Resolution on the access to humanitarian aid in Kashmir

2005/2646(RSP) - 17/11/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on access to humanitarian aid in Kashmir.

The resolution had been tabled by the ALDE, PES, Greens/ALE, EPP-ED, UEN and GUE/NGL groups.

Parliament expresses its solidarity to all those affected by the earthquake that struck South Asia on 8 October 2005, and remains seriously concerned about the situation of survivors, especially the people living in high-country settlements cut off by landslides, who can only be reached by a fleet of relief helicopters. It is alarmed about reports that people in some of the hardest-hit areas have received little if any aid. Members welcome the joint relief effort by the government of Pakistan and the international community, including the assistance from Member States and NATO. They also welcome the aid package of EUR 93.6 million proposed by the Commission and the pledges made by Member States and other donors.

Parliament calls for increased coordination between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the European Community Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO), non-governmental organisations and the governments of Pakistan and India to ensure that the aid currently provided by the EU is rapidly deployed to Kashmir. It urges donors to contribute to the USD 550 million requested by the UN without delay. The Commission should indicate as soon as possible whether the EU will be able to make further funds available within the global transfer or under other mechanisms, particularly in view of the reconstruction needs from 2006 onwards. Parliament expresses its serious concern about the **severe budget constraints faced by the Commission** as far as humanitarian aid is concerned and stresses that most of the remaining operational reserve of ECHO has been used up by other recent major emergencies. It urges the Commission to revisit the Scheme of Generalised Tariff Preferences (GSP Plus Scheme) and to implement the model approved by the European Parliament on 9 March 2005. The Commission is asked to give effect to those and other appropriate measures on an expedited basis, as per the timetabling of the GSP Plus Scheme following the South Asian Tsunami.

Parliament goes on to welcome the agreement between the governments of India and Pakistan on the opening of crossing points on the Line of Control and supports the call by the UN World Food Programme to open other points for crossing the LoC and to allow the movement of trucks in order to support the relief operation for hundreds of thousands of people in remote valleys and on high mountains in Kashmir. It also welcomes the fact that "cricket diplomacy" led to the holding of a summit in New Delhi between the Indian Prime Minister and the President of Pakistan on 17 April 2005. Both parties are making progress in consolidating confidence-building measures through gradual bilateral normalisation which could lead to a **political settlement of the Kashmir border question**.

Members express their hope that the terrible catastrophe, which struck the Kashmiri people hardest of all, may bear the positive fruit of bringing the survivors closer to peace, free movement and prosperity in the near future. It applauds the governments of India and Pakistan for recent first steps towards reconciliation, which for the first time included the Kashmiris directly in the process, and very much hopes that this is the beginning of a steady process towards peace.