Fourth United Nations International Conference on Women (September 1995, Beijing)

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In its resolution on the sixth World Conference on Women (Beijing), the European Parliament started by welcoming the Commission's initiative in making provision for transparent working documents on preparations for the conference but regretted that it had not been more closely involved with the preparatory conferences and the World Conference itself. Parliament called on the Council to include a majority of women in the Union delegation to the Beijing conference, together with representatives from NGOs. It specifically called on the Council to define a common Union position as the basis for negotiation at the Beijing conference and for the Union to make a clear and firm declaration in favour of human rights and affirm that women's and children's rights were an integral part of these fundamental rights. The European delegation should lobby for a categorical rejection of rape as a weapon of war and for effective prosecution of rapists before an international court. Sexual violence should be seen as a violation of human rights throughout the world and as legitimate grounds for granting asylum rights. The Member States of the Union should also lobby at the conference for the United Nations Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) to be recognized and signed. One of Parliament's specific demands was for the Commission to propose a European "emergency plan" to improve the situation of women in developing countries and, more specifically, in the refugee camps (fight against poverty, vaccination, access to hygiene etc.). Parliament again drew attention to the fact that urgent measures were needed so that women could reconcile work and family life. It also urged for equality between the sexes to be taught as a principle and for the Member States to make a real effort to raise awareness of this issue. Similarly, public awareness campaigns were needed on trafficking in women, child labour, economic exploitation of women and AIDS prevention directed specifically at women. Parliament also drew attention to efforts by NGOs working for women's rights so that their actions could be identified and taken into due account. Finally, Parliament roundly condemned: - coercive measures in China against women who wished to have more than one child or who were forced to have an abortion if their child appeared to be deformed; - the fact that forced abortions were mainly of female foetuses and that this practice was widespread in Tibet (resulting in disguised genocide of the Tibetan people).