MEDA programme, Mediterranean countries (Regulation (EC) No 1488/96). Annual report 2000

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Yves PIÉTRASANTA (Greens/EFA, F) on the annual report on the MEDA 2000 programme. It began by reaffirming its support for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and welcoming the new provisions for the MEDA II programme. It noted the improvement in the payment-to-commitment ratio and urged the Commission to achieve even greater efficiency in the use of credits as well as "a significant decrease in 'sleeping' commitments (RAL)". It stressed, however, that such improvements in the programme should also be accompanied by more precise targeting of the real issues and the setting of objectives which reflected these realities. The Commission was also asked to pay particular attention to laying down the optimum size for projects in order to avoid actions being fragmented into a large number of micro-projects, which were difficult to monitor. The committee singled out a number of priority areas, including reforms in the institutional sector, and called on the Commission to report to it before Parliament's 1st reading of the 2004 budget on the progress made in this field by the beneficiary countries. It also wanted to see social action programmes to protect the disabled and forms of regional cooperation concerning the protection of children. Other recommendations included: - rapidly launching the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for dialogue between cultures and civilisations and the Observatory on Migration; - concluding as soon as possible the negotiations on a Syria/EU Association Agreement so as to complete the network of Euro-Mediterranean association agreements; - effective implementation of the arrangements adopted in the Barcelona Declaration on democratisation and respect for human rights: the committee pointed out that the key criterion for eligibility for MEDA funds was respect for human rights by the beneficiary countries; - incorporation of the gender dimension and hence of respect for and the promotion of women's rights in the Barcelona process; - relaunching as soon as possible the project selection and planning processes for MEDA-funded programmes currently suspended in Israel and Palestine; - greater funding for regional projects and a better balance between bilateral and regional cooperation; - appropriate monitoring and auditing of projects; - greater emphasis on renewable energies; - development of the information society and use of the Internet, by investing in training and education in schools. Lastly, the committee reiterated its support for the official establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary assembly at the EuroMed ministerial conference in Naples scheduled for December 2003.