Promoting regional stability and security in the broader Middle East region

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The European Parliament adopted by 469 votes to 67, with 104 abstentions, a legislative resolution 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 resolution 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. Parliament 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 resolution 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

Parliament 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.

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

Underlining the need to diversify the EU's sources of energy, Parliament called on the EEAS and the Commission to conduct an assessment of the implications in the field of security of any agreement to import oil, gas or hydrogen into the EU.

Parliament deplored that the United Arab Emirates has provided a safe haven for Russian oligarchs avoiding EU sanctions on Russia. The EU and its Member States should make a firm commitment to legitimate governments fighting against jihadist networks.

Citizens and human rights

Parliament 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. It 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. Parliament stressed that rule of law and human rights, good governance and anti-corruption bring benefits to people and foster stability in the region. The prospect of being arbitrarily detained and tortured constitutes an unacceptable form of insecurity for all the citizens of the region and causes more social unrest, mistrust and resentment towards national institutions.

The resolution also called on the authorities in the region to uphold the ban on torture under all circumstances, as enshrined in particular in the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which most of the countries in the region have signed and ratified. It also called for the abolition of the death penalty throughout the region.

Lastly, 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.