Mediterranean region: common strategy of the European Council of 19 June 2000, Feira

2000/2247(COS) - 16/01/2001

The committee adopted the report by Cristiana MUSCARDINI (UEN, I) expressing support for the EU's common strategy for the Mediterranean region. The committee considered the Strategy - which was laid down at the Feira summit in June 2000 - to be in line with the Barcelona cooperation process which Parliament wanted to be reactivated. The Strategy should give priority to the promotion of human rights and democracy, the encouragement of direct investment in the region and dialogue on the cultural level. The Council was urged to take all necessary steps to take the Strategy forward and there was a particular welcome for steps to create a permanent structure bringing together MEPs and parliamentarians from the partner states. The committee also called for a partnership extending to the security sphere in order to build a common area of peace and security. The Mediterranean should be a nuclear-free zone. It regretted that the Strategy had no initiatives on the environment, and the Council was urged to remedy this gap. There was criticism too of the absence of specific information on the ways in which the Strategy would be implemented and of the failure to mention the overall budgetary framework to be used to finance it. The committee felt that the establishment of a free trade area could not be confined to the free movement of capital, but should extend to exchanges, notably of students and qualified workers. Support should be given to building civil society in the Mediterranean countries. Other issues taken up included the need to crack down on drug trafficking and child exploitation and the desirability of promoting a genuine "Euro-Mediterranean" agricultural policy. Lastly, the report supported the EU's aim of achieving an all-encompassing and strategic partnership with the Mediterranean region. Access to the MEDA programme should not be linked to the signature of the partnership agreements as they did not correspond to the programme's initial objective, i.e. assisting the EU's partners to undertake reforms and to be competitive in the future free trade area.