Resolution on the reform of the United Nations

2004/2620(RSP) - 09/06/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on reform of the United Nations, drafted by Armin LASCHET (EPP-ED, DE). It warmly welcomed the report of the Report of the High-level Panel (hereafter RHP), which made more than a hundred recommendations on change and the need to reform the UN in order to address challenges and threats ranging from poverty, infectious diseases, environmental damage and civil violence to terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and nuclear nonproliferation. The Report by the Secretary-General (hereafter RSG) emphasised and endorses most of these recommendations.

Collective security in the 21st century: prevention, awareness and shared responsibility:

Parliament strongly supported the underlying determination to achieve a reform of the United Nations in order to adapt the organisation to new world realities and make it more efficient, equitable, geared to the long term and accountable in providing collective security in the 21st century. It particularly welcomed the realistic approach of both reports, which, unlike previous reform proposals, adequately combine vision with concrete and practice-oriented measures for action. It recommended strengthening the United Nations system and institutions, since they constitute the most appropriate and only global institutions potentially able to foster and ensure collective security in a manner which is both legitimate and efficient.

Parliament mentioned the following points with approval:

- the strict limitation of the notion of self-defence and the use of force and responsibility to protect civilian populations. Such a definition should not prevent the Security Council from acting preventively since it is the only legitimate body for such action;

- granting the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) an increased role and reinforced means, including the strengthening of its verification authority, in the fight against nuclear proliferation and in preventing the use of atomic, biological and chemical (ABC) weapons;

- the guaranteeing of the supply of fuel necessary to develop peaceful uses, such as an arrangement in which the IAEA would act as a guarantor for the supply of fissile material to civilian nuclear users at market rates for States who voluntarily forego the development of domestic uranium enrichment and plutonium separation facilities;

- the forging by the United Nations of a strategy of counter-terrorism which is respectful of human rights and the rule of law.

Parliament called for greater efforts by the EU Member States with a view to transforming armies into units suitable for deployment to peace operations, and to placing contingents on stand-by for UN purposes.

Freedom from want: a shared and balanced vision of a renewed UN development policy:

Parliament asked all actors to do their utmost to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Previous pledges from donor countries for the financing of development should be implemented – especially to achieve progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

Parliament also endorsed the view that economic and social development and security and respect for human rights and safeguarding the environmentare intricately interdependent. Risk prevention through development can significantlyreduce political, military or terrorist threats which derive from actual or perceived social inequalities, economic injustices and environmental degradations. Security issues are intimately linked to the achievement and consolidation of the MDGs.

Reformed institutions for greater representativeness and efficiency:

The necessary reform of the United Nations as a whole must by no means be limited or overshadowed by the reform of the Security Council and other institutional questions, although a rethinking of structures and working methods with a view to better representation and credibility is of the utmost importance. The composition of the Security Council should be changed in a way that takes into account the changed state of the international system as well as current geopolitical realities, by increasing the number of developing countries in the Council, by ensuring that its members are willing and able to act when action is needed, and by employing more effective and transparent working methods.

Parliament emphasised that an EU seat in the UN Security Council remains the aim for the EU as soon as the political, constitutional and legal conditions for such a seat are met.

It took note of the proposal to extend the composition of the UN Security Council by adding new seats for each regional group, including 'Europe'. The appropriate solution would be to allocate an additional permanent seat to the EU. Parliament called on the Member States seriously to consider this proposal in order to enhance Europe's influence in the world through a coherent and efficient Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). In any case, irrespective of the procedure for reform chosen, some of the additional seats for 'Europe' should be allocated to the EU as such. It called on the European Council to establish the appropriate mechanism to designate the EU Member States who will carry out their mandate as EU representatives in close coordination with the other EU Member States, the High Representative for the CFSP or the future Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Commission and the European Parliament until the conditions for an EU seat are met.

Parliament went on to call for significantly increased financial support from all member states for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the active involvement of the High Commissioner in the work and deliberations of the Security Council.

Other matters addressed by Parliament include the need to revitalise the General Assembly, and the upgrading of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as well as the establishment of a permanent consultation mechanism between a reformed ECOSOC and the Bretton Woods Institutions as well as the World Trade Organisation (WTO). It felt that the reform proposals put forward by the RSG in the socio-economic field remain largely below actual needs for a body that brings together the key developed and developing countries to address the critical links between trade, finance, the environment and economic and social development.

Other suggestion include the following:

- the existing but dormant and obsolete Trusteeship Council be transformed into a Council for Failed States, which would be responsible, on behalf of the United Nations, for coordinating international cooperation in the case of failed States, and more widely for conflict prevention in failing States;

- the strengthening of international environmental governance through the upgrading of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) into a United Nations specialised agency for the environment;

- member countries should provide UNESCO with enhanced budgetary resources in order to fulfil its important mandate;

- the establishment of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) within the UN system, which would increase the democratic profile and internal democratic process of the organisation and allow world civil society to be directly associated in the decision-making process;

- the creation of a Democracy Fund aimed at encouraging, establishing and strengthening democracy worldwide, as called for in the RSG;

- strengthening the 'UN Democracy Caucus';

- encouraging the Council and the Commission actively to pursue the merging of their liaison offices and delegations into a common external EU delegation in each one of the following UN headquarters: New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi;

Finally, Parliament called on its Bureau to commission a group of experts to draw up an initial blueprint detailing how the overall reform of the UN system might operate from the point of view both of the UN Charter and of the EU institutions.