Fight against organized crime: making corruption in the private sector a criminal offence

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The committee gave its unanimous backing to the proposal for a Joint Action on making corruption in the private sector a criminal offence (Article K.6 of the Treaty - third pillar - consultation procedure), for which Mr BONTEMPI was the rapporteur. This Joint Action is based on the recommendations of the High Level Group appointed by the Dublin European Council in December 1996 and is intended to contribute to a consistent, coordinated approach by the EU to the fight against organised crime. The report emphasises that the link between organized crime and corruption threatens the fundamental democratic principles of the European Union. To combat corruption, it advocates the adoption by Member States of effective, proportionate and dissuasive criminal penalties, including, at least in serious cases, penalties involving deprivation of liberty, which could constitute grounds for extradition. It also seeks to establish that legal persons may be held criminally liable, an idea which it takes from the Convention on the protection of the European Communities' financial interests. Member States are asked to take legislative measures to ensure smooth and effective cooperation. The committee is also calling for the EU Court of Justice to have jurisdiction to give preliminary rulings in such cases.