Resolution on the crisis in the steel sector

2003/2521(RSP) - 13/02/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution expressing its concern about the crisis in the steel sector. It pointed, firstly, to the decision of the steel company Arcelor, to close hot rolling lines in all the group's continental sites, which will lead to thousands of job losses throughout Europe. At the same time, Arcelor is offering to purchase four continental sites in southern Poland and the Polish Government is planning an intervention amounting to 2.7 billion zloty. Parliament reminded Arcelor of its commitments as a company and demanded that it assumed its social responsibility and that all its continental sites be treated equally and without discrimination. Moreover, the Commission must ensure that the Treaties are applied strictly to any request for aid submitted by the Polish Government in relation to the operation announced by Arcelor in Poland, and must reject any contradictory arguments. The Commission is reminded that, since the disappearance of the ECSC, it is responsible for dealing with the economic and social consequences for the steel industry of Europe's enlargement to include new Member States. Secondly, Parliament pointed to the unilateral US decision to impose extraordinary tariffs on steel imports, mainly from the EU, which goes against the WTO Agreement and is causing considerable harm to the Community producers concerned. The Commission is asked to pursue vigorously, through both the OECD and the WTO, stricter multilateral rules against unfair competition from third countries, whether through subsidies, abuse of trade remedies or other measures. Parliament encouraged the Commission to take bold measures to protect European firms from the negative effects of US unilateral action, while respecting multilateral trade rules and taking into account the long-term interests of the European economy. It welcomed the creation of a group of Commissioners, chaired by Enterprise Commissioner Erkki Liikanen and including Commissioners for trade, competition, enlargement, economic, social and foreign policies, to chart a coherent response to the difficulties ahead, but felt that the Environment Commissioner, Mrs Wallstr·m, should be associated. Parliament felt that the EU must maintain a strong, modern steel industry which is in a position to meet the needs of sustainable development and job creation, in particular with a view to enhancing employee and consumer protection. The Commission and Member States must adopt a more proactive strategy in response to industrial restructuring measures and their social impact, with a view to preventing their negative effects on jobs, working conditions and regional planning. Parliament deplored the fact that during the many recent restructurings of businesses, Community provisions on collective redundancies, transfers of undertakings and European Works Councils have not been adhered to and asked the Commission to verify that Member States apply Directives 98/59/EC and 94/45/EC.