Promoting regional stability and security in the broader Middle East region

2020/2113(INI) - 21/10/2022 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Manu PINEDA (GUE/NGL, ES) on promoting regional stability and security in the broader Middle East region.

Current state of play

The countries in the broader Middle East region, which encompasses the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf, are very diverse but strategic for the EU given its geographical position and common ties and requires a long-term approach and coordinated policy. The influence and role of different EU Member States in the region is also very unequal, owing to their specific historic, cultural and socioeconomic ties. These differences hamper a more coherent and effective approach by the EU. There are many state, ethnic and religious rivalries in the Persian Gulf that risk not only perpetuating current crises, such as that in Yemen, but also spreading instability throughout the region. The unresolved conflicts in Libya and Syria are of great concern and hamper the stability of the whole region. Third party actors such as Iran, Russia and Turkey are present in these countries and military and paramilitary groups are involved in these conflicts, such as the Russian Wagner group.

Members highlighted that the current situation in the broader Middle East region is characterised by the persistence of **ongoing conflicts**, including crippling proxy ones with a regional dimension and crises with multiple sources, which makes the development of a global European strategy particularly complex, as any contribution has to be multidimensional and adapted to the specificities of each situation, while maintaining a coherent regional and international dimension.

The report stressed that the EU promotes a peace and stability agenda and is ready to cooperate closely and share **conflict prevention, mediation and counterterrorism methods, experiences and best practices**, both at a bilateral and regional level.

Stressing that EU security is interdependent with security in the Middle East, Members make it clear that **EU funding instruments**, such as the European Peace Facility and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, and humanitarian aid and operations directed at the region should make an important contribution to the stability and prosperity of the region.

Instability in the region

The region has undergone historical changes since the Arab Spring in 2011. Members stressed, however, that the instability that has followed has been caused, *inter alia*, by the decision of certain authoritarian regimes to use violence against peaceful protests and criticism. The EU is called on to foster multilateralism and regional integration in the broader Middle East through the EU-Gulf Cooperation Council institutional partnership and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, including strong inter-parliamentary relations.

More specifically, the report underlined that a stable, secure, united, and prosperous **Libya** is a priority for the EU. As for **Yemen**, the EU should suspend the export of arms that are used in the war in Yemen, given the serious risk of violations of international humanitarian law or humanitarian law.

Members recalled that peace talks between **Israel** and the **Palestinian Authority** on a definitive settlement of the conflict based on a solution enabling both countries to live side-by-side in peace and security is a perquisite for regional stability. They called for the lifting of all restrictive measures on the movement of people and goods imposed by Israel on the territory, but which are having a devastating impact on the population.

Moreover, the EU should pay special attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict due to its exceptional length and to current perspectives that do not allow for a realistic path towards stability across the Middle East.

Stability and security options

Members highlighted that any form of cooperation must be based on a **human security approach and respect for international law**, a rules-based world order and the shared objectives of promoting human rights and democracy. Members deplored the fact that neighbouring countries interfere too often in each other's internal crises and that such interference – whether political or even military in nature – is harmful, causes long-term damage to inter-state relations in the region and prevents conflicts from being resolved. Third countries are called on to **refrain from exporting arms** to countries affected by internal conflicts. They also condemned Iran's recent use of **ballistic missiles and drone attacks** against the Iraqi Kurdistan Region as an unjustified violation of Iraqi sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The report welcomed the EU's commitment to establishing a **weapons of mass destruction–free zone** in the Middle East.

While noting the strategic dimension of **energy cooperation** with the Middle East region, Members underlined the need to diversify the EU's sources of energy. They called on the EU to increase its engagement with the countries of the broader Middle East on the European Green Deal.

On **terrorism**, the EU and its Member States should make a firm commitment to legitimate governments fighting against jihadist networks.

Citizens and human rights

The report noted that peopletopeople contacts and cooperation in fields such as trade education, science and culture play an important role in the region and can make a key contribution to regional stability and the bridging of divides both with the EU and among the different states. Members welcomed the proposal presented by the Commission for **visa exemptions** for citizens of Kuwait and Qatar.

The EU is called on to increase diplomatic and political relations for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as demanded by peaceful popular movements across the Middle East and North Africa region. In addition, highlighting the gravity of violence against women in the region, Members called for the EU and its Member States to urge all parties to conflict in the region to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict.