# Human rights in the world: Union's activities from 1997 to June 1999. Memorandum and annual report

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The European Parliament adopted its resolution on the Annual Report on International Human Rights and EU Human Rights Policy drafted by Ms. Cecilia Malmström (ELDR, Sw). The resolution makes a number of recommendations that include: - in view of the priority attached by the EU to human rights and because of the need to establish a coherent and consistent approach across the different European Union institutions, that the Council urgently elaborates a common strategy on human rights in consultation with the Parliament; - that the Council and Commission ensure that human rights and democratic principles are actually respected firstly within the EU by all Member States and that future Annual Reports from the Council should include a record of human rights activities by the Member States, by the Commission and by Parliament and also of all actions falling under budget heading B7-70; - the establishment of an early-warning system for human rights violations in order to be able to respond to them as swiftly as possible; - that the Council, Parliament and Commission should jointly declare their determination to increase human rights and democratisation expenditure in each of the next five years; - that provision should be made in the Commission budget for support to a platform of human rights NGOs, on the lines of similar platforms concerning (inter alia) development policy, social policy and women's affairs; - that representatives of the governments, national parliaments, and civil society of the candidate countries be invited to contribute to the elaboration of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which will become part of the 'acquis communautaire'. The European Parliament calls: - on the Council and the Commission to convene a further conference to review the effectiveness of EU support for the efforts of the candidate countries to achieve the political criteria established at Copenhagen; - on the Council and the Commission to make particular efforts to improve the effectiveness and rigorous monitoring of programmes concerning protection and respect for the human rights of minorities in candidate countries, and to enhance the ability of these countries to pass and implement laws aimed at countering discrimination, including on grounds of race. Special reference is made to the need to improve the situation of Kurdish, Roma and Sinti minorities; - for particular efforts to improve the effectiveness of programme concerning the conditions of minorities in applicant countries, in particular those of religious, ethnic, linguistic and cultural minorities. The Parliament emphasises the importance of the human rights clause as a basis for a common effort to improve respect for human rights, and insists that the suspension mechanism for agreements which include the human rights clause should in all cases be based on clear procedures, and that implementing regulations should be speedily adopted where necessary. It reiterates its request to the Commission to draw up, as a matter of urgency, a detailed list of the rights which it considers to be covered by the human rights clause, referringto the international and regional human rights instruments to which the EU and its Member States subscribe. Parliament calls on governments to take the necessary measures so that domestic violence is covered by human rights and not by private law, with the aim of making it easier to pursue offenders, as well as to intensify cooperation between the states of origin and of destination of trafficking in women by supporting investigation and judicial processes and ensuring an effective exchange of information encompassing governmental and non-governmental action. It also calls on the EU to initiate a UN Convention on punishment of anybody who is responsible for incitement to, or organisation or execution of, any form of trafficking in persons. The European Parliament reaffirms its commitment to the abolition of capital punishment and salutes the diplomatic efforts made by the EU and its Member States in favour of a global moratorium on the death penalty and the ultimate abolition of capital punishment; to this end, it calls on the EU to renew its efforts within the UN to ensure that the Assembly takes a stance as soon as possible on a universal moratorium and the abolition of the death penalty. It insists that the abolition of the death penalty should become a key element of European human rights policy and calls on the Council to raise this issue in dialogue with third countries. The Council and

Commission are invited to step up their efforts to establish common definitions and strategies at EU level on asylum seekers and refugees, respecting and, where appropriate, supplementing the Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees; in this connection, the Parliament is concerned at the growing number of reports of ill-treatment suffered by asylum seekers in EU Member States and calls on these Member States, as a matter of urgency, to introduce a policy on treatment, detention and, if necessary, expulsion of asylum seekers that is more respectful of human rights. Parliament reiterates its request to the Commission and the Council for a detailed study to be made of existing codes of conduct on human rights for business and to submit a draft code for business designed to ensure that fundamental, social and trade union rights are respected in the EU. It recalls its support for the setting of fair social standards in economic activity and its commitment to take part in efforts to combat the exploitation of labour throughout the world. Lastly, the Parliament calls on the Council and the Commission urgently to develop, as an alternative to sanctions which may harm the general population, 'smart actions' targeted at illegally expropriated assets of the heads of abusive governments, and to promote coordinated international efforts to restore such assets to the country of origin as soon as a genuine process of democratisation has started.