Annual report on the human rights in the world in 2003 and the Union's policy on this matter

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The committee adopted the annual report drawn up by Véronique DE KEYSER (PES, B) on human rights in the world for 2003. The main focus of the report was the fight against terrorism and the rights of disabled people. MEPs stressed that the fight against terrorism had to take place in the framework of international law and that democratic countries must set an example. The committee called on the US authorities to put an immediate end to the legal limbo in which the detainees held in Guantánamo Bay had been placed and to guarantee immediate access to justice in order to determine the status of each individual detainee on a case-by-case basis. MEPs also condemned certain dictatorships (without naming them) which use the fight against terrorism as a pretext for stepping up repression against political dissidence. Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the committee condemned all acts of violence, including extra-judicial killings, indiscriminate terrorist attacks, the continuing Israeli settlement activities and the construction of the "security fence". Turning to the question of the fundamental rights of disabled people, the committee pointed out that, according to the UN, there are more than 500 million such people in the world. 2003 was the European Year of Disabled People and it focused attention on the special needs of the disabled, such as the barriers to their inclusion in social, professional, family, emotional and sexual life. Among their comments on this subject, MEPs condemned the unacceptable obstacles faced in some countries by disabled children, adolescents and students in gaining access to education or training. The committee deplored the human rights violations experienced by many disabled people in the world, notably those living in institutions where they are subject to degrading treatment, violence and abuse. MEPs called on the Commission to draw up a specific report on this matter. Lastly, the committee fully supported the Council and Member States in calling for an international convention to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by disabled people.