Implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy - annual report

2019/2136(INI) - 15/01/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 454 votes to 148, with 102 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) - annual report.

An effective common foreign policy

In a context where the EU's strategic environment is deteriorating, Parliament stressed that no single Member State is capable on its own of tackling any of the challenges facing the European continent today: armed conflicts on the eastern and southern borders of the European continent, terrorism - and in particular jihadism, cyber-attacks, foreign interference in European electoral processes, challenges to arms non-proliferation agreements, an increase in forced displacements and uncontrolled migration flows, tensions over Member States' energy supplies and climate change.

Multilateralism at stake: urgent need for a stronger and more united Europe

At a time when competing powers are increasingly challenging the rules-based global order, Members believe that Europe must defend universal values, rules and principles – in particular multilateralism, international law, the rule of law, democracy, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, free and fair trade, non-violent conflict resolution and shared European interests – both outside and inside the EU.

The resolution stressed that multilateralism is the cornerstone of the Union's foreign and security policy and should be the cornerstone of the Union's efforts to prevent, mitigate and resolve conflicts by upholding the norms and principles of international law.

While expressing regret that the United States is gradually withdrawing from the rules-based multilateral global order, Members stressed that the transatlantic partnership remains indispensable for security and prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic.

Parliament called for an EU foreign policy that unites the European institutions and Member States around a strong common foreign policy at Union level. It supported the Commission President's decision to transform the EU's executive into a 'geopolitical Commission' aspiring to become a credible external actor that will systematically address foreign policy issues.

Members stated that the EU should rely more on trade and development instruments such as bilateral and free trade agreements with third countries, making ratification of an agreement conditional on the signature of the Paris Agreement and respect for fundamental European values. In order to maintain its external credibility, the EU should also make its agreements with third countries conditional on respect for human rights clauses and enforce those clauses.

Reinforcing the European Parliament as a pillar of the CFSP

Parliament recalled its duty and responsibility to exercise democratic scrutiny over the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

The resolution stressed Parliament's powers of supervision and control and called for greater attention to be paid to its reports and resolutions. It stressed the importance of parliamentary assemblies as forums for

cooperation and institutional dialogue and highlighted the essential role of EU election observation missions.

Members called for comprehensive information sharing between the Commission and the EEAS to enable Parliament to exercise its scrutiny function effectively, including in the area of CFSP. They called for the strengthening of parliamentary scrutiny and oversight roles over the EU's external action, including in the context of the negotiation process for the future agreement with the United Kingdom. They also called for an increased role of Parliament during the scrutiny and steering of all EU external instruments, including the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for the period 2021-2027 (IPA III).

Strengthening the CFSP to counter global threats

Parliament welcomed the decision taken by the President of the Commission to establish, within five years, a genuine and operational European Defence Union and called for transparent exchanges with Parliament and the Member States to this end. It considered that qualified majority voting would enhance the effectiveness of the EU's foreign and security policy and speed up the decision-making process. It supported a European debate on new formats, such as a European Security Council.

Parliament called for the strengthening of the capacity of the Union and its Member States to act autonomously in the fields of security and defence, while underlining the important role of NATO, one of the pillars of European security.

In particular, Members recommended:

- integrating climate security concerns and the commitment to global environmental governance into the EU's foreign policy;
- working towards a more coherent internal and external policy, an Arctic strategy and a concrete action plan on the Union's engagement in the Arctic that also takes into account geostrategic and security aspects;
- strengthening support for the EU’s maritime security strategy globally and in its neighbourhood;
- establishing an EU-wide monitoring and control mechanism for arms exports and make multilateral nuclear disarmament a priority of the EU's foreign and security policy; the EU should continue its efforts to rescue the Iranian nuclear agreement;
- promoting a more integrated internal market for defence equipment and a coordinated policy of support for defence research and development;
- stepping up efforts to combat cyber and hybrid threats and develop a comprehensive strategy to combat foreign electoral interference and disinformation in national and European democratic processes, including in the form of state-sponsored Russian propaganda;
- increasing investment in developing reliable artificial intelligence technologies to ensure the EU’s strategic autonomy;
- allocating to civilian and military CSDP missions the human and material resources necessary for peacekeeping and conflict prevention and increase the participation of women and their presence in management positions in these missions.

Lastly, Parliament called for a credible EU enlargement strategy in the Western Balkans, rooted in strict and fair conditionality in accordance with the application of the Copenhagen criteria, and which remains for foreign policy reasons an important tool for promoting security by enhancing the resilience of countries in a region of strategic importance to the EU.