# The European Union and Hong Kong: beyond 1997

1997/2070(COS) - 08/10/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr John CUSHNAHAN (PPE, Irl.) on relations between the European Union and Hong Kong beyond 1997, the European Parliament deplored the fact that the complex and less than fully democratic electoral system applied in the 1995 elections had been retained in 1998 with further restrictions on the franchise, so that pro-democracy parties had secured only one third of the seats on the Legislative Council, despite having won a clear majority of the popular vote. It noted with satisfaction the interest which Hong Kong voters had demonstrated in democracy (the turnout for the elections had been 53.3%, representing 1.5 million voters), and urged that close consideration be given to establishing a system to elect the Chief Executive, directly or indirectly, at the end of the first two mandates in 2007. It regretted that the 36 Hong Kong delegates to the National People's Congress had been appointed by a Selection Committee in a less than transparent fashion and that members of the Democratic Party had been totally excluded from the process. It reiterated its attachment to the maintenance of the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary in Hong Kong and called on the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) to grant permanent residency and the right of abode to all current Hong Kong permanent residents who had obtained foreign passports. Member States were urged to grant visa-free entry to holders of HKSAR passports and to the 3 million Hong Kong British National (Overseas) passport holders. It was concerned that refusal by a single member of the Schengen Pact to do this would effectively deny these passport-holders visa-free access to 13 of the European Union's Member States. Recalling the importance it attached to freedom of expression, it called on the Government of Hong Kong to ensure that the Basic Law did not violate the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Taking the view that the EU should fully support the international autonomy of Hong Kong, Parliament called for cooperation to be developed on a large scale in order to strengthen the EU's relations with Hong Kong. It called on the Commission and Council to monitor closely the financial and economic autonomy of the HKSAR, and welcomed the Commission's intention to produce annual reports on political and economic developments in Hong Kong. In this context, Parliament considered that the Commission's Office in Hong Kong should be able to play a role in producing this annual report and in strengthening links between Hong Kong and the EU. The Office's resources should therefore be increased. Parliament called on European companies operating in Hong Kong and in China via Hong Kong to observe ILO core labour standards.