The Barcelona Process revisited

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Anneli JÄÄTTEENMÄKI (ALDE, FI) entitled "The Barcelona process revisited". The report said that, although the ten-year Euro-Mediterranean partnership had not as yet "produced the expected benefits", it nevertheless remained the "appropriate framework" for the EU's Mediterranean policy.

MEPs regretted that the partnership had not helped solve the major conflicts in the Mediterranean region. They also noted that "no substantial progress has been achieved in the field of democracy and human rights" and that more progress needed to be made in reducing poverty and bridging the North-South gap. The report said that "political will and a pragmatic vision" were needed more than ever, but stressed that, to be effective, the Euro-Mediterranean policy must be allocated a budget in line with its ambitions.

One of the main issues to be addressed was greater participation by all Mediterranean partner countries in the decision-making process. The committee welcomed the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and called for it to be given "the resources and administrative structures needed to ensure it makes its presence felt and operates effectively".

The committee also felt that one of the main priorities was the development of education and vocational training, with specific attention to be given to women and underprivileged groups such as illiterate populations, female students and populations in rural and suburban areas. In order to increase prosperity, the European Investment Bank Facility for Euro-Mediterranean investments should be further developed, with an emphasis on micro-credit facilities. Cooperation should be encouraged in the field of environmental protection and in the fight against organised crime and terrorism. MEPs warned, however, that the fight against terrorism must in no way be pursued at the expense of civil liberties and human rights.

The EU and its Mediterranean partners should also increase their cooperation in the management of migration flows, while maintaining the principle of "non-refoulement" as laid down in the Geneva Convention and addressing root causes as well as negative effects of illegal immigration. On the issue of human rights, the committee said that the clauses suspending Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements should be invoked in the case of violations of human rights and democratic freedoms.

Lastly, the report called for the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Partnership to be accompanied by "the definition of a clear and committed set of priorities and actions for the future", so that the Barcelona Process could be given a new impetus.