Economic globalisation: social governance, core labour standards

2002/2070(COS) - 04/07/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted the resolution drafted by Marie-Helene GILLIG (PES, France) on core labour standards. (Please refer to the document dated 19/06/02.) Parliament called for a multilateral WTO agreement to provide incentives to observe core labour standards. The ILO's constitution permits the imposition of trade sanctions. The latter alone should have that power. Parliament asked the WTO to state clearly that trade sanctions imposed pursuant to an ILO decision could not be considered incompatible with the WTO Treaties. The WTO's dispute settlement body should be obliged to consult the ILO and the ILO opinion should be attached to the ruling when a trade dispute between the WTO member countries involves a failure to observe core labour standards. The EU must ensure full respect for CLS, which implies full compliance with the ban on child labour, stepping up action against trafficking and slavery and a European immigration policy which encourages legal immigration. Parliament went on to endorse the decision of the Council and the Commission to gear the Union's development strategy towards incentive clauses and not to penalty clauses. The Commission must reinforce the GSP and ensure that the fundamental labour standards component of the EU's new GSP are actually enforced. New non-trade incentive clauses must be proposed for developing countries. The EU should incorporate in all third country agreements, whether commercial or cooperation, a CLS clause. Parliament stressed that financial aid must be stepped up to promote fundamental labour standards. It called attention to the rapid growth of Export Processing Zones (EPZ) in different parts of the world and the fact that in many cases national labour legislation does not apply in these zones. The promotion of corporate responsibility must follow on from what is happening in the OECD and ILO context and must be accompanied by the promotion of worldwide social labelling. The EU must incorporate this labelling into the development of the GSP. Finally, Parliament stressed the role and responsibility of transnational companies in ensuring equitable working conditions in line with the OECD guidelines revised in 2000.