

Resolution on Euro-Mediterranean relations

2006/2682(RSP) - 15/03/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a joint resolution on Euro-Mediterranean relations, and felt that it was appropriate to strengthen the political dimension of neighbourhood towards the south, in view of the increased complexity of relations with the Mediterranean region, towards which the Barcelona Process represented a significant step forward. The objectives with which this policy was launched, aimed at establishing stable relations based on common values shared with the new neighbours of an enlarged Europe, are still far from being achieved.

Parliament stated that the development of the ENP cannot be limited to updating the association and cooperation agreements with each of the countries concerned, stressing only the bilateral dimension. It called on all partners to re-launch the strategic and political objectives of the Barcelona Process, including the creation of cooperation networks and the promotion of North-South and South-South regional integration. The Commission's proposal to give the ENP a thematic dimension was welcomed.

MEPs called on the Commission and the partner countries to give more concrete expression to the relationship between the ENP and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership by adding new agreements and multilateral programmes for energy and transport and by strengthening existing programmes and agreements. The Euro-Mediterranean region was vulnerable from an environmental point of view and, more precisely, in terms of climate change. Against that background, Parliament called on the Commission to put forward an action plan for renewable energy sources for the region.

The need to re-launch the Middle East peace process, was reaffirmed, taking account of the seriousness of the political and humanitarian situation. The re-launching of negotiations based on the Road Map will not suffice unless account is taken of other proposals such as the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and unless all players in the region take part in the negotiations. The Middle East conflict can only be resolved by negotiating a final peace agreement, as provided for by the Road Map, i.e. without preconditions, based on the existence of two democratic, sovereign and viable States living in peace alongside one another and within secure and recognised international borders.

Parliament stressed the importance of dialogue between cultures and religions by reaffirming the need to respect common values and the need to develop the rule of law, democracy and human rights. No terrorist act can be justified in any circumstances and the fight against terrorism cannot legitimise the stigmatisation of any particular culture, civilisation or religion. All countries must abide by their legal obligation to respect human rights and international humanitarian law in the fight against terrorism.

The European Parliament called on the Commission to do everything possible to bring about the setting up of democracy and human rights committees with all countries signatory to the ENP action plans and called on the partner countries to respect their undertakings in this connection, particularly with regard to individual cases. All contracting parties to the Euro-Mediterranean association agreements must transpose the human rights clause into a programme for action in order to enhance respect for human rights and put in place a mechanism for the regular assessment of compliance with Article 2 of the Association Agreement in order to make it more effective and more binding. Parliament highlighted the need to address women's rights within the EuroMed Dialogue and stressed the importance of legislative reforms promoting gender equality.

It reaffirmed the importance of a social policy that creates jobs, especially for young people, by establishing, in particular, a favourable climate for increased foreign direct investment and by encouraging young people to create new businesses at local level by means of appropriate instruments such as

microcredits. An education and training policy remains essential for the development of the countries on the southern side of the Mediterranean.

Prime importance must also be given to environmental problems, particularly to tackling the consequences of urban concentration and industrial and commercial activities on both sides of the Mediterranean. Respect for social and trade union rights must be promoted when implementing financial and technical aid programmes in the partner countries.

Parliament moved on to call for a major development of investments in the region as part of the European strategy with regard to financial policies and resources in the regional and intra-regional dimension of the Partnership, which would constitute value added for this strategy. Total resources for regional and multilateral activities must be maintained by the Commission at the level achieved in the 2000-2006 period, taking account of the fact that, according to the Commission, this level has reached 20 % of the total amount.

Lastly, Parliament again referred to the need for the necessary studies concerning the transformation of the facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP) into a Euro-Mediterranean Development Bank, and the need for gradual integration of the Euro-Mediterranean energy markets, to establish energy programmes of common interest and to develop sustainable energy sources.