Islam and the European Averroës Day

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Adopting the report by Mr Abdelkader MOHAMED ALI (GUE/NGL, E) on European Averroës Day, the European Parliament regarded it as essential within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership established in Barcelona in November 1995 and in Malta in 1997 to strengthen mutual knowledge of the cultures and civilisations of the Mediterranean through cultural exchanges, language teaching and meetings between the representatives of different religions with a view to facilitating mutual respect and cooperation. It proposed that the European Commission should organise a conference to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the death of the philosopher Averroës (Ibn Rushd) who sought to reconcile three bodies of teaching: Islamic theory, Koranic revelation and Aristotelian philosophy. This would give the EU the opportunity to establish the main features of an intensive and ongoing dialogue with Islamic countries and socially representative groups from the world of Islam, with a view to strengthening all democratic and pluralist tendencies and developing them where they do not yet exist. The aim of this dialogue would be to achieve recognition of the state of law and respect for human rights, which implies a clear division between the laws of the state and religious precepts, since this is an essential precondition for respect for human rights and freedoms in a multicultural and ethnically diverse society. Repeating its conviction that the Euro-Mediterranean partnership is not limited to economic aspects alone, the European Parliament regarded it as essential that the Islamic countries should embark on a process of genuine secularisation and democratisation based on: - participation, taking account of the concerns and requirements of civil society and its representatives; - respect for each individual's fundamental rights; - equality for men and women in practice and before the law; - respect of the rights of linguistic, religious and ethnic minorities in the Islamic states in exactly the same way as those of Muslims are respected where they form the majority of the population. The European Parliament condemned all types of discrimination against women, including attacks on their personal freedom and physical integrity in society, especially when they are subjected to restrictions on their form of dress and to corporal punishment, sexual mutilation or when they are disowned and denied any autonomy as regards family or social life. It called for the comprehensive incorporation of equal opportunities for men and women in all EU policies concerning cooperation with Islamic states. It rejected self-exclusion by some Muslim communities from certain subjects on the educational curriculum and stressed that the compulsory public education systems of the Member States must be respected and that the principle of secularism must therefore be applied in the educational systems. The European Parliament called on the Commission to put forward programmes to promote the mobility of artists and arts administrators, student and teacher exchange programmes, media products produced jointly and the creation of a Euro-Islamic university within the territory of the European Union, which would concentrate on contributing through the values and methods ("igtihad") of Islam itself to the shaping of a modern, self-reflective, liberal European Islam for Muslims in Europe. It also called on the Member States to: - attach more importance in school curricula to knowledge of the civilisation and culture of the Mediterranean basin; - make it easier for Islamic communities to express their views publicly through the media on the same terms as other religions, while respecting mutual tolerance; - promote the vocational and academic training of imams and other religious leaders in Europe; - examine the possibility of making available to the Muslim population appropriate sites and facilities for their religious and funeral rites; - facilitate the learning of Arabic as a living language and actively promote research at European universities in the fields of Islamic culture, history, politics and societies.