Resolution on the outcome of the European Council meeting held in Brussels on 4-5 November 2004

2004/2556(RSP) - 17/11/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the outcome of European Council meeting of 4-5 November in Brussels.

Regarding the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy, Parliament welcomed the European Council's reaffirmation of the Lisbon goals and deplored the lack of progress made up to now. It drew particular attention to the Kok report's conclusion that the chief obstacle to progress has been poor implementation by the Member States. Parliament considers that to achieve the necessary economic growth, Europe should focus on both structural reforms and macroeconomic action by the EU and the 25 governments including investment in people, research and innovation, to stimulate growth and employment, without endangering the stability and sustainability of public finances. Parliament also called for a greater emphasis on the environmental dimension and deplored the Council's failure to agree on the Community patent.

On the area of Freedom, Security and Justice, Parliament welcomed the historic decision of the European Council to the effect that by no later than 1 April 2005 full qualified majority voting plus codecision will be applied to all areas of Justice and Home Affairs (Title IV), with the exception of legal migration. It stressed the urgent need to reduce illegal immigration, arguing that this can only be achieved through a coherent and comprehensive European asylum and immigration policy. It also emphasised the need to achieve a proper balance between law enforcement and the protection of fundamental freedoms.

On the matter of Iraq, Parliament expressed its concern over the difficulties experienced in the restoration of security, and the conditions for the preparation of free and fair elections planned for January 2005. It also expressed its concern also for all the victims among the civilian population as a result of the current military operations. The elections for the transitional National Assembly must include the broadest possible participation from across the whole political spectrum and be free and fair, and counts on the EU's support for the preparation of these elections.

Parliament supported the financial package decided on Iraq, but pointed out the Council failed to indicate whether policies will be taken from the flexibility instrument. New funds must not come at the expense of the other external political priorities. Furthermore, Parliament called on the multinational forces and the Iraqi Interim Government to grant the IAEA unimpeded access to all of Iraq's nuclear installations in order to perform an overall assessment of the sites, as well as possible radioactive contamination of people and the environment.

On the Middle East, Parliament expressed its solidarity with the Palestinian people following the death of Yasser Arafat, and repeated that a solution to the Middle East conflict is possible only through a negotiated agreement based on the existence of two viable, peaceful and democratic states - Israel and Palestine. The EU should assist the Palestinian Authority to organise free and fair presidential, legislative and local elections.

Regarding Sudan, Parliament shared the Council's grave concern at the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the Darfur region resulting from renewed violence by rebels and militia, compounded by the violent and forced displacement of internally displace people by the Government of

Sudan's forces. It called on the UN Security Council to introduce a global arms embargo against Sudan and introduce targeted sanctions against those responsible for massive abuses of human rights and other atrocities.

On Iran, Parliament supported the efforts of the EU and its Member States to reach an agreement with the Iranian government on its nuclear programme, but expressed its deep concern at the deterioration of the human rights situation in the country, reaffirming that a durable and co-operative long term relationship depends on progress in this field.

Regarding Ukraine, Parliament agreed with the Council that Ukraine is a key neighbour and partner, but expressed its alarm that the first round of Presidential elections failed to meet many international standards. The Ukrainian authorities must improve matters for the second round. Encouraged by the high turnout in the elections, Parliament asked for the Ukraine Action Plan to be put into effect, with a strong focus on the development of civil society.

Finally, Parliament noted the Council's commitment to assisting third countries, namely countries of origin and countries of transit of asylum seekers and migrants, in order to combat illegal immigration. However, any such measures must not affect the manner in which EU development aid is allocated, or the priority of the EU's assistance to developing countries, which must remain combating poverty. Development assistance must be kept from being used for political ends.