EU-India relationship: a strategic partnership

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Emilio MENÉNDEZ DE VALLE (PES, ES) in response to the Commission's paper on an EU-India strategic partnership. MEPs backed the partnership agreement and called for extra funding for its implementation. They noted that the USA had aspirations for a strategic alliance with India and that China and India were also expanding their relations. The report made a number of specific recommendations to strengthen ties with India , but also raised a number of issues of concern.

MEPs called on the EU and India to jointly tackle aspects of industrial, environmental and development cooperation, trade, investment and good governance. They voiced alarm at UNICEF reports that 17.5 million children were working in India , "mostly in subhuman conditions". More generally, they urged India to update its labour laws to prevent the exploitation of workers. The EU should work together with the Indian government to improve the situation of underprivileged people, in particular women, children and disadvantaged groups, e.g. Dalits and Adivasis.

Another cause for concern was the increasing environmental destruction, and MEPs urged India to show greater sensitivity to the question of global warming, while pursuing its development needs. The "alarming drop in the number of tigers" merited special mention. The report noted that 20 years after the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal , the site had still not been cleaned up and called on the Indian authorities and Dow Chemicals to clean up the toxic waste immediately. MEPs also urged India to allow derogations to the ban on the manufacture of generic drugs for medicines such as those against AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, hepatitis and cancer.

The committee recommended systematic EU-India consultation in advance of international meetings or conferences and the establishment of permanent links to secure "balanced and mutually beneficial progress on the main points of the Doha Develoment Agenda". Lastly, they urged the Indian government to take firm action against the dumping of trade goods on the EU.