Implementation of the common strategy with Russia

2000/2007(INI) - 22/11/2000

The committee adopted the report by Arie OOSTLANDER (EPP-ED, NL). While considering that the Common Strategy should be regarded as a unique opportunity to enter into a genuine long-term relationship with Russia and to strengthen common values, the committee also expressed criticism of certain Russian actions, notably over Chechnya. It therefore supported a "double track strategy" of condemning explicitly human rights violations and the disproportionate use of force as in the case in Chechnya, while collaborating with Russia in order to strengthen the rule of law and democratic structures of state. In particular it argued that no purely military solution to the Chechen conflict existed, and that war criminals should be brought to justice. Equally it supported the development of trade links and joint research science and technology projects with Russia, which should be a true strategic partner. There was particular support for the Northern Dimension (cooperation with North West Russia) which the committee felt had been underused. Furthermore the Kaliningrad enclave should become a pilot region for cross-border cooperation. The report said that the EU's Tacis support programme for Russia should be geared towards closer cooperative partnership rather than assistance, and wanted it to reinforce support for the achievement of a state based fully on the rule of law - partly by training civil servants in the field of justice and home affairs. It should also promote long-term economic benefits and help vulnerable groups. The report called for revision of Russian criminal law on money-laundering and a more effective implementation of legislation in this area. The EU was also urged to work with Russia to eliminate nuclear hazards - particularly on efforts to decommission obsolete nuclear submarines. Among other items, the committee wanted EU visa policies to be relaxed to make it easier for Russian students to study in the EU. It supported President Putin's tax reforms and his efforts to restore the authority of the state. It called for a proper balance between the legislative and executive powers, and stressed the need to crack down on organised crime and corruption which was endemic and was creating obstacles to Russia's economic development. Finally the committee welcomed the possibility of future Russian participation in EU-led operations and stressed the importance of studying Russian proposals aimed at increasing shared security on the continent, while maintaining full solidarity and common security within the framework of NATO.