European Union and Iraq: a framework for engagement

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Giorgos DIMITRAKOPOULOS (EPP-ED, EL) in response to the Commission paper entitled "The European Union and Iraq - a framework for engagement". The committee said that foreign troops in Iraq should be replaced by a UN peace-keeping force and that the EU should promote a new Security Council resolution to this end. MEPs also advocated the setting up of an independent Commission, consisting of UN, EU and Iraqi experts, to investigate past human rights crimes.

The report expressed "great concern over the deteriorating security situation in Iraq since the end of combat operations was declared" and hoped that "the lessons learned from the Iraq war will lead to more multilateral, democratic and results-oriented conflict management worldwide in the future". However, MEPs did recognise that the fall of the "repressive" regime of Saddam Hussein had paved the way towards a peaceful, secure and democratic future for the Iraqi people. But in view of the present insecure situation and the increasing number of terrorist acts and attacks against foreign troops, MEPs felt that the international community "has a moral and political duty to respond". A new UN resolution should also provide for the possibility that countries not taking part in the war could participate in the training of Iraqi armed forces and police.

The report said that EU assistance should remedy the shortcomings of the past and bring about a better understanding of Iraqi society. The future political institutions of Iraq should reflect the will of the Iraqi people and preserve the country's unity in a federal state. Democratisation, the rights of minorities and of women and the rule of law were still seen as matters of concern by MEPs, although they also signalled a number of hopeful developments, such as the fact that the government includes members of the Sunni minority and that the Transitional National Assembly consists of 31% women.

The committee called for the EU to make a serious commitment to aid the general elections scheduled for December, by financing electoral assistance and sending observers. The EU should also offer its assistance in the drafting of a new constitution. MEPs added that Iraq 's neighbouring countries could also play an important role in the process of pacification, preserving Iraq 's unity and building the democratic process.

Lastly, the committee urged the EU to target its reconstruction aid towards providing basic services such as primary healthcare, education, clean drinking water and proper sanitation, and to work actively with the Iraqi authorities in the fight against terrorism.