Resolution on the outcome of the European Council in Thessaloniki, 19-20 June 2003

2003/2553(RSP) - 03/07/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

In a joint resolution by four political groups (EPP-ED, PSE, ELDR, UEN), adopted by 327 to 92 and 47 abstentions, Parliament welcomed the European Council's decision on the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe and took the view that the latter must form the sole basis for the work of the Intergovernmental Conference. At the same time, it warns against unpicking the essential elements of the package achieved by the Convention.

Parliament insists that the Convention must still reach a consensus on Part III and part IV and it emphasises the importance of the revision of Part III to achieve may procedural and policy reforms in conformity with Part I, especially with a view to extending qualified majority voting in the Council and codecision of the Parliament. It underlines the necessity of amending Part IV in order to ensure the coming into force and future revision of the Constitution.

The Intergovernmental Conference should be convened by the Italian Presidency, according to the Parliament, at a high political level as soon as possible, with the Accession States taking a full and equal part, so that it can finish before the end of 2003, while recalling that it has become established practice that the Commission and Parliament participate in Intergovernmental Conferences by sending MEPs as its representatives to the IGC and by having the President of Parliament participating in meetings held at the level of Heads of Government.

On the issue of immigration, frontiers and asylum, Parliament insists that the EU needs to have a coherent common policy on and procedures for legal immigration and therefore asks the European Council to explore legal means for third-country nationals to enter the Union, taking into account reception capacity and enhanced cooperation with the countries of origin. It therefore calls on the Council to adopt the Directive on conditions for entering the EU for employment purposes. Parliament expresses its dismay at the death of numerous immigrants in shipwrecks in the Mediterranean and condemns the criminal action of all those who profit from trafficking in human beings. It also believes that more should be done to clamp down on these criminal networks, while stressing that the effective management of the external borders of EU Member States should be developed with a coherent and structured Community framework and methods. In adopting a series of amendments tabled by the Green group, MEPs say that, at present, there is no Community policy on the return of illegally residing persons and that the overriding priority must be voluntary return, while stressing that any policy development should fully respect the principle of non-refoulement and the right to seek asylum. Parliament also insists that third-country nationals should enjoy rights and obligations comparable to those of EU citizens, including the political right to vote in local and European elections. Parliament intends to consider as soon as possible the Greek proposal aimed at setting up a network of immigration liaison offices (ILOs) in third countries.

On combating terrorism, Parliament recalls the necessity to link the fight against funding for terrorism with the fight against money laundering and drug trafficking.

On enlargement, MEPs underline the positive prospects for the membership of Bulgaria and Romania and express their support for the Turkish government in its programme of radical reform at home. They also consider that Cyprus's entry into the Union will create a climate favourable to bringing both communities of the island closer together and finding a solution in the UN framework; they therefore urge Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership to respond positively to the UN Secretary-General's efforts. Parliament also recalls the need to achieve all the objectives set out in the Barcelona Declaration and reiterates its

proposal to establish a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, reinvigorating the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona process through a greater degree of institutionalisation and a higher political profile.

Parliament regards the establishment of the International Criminal Court as a great step forward for the development of international law. In the same context, following the adoption of an amendment of the Green group, MEPs express their regret for the continued opposition of the current US Administration to the ICC and also for the fact that it is intensifying its political and financial pressure worldwide, trying to persuade several states to enter into bilateral non-surrender agreements by threatening to suspend military and economic aid as well as other forms of assistance. Concerning external relations, CFSP and the ESDP, Parliament expresses its interest in the recommendations presented by the High Representative for CFSP on a European Strategy on security and request that it be involved in the formulation and implementation of the EU security strategy.

See also the Presidency conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council (19 and 20 June 2003).