Resolution on human rights and freedom of the press in Tunisia and evaluation of the World Summit on the Information Society held in Tunisia

2005/2651(RSP) - 15/12/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on human rights and freedom of the press in Tunisia and evaluation of the World Summit on the Information Society held in Tunisia.

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

Parliament recalls that Tunisia and the EU have been linked since 1998 by an association agreement, Article 2 of which contains a human rights clause that constitutes an essential element of that agreement.

It welcomes the significant economic and social progress made in Tunisia and expresses its hope that this progress will be accompanied by similar advances in the areas of the **strengthening of democracy**, the rule of law, human rights, in particular freedom of expression and association, and judicial independence, which form part of the Barcelona Process acquis.

Parliament points out the clear contradiction between the final Summit declaration on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005, in which the States taking part recognise that full and absolute respect for human rights and democracy constitutes the cornerstone of the information society, and the disregard of this undertaking by the host country. Parliament calls on the Tunisian authorities to allow the LTDH, the Union of Tunisian Journalists and the Association of Tunisian Magistrates to carry on their activities freely and to hold their congresses. Members express their concern at the **lack of progress towards the release of Community funds** intended to provide financial support for the projects undertaken by the LTDH and the IMED (the Mediterranean Institute) and AFTURD (the Association of Tunisian Women for Research and Development) project on positive action for women's rights of citizenship and equal opportunities in the Maghreb, the project undertaken by Santé Sud and the modernisation plan for the Tunisian justice system. The Tunisian Government is called upon to take immediate action to release the Community funds intended for the above-mentioned projects and rapidly to reach agreement on the modernisation plan for the justice system.

The resolution calls on the Council and Commission to work to improve the management of projects under the MEDA programme and the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights and urges the Commission to determine the measures to be taken if no progress is made towards the release of blocked funds.

Parliament urges the Council and Commission to step up their political dialogue with Tunisia, which is based on mutual understanding and respect and has the aim of encouraging democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and good governance, by calling for the EU-Tunisia Human Rights Subcommittee, provided for in the Association Agreement, to be made fully operational in order to discuss the overall human rights situation and, in particular, individual cases of abuse.

Parliament calls on the Council and the Commission to take, in cooperation with Parliament, the tangible initiatives and appropriate measures, at the imminent meeting of the EU-Tunisia Association Council, in order to discuss the human rights situation; points, in this connection, to the initiative on the setting up of an EU-Tunisia Subcommittee on Human Rights within the framework of the Association Agreement.

Lastly, Parliament welcomes the decision to opt for closer cooperation between governments with regard to the principle of equal treatment between States and the establishment of a Forum on Internet governance.