Resolution on the situation in Belarus prior to the presidential elections on 19 March

2006/2526(RSP) - 16/02/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation in Belarus prior to the presidential elections on 19 March 2006.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, GUE/NGL, Greens/ALE, and UEN groups.

Deploring the continuing deterioration of the political situation and the continuing violations of the civil and human rights of the Belarusian people, Parliament expresses its solidarity with, and support for, all Belarusians who strive for an independent, open and democratic Belarus based on the rule of law.

Parliament calls on the Belarusian authorities to adhere strictly to international standards in the preparations for the presidential elections in March 2006, in the registration and verification of candidates, during the campaign and during the election itself. It condemns the recently adopted 'anti-revolution law', which, amongst other things, allows the Belarusian authorities to imprison anyone suspected of providing or financing training for people to take part in street protests or anyone suspected of misinterpreting or providing information about the situation in Belarus in any foreign country or international organisation. It urges Belarus to reject the anti-revolution bill.

Specifically concerning the elections, Parliament stresses that the following criteria must be fulfilled:

- full transparency of the electoral process in all its aspects, in particular as regards the process of registering candidates, the composition of the electoral commissions and the counting of the votes;
- equal conditions for all election candidates;
- the refraining by State and government bodies from any act that may be considered as harassment of candidates, their relatives or their supporters;
- the guarantee that all those engaged in observing the presidential elections, especially those not connected to particular candidates, will be completely free to carry out their work.

Parliament deeply deplores the fact that the European Parliament and the Council of Europe have received no invitation to observe the presidential elections and calls on the Belarusian authorities to extend a corresponding invitation to both institutions as soon as possible. It calls on the Belarusian authorities to allow independent exit polls to be conducted on the day of the election.

Overall, Parliament considers that should the Belarusian authorities fail to ensure free and fair presidential elections, the Commission, the Council and the Parliament should **consider further initiatives**, including expanding the visa-ban list, particularly for those responsible for any falsifications during the forthcoming elections, as well as freezing the assets of representatives of the Belarusian authorities. Parliament calls on the Council and the Commission to monitor closely the situation in Belarus in the run-up to and during the elections and invites the Commission to consider drawing up a new strategy for Belarus if the proceedings during and after the elections do not meet international democratic standards. It expects such a strategy to include concrete proposals for a more flexible use of EU technical assistance and financial support for civil society, as well as other measures aimed at the restoration of democracy in the country.

Lastly, the Parliament calls on the Council and the Commission to raise the issue of Belarus with the Russian authorities so as to define a common responsibility for bringing about concrete democratic changes in Belarus.