EC/Cambodia agreement: cooperation agreement

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In contrast to the opinion of the Committee on Foreign affairs, Security and Defence policy (13 votes to 11), the Committee adopting the report by Luciano PETTINARI (EUL/NGL, I), recommended approval of a cooperation agreement between the EU and Cambodia. The signing of a peace agreement on 23 October 1991, together with the free democratic elections held in May 1993, represented a major turning-point. The next general elections are due in November 1998. However, as the elections approach, there is widespread corruption and deforestation continues to be authorised, contrary to promises made. Moreover, the IMF suspended its aid in November 1996. Thus, while the peace process has got off the ground, it remains fragile. This is, in fact, precisely why the rapporteur believes the process must be encouraged by all available means and regards the signing of a framework cooperation agreement with Cambodia as an appropriate tool to achieve this. Under the agreement, the focus will be on measures to combat poverty as well as support sustainable development and social progress. On trade, the agreement would grant Cambodia the most-favoured nation clause. Economic cooperation will help the country overhaul its economy and promote private investment. One article specifically mentions the need to eliminate illegal tree-felling and promote sustainable development of forestry resources. Other provisions deal with agricultural cooperation, energy, regional cooperation, science and technology, infrastructure and cultural cooperation. Human rights are a key component of the agreement: the EU can suspend the agreement under a special emergency procedure in cases of human rights violations.