Resolution on the outcome of the European Council meeting in Brussels of 25 and 26 March 2004

2004/2529(RSP) - 01/04/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the outcome of the European Council meeting in Brussels on 25-26 March 2004. Concerning the intergovernmental conference, the Parliament welcomes the undertaking to reach agreement on a constitutional treaty at its meeting on 17-18 June at the latest, and stress the importance of not undermining the balance achieved by the Convention. They note they would not support a treaty which disregarded Parliament's existing budgetary prerogatives. It calls for the resulting treaty to be signed in Madrid. On the issue of terrorism, Parliament condemns all terrorist attacks, whatever the motive, and welcomes the European Council's support for Parliament's proposal to establish a European Day for the Victims of Terrorism and it argues that the future Counter-Terrorism Co-ordinator should be subject to EU parliamentary and judicial control. On the other hand, it regrets that progress in the EU's fight against terrorism apparently only progresses in the wake of tragic events and not as a result of a coordinated and coherent EU approach. MEPs also argue that the five Member States who have not implemented the European Arrest Warrant should do so rapidly. Parliament calls for reinforced cooperation between police services and a more structured role for the Task Force of EU Police Chiefs and states its belief that measures taken to defend the values of democracy and freedom against terrorist acts cannot be allowed to undermine the fundamental aspects of those values, and that efforts should be increased to reinforce the protection of civil liberties, fundamental rights and personal data. The Commission is urged to assess the threat of chemical or biological attacks by terrorists and to propose any necessary legislation to deal with the threat and Parliament underlines that underlines that international terrorism must be combated firmly, not only by military means, but also by addressing the roots of the huge political, social, economic and ecological problems existing in today's world. As regards the Lisbon Strategy, Parliament agrees that the critical issue is implementation of existing commitments, which means specific, realistic and concrete action. It considers that efforts so far have been laudable in intentions, but weak on implementation. Setting up high level groups cannot replace political action: the existing targets and mechanisms must now be fully implemented. Parliament welcomes the environmental dimension of the Council conclusions and insists that the Kyoto protocol is only a first step in a global strategy to tackle climate change - further emission reduction targets might be considered. It notes that Europe needs an increase of 22 million jobs by 2010 to reach the target of 70% employment. This must be met through structural reforms, by making work pay, opening new ways into work for more people and ensuring a labour market better adapted to new challenges. It is also noted that it is essential to tackle the financial implications of an ageing population by reducing public debt and strengthening employment, health and pension reforms. Parliament strongly criticises the failure to make progress in increasing research and development spending towards the 2010 target of 3% of GNP. The European Parliament shares the European Council's support for the Annan plan in Cyprus and urges both sides to seize the opportunity to reunite the island. With regard to international affairs, Parliament welcomes plansfor a strategic partnership with Russia based on common values, while calling again for a political solution to the conflict in Chechnya. It condemns the extrajudicial killing of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, and all terrorist acts against the civilian population of both sides of the Middle East conflict. While recognising Israel's right and duty to defend its people from terrorist attacks, they strongly reject the practice of extrajudicial killings as contrary to international law. Parliament also urges the US administration to make a more active effort to revive the Road Map. Parliament strongly supports the European Council's request for a strong UN playing a vital and growing role in Iraq, which should include a major role in the reconstruction of the country, the transfer of sovereignty and the organisation of future elections. Equally, it welcomes the proposal by Germany to organise a new conference on Afghanistan and support the plans for election in that country in September. Finally, on the EU's new Financial

Perspectives, Parliament agrees with the European Council on the timetable which aims at reaching political agreement on the new Financial Perspective at the European Council in June 2005, but reiterates its opinion that this Financial Perspective should cover a five-year period starting from 2007.