Euro-Mediterranean relations: meeting of Foreign Ministers, 22-23 April 2002, Valencia

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The committee unanimously adopted the report by Pere ESTEVE (ELDR, E) on the Commission communication. MEPs welcomed the speed with which the Commission had brought forward this paper, thus enabling Parliament to adopt an official position before the EuroMediterranean conference, and gave their unreserved backing to the launch of the proposed Action Plan to revitalise the fundamental goals, including the political objectives, of the Barcelona process. The committee called for reinforced political dialogue and EuroMediterranean political and security cooperation, and proposed the establishment of a contact network to ease cooperation in the fight against terrorism, while stressing that this would entail full, unconditional respect for human rights. The Barcelona process was also seen as providing crucial support for any solution to the Middle East conflict. In addition, the committee recommended increased economic and financial cooperation and the establishment of a EuroMediterranean free trade area, in line with the Agadir declaration. It backed a proposal by the Spanish Presidency for a Euromediterranean Development Bank to be set up. MEPs also called for better management of the MEDA programme and for financial aid cooperation to be more decentralised. Lastly the report stressed the need to boost intercultural dialogue, which would cover educational and university exchanges as well as arrangements for joint management of migration.