Resolution on Sri Lanka

2006/2621(RSP) - 07/09/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted by 56 votes to 26, with 2 abstentions, a resolution on Sri Lanka.

The resolution was tabled by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE and Greens/EFA groups.

The resolution recalls that, in the past few months, the situation in Sri Lanka has deteriorated miserably with hundreds of deaths, some 200 000 people displaced from their homes, 500 000 civilians in the Jaffna peninsula deprived of essential food and water supplies, and vital post-tsunami reconstruction work disrupted. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) has found that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was responsible for the bombing of a civilian transport bus in a land mine attack on 15 June 2006 that killed 64 people and injured more than 80 in Kebetigollewa in northern Sri Lanka and declared the incident to be a gross violation of the Cease Fire Agreement.

The Parliament deplores the resumption of large-scale and widespread violence and stresses that the immediate reintroduction of the nominally extant Cease Fire Agreement is essential for any progress towards a political solution and a lasting peace. The resolution condemns, inter alia, the daily attacks in and around Jaffna, the murder of the 17 Sri Lankans working for the French NGO Action Against Hunger in Muttur, as well as the operation on 14 August 2006 against Mullaitivu which resulted in the deaths of 51 children and young people.

MEPs deplore the breakdown of peace negotiations and stress the long-term need for a wide-ranging human rights agreement between the parties and its facilitation by an effective, independent international monitoring mission, complementing the agreement on the ground, with unhindered access to both Government and LTTE controlled areas.

The Parliament emphasises the need for Government forces engaged in counter-insurgency and domestic security operations to exercise maximum restraint in order to minimise any risk of innocent civilian casualties. It reiterates its condemnation of the appalling abuse of children through the recruitment of child soldiers, which is a war crime, and calls on all rebel groups to stop this practice. Moreover, it condemns the intransigence of the LTTE leadership over the years, which has successively rejected so many possible ways forward, including devolution at the provincial or the regional level, as well as the concept of a federation with devolution at the national level.

The resolution calls on all parties to the conflict to guarantee the security of the SLMM at all times and regrets the LTTE's insistence on the withdrawal of EU nationals from the SLMM. It calls on the Council to provide financial or technical support for any measure that could adjust the SLMM equipment to match the challenges of its task. It calls on the Government and the LTTE to grant unhindered access for humanitarian aid workers, UN organisations and truce monitors to all parts of the country and to ensure their security.

Member States and the international community are called upon to take robust and determined action actively to investigate the agents of the LTTE. According to MEPs, consideration can be given to lifting proscription if there is an effective ceasefire, an end to terrorism and resumption of serious negotiations on a constructive basis.

Moreover, the Parliament calls on the Government of Sri Lanka, the United National Party and other parties to agree to work in close cooperation to take robust action against terrorism and to address legitimate Tamil grievances. It calls on them to come forward with a bold gesture of reconciliation

towards the Tamil peoples of Sri Lanka. A major step would be early revision of the Constitution of Sri Lanka to define the state as a secular, democratic republic in which all religions are respected.

Lastly, although the EU has allocated almost EUR 125 million in post-tsunami humanitarian and reconstruction aid for Sri Lanka, the Parliament notes that the enduring political gridlock on the 'Post-Tsunami Operations Management Structure' continues to delay the release of a further EUR 50 million in aid, hindering vital reconstruction work in the north and east of Sri Lanka.