Human rights in the world. Annual report 1999-2000

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PURPOSE : to present the second annual report on Human Rights in the world. CONTENT : the Council submitted to the Parliament the annual report on human rights which consists of two distinct parts: the first, dedicated to human rights in the Union (see INI/2000/2231), the second, Union action on human rights on the international scene. This report, which concentrates on human rights in the world, aims to ensure a greater transparency of the main positions and actions taken by the Union in the field. It analyses, in particular, the instruments to take action that are at the Union's disposal and their practical application from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000. More specifically, the report focuses on the European Union in relation to its partners and underlines its position on the international scene. It highlights that during Union's regular meetings in the traditional arenas (Commission on Human Rights, United Nations General Assembly), the time-period has provided a number of opportunities for the Member States to work together: - Peking +5 and Copenhagen +5 meetings; - preparation of European and world conferences against racism; - negotiation and adoption of two important protocols to the Convention of children's rights and on children in armed conflicts and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; - the creation of a Special Representative post of the Secretary General on the situation of defenders of human rights; - the human interest conferences and seminars of the OSCE on children in armed conflicts and on the treaty on human beings. The report stresses the importance of the dialogue with organisations in civil society. It recalls the intense activity of several leading organisations in this field throughout the past year, such as the EU Forum on human rights and the conclusions of the conference organised by the Portuguese Presidency and the Commission on the role of human rights and democratic principles in the Union's relations with third countries (held in Venice in May 2000). Lastly, with respect to the legal instruments at the Union's disposal to make progress on human rights in the world, the report stresses the important role of the European Parliament in this field, as well as that of the European Ombudsman and the Court of Justice of the European Communities. It should also be noted that annexed to this document is a list of specific actions taken by the Union with a view to advancing human rights in the world, including, in particular: 1) joint strategies led by the Union (e.g. Ukraine and the Mediterranean region); 2) joint actions (e.g. Palestinian Authority and Bosnia Herzegovina); 3) joint positions (e.g. against human rights violations in Kosovo and in certain African countries); 4) declarations or official Union approaches (e.g. in China and in Russia). In addition to these traditional instruments, the report alsodetails Union action in view of the abolition of the death penalty (including with regard to the USA), specific European missions to evaluate the human rights situations, as well as electoral missions.