Defence-related industries: implementation of Union's strategy

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An EU strategy proposed by the Commission to restructure the defence sector and develop a common armaments policy, using new provisions in the Amsterdam Treaty, is backed by Gary TITLEY (PES, UK) in his report adopted by the Committee. Mr TITLEY agrees with the Commission that action is urgently needed to rationalize Europe's ailing defence sector and give it a strong technological and industrial base so that it can compete with the US. He also presses for a European security and defence identity to be forged, within Nato, as part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Pointing out that a European armaments policy is no longer "a taboo subject", he wants arms cooperation to be developed with the Western European Union (WEU) and to be harnessed to the needs of the CFSP. He also calls for progress in setting up the European arms agency referred to in the Maastricht Treaty. The Committee states in its resolution that a European arms policy is compatible with global disarmament and presses for the EU code of conduct on arms exports, which imposes moral constraints as well as transparency on the trade, to be made legally binding. It also seeks curbs on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and calls on Member States to ratify the Ottawa Convention banning landmines. Mr TITLEY wants all the instruments provided by the Treaties, under both the first and the second pillars, to be used to develop a common arms policy, involving the applicant countries in the process. The resolution was adopted by 18 votes to 4, with one abstention.