

Bosnia Herzegovina. Recommendation to the Council

2006/2290(INI) - 15/03/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Doris **PACK** (EPP-ED, DE) containing a proposal for a recommendation to the Council on Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). It noted with concern that the winners of the parliamentary and presidential elections, who were formerly moderate parties, resorted during the campaign to confrontational and divisive language. It reminded BiH's political leaders of the urgent and important reforms they need to undertake, notably with regard to the State's Constitution, the judiciary, public administration, the business environment, the educational sector, the phytosanitary and veterinary areas and the environmental field.

Parliament urged the Council to exert pressure on the relevant authorities in BiH to take all necessary steps to implement the recently submitted draft plan for the implementation of the BiH 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. The legal provisions for achieving a police structure which matches the ethnic composition of the population in BiH should be accompanied by an effective monitoring mechanism.

Parliament welcomed the fact that the Bosnian governments and police forces had, in general, cooperated with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), but condemned the failure to arrest all the war criminals still at large on the country's territory and the fact that documents potentially of use to the investigations had in many cases disappeared. It called on the political leadership of BiH to continue in its efforts to cooperate fully with the 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, and expected concrete results in the near future with regard to the capture of the main fugitives.

Parliament went on to call for a re-launching of the constitutional debate involving an in-depth review of the Entity veto mechanism, which should apply only to issues falling under the shared responsibility of the State and the Entities. It also called for a narrow interpretation of the concept of 'vital national interests' so as to prevent any ethnically motivated misuse of the related veto instrument for purely obstructionist purposes. Parliament was concerned by the persisting ethnic barriers in BiH, which hampered the development of a national identity, and felt that the constitutional arrangements in the Dayton Agreement made it more difficult to remove such barriers. The EU experience is that a common identity is fully compatible with respect for the cultural and religious traditions of the constituent peoples. Parliament considered that 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. In practice, this meant an end to the segregation of different ethnic groups schooled under the same roof, a debate on the creation of a common curriculum for those in compulsory schooling, paying special attention to the way in which history is taught, and improved continuing training for teachers.

Parliament called on the Commission to devolve sufficient funds, under the new Pre-Accession Instrument, to both of the above-mentioned objectives, not least by providing support to the International Commission on Missing Persons, and urged the Council, via its EU Special Representative, to promote initiatives in this area. It felt that the current education system could represent a serious threat to the security of the country. Parliament also felt that it would be in the interests of the citizens of BiH if a national truth and reconciliation commission were established for the country, which should examine and

report on the abuses suffered in the past as well as developing recommendations for steps to be taken to deal with this painful legacy and to prevent the recurrence of any such inhumanity.

Parliament reminded BiH politicians that the international community would not tolerate any measure or policy undermining the multi-ethnic character, the territorial integrity, the stability and the unity of BiH and of its entities. It called on the High Representative for Bosnia-Herzegovina to remain particularly vigilant in this respect and to be more robust in promoting the re-integration of refugees and displaced people throughout the territory of BiH, and, in particular, in the Republika Srpska, which had a disappointing record as regards returns of refugees and displaced persons.

Lastly, Parliament commended the work carried out by the incumbent EU High Representative/Special Representative and 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.