Strengthening the Mediterranean Policy of the European Union: establishing a Euro-Mediterranean partnership

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In adopting the report by Mr SAKELLARIOU (PSE, D), Parliament called on the Commission to present a further communication on the "security" aspects of the region, which would serve as a basis for a joint action of the Council, in accordance with Article J.8(3) of the Treaty on European Union. It recommended that the Presidency, while remaining extremely mindful of the ideas and values of our future partners, should take a firm line during the discussions on the founding principles of the European Union (human rights, democracy, social justice and the rule of law) in order that the debate might be productive and useful to all parties. Parliament called for a general conception of the Europe-Mediterranean partnership to be drawn up based on three pillars: - harmonization of the policies which are provided for under the Treaty on European Union and which are applicable to the region, - extension of the bilateral policies of the Member States by a framework agreement of a multilateral kind (which the Commission would present to Parliament), - demonstration of a high degree of flexibility in the application of policies, as a function of developments in the partner countries. Parliament considered that the creation of a free-trade zone was a worthwhile objective with regard to the promotion of the various interests of those involved, but pointed out that such measures should go hand in hand with the reorganization of the economy of the countries concerned. In this respect it recalled that the essential conditions for attracting investment to the region were the application of market-based economic policies, the existence of a small and efficient public administration and an improvement in infrastructure and in education and health facilities. With this in mind, Parliament called on the EC to implement cooperation programmes with its Mediterranean partners, along the lines of what had been achieved with the CEECs and with the countries of the former USSR. In addition to those participating by right in the programmes (the 15 Member States and the countries of the south and south-east Mediterranean zone which have signed cooperation agreements with the Community), Parliament also called on the Council to invite other countries to take part as observers. At the same time, it thought that it was not desirable for other countries, who might be interested, to attend the conference and therefore called on the Council to limit the number of countries participating by right. On the other hand, it welcomed the participation of a large delegation from the European Parliament (in an official capacity), as well as NGOs. Finally, Parliament insisted that the Conference of Barcelona (27 and 28 November 1995) should lead to the creation of a permanent and flexible framework for monitoring the progress of Euro-Mediterranean policy.