Resolution on the situation in Saudi Arabia

2005/2526(RSP) - 10/03/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted by 78 votes to 1, with 5 abstentions, a resolution on Saudi Arabia .

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 Parliament welcomes the first-ever nationwide electoral process in Saudi Arabia between 10 February and 21 April 2005, witnessed by a European Parliament delegation. It regrets, however, the fact that women are not allowed to participate in these elections, although the electoral law is clear on women's participation.

The Parliament reminds the authorities of their obligations under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and calls on them to take all appropriate measures to eliminate segregation and discrimination against women, and to gradually increase the participation of women in the political decision-making process on equal terms with men, and enable them to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.

The Council and the Commission are called upon to raise a number of issues during the next Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council, notably:

- the abolition of the death penalty: the Parliament calls for an immediate moratorium on the carrying out of death sentences in Saudi Arabia where, according to Amnesty International, 31 executions took place in 2004;
- the lifting of restrictions on women's free movement, including the prohibition on driving; on their employment opportunities, on their legal personality and on their representation in judicial processes;
- steps to upgrade the working conditions and treatment of immigrant workers, in particular of women;
- the lack of freedom of religion: the Parliament encourages the authorities to pursue their efforts to foster greater moderation and tolerance of religious diversity.

The Parliament underlines the importance of countering terrorism and fundamentalism and, on this basis, would favour a strengthening of EU-Saudi relations. It also calls for the EU and Saudi Arabia to support each other's efforts in achieving a satisfactory outcome for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.