Democracy and human rights: EU election assistance and observation

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The committee adopted the report by Giovanni Claudio FAVA (PES, I) on the Commission communication. The report stressed the key role of the European Parliament in monitoring elections, saying that, in view of Parliament's democratic legitimacy, the presence of its representatives would raise the political profile of observation missions. The committee also called for decisions on the missions to be taken every six months within the framework of an institutional agreement. Election observation should cover not only the day of the election but also the preparations for the elections and post-electoral developments. Only the House could determine the size and composition of a Parliament observation mission and determine its duration. Parliament should establish an "Election Coordination Group" which would cover all aspects of election monitoring. The Commission was also urged to set up an election unit within its External Relations Directorate that would be the main contact point for Parliament and Council and ensure a systematic and coordinated EU strategy. The committee wanted to see clearer definitions of what constituted a truly democratic election. General transparent criteria for the whole electoral process on the basis of respect for human rights needed to be drawn up. The terms "free and fair" were deemed to be often inadequate and other criteria should be included before an election was declared as having been in accordance with democratic principles. There should also be sustainable long-term support for the democracy, whereby the EU would assist political and social forces in the country to set out priorities for the whole democratic process, including the organisation of elections.