Non-proliferation of arms of mass destruction: a role for the European Parliament

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by irts Valdis KRISTOVSKIS (UEN, LV) entitled "The non-proliferation of arms of mass destruction: a role for the European Parliament". Alarmed at the prospect of a "new and dangerous" arms race involving weapons of mass destruction, MEPs issued an urgent call for effective measures to combat the spread of WMD. Referring specifically to a possible arms race in the Middle East and parts of Asia , they said that the EU, acting together with its international partners, should seek to tighten up controls and sanctions.

The report called for targeted sanctions against those who violate their non-proliferation obligations. While acknowledging that a credible threat of force can facilitate disarmament efforts, they stressed that all diplomatic and political channels should be used before resorting to legitimate military force in accordance with the UN Charter.

The EU should play a more active role in non-proliferation and disarmament policies and also strive for stronger cooperation with the United States against the spread of WMD. The Middle East should become a WMD-free zone. For its part, the EU should make its export controls more effective and help other countries that wish to improve their controls. The EU should also give full support to the IAEA in its efforts to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. The committee stressed that the security of civilian nuclear, biological and chemical materials, plants and laboratories should be improved in view of terrorist threats and that export and transit controls should be strengthened to prevent sensitive materials, equipment and technologies from falling into the wrong hands.

Israel , India and Pakistan were called on to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. All nuclear weapons states under the Non-Proliferation Treaty were urged to take significant steps towards the elimination of their nuclear arsenals. Russia was urged to contribute more to the programmes for the destruction of its chemical weapons and for the disposal of its plutonium.

The committee rejected the development of new generations of nuclear weapons and called for immediate action to prevent the further proliferation of ballistic missiles. The Council and Commission should insist on "the urgency of signature and ratification" of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in dialogue with the United States and all other partner states which have not yet ratified the CTBT. MEPs also repeated their call for a moratorium and eventual ban on the use of depleted uranium ammunition. Referring to the 1967 treaty whereby states commit themselves not to place nuclear or WMD weapons in space, MEPs urged the EU and its Member States to explore the possibility of negotiating additional outer space agreements.

The committee also welcomed the inclusion of non-proliferation clauses in the latest EU agreements with third countries, and said that existing agreements which lacked such a clause should be revised quickly. Lastly, given Parliament's authority over the EU budget, MEPs asked to be fully associated with the implementation of the EU strategy on WMDs and said that "an adequate level of financing" should be allocated to this strategy. Moreover, in the EU budget one single budget line should be introduced for all activities relating to WMD issues, "irrespective of whether they fall within the Community or the CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy) framework".