Resolution on transatlantic relations

2007/2530(RSP) - 25/04/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on transatlantic relations ahead of the forthcoming EU-US Summit to be held on 30 April in Washington.

MEPs welcomed the improvement in EU-US relations on an equal basis; believes that this positive backdrop offers serious opportunities for the EU and US to work closely together on a wide range of policy challenges of common concern, notably in the common approach to the Western Balkans, the South Caucasus region, Central Asia, the Middle East, Afghanistan, the Mediterranean, Latin America and Africa.

Political, security and human rights issues: MEPs call on the Council and the US administration to intensify efforts, within the framework of the Middle East Quartet, to foster negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians for a comprehensive peace solution on the basis of two secure and viable states. They support the Quartet's call for continued international assistance to the Palestinian people. They are of the view that every effort should be made to stabilise the situation in Lebanon and welcome the re-launch of the Plan adopted by the LAS at the Riyadh Summit. They also welcome the formation of the Palestinian national unity government and urge both transatlantic partners to engage in a constructive dialogue with it.

The Parliament welcomes the close cooperation between the EU and the US on the Iranian nuclear issue and encourages both partners to continue cooperation in strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and establishing a comprehensive system of international agreements on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in order to jointly reinforce the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a key element in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. It believes that fighting terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remain the greatest security challenges for both partners; stresses therefore the need for both sides to reinforce their collaboration in that field and to support the role that the UN must play in combating both challenges. It also believes that it is necessary to define, with the US, a common and shared framework to safeguard the guarantees that are needed in the special EU-US partnership in the fight against terrorism, which could also deal with all aspects concerning the free movement of persons between the EU and the US.

The Parliament recognises that the sharing of data and information is a valuable tool in the international fight against terrorism and related crime, but stresses that strong data protection guarantees would facilitate data sharing while ensuring protection of privacy, and that such data sharing would in any case need to be based on one or more international agreements similar in structure to the EC/US agreement on judicial cooperation in criminal matters and extradition, which is currently being examined by Congress. It strongly regrets that the agreements on Passenger Name Records, SWIFT and the existence of the US Automated Targeting System have led to a situation of legal uncertainty with regard to the necessary data protection guarantees for data sharing and transfer between the EU and the US for the purposes of ensuring public security and, in particular, preventing and fighting terrorism.

It calls on the US and all other countries which apply entry visas to selected EU Member States to immediately lift the visa regime and to treat all citizens of EU Member States equally. It regrets the inclusion of an additional 'information sharing clause' (a PNR clause) in the proposed changes to the US Visa Waiver Programme.

The US is called to redouble its efforts to consult and explain its planned missile defence system within NATO in order to allow the Alliance and Europe to remain united, resist foreign pressure and steer clear of disagreement in different areas of security; stresses the importance of consulting on the system within

the NATO-Russia Council. Parliament stresses that the US system should be coordinated and interoperable with NATO's Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence (TBMD) system.

Parliament recalls the resolutions of Parliament calling for the closure of the Guantánamo Bay detention centre. It calls on the Council and the Commission to urge the US Government to find a mechanism that will facilitate the charging or releasing of detainees. It is concerned that the very existence of the Guantánamo Bay detention centre continues to send out a negative signal as to how the fight against terrorism is being pursued and therefore urges the Council to issue a clear and forceful declaration calling on the US Government to put an end to the practice of extraordinary arrests and renditions and that the US Government be requested for clarifications regarding the existence of secret prisons outside US territory.

Parliament calls on the EU Presidency and the US Government to signal to the President of the World Bank, Paul Wolfowitz, that his withdrawal from the post would be a welcome step towards preventing the Bank's anti-corruption policy from being undermined.

Economic and Trade Issues: the Parliament strongly supports the initiative by the German Presidency of the European Council to launch a New Transatlantic Economic Partnership, with a road map for achieving a barrier-free transatlantic market. It insists that the negotiations on a barrier-free transatlantic market place must not lead to a downward harmonisation of social, environmental and health standards and must maintain the autonomy and integrity of the EU's competition policy and its rules on the protection of public services and cultural diversity.

Parliament calls on both sides to bring the WTO Doha Development Agenda to a successful conclusion with full respect for the development dimension and urges the EU and the US, therefore, to declare at the 2007 Summit their full commitment to working towards a positive breakthrough by Summer 2007 and, in addition to their market access and services objectives, to agree a joint approach to promote enforceable International Labour Organization´s core labour standards in the WTO and in bilateral trade agreements.

On environmental and energy questions: the US is pressed to reconsider its position regarding ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and both parties are urged to develop alternative energy production methods and pursue greater energy efficiency.

Institutional framework and role of Parliament: MEPs emphasise that only the wider involvement, at all levels, of Congress and the Parliament will make it possible to truly improve the whole process and that the existing interparliamentary exchange should be gradually transformed into a de facto 'Transatlantic Assembly'. They request the Commission to discuss with the relevant EP committees its negotiating strategy before engaging in negotiations with its US counterparts, when those negotiations tackle legislative issues. Lastly, they call their relevant committees to use the budget for 2007 to provide the necessary funds for establishing a permanent European Parliament official post in Washington DC that ensures proper institutionalisation of Parliament's own activities and allows for an improvement in liaisons between the European Parliament and the US Congress