Human rights and democratisation: role of the Union in third countries

2001/2276(COS) - 19/03/2002

The committee adopted the report by Rosa DIEZ GONZALEZ (PES, E) on the Commission communication. MEP's welcomed the Commission paper, although they added a number of recommendations of their own. In particular they wanted an interinstitutional code of conduct to be drawn up, governing relations between the EU and the countries with which it has concluded various agreements containing a "democracy clause", in order to ensure a more coherent approach in the Union's external action on democratisation and human rights. The code of conduct would require a suspension of economic and political relations between the EU and any third countries identified by the United Nations as supporting or sponsoring terrorism. Occasional human rights violations could also result in the suspension of agreements. The committee also called for any third country wishing to have political, economic or other relations with the EU to be required to sign, ratify and apply basic texts on human rights. Furthermore, the report said that, under the code, the existence of the death penalty in a non-EU country should automatically trigger a demand that it be abolished or that a universal moratorium be introduced as a clear indication of the EU's position. The report also specified that the application of the democracy clause should under no circumstances affect the provision of humanitarian aid to third states, irrespective of the type of relations they have with the EU. This aid should preferably be distributed through UN agencies or NGOs rather than through government channels. Lastly, the committee wanted to ensure that respect for women's rights as a part of human rights was included as a key element in all Community programmes and as a criterion for external relations with non-EU countries. As a specific condition of any form of financial aid, such countries should be required to eradicate and penalise the worst kinds of violence against women, including genital mutilation, stoning and rape in times of war.