Resolution on the European Union military operation 'Althea' in Bosnia and Herzegovina

2004/2558(RSP) - 17/11/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution, tabled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, on the European Union military operation 'Althea' in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

Noting the announcement by the European Council of an ESDP mission, code-named 'Althea', to BiH, which will be the first European Union military mission on a relatively large scale (with approximately 7 000 military personnel), the Parliament welcomes the new coordinated and coherent approach of the EU to Bosnia and Herzegovina which includes: (i) a comprehensive Strategy for BiH; (ii) a new mandate for the EU Special Representative; (iii) the civilian aspects such as the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) and Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDs) programmes; (iv) the European Union Police Mission; and (v) the future military stabilisation force 'Althea'.

MEPs consider that the 'Althea' operation should reinforce the EU's comprehensive approach towards BiH and should support that country's progress towards eventual EU membership. However, they recall that BiH must rely principally on its own efforts in relation to European integration.

The Parliament welcomes the decision of the EU to have recourse to NATO assets and capabilities for the 'Althea' mission. It advocates the closest cooperation between the EU Stabilisation Force in BiH and the residual NATO presence in that country to ensure a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between the two organisations. It recommends that the EU Special Representative (EUSR) not only closely coordinate with the EU Force Commander but also invite NATO representation on the EUSR coordination group in order to ensure coordination and coherence across the range of EU activities in BiH.

The resolution makes the following recommendations:

- this operation should establish further the collective capacity for planning and management of European military operations at EU level with a view to developing the EU Civil-Military Planning Cell;
- the Althea mission must undertake to abide by Community and international human rights legislation;
- it is important for the EU force to include a robust "gendarmerie-type" element (the Integrated Police Unit) in order to perform those tasks for which the military have not generally been trained;
- the EU's military and police forces as well as the civilian authorities in BiH are called upon to collaborate closely in searching energetically for war criminals and in fighting against any kind of terrorism;
- the EU force should continue SFOR's recent practice of deploying a network of small military teams to live among the population in 'host houses' in order to maintain its situation awareness;
- it underlines the importance of clear responsibilities over the command chain between the EU force commander in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU operational commander, who is Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe at SHAPE;
- it calls for coordination in the field of intelligence, and recommends that a specific mechanism should be implemented for coordinating information flows between the EU, NATO, the United States and other actors engaged in the region on the probability of ethnic tensions.

MEPs deplore the non-involvement of the European Parliament and the decision to finance this mission by contributions outside the normal budget of the European Union. They propose that the European Union contribute to the operational cost of Althea in the form of flat monthly reimbursements along the lines adopted by the UN and the OSCE with a view in particular to covering part of the per diems of personnel from the budget of the European Union.

In view of the more integrated and coordinated civil-military aspects of operation 'Althea', the Parliament demands to be kept up to date by the EUSR and to be informed at regular intervals by the chairman of the Political and Security Committee (PSC) which exercises the political and strategic direction of the EU military operation. It calls on the Council to provide specific information on the "operational capacity" and the "rules of engagement" for the Althea mission.