Resolution on the outcome of the European Council in Brussels, 16-17 October 2003

2003/2570(RSP) - 23/10/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the outcome of the European Council meeting held on 16-17 October 2003.

Firstly, it stated that the IGC would fail if it unravels the consensus achieved by the Convention. All the national parliaments and governments, as well as the European Parliament and Commission were represented in the Convention. Parliament recalled that the agreement in the Convention concerning the Foreign Minister was deliberately intended to bring together a number of functions concerning external relations: those of High Representative, of Commissioner coordinating external policies, and of Chair of the Foreign Affairs Council. Any attempt to remove, limit or weaken any one of these elements would destroy the compromise.

On the matter of the European economy, Parliament felt that job creation and sustainable growth are crucial. To achieve this, the key priorities should be maintaining sound macroeconomic policies, within the framework provided by the Stability and Growth Pact and the current Financial Perspective ceilings. Structural reforms must be speeded up, particularly efforts to increase the flexibility of product, capital and labour markets - and the promotion of investment in infrastructure and human capital.

Parliament regretted that the environmental and sustainability aspects have not been properly taken into account. It asked Member States to promote an ambitious EU plan for development of clean technologies, which has great potential for the environment, growth and employment, and social welfare.

The Lisbon structural reform agenda, notably labour market reforms, must result in better jobs. Substantial investments in people are therefore essential. Economic and social reforms have to be mutually supportive. Member States must increase the labour market participation of underemployed sections of the population, such as women, immigrants, older workers and disabled people, e.g. through targeted integration measures, measures to reconcile work and family life and incentives to promote a longer working life. All Member States must promote incentives for work, e.g. by taking action to adapt tax and benefit systems to make work and education pay. Full employment is the best way to ensure the sustainability of pensions.

On the question of the EU's external borders, Parliament is in favour of allocating the necessary funds in order to cover the most pressing needs in this domain. It took note of the European Council's call for the setting-up of a Border Management Agency, but would prefer to see an operational structure, coordinated by the Commission, established as a precursor to an EU Corps of Border Guards made up of special national forces, financed by the EU. Parliament moved on to a discussion of migratory flows stressed the need to relate immigration to social, employment and economic policies. It agreed with the global approach of strengthening partnership with countries of origin, as proposed in Thessaloniki. A return policy which respects humanitarian principles is acceptable, but this should be financed by a specific instrument supported by a new legal base. All the measures concerning external border control, stopping of illegal immigration, Visa Information System (VIS) etc. must not undermine asylum seekers' possibility of access to asylum procedures.

Parliament went to state that it was appalled by the continued detention of approximately 26 European nationals and residents at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and indeed of all 600 detainees, which is unacceptable. The failure of EU leaders and the Council Presidency to even discuss the matter is a

scandal.

On the Middle East, Parliament again called on:
- the Palestinian National Authority to ensure that its government is able to act against those responsible for terrorist attacks, and to complete the reform programme already undertaken; - the Israeli government, while recognising its legitimate right to protect its citizens, to renounce the disproportionate use of force, to end extra judicial executions, to halt the building of the so-called 'security' wall that aggravates the living conditions of the Palestinian population in the Territories and prejudges a positive solution of the question of the borders, and to dismantle colonies in accordance with the programme established in the road map.

Turning to Iraq, Parliament felt that UNSC Resolution 1511 is only a first step towards the restoration of international legitimacy in the management of post-war Iraq. The President-in-Office of the Council must immediately reach an EU common position in order to adopt a genuine strategy towards Iraq, in accordance with the request made to the High Representative for CFSP. The amount represented by the pledge at the Madrid donor conference for Iraq must be agreed between the two arms of the budgetary authority. A pledge for Iraq must not be to the detriment of other regions in the world.

Finally, with regard to Iran, Parliament welcomed the readiness of Iran to sign the IAEA additional protocol. It insisted on the need to increase international confidence with regard to the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme and improvements in the areas of human rights, the fight against terrorism and Iran's position on the Middle East Peace Process. It congratulated Shirin Ebadi on the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her commitment to democracy and the defence of human rights in Iran.