Nuclear material and radioactive substances: illegal trafficking

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In adopting the report by Mr Martin SCHULZ (PSE, D) on the Communication from the Commission on the illicit traffic in radioactive substances and nuclear materials, Parliament took the view that a policy focussing on cooperation and controlled disarmament offers the best guarantee for peace and called on the European Union to develop programmes with the aim of converting military nuclear materials into less dangerous materials. It took the view that a comprehensive picture of trade in radioactive and nuclear substances of all kinds could be built up and called on the Commission, by means of a regulatory instrument, to initiate the necessary procedures ensuring a harmonized approach to the legal traffic of nuclear materials as well as to the monitoring procedures and techniques relating thereto. It also called on the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference to develop a clear legal basis for this within the framework of environmental policy and to clear the way for comprehensive Euratom monitoring of all stocks and all shipments of nuclear materials on the territory of the European Union. As regards prevention, the report called for the stepping-up of technical assistance to improve the monitoring of the security of nuclear materials in the CIS and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It called on the Council to draw up a report comparing the standard of physical protection in the Member States with the US systems, which are regarded as rigorous; it also called on the Commission to draw up a detailed analysis of the funding needed by Euratom safeguards and not to go ahead with the cuts in appropriations provided for in the preliminary draft budget. As regards the fight against crime, the report called on the Member States to develop and expand Europol without delay and to harmonize their legislation in this field. It took the view that the Member States should step up cooperation between their own secret services and that investigations must be carried out to establish how far government agencies of third countries are themselves involved in the illicit traffic in nuclear or radioactive substances. Parliament also called on the Commission to investigate the dispute between the German Government and Euratom, the German Government claiming that Euratom safeguards had been notified of an imminent movement of nuclear materials on 27 July 1994, while Euratom declared it had not been warned until 10 August 1994 when 400 grammes of plutonium were seized at Munich airport.