# Annual report on the human rights in the world in 2004 and the European Union's policy on this matter

2004/2151(INI) - 30/03/2005

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Simon COVENEY (EPP-ED, IE) on the 2004 annual report on human rights in the world and the EU's policy on the matter. The wide-ranging report raised concerns about human rights issues in many countries, both in Europe 's immediate neighbourhood and further afield. It also addressed a number of wider themes:

- **terrorism**: the committee issued a strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms but insisted that, when enacting counter-terrorism measures, states should adhere to the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination;

- **children's rights**: children and children's rights should be placed at the centre of the EU's contribution towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals;

- **the impact of conflict on women and children**: the report condemned the "barbaric use" of rape as a tool of war and called for such crimes to be prosecuted. It also urged all states, including the EU Member States, to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict;

- **abolishing the death penalty**: although 118 countries in the world have now abolished the death penalty, MEPs remained concerned that 78 states (including the USA and China) still maintain this penalty and urged them to impose a moratorium on all executions;

- **trafficking in humans and human organs - sex industry and child labour**: the report emphasised that trafficking in women and children was a global problem and required coordinated action to improve international law enforcement to tackle this crime. It added that trafficking in human beings was not confined to the sex industry, as women and children were also made to work as forced labour. MEPs also called for a more focused response from the international community to combat trafficking in human organs, which is a highly organised international criminal activity;

- **the role of international business in human rights**: the committee called on multinationals to view human rights as a benchmark for policy, to assume their corporate social responsibility obligations and to adopt minimum standards based on these norms. The EU was urged to adopt a code of conduct for European companies operating internationally and in particular in developing countries;

- **impunity and the role of the International Criminal Court**: MEPs said that the establishment of the ICC forms part of a system of international justice in which national courts, international and mixed tribunals and the ICC work together towards effectively ending impunity for serious human rights violations. The EU Member States were urged to take all appropriate measures to fully cooperate with the ICC in order to ensure successful investigations. The Council and Commission were asked to consider measures "which may encourage the US to take a more positive view of the ICC";

- **institutional and policy developments**: the report called on the EU to improve the coherence of its human rights policy and ensure a better flow of information. It pointed out that economic considerations should on no account result in the Union ignoring or playing down human rights violations. MEPs also welcomed the proposed revision of the EU's Code of Conduct on Arms Exports.