Asylum: common procedure, uniform status valid throughout the Union

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The committee adopted the report by Robert EVANS (PES, UK) on the Commission paper, stressing that a common European asylum policy should maintain high standards for refugee protection, include a common definition of refugees and ensure full and inclusive interpretation of the Geneva Convention, taking account of persecution by both state and non-state agents and of an asylum seeker·s fear of future persecution as grounds for granting asylum. Moreover, the report said that appeals procedures and the time taken to process asylum applications should be harmonised. The use of concepts such as safe third country, safe country of origin, accelerated procedures and procedures for manifestly unfounded applications should be limited to where justified and include legally binding guarantees. There should be agreement on a common list of safe countries which should take account of recent developments and be based on human rights considerations. MEPs were also concerned that the Commission so far had submitted no proposals on a common repatriation policy for asylum seekers whose applications had been rejected. Member States should encourage and organise voluntary return to the country of origin for asylum seekers whose applications had been rejected, and offer them material aid as well as other forms of support. The Commission should develop resettlement programmes. MEPs said that the Commission should also consider measures to combat the root causes of migration and that even greater attention should be paid to conflict prevention. Lastly, the report said that the EU should provide even greater support to the UNHCR and the High Commissioner for Refugees for the reception of refugees in regions affected by conflict. Appropriate financial support for the UNHCR from the EU and Member States was urgently needed.