Agreements EC/South Caucasus: partnership and cooperation agreements

1999/2119(COS) - 23/01/2002

The committee adopted the report by Per GAHRTON (Greens/EFA, S) on the Commission communication. Noting the continuing political instability in the region, the report urged the Council to work as quickly as possible towards common strategies over the long term for the countries of the Caucasus, focusing on prevention of violent conflict and the establishment of a framework for security and cooperation in the region. It suggested that this framework could draw inspiration from the Stability Pact for the Balkans and should be accompanied in particular by specific measures to combat the illegal transfer of small arms and handguns. MEPs called on the Commission to prepare differentiated proposals, while adding that the partnership and cooperation agreements with the countries of the South Caucasus should be brought into line with each other in order to create a coordinated approach. In addition, the committee restated its call for consideration to be given to appointing an EU special envoy to the South Caucasus, and proposed a Conference of the three states of the Southern Caucasus and the EU to draw up a strategy for regional cooperation which would promote peace, human rights, democracy, social and cultural development, economic growth and cooperation on shared environmental problems. It also said that a civilian peace corps, using the Commission's rapid reaction facility, could help build confidence between the various ethnic groups. MEPs called on the Commission and Council to ensure that adequate resources were made available to enable the EU, as it had pledged, to step up its contribution to conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation. However, they urged caution as regards the issuing of advice on economic matters, given the experience of privatisation in Central and Eastern Europe and its economic and social consequences. At the same time, the report reminded the three countries of their obligations, as members of the Council of Europe, in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms and urged them to take the measures needed to boost their efforts to fight corruption and promote the rule of law, media freedom and the free development of a civil society. Lastly, the committee backed the aspiration of countries in the region to be part of Europe and to cooperate closely in economic and political areas with European institutions and organisations.