Europe and the United States US: the way forward

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In adopting the report by Mr Dominique SOUCHET (I-EDN, F) on Europe's relations with the USA, the European Parliament welcomed the New Transatlantic Agenda and the Joint Action Plan. It considered that strengthening relations between Europe and the United States would enhance the stability of the international community. However, it took the view that this must be achieved by striking a new balance in relations between the parties in order to attain genuine partnership. It expressed itself in favour of the adoption of joint international political initiatives on condition that balance between the partners was respected and that the Union and its Member States were not associated with them solely in the capacity of paymasters. It wished the current dialogue to be enhanced and deepened, particularly with regard to terrorism and organized crime, trafficking in human beings and drugs, trafficking in fissile material, illegal immigration and the environment. In this respect it condemned the USA's retrograde position on leghold traps. It called for greater Euro-American cooperation within international organizations, in managing crises and deploying peace-keeping forces in sensitive regions. It called on the Union, the Member States and the USA to continue and coordinate their development aid efforts to enable the funds available to be put to the best possible use. At the same time, Parliament called on the Commission to defend European interests in the sphere of external trade relations firmly and vigilantly, taking care in particular, when negotiating with the United States, to ensure the strict reciprocity of concessions, symmetry in the granting of advantages, and linkage (globalization) of negotiations, especially with regard to WTO panels. On this subject, Parliament again called on the Commission to ensure openness in its handling of negotiations with the USA, keeping Parliament informed of the guidelines it intended to follow (e.g. the multilateral agreement on investment). It again condemned the extraterritorial application of the Helms-Burton and D'Amato-Kennedy Acts to transatlantic trade relations, hoped that dialogue would make it possible to attain more flexible positions on the part of the Americans, and called on the Union to adopt equivalent instruments to enable it to defend its interests better. In passing, it recalled its full endorsement of the action taken by the Union in connection with the WTO with a view to settling the dispute and expressed the view that if the arrangement of April 1997 between the EU and the USA did not result in a valid solution, the Union should again resort to the WTO trade panel procedure. Parliament condemned the recent initiatives by certain US federal states with extraterritorial repercussions in the form of barriers to trade (e.g. the Buy American Act). It called on national parliaments and Congress to do everything possible to help prevent Euro-American crises, notably by explaining to American Congressmen that the same political objectives (e.g. the fight against terrorism) could be pursued by different means. It called for cooperation between the Union and the USA in external affairs to be stepped up. Similarly, the EU and the USA should coordinate their arms export policies. Parliament called on the Union to draw the USA's attention to consumer protection and health standards, and called for imports into Europe of bovine meat containing hormones to be banned. It called on the Union to increase its representation in certain states of the USA (e.g. California). On another point, Parliament called on the USA to abolish the death penalty and called for the ban on landmines (Ottawa Declaration) to be placed on the agenda for the transatlantic dialogue.