Environment: Europe-Asia cooperation strategy

1997/2240(COS) - 14/07/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting without debate the report by Mrs Lone DYBKJAER (ELDR, DK) on a Europe-Asia cooperation strategy in the field of the environment, Parliament agreed with the principles set out in the Commission communication but was surprised at the lack of concrete suggestions in the document. It therefore intended to stress the measures the Commission should take to that end. In particular it wished a stronger commitment to combat climate change and a clear linkage to the clean technology and technology transfer schemes agreed at Kyoto. It regretted the Commission's focus on the export-led industrialising Asian countries and affirmed that a cooperation strategy should actively include the South Asian developing countries to a greater extent and should seek sustainable development. The strategy proposed should also help the Asian countries to fulfil the obligations derived from international agreements such as Agenda 21, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Montreal Protocol, etc. Parliament noted that the actions proposed failed to reach the poorest sections of the population and called for specific initiatives. The European Investment Bank should have clear policies concerning the environmental impact of its operations. At the same time Parliament hoped that European Union companies would comply with a uniformly high level of environmental standards. It called for a code of conduct containing environmental standards which European Union companies should uphold when carrying out activities in Asia. It also called on the Commission to develop plans to assist capacity building in national, regional and local government administrations in Asia with regard to environmental management and it stressed the need to support Asian governments in the reducing of administrative deficiencies in this area. Parliament considered it a matter of urgency to integrate experiences from existing programmes into the cooperation process (e.g. the EU-China cooperation programme). With regard to financing, Parliament hoped that public and private funding would be involved with some specific European funding. The programmes financed should be subject to continuous evaluation and should have direct effects on biodiversity. The Union should also, in the financing agreements which it concludes with the Asian countries, impose environmental management conditions. Parliament considered in particular that it would be more efficient to gather together all budgetary elements concerning the environment and cooperation with Asia with a framework programme. It pointed out that water pollution was responsible for more than 500 000 infant deaths a year in Asia and stressed that a significant part of the programme should be devoted to air pollution and renewable sources of energy. It also hoped that more consideration would be given to the problem of forest fires (in particular in Indonesia). Lastly Parliament hoped that in both Asia and Europe the Commission would act to promote greater public awareness of environmental problems and called for a report evaluating the implementation of the strategy after a period of three years.