Outcome of Copenhagen 2004 enlargement negotiations

2003/2014(INI) - 09/04/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Elmar BROK (EPP-ED, Germany) welcoming the historical decision of the European Council of Copenhagen to close accession negotiations with the ten candidate countries. These countries will become Members of the EU on 1 May 2004, provided that the ratification procedures are complete. Parliament pointed to the Council's unilateral establishment of the EU budget ceilings for 2004-2006 and stated that Parliament would do its utmost to ensure that its powers are fully respected and the new Member States are treated in the same way as the current Member States. (Please see INI/2003/2050). The Council breached the Interinstitutional Agreement of 6 May 1999. Parliament regretted the irresponsibility of the Council in committing this unlawful act in view of the historic significance of enlargement. Moving on, the European Parliament insisted that an enlarged Union should speak with a common voice in world politics and should add to the weight of the EU to the international scene, as the only way to assure influence for the citizens of Europe. Mechanisms must be strengthened that will gradually lead to the establishment of a common European diplomatic service within the Commission, including staff and officials from the institutions of the Union and its Member States, so as to develop a common strategic and administrative culture within the framework of the Union's external relations. The accession of ten new countries will influence the geo-political position of the Union, but it must not weaken its internal cohesion or the interest of the Union as a whole. Parliament called for active cooperation to formulate and implement a common foreign and security policy. On more domestic matters, Parliament cautioned all EU Member States that additional efforts are needed to ensure that the whole of society in each acceding country will be able to reap the benefits of the different dimensions of EU membership. Future Member States must deal with the regional disparities in income and strengthen the social dialogue. Parliament went on to remind new Member States that they will also need to make progress in building up administrative capacity, strengthening civil society, increasing judicial capacity and the proper implementation and enforcement of case law. Parliament stressed the importance of combating fraud and corruption in all candidate countries and of implementing EU anti-discrimination acquis. It recognised that certain progress has been made with regard to the protection of human and minority rights, including linguistic rights. It felt, however, that in many candidate countries situations of abuse and discrimination persist due to shortcomings in the judicial and law enforcement systems. Particular efforts need to be made to end human rights abuses of disabled persons living in institutions in candidate countries. Parliament also urged all candidate countries concerned to cooperate with the representatives of the Roma minorities. Parliament stated that it rejected attempts by candidate countries' governments to weaken European values in relation to the equality of women and men and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, in particular the prohibition of discrimination, by inserting morality clauses in the Annex to the Accession Treaty. It also felt that the "safeguard clauses" should be understoodas instruments designed to limit the possible risk of disruption of the internal market and not as a sign of mistrust in relation to future members. The European Parliament must be fully associated in the procedure for the application of the "safeguard clauses", which should be applied following a qualified majority decision in the Council and the assent of Parliament. Moving on to current and future candidates Parliament regretted the failure of the UN-led talks in Cyprus which almost brought an end to the division of the island and urges the UN Secretary-General to maintain the momentum. It welcomed the Presidency Conclusions of the European Council of Copenhagen establishing that the EU should aim to admit Bulgaria and Romania by the year 2007 provided they comply with the Copenhagen criteria. Whilst Parliament welcomed the decision of the European Council of Copenhagen to offer further assistance to Turkey, so that in 2004, it can be judged whether conditions for opening negotiations have been achieved, Turkey is reminded that the political criteria are the sine qua non for membership. Finally, Parliament welcomed the application for EU membership put forward by Croatia, and hoped that Croatia will take concrete steps in order to comply with the Copenhagen criteria.

It called on the Croatian authorities to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague.