Annual report on human rights in the world in 2001 and European Union's policy

2001/2011(INI) - 25/04/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted its own-initiative report drafted by Johan van HECKE (EPP-ED, Belgium) on human rights in the world and EU human rights policy. (Please refer to the document dated 26/03/02.) Parliament pointed out that the number of poor people in the world who are not benefiting from globalisation or whose circumstances are even worse as a result of it, is rising steadily. Widening inequalities generated by precarious socio-economic circumstances are a breeding ground for acts of violence and human rights abuses. With regard to slavery, there is a need to combat the root causes, in particular poverty, illiteracy, views on women and demographic and environmental pressure, by investing in education, providing economic incentives, tackling the problems of debt and climate change, and opening Western markets to the products of developing countries. The promotion of core labour standards and the improvement of social governance at European and international level by both the public and private sectors constitutes one of the Commission's objectives in the spheres of social and external relations, development and trade policies, as well as that of the revised EU GSP (social incentive) scheme. There is a need for concrete action to develop a coherent policy in respect of the social responsibility of business, trade unions and other civil society actors in the field of external relations. This should be a future priority of the EIDHR. Parliament pointed out that more than 300 000 children are working as soldiers, who are often forced to kill their families and peers and are themselves subjected to terrible abuses. Only one Member State has ratified the voluntary protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibiting the recruitment of soldiers under 18. This needs to be rectified and Somalia and the USA must ratify the Convention. With regard to terrorism, the European Council and Member States must denounce all human rights violations, including those committed by allies. Governments must not use the fight against terrorism as a pretext for human rights abuses at home. All UN states and particular the USA ought to accede to the Rome Statute setting up the International Criminal Court and enact effective universal jurisdiction legislation. In terms of future action, Parliament asked for the EU annual report on human rights to provide an analysis of the impact of EU activities on the human rights situations addressed, and a follow-up of the fulfilment of the clauses in the cooperation agreements. For the sake of consistency and coherence of EU policy on human rights and democracy, Parliament called on Member States, when taking over the EU Presidency, to set priorities in their respective programmes and to ensure continuity of actions undertaken by previous EU Presidencies. It committed itself to giving human rights issues a central place on each agenda of its committees and delegations, to ensuring that violations in third countries are systematically followed up.