Horn of Africa: EU regional political partnership for peace, security and development

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Filip KACZMAREK (EPP-ED, PL) in response to the Commission communication entitled "Strategy for Africa: an EU regional political partnership for peace, security and development in the Horn of Africa".

The report began by deploring the fact that neither the European Parliament nor the Parliaments of the African countries, nor the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, nor civil society representatives were duly consulted at any stage of the formulation of the EU-Africa Strategy, "which calls into question the democratic legitimacy of the common commitment".

The committee stressed that the conflicts in the Horn of Africa must be addressed through a comprehensive, conflict-sensitive, regional approach that will make it possible to formulate a comprehensive response to the regional dynamics and conflict systems. The EU's action must address not only security concerns but also the structural causes of conflicts connected to social, political and economic exclusion, as well as strengthening security and justice. The report stressed that, while addressing security concerns and pursuing counter-terrorism policies, the EU must not neglect human rights and humanitarian law.

MEPs in the committee insisted that, in its efforts to address the crisis in the Horn of Africa region, the EU should "first and foremost seek African solutions", i.e. by involving the regional organisations in place (the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development). They accordingly called for the EU to provide technical support, expertise and institution building assistance to the African Standby Force and the AU Commission's Peace and Security Department. The report also stressed the need to foster the role of national and international NGOs, Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), grassroots movements and other non-state actors in peace-building and conflict prevention.

The committee called also for consolidation of the EU presence in the region through the appointment of an EU representative for the Horn of Africa, who would coordinate EU initiatives in the region, serve as the main EU interlocutor and submit regular reports to Parliament. On the development aspect of the regional partnership, the report stressed that priority must be given to the objective of reducing poverty by achieving the MDGs. However, these should not be seen as "a technical issue which will be resolved simply by providing more money without identifying and tackling the causes of poverty".

At country level, the committee called on the Commission, the Council and Member States "to fully assume their responsibilities" and make every possible effort to protect people in Darfur from the humanitarian disaster resulting from the continuing violation of the ceasefire by all parties and involving civilians in particular. As for Somalia, the committee condemned foreign intervention in the country and called on the Ethiopian government to withdraw its army. It endorsed the deployment of an AU peace-keeping force "under an inclusive political agreement between the warring parties". As for Ethiopia, the report called on the Council and the Commission to put pressure on the Ethiopian government to disclose the total number of people detained throughout the country, to allow visits by the Red Cross, to allow detainees access to their families, legal counsel and any medical care needed and to release immediately and unconditionally all political prisoners. It also urged Ethiopia to accept the demarcation and delimitation of its border as set out by the UN Boundary Commission. On Eritrea, the report urged the

Commission and the Council to take action with regard to the Eritrean Government to release all political prisoners. Lastly, the Council and the Commission were urged to facilitate the peace process in Northern Uganda and to support local processes for alternative justice and reconciliation to take place.