Implementation of the common foreign and security policy – annual report 2023

2023/2117(INI) - 28/02/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 338 votes to 86, with 122 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy - annual report 2023.

1. Addressing the consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

Members are concerned that the illegal, unprovoked and unjustified Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, enabled and supported by the illegitimate Lukashenka regime in Belarus and the regime in Iran, has brought war back to the European continent. They demand that Russia, and its proxy forces, cease all military action and that the Russian leadership immediately and unconditionally withdraw its troops from the internationally recognised territory of Ukraine and from any other country whose territory, or parts thereof, it unlawfully occupies.

The report also strongly condemns Russia's ongoing illegal occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and similarly condemns the undermining of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova through the presence of Russian troops in Transnistria.

Members reiterated the need for the Member States to make collective and well-coordinated investments in defence and called for the **full and swift implementation of the Strategic Compass.** They highlighted, in particular, the need to engage further with NATO on the establishment of the Rapid Deployment Capacity and urged the Member States to ensure that the Military Planning and Conduct Capability is fully operational by 2025.

Parliament encouraged the VP/HR to **propose a Council decision** on an EU Rapid Deployment Capacity to protect the Union's values and serve the interests of the Union as a whole, to respond to imminent threats and to react rapidly to a crisis situation outside the Union, including in non-permissive environments and during all stages of a conflict cycle. It underlined that the **EU Rapid Deployment Capacity** should be set up as a force that is permanently available and trains together with the goal of becoming a standing force.

2. Progressively adapting EU structures, funds and decision-making procedures

Members regretted that the potential for fast, efficient and effective foreign, security and defence action, as provided for, *inter alia*, by the passerelle clauses of the TEU, has been used only in a very limited manner. They reiterated their call for the Council to **gradually switch to qualified majority voting** for decisions in areas of the CFSP that do not have military or defence implications.

Members encouraged:

- the introduction of **qualified majority voting** in identified priority areas, such as the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime (EU Magnitsky Act), and on issues pertaining to the adoption and implementation of the next EU action plan on human rights and democracy;

- the application of the **passerelle clauses** provided for in the Treaties, except for the creation of military missions or operations with an executive mandate under the common security and defence policy (CSDP), for which unanimity will still be required;

- the use of **constructive abstention**, pending the full application of qualified majority voting to decisions without military or defence implications;

- the regular revision of the threat analysis underpinning the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence to allow for Member States to converge on and define a common threat perception.

Parliament called for further clarification on the functioning, format of representation and accountability of the 'Team Europe' approach in order to ensure the effective allocation of resources and avoid duplication in the EU's foreign and security policy.

Members believe that there is a need for stronger institutionalised **parliamentary oversight** of the EU's external action, including regular and timely, yet secure, access to confidential information, briefings in the European Parliament and swifter channels of communication with the EEAS. They also called for a change in the structure of the CFSP budget, with **one budget line per civilian CSDP mission**, in order to allow for better scrutiny and increased transparency. Member States are urged to dedicate sufficient funding to the CFSP in light of the need to defend peace, democracy and the rule of law and to ensure better coordination with other policy areas. The report called, in this context, for an appropriate adjustment to the MFF and for increased financing for EU external action.

3. Reinforcing and defending a rules-based multilateralism

Parliament emphasised that multilateral forums, in particular the UN and its agencies, should be considered the EU's format of cooperation of choice. Member States are called on to reinforce inclusive forms of multilateral governance. The resolution encouraged, in this context, the Commission, the EEAS and the Council to step up interinstitutional cooperation with multilateral organisations that are integral to the international rules-based system and the management of global commons, including the UN and its agencies, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the WHO, the WTO and NATO.

According to Members, cooperation between NATO and the EU should be enhanced further while strengthening the European pillar within NATO.

4. Asserting interests through the development of robust strategic alliances and like-minded partnerships

Members emphasised the need to build strategic solidarity between like-minded partners as the best response to a more dangerous and unpredictable security environment. They highlighted the significance of building new alliances, *inter alia* in the Global South, taking into account mutual needs and interests in order to foster real and balanced partnerships.

The resolution also stressed the importance of strong and strategic transatlantic cooperation, including that between NATO and the EU, based on shared values, interests and objectives and on the principle of a partnership of equals. It also called for closer political ties with like-minded partners, in line with the EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, particularly with Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan and the ASEAN member states, including on maritime security, non-proliferation and resilience to hybrid threats.

Priorities in the geographical areas

The terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel have highlighted the volatile and dynamic security situation in the Middle East and the need for the **EU and other international actors to assume greater responsibility** and assist governments and civil society organisations of the region with reaching a durable

and sustainable peace, in particular by continuing to support a two-state solution between **Israel and Palestine**. Parliament condemned in the strongest possible terms, the despicable terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel and called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages taken by the terrorist group Hamas and for the bodies of deceased hostages to be returned. Although Israel has a right to self-defence, such actions must strictly **comply with international humanitarian law**. Parliament condemned the Israeli military's disproportionate response, which has caused a civilian death toll of unprecedented scale. The resolution called for a permanent ceasefire so that aid can be provided to civilians in the Gaza Strip.

Recognises that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine presents both challenges and opportunities for the states in Central Asia, which have traditionally maintained close relations with Russia, Parliament is concerned about Russian and Chinese pressure exerted in the region and stressed the need to **scale up the EU's presence in Central Asia** in response.

Members strongly condemned China's continued military provocations against **Taiwan** and reiterated their firm rejection of any unilateral change to the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, which endangers regional stability.

Parliament denounced Russia's interference in **Africa**, in particular via the increased footprint of the Wagner Group on the continent, and strongly condemned the abuse and crimes committed. It recalled that stability in the Sahel has direct repercussions for the security and stability of European external borders in the Mediterranean. Therefore, the resolution called for the EU to increase resources and enhance cooperation with our partners to combat human trafficking through the Mediterranean and Belarus and dismantle the criminal networks used for human trafficking.

Lastly, Members called for stronger EU engagement in the **Arctic**, as it is of key geostrategic importance for the EU in view of the consequences of climate change, industrial and economic competition, security threats, inter alia caused by Russian military expansion in the High North, and the freedom and safety of navigation.