Resolution on forced labour in the Linglong factory and environmental protests in Serbia

2021/3020(RSP) - 16/12/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 586 votes to 53, with 44 abstentions, a resolution on forced labour in the Linglong factory and environmental protests in Serbia.

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

Serbia, as is any country aspiring to become a Member State of the EU, needs to develop an irreversible track record in adhering to, upholding and defending the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

However, there have been serious allegations against the Chinese tyre production company Linglong Tire in Zrenjanin, northern Serbia, regarding the working conditions of 500 workers from Vietnam. These allegations include violations of human rights, human trafficking and conditions that could endanger human health and lives.

Serbia is increasing the number of contracts it has with major Chinese industrialists and granting China more and more legal privileges, even when these are contrary to EU law. The agreement between Belgrade and Beijing on the employment of foreigners allows Chinese labour law to be applied in Serbia.

Parliament expressed deep concerns over the alleged forced labour, violation of human rights and human trafficking of the 500 Vietnamese people at the Chinese Linglong Tire factory construction site in Serbia.

The Serbian authorities are urged to:

- investigate the case carefully and ensure respect for fundamental human rights in the factory, especially labour rights, to provide the EU with the conclusions of its investigations and to hold the perpetrators to account;

- allow free, meaningful and unhindered access to the Linglong Tire factory in Zrenjanin and the lodging facilities of the Vietnamese workers for NGOs, CSOs, EU officials and officials from other international organisations;

- improve alignment with EU labour law, adopt a new law on the right to strike, tackle undeclared work and amend the law on inspection oversight to comply with the relevant International Labour Organization conventions, which it has ratified;

Furthermore, Parliament expressed its deep concern over serious problems with corruption and the rule of law in the environment area, over the general lack of transparency and over environmental and social impact assessments of infrastructure projects, including from Chinese investments and loans as well as from multinational companies such as Rio Tinto. It emphasised that Serbian labour and environmental laws should also apply to Chinese companies operating in the country.

The resolution also expressed deep concern over the increasing violence by extremist and hooligan groups against peaceful environmental demonstrations. The Serbian authorities are urged to properly investigate recent cases of mass protests during which the police force allegedly overstepped its authority or failed to protect protesters from violence and protect their human right to peaceful assembly.