Human rights in the world. Annual report 1999-2000

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Matti WUORI (Greens/EFA, FIN) on the 1999-2000 annual report on human rights in the world. The committee called for the EU to actively promote human rights and democracy in all its activities across the world, including EU conflict prevention efforts. Human rights matters should also be fully addressed in peace-building dialogues and in agreements with third countries. Council and Commission were accordingly urged to develop more focused thematic common strategies on human rights. Such strategies should be subject to annual review and should ensure consistency across relevant EU policies. The committee expressed concern that many of the EU's international agreements which contained human rights clauses did not include rules setting out how the agreement might be suspended in the case of serious human rights abuses, and wanted to this to be rectified. Parliament's views should be taken into account when invoking the human rights clause in such agreements. Member States should ensure consistency between their actions and those of the EU, particularly when suspending bilateral co-operation. The report also paid special attention to violations of the fundamental right of freedom of expression. In particular it wanted concrete measures to be taken to prevent attacks on journalists and to ensure that press freedoms were safeguarded. There was also mention of human rights in the context of enlargement, with specific condemnation of continuing discrimination against the Roma people in several applicant states - most notably Romania. Turkey also came under fire for human rights abuses inflicted on its Kurdish and Christian minorities as well as in Cyprus, and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was also condemned for human rights violations, especially towards women. Other items taken up in the report included the need for Parliament to improve its own structures for dealing with human rights-related matters, notably the appointment of a special "representative" (possibly a vice-chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee) to pursue all human rights related issues, including follow-up of individual cases of human rights violations.