Implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy - annual report 2020

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by David McALLISTER (EPP, DE) on the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy – annual report 2020.

Positioning the EU as a 'partner of choice' in a changing geopolitical order

The report highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call for the need for a stronger, more autonomous, more united and assertive foreign and security policy to step up the EU's leadership on the international scene in order to defend and develop a rules based international order which guarantees multilateralism, democracy and human rights, and to promote its values and interests more decisively worldwide. In order to achieve this, the EU first has to successfully assist its partners in the immediate neighbourhood. The EU is called on to establish more strategic cooperation with third countries based on trust and mutual benefit, and of building alliances with like-minded democracies. Its partnership with the UN and NATO should be enhanced in order to build a common complementary approach to current and future regional and global security challenges as well as to conflict situations, health crises, asymmetric and hybrid threats, cyberattacks and disinformation.

A new level of ambition for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP): strategic regional approaches based on a stronger political will

Recalling that no EU Member State alone has sufficient capability and resources to effectively deal with current international challenges, Members considered that, in this context, the EU needs first and foremost a stronger and genuine political will on the part of the EU Member States to jointly agree on and push EU foreign policy goals.

The EU institutions and Member States are called on to coordinate any actions in response to the COVID-19 crisis among themselves and with international partners in order to foster a coherent and inclusive global response to the pandemic. In this regard, they reiterated their call for a revision of the EU Global Strategy in order to draw the lessons from the new geopolitical dynamics, current threats including the COVID-19 pandemic and expected upcoming challenges, and to reassess the goals and means of the CFSP.

The report recalled that the European Parliament's diplomacy constitutes an important pillar of the EU's foreign policy, with its own distinct and complementary instruments and channels. It stressed that Parliament should therefore be recognised as an integral part of the 'Team Europe' approach promoted by the Commission and the EEAS).

Geopolitical priorities

UK

Members stressed that it is essential to agree on common responses to address foreign, security and defence policy challenges based on the principles of multilateralism, the resolution of conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy, and international law, bearing in mind that most international threats affect both sides with the same intensity.

Turkey

The report reiterated that the accession negotiations with Turkey are formally frozen, in light of human rights situation, democratic back-sliding and challenges to the rule of law inside Turkey. It is of common strategic interest to the European Union, its Member States and Turkey that a stable and secure environment be established in the Eastern Mediterranean;.

US

Members stressed that transatlantic cooperation remains crucial and is paramount in the EU's common foreign and security policy. This partnership should be revitalised in order to deal more effectively with the pandemic and other major international challenges such as climate change.

Russia

The report called for a new EU-Russia strategy to be elaborated, which would send a clear signal to the prodemocracy faction in Russian society of the EU's continued willingness to engage and cooperate. It called for the sanctions regime to be strengthened. Members deplored Russia's negative role in disinformation campaigns and other forms of hybrid warfare waged against the EU and the West, which seek to weaken its internal cohesion and thereby its ability to act effectively on the global stage.

China

Members underlined the importance for the EU of pursuing a unified, realistic, effective, firm and more assertive strategy that unites all Member States and shapes relations with China. They encouraged China to assume greater responsibility in dealing with global challenges. As regards Hong Kong, the report noted that the EU will not tolerate its continued human rights violations in Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjang, nor its treatment of people belonging to minorities.

Marine security

The report called for stronger support for the EU maritime security strategy, as maintaining freedom of navigation presents a growing challenge both globally and for the neighbourhood.

Funding

Members stressed that the EU must assume a global leadership role in tackling the consequences of the pandemic, which requires sufficient financial resources. Regretting the proposed cuts by the Council on the external financial instruments and the lack of funding via the Next Generation EU recovery package, they highlighted the need for a more ambitious multiannual financial framework (MFF) in the area of external action and defence and called, in this regard, on the Council to ensure early approval of the European Peace Facility.

The EU budget resources should also be boosted for civilian conflict prevention, for peacebuilding, dialogue, mediation and reconciliation.