External European Union relations concerning transport

2002/2085(INI) - 11/03/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European parliament adopted a resolution based on its own-initiative report drafted by Brian SIMPSON (PES, UK) on external relations in the field of transport. On a general note, Parliament felt that the Commission and Council should work towards full membership in ICAO as well as in IMO, thus ensuring coherence between Community law and international law and allowing the Community to act for its interests in an effective way. The importance of ILO membership was also discussed. On the question of air traffic, Parliament referred to the Court of Justice's judgements on the "open skies" cases on 5 November 2002. It drew attention to the adverse effects of bilateral open sky agreements both on European airlines and on consumers, since these effectively open European domestic market to American airlines and give only limited access of European airlines to the American market. Member States must denounce bilateral air transport agreements with third states if they conflict with the judgement of the European Court of Justice (with particular reference to the nationality clause), subject to a suspensive condition relating to the conclusion of suitably revised agreements. Once the Commission has been granted a suitable negotiating mandate, it should take up negotiations with the USA under the leading point of full reciprocity in order to create a "Transatlantic Common Aviation Area" and a genuine Single Market in air transport. Parliament also stated that it is unsatisfactory that European competition law defines different responsibilities for the Commission in regard to airline alliances, distinguishing between EU routes and third-country routes. The scope of Regulation 3975/87/EEC must be broadened to include routes between Community and third-country airports. Parliament also referred to the royalty charges levied by Russia on European airlines for the right to overfly Siberia, stating that it considered these to be illegal. This practice must stop immediately and Russian authorities must grant overflying rights, in accordance with the Chicago Convention, without imposing any 'royalties' over and above air traffic control charges. The concept of a "Russian Aviation Modernisation Fund" is a helpful option in this context. Any sums being paid by European carriers to Russian authorities should be used for such a fund. On maritime traffic, Parliament pointed to the fact that the Community has established stricter standards for the inspection of vessels calling at EU ports. The USA should recognise that security provisions in European ports are sufficient and that, should any tightening up of these provisions be required, such measures should be negotiated not with individual Member States, but with the Union. It also asked the Commission to investigate the problem of free access to markets in China, and the question of tax anomalies concerning seafarers in short sea shipping. Finally, Parliament called on the Commission to foster the integration of inland waterway transport markets in the enlarged EU, as well as to ensure good transport relationships with the neighbouring countries.