Resolution on the outcome of the negotiations on the Human Rights Council and on the 62nd session of the UN Commission on Human Rights UNCHR, from 13 March to 21 April 2006

2006/2535(RSP) - 16/03/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the outcome of the negotiations on the Human Rights Council and on the 62nd session of the UNCHR, which will be its last session prior to the actual establishment of the HRC. It welcomed the adoption of the resolution creating the HRC, and took note of the EU's contribution towards the outcome of the negotiations. It also welcomed the establishment of a smaller, permanent UN body, directly elected by the General Assembly, as a first step in meeting the 2005 World Summit's commitment to strengthen the United Nations human rights machinery. Parliament approved of the fact that the UNCHR's system of independent 'special procedures' had been retained and noted that these special procedures would be subject to review within one year. The EU must remain vigilant so as to ensure that they are maintained. Parliament also approved the establishment of a universal periodic review mechanism, 'the peer review', as a means of reinforcing the universality of coverage and equal treatment of Member States with regard to the monitoring of human rights throughout the world. It took note of the specification that this mechanism should not duplicate the work of UN treaty bodies. The HRC must ensure, in establishing the modalities of this review, that the session dedicated to it was additional to the minimum three sessions and ten weeks provided for in the resolution.

Parliament regretted that the proposal for the election of members of the HRC by a strengthened, two-thirds majority had not been retained. Nevertheless, the procedure whereby members are elected directly and individually by secret ballot by an absolute majority of the General Assembly, and governments are required to consider candidates' human rights records, could prevent gross human rights violators from sitting on the HRC. Parliament welcomed the setting-up of a mechanism for the suspension, by a two-thirds majority vote of the General Assembly, of the membership rights in the HRC of a member that commits gross and systematic violations of human rights.

It called on all UN Member States to elect the candidate countries with the highest human rights standards, which have ratified core human rights treaties, complied with their reporting obligations, issued open invitations to the UN special procedures and endeavoured to implement their recommendations. It felt that the HRC's ability to protect human rights would depend on all the parties' political willingness to make it a strong and effective body. Parliament urged the EU to play a pioneering role in the HRC and to set an example for working towards a strengthened UN human rights body, capable of addressing and reacting to human rights situations all over the world. It reaffirmed the need for strengthened consultation, between the EU and the UN, in particular the new HRC, and also the need for a coordinated approach on the part of the EU to the HRC sessions so as to ensure effective contribution to its proceedings.

With regard to the 62nd session of the UNCHR, Parliament called on members of the Commission on Human Rights to ensure that the work of special procedures mandated at the last session is presented, acknowledged and fully debated, and that those mandates that come to an end, such as the mandate of the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders, are renewed.