Relations between European Union and the Union of Arabic Maghreb: coming into force of a privileged partnership

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Philippe MORILLON (EPP-ED, F) and Daniel COHN-BENDIT (Greens/EFA, F) on a privileged partnership between the European Union and the Arab Maghreb Union. The report underlined Parliament's firm commitment to an active, open and constructive Euro-Mediterranean policy based on closer dialogue between cultures. It also called for new forms of political and economic cooperation between stable, unified partners, which it said could take the form of a pact for stability, democracy and development. MEPs stressed that closer ties and efforts to promote regional cooperation between the Maghreb countries were crucial to the development of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. They added that the EU had a duty, in cooperation with the UN, to assist in resolving disputes and in creating a climate of peace in the region, in the interests of all concerned. As regards the existing Euro-Mediterranean agreements, MEPs believed these should be regularly evaluated, once a year, by the association council with the full involvement of the European Parliament and the parliaments of the Maghreb countries. In addition, the Commission was asked to draw up an assessment of the economic and social impact of the association agreements. The report backed the fight against terrorism but reiterated the importance of the clause on human rights, democracy and the rule of law contained in the association agreements, as well as the need for political pluralism and safeguards for freedom of association in the Maghreb states. In addition the Commission was urged to act independently when administering the EU democracy and human rights programmes. On the economic front, the committee said that it was not enough to open up borders if this did not go hand-in-hand with investment geared towards the complementary development and integration of the economies of the region. The EU should also reconsider its immigration policy with a view to sharing responsibility with the Maghreb States for the management of migration flows. The aim must be to harness immigration so as to assist development in the country of origin and implement an integration policy in host countries while still combating illegal trafficking in human beings.