Nuclear material and radioactive substances: illegal trafficking

1994/2128(COS) - 07/09/1994 - Non-legislative basic document

The problem of the illicit traffic in radioactive substances is serious, complex and of immense geographical proportions and therefore requires a global response on the part of the Union. The purpose of this communication is to draw attention to the seriousness of this problem and suggest a number of ways of dealing with it in an efficient, coordinated manner, using the various instruments at the Union's disposal (Community pillars, CFSP and justice and internal affairs). A Union response should target the following objectives: 1) The operating conditions of the nuclear sector (i.e. safety controls on nuclear materials in countries affected by the traffic in dangerous substances) need to be improved. The Commission suggests that maximum use should be made of assistance programmes already under way, especially: - the assistance provided by the safety control directorate of Euratom; - the technical assistance provided under the TACIS programme, with the support of the Joint Research Centre; - the Moscow Centre of Science and Technology. In addition, industrial assistance provided by various donors and operators should be subject to exchanges of information and coordination. 2) Everything should be done to stop nuclear materials entering the territory of the Union at the Union's external borders. Consequently: - the Commission intends to strengthen customs cooperation in order to prevent and detect attempted smuggling; - the potential offered by the third pillar (justice and home affairs) should be explored and used to the maximum; - the safety control directorate of Euratom and the JRC will offer their services to the national authorities facing this problem. 3) Cooperation between all the states involved is essential. The Commission considers that: - advantage should be taken of the potential for cooperation in extant agreements (partnership and Europe agreements) in order to find a common approach; - future agreements should, where applicable, include provision for such cooperation; - the possibility of making use of the joint action on non-proliferation already decided should be examined within the framework of the CFSP, as should any other action which might help to fight this traffic; - close cooperation should be maintained or introduced with third countries which could help in the fight against this traffic, especially the United States.