordination within the EU and with international bodies could make decision-making in the context of foreign and security policy (CFSP) more effective.