Ukraine: action plan

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The Committee adopted the report by Gary TITLEY (PES, UK) on the Commission communication on an action plan for Ukraine. According to the report, the EU should continue to support the democratic process in Ukraine by encouraging the development of civil society. Aid should also continue to be provided to help the country through the process of economic change. This means using all available financial instruments, such as macro-financial aid and TACIS, as well as developing joint industrial and trade ventures with Ukraine in areas such as aeronautics, space, energy and transport. The Ukraine should also be involved in Community programmes in the fields of education, culture, the information society, science and environmental protection, says the report. The partnership agreement - which was signed on 11th June 1994 but has not yet entered into force - is regarded by the committee as only a step towards a closer relationship between Ukraine and the EU. When the time comes, new instruments will need to be negotiated to provide a basis for such a relationship. Welcoming the agreement signed on 30th June 1997 between the WEU and Ukraine on long-distance air transport, Mr Titley said that he believed Ukraine should be involved in an appropriate way in the activities of the WEU, starting with Petersberg-type missions. The committee welcomed the ratification by Ukraine of the European Convention on Human Rights. However, it hoped that Protocol No. 6 (on the abolition of the death penalty) would also be swiftly ratified and expressed displeasure at the execution of thirteen prisoners in 1997. Lastly, the committee stressed that Ukraine must comply with its undertaking to close down completely the nuclear power station at Chernobyl by 2000 and called on the EU and the G7 to encourage Ukraine to achieve this by helping it to diversity its energy sources, combat the wasteful use of energy and improve the safety of those of its nuclear plants which were still in service or had been decommissioned. The international community must also finance the reconstruction of the insulating cover (the "sarcophagus") on the old Chernobyl reactor, which was expected to cost 750 million dollars.