Bosnia Herzegovina. Recommendation to the Council

2006/2290(INI) - 30/01/2007

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Doris PACK (EPP-ED , DE) containing a proposal for a recommendation to the Council on Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). The report noted with concern that the winners of the parliamentary and presidential elections, which were formerly moderate parties, "are increasingly resorting to radical and nationalistic language, once the prerogative of extremist political groupings". The committee urged the Council to exert pressure on the relevant authorities in BiH, and in particular on the Government of Republika Srpska, to endorse the recently submitted draft plan for police structure reform and to remind all parties that the police reform is a key prerequisite for the conclusion of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU.

The report called on the political leadership of BiH to continue in its efforts to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and to dismantle networks supporting indicted war criminals. It welcomed the decision of the authorities of the Republika Srpska to establish a special body with the task of improving its cooperation with the ICTY with a view to implementing the ad hoc action plan. MEPs added that they expected "concrete results in the near future with regard to the capture of the main fugitives".

The committee also expressed concern at the persisting ethnic barriers in BiH, which were hampering the development of a national identity, and said that the constitutional arrangements in the Dayton Agreement made it more difficult to remove such barriers. It noted that "the EU experience is that a common identity is fully compatible with respect for the cultural and religious traditions of the constituent peoples". The committee therefore felt that, in the context of EU assistance (which, after the reconstruction phase, had focused on facilitating the adoption of EU standards and laws), increasing attention should be paid to dealing with the burden of the past, including the issue of persons who went missing during the bloody conflict, and promoting an inclusive, non-discriminatory education system in BiH, based on tolerance and respect for diversity.

The report called on the Commission to devolve sufficient funds, under the new Pre-Accession Instrument, to both of these objectives, not least by providing support to the International Commission on Missing Persons, and it urged the Council, via its EU Special Representative, to promote initiatives in this area. It stressed that the current education system could represent a "serious threat" to the security of the country.

Lastly, the committee said that, when the Office of the High Representative eventually closes down, the EU must provide strong and coordinated support to help BiH to achieve its long-term aim of European integration as quickly and thoroughly as possible.