Resolution on counterfeiting of medicinal products

2006/2575(RSP) - 07/09/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a joint resolution on counterfeiting of medicinal products, pointing out that such products could have extremely serious consequences and may well endanger the health and life of millions of people. Counterfeit medicines were primarily circulating in developing countries and were used to treat fatal conditions such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. 25% of all medicines used in developing countries were apparently counterfeit, and in some cases, much higher. Parliament felt that the European Union should equip itself as a matter of urgency with the means to combat effectively illicit practices in the area of piracy and the counterfeiting of medicines. According to the WHO, 200 000 of the one million deaths a year from malaria were attributable to medicines wrongly administered or the administration of counterfeit medicines. The counterfeiting of medicines was rife in all continents but mainly in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Russia.

Parliament regretted that the EU had become involved only at a late stage in the international fight against counterfeiting, when more open borders and the Internet were likely to exacerbate the problem of piracy. It called on the Commission to go beyond its current strategy on enforcing intellectual property rights in third countries. The EU must :

- take steps to strengthen the regulatory and quality-control capacity for medicinal products and medical equipment put on the market in countries with inadequate resources and improve access to affordable medicines;

- play a key role in promoting an international convention to create a specific criminal offence of c counterfeiting or the receiving and distribution of counterfeit medicines in the legislation of every country.

Parliament pointed out that this trafficking in fake medicines was also a consequence of the lack of political awareness and commitment, weak regulatory systems, inadequate enforcement capacity and, especially in developing countries, the lack of public access to genuine medicines supervised by the public authorities. There must be preventive measures in action programmes, more specifically, the establishment of structures, cooperation, awareness campaigns, preferably carried out by the public authorities, and finally the political will to carry through such measures successfully.