Displaced persons: temporary protection

1997/0081(CNS) - 23/09/1997

The Committee has adopted the draft report by Jan WIEBENGA (ELDR, Nl) on a joint action to provide temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced people, particularly if they are in need of international protection. The protection takes the form of looking after the people concerned and of their being granted a number of rights. In principle the accommodation should be temporary. On the other hand, Mr WIEBENGA thinks that this policy is inappropriate if there is only a small number of people in need of protection, in which case the Member States should apply the normal asylum procedures based on the Geneva Convention. One of the central aspects of the joint action is harmonization of the basic rights to which displaced persons are entitled (residence permits, family reunification, means of subsistence, medical care, education and work). The other is the duration of the temporary protection period. Harmonization is desirable to ensure that refugees will be equally well received in all Member States. At present the differences are sometimes considerable. Minimum rights can also be affected. The committee has proposed that the benefit of temporary protection should not be applied to those suspected of:- - committing a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity, as defined in the international instruments drawn up to make provision in respect of such crimes; - committing a serious non-political crime outside the country of refuge prior to his or her arrival on the territory of one of the Member States; or - guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The committee also takes the view that a Member State may refuse the benefit of temporary protection to any person considered a threat to the security of that Member State.