Resolution on Bhopal

2004/2623(RSP) - 16/12/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Bhopal.

The text adopted in plenary had been tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, Greens /EFA, GUE/NGL and UEN groups.

The resolution recalls that on the night of 2 December 1984, over 35 tons of toxic gases leaked from a pesticide plant in Bhopal owned by the US-based multinational Union Carbide Corporation (UCC)'s Indian subsidiary, Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL), consisting in the main of at least 24 tons of extremely poisonous methyl isocyanate. In the next 2-3 days more than 7 000 people died and many more were injured, and over the last 20 years an estimated 15 000-30 000 people have died from illnesses related to gas exposure. Today more than 100 000 people affected by the gas exposure continue to suffer chronic and debilitating illnesses for which treatment is largely ineffective.

The Parliament expresses its sincerest sympathy to the relatives of the deceased and those still suffering from the after-effects of exposure to the gas, and calls for better compensation and treatment for the victims. It condemns the fact that inhabitants still do not have access to anything near their daily requirements in clean water.

The Governments of India and Madhya Pradesh are called upon to:

- ensure the effective and prompt decontamination and clean-up of the Bhopal site;
- ensure regular supplies of adequate safe water for domestic use by the affected communities, in line with the order issued by the Supreme Court, and ensure adequate and accessible health care for all survivors;
- reassess the compensation received by victims, following the 1989 settlement, and make up any shortfall, in line with the Supreme Court's 1991 order.

The resolution stresses that bad working conditions, the lack of any proper security systems and totally inadequate risk assessment in the plant in Bhopal, elements which were well known to the executive management of the plant as well to the Indian authorities, were the main causes of the disaster.

The Parliament calls for an independent inquiry into the current situation in Bhopal, possibly under the auspices of the UN Commission on Human Rights. It also calls on the Commission to look into ways in which the European Union could assist in the comprehensive and definitive decontamination of the site and, in the meantime, in ensuring the supply of drinking water.