EC/United Nations relations: development and humanitarian affairs, reinforcing cooperation

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Conscious of the important role that the EU Member States play in every sphere of United Nations operations, Parliament has adopted the report by Mr Joaquim Miranda (GUE/NGL, P) on the communication from the Commission on building an effective partnership with the United Nations in the fields of development and humanitarian affairs. While approving the communication, Parliament deplores the fact that the document disregards key issues such as peacekeeping, crisis management and conflict prevention. These matters will therefore have to be addressed by the Commission in a subsequent communication. Taking the view that the EU should obtain membership of the UN specialised agencies in its own right, Parliament suggests that the EU should use the intergovernmental conference scheduled for 2004 as the occasion on which to clarify the issues surrounding the legal basis for its external action within the context of international law, particularly by defining and strengthening the Commission's legal status in international institutions. Parliament emphasises the paramount role of the strategic political dialogue in the preparation of policies and programmes designed to enable the EU to play a more active role within the UN. This dialogue must first be established in the domains of food aid and development cooperation. In addition, the two organisations should intensify their cooperation on the ground in the developing countries in order to guarantee a complementary and coherent institutional approach. Parliament maintains that country strategy papers must be coordinated with the UN assessments of the countries concerned and that the same or similar and compatible performance indicators must be used to check on the impact and quality of development aid. It also believes that a stable financial framework should be established to enable relations between the two institutions to be based on coherent financial principles and rules and that a new framework agreement should be drawn up to this end. The House has also adopted an amendment asking the Commission to provide Parliament regularly with a quantitative and qualitative appraisal of the amount of EU funds channelled through the United Nations as a whole, as well as through individual agencies. In particular, it calls on the Commission to involve social movements and movements representing civil society actively and democratically throughout the development-aid process. Lastly, focusing on the generally poor performance of the international community in responding to major disasters, Parliament emphasises that emergency aid must dovetail with rehabilitation and development and suggests that the EU and the UN could create joint rapid-response units to improve preparedness for major disasters in various regions of the world.