A new Asia strategy

1994/2107(COS) - 12/04/1995

The general theme of the report by Mr Jean GOL (ELDR, B) that was adopted was that the EU should make its presence felt in Asia. It aimed to support and supplement the approach proposed by the Commission in its communication "Towards a new Asia strategy". The rapporteur's findings highlighted the importance of Asia: - demographically speaking, including China, Asia accounted for more than half the population of the earth; - economically speaking, Asia was experiencing rapid growth. The World Bank forecasted that by the year 2000 half the growth in the global economy would come from East and South-East Asia alone; - the military strength of many Asian countries was growing. As a result, the European Union should work to develop its relations with Asia. As the committee pointed out, this was all the more important since it was "essential that Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) did not result in bilateral relations from which Europe would be excluded". EU/Asia relations should therefore be developed and to this end the Committee on Foreign Affairs considered that "the Asian countries stood to gain as much as the European Union from joint efforts to improve democratic freedoms". The proposals put forward by Mr GOL to develop this new approach covered several areas: - at political level, he called on the Council "to hold a summit of the Heads of State or Government of the European Union and Asia as soon as possible". With regard to the CFSP, the Council should also accord particular importance to "security and peace issues involving Asian countries". Furthermore, the European Union "should be concerned to develop Asia's enhanced role by means of better Asian representation in international fora through deeper political dialogue". - at economic level, the Committee on Foreign Affairs stated that relations should be developed on the basis of "a partnership with Asian countries". It believed that any agreements concluded should take into account "mutual respect for human rights and democratic principles" and pay particular attention to steps "to reduce child labour". To achieve this new partnership, the Commission should: - make provision for the necessary financial resources; - develop training programmes for students and teachers; - expand the European Union's presence.