Middle East: role of the European Union in the peace process and its future assistance

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Luigi COLAJANNI (PES, I) voiced concern at the dangers of a rigid approach. He argued that whether or not aid should be provided ought to be based on political assessments. If funding for the police were called into question this would prevent the PA from combating terrorism, which would be a major obstacle to the peace process. To cut off funds for education would in effect leave teaching in the hands of fundamentalists and extremists. Mr MARÍN replied that there was no question of "dropping" areas such as education. However, the watchword must be selectivity and there was a need for agreement between the three institutions (Parliament, Commission and Council) as to what should be financed. Once a programme was drawn up, he planned to submit details of the operating costs to Parliament so that choices could be made on the basis of maximum transparency. Mr Marín's reply anticipated one of the demands made in Mr COLAJANNI's report containing a motion for a resolution on the role of the EU in the peace process and its future assistance to the Middle East, which the Foreign Affairs Committee had adopted earlier that morning. In its report the committee expressed concern about the approach of the fateful date of May 4th, on which, if no progress has been in the peace process, the PA plans to make a unilateral declaration of independence. The Israelis have already announced that, in that case, they would immediately occupy the Territories. The resolution therefore calls for every effort to be made to prompt the Palestinians to postpone the date until after the Israeli general elections in May and June. The committee hopes that the necessary conditions will then exist to enable the principle of "land for peace" to be accepted by Israeli society and to enable the legitimate aspiration of the Palestinians to found their own state to go hand in hand with recognition of Israel's right to security. On the subject of EU funds, the resolution says "swifter action should be taken to ensure that the Commission exerts direct control over the use to which European funds are put, given the unacceptable fact that such funds have been repeatedly misappropriated". In this connection, it supports Commission initiatives "aimed at ensuring total transparency of expenditure and the measures it intends to adopt to this end".