Resolution on the Northern Dimension and the new action plan 2004-2006

2003/2504(RSP) - 16/01/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution welcoming the approach presented in the council's guidelines for a new Northern Dimension Action Plan. It expressed gratitude to the Danish Presidency for the work on this matter and was disappointed that the Northern Dimension is not mentioned in the 2003 programme of the Greek and Italian Presidencies. The principal objective of future policy will be to address the challenges posed by enlargement, when the EU's border with Russia will be extended and several Northern Dimension partner countries will become Member States. The Commission was urged to take the following points into consideration in the 2004-2006 Northern Dimension Action Plan: - promoting the political and economic dialogue across the current and future eastern border of the EU and providing all those involved with a guiding strategic framework regarding objectives and priorities rather than a long project-oriented 'shopping list'; - focusing on social disparities, which can be expected to increase as between the enlarged EU and the bordering countries, and ensuring the start of the Northern Dimension partnership programme in the social and health sector, with particular focus on the fight against TB and HIV- AIDS. Civil society must be taken into account as partners; - making a sustainable environment and development, including the sustainable use of natural resources, the keystone of the Northern Dimension. Parliament welcomed the signing of the construction contract in respect of the South-Western Sewage Clearance Plant of St Petersburg in December 2002 and stressed the need to replace the Sosnovy Bor (near St Petersburg) and Kola (near Kandalaks) nuclear power plants by more modern nuclear or gas plants. It also approved the initiative proposing that the new Action Plan also concerns issues of maritime safety in the Baltic Sea: the new ports which Russia is building and the rapid increase in marine traffic are creating new threats to the Baltic. The Commission should work towards a ban prohibiting tankers other than those fulfilling the highest international safety standards from engaging in transport operations in the Baltic and finding ways to solve the problems concerning the management of nuclear waste in the Barents Sea. Russia must be persuaded to sign the MNEPR; - giving priority to fostering effective management of the new EU-Russia border and to fighting organised crime. Parliament expressed its concern about the huge increase in trafficking in women in the region and stated that this problem cannot be solved merely by strengthening border controls, but above all by tackling the root-causes of the problem, namely poverty and prostitution; - reinforce measures to promote the development of Kalingrad; - involving civil society in cross-border cooperation; - stressing the role and participation of indigenous peoples; - improving coordination between the EU, the Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Nordic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and other bodies involved in arctic and regional matters on the one hand, and creating a clear division of responsibility among all relevant public bodies in the EU on the other; - improving better coordination of financing instruments managedby the Commission and the international financial institutions. The Commission should explore the viability of a separate Northern Dimension budget line in the preparation of the 2004 budget; - introducing annual reporting to the European Parliament on developments in the Northern Dimension policy area.