Basic information

1999/2002(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Human rights in the world: Union's activities from 1997 to June 1999. Memorandum and annual report **Subject** 6.10.08 Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general	

Key players

	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
European Parliament	AFET Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security, Defense	MALMSTRÖM Cecilia (ELDR)	23/09/1999

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
01/10/1999	Non-legislative basic document published	11350/1999	Summary
01/12/1999	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
24/02/2000	Vote in committee		Summary
24/02/2000	Committee report tabled for plenary	A5-0060/2000	
15/03/2000	Debate in Parliament		
16/03/2000	Decision by Parliament	T5-0110/2000	Summary
16/03/2000	End of procedure in Parliament		
29/12/2000	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	1999/2002(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 101o-p1
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/4/10706

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A5-0060/2000 OJ C 377 29.12.2000, p. 0005	24/02/2000	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T5-0110/2000 OJ C 377 29.12.2000, p. 0172-0336	16/03/2000	Summary

Council of the EU

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Supplementary non-legislative basic document	13334/1998	15/12/1998	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	11350/1999	01/10/1999	Summary

Human rights in the world: Union's activities from 1997 to June 1999. Memorandum and annual report

1999/2002(INI) - 15/12/1998 - Supplementary non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to present the annual Memorandum on the Union·s activities in the field of human rights (1997). CONTENT : the aim of this Memorandum is to keep the European Parliament informed about the activities put into action by the Union in the field of human rights in 1997. The document goes through the Union's actions in all regions of the world, as well as its collaboration with various competent international institutions in the area of human rights, such as the OSCE, the United Nations or the Council of Europe. The Memorandum reveals that, in 1997, the European Union continued to exercise strict vigilance with regard to the situation on human rights in the world. It also adopted several common positions, issued public declarations and took steps in order to oppose violations of human rights in the countries and regions concerned. In Central and South-Eastern Europe, it is mainly the situation in the FYROM which was of greatest concern Two documents were published which aim to ensure respect for human rights, the rule of law and minority rights are conditions for agreed assistance. In Bosnia, the European Union continued to support the High Representative, Mr. Carlos Westendorp, with a view to the implementation of the Dayton/Paris Agreements ; however, serious barriers were the cause of the slowdown in the return of the refugees to Bosnia. Moreover, in the FYROM, the deterioration of the situation concerning the respect of human rights and ethnic minorities drove the Union to suspend and then abolish the autonomous commercial measures with this country. In Central Asia, the most worrying situation is Chechnya where summary trials and public executions were carried out. Furthermore, the Union denounced the random arrests of protesters and the worsening of the repression of members of the opposition in Belarus. As for the Mediterreanean region, the Union closely followed developments in the situation in Algeria while recalling that the fight against terrorism must also respect human rights. In the Middle East, it is mainly the Israeli-Palestinian situation which attracts the Union's attention with the setting up of a European Observatory in 1997 for Human Rights in the region. The information collected, thanks to this new mechanism, resulted in some progress on questions associated with human rights in the two camps. In Asia also, the Union maintained its pressure in favour of respecting human rights, in particular, in China and Afghanistan. In these countries, the Union called for the immediate halt of hostilities in order to avoid having new victims in the country. It is also worth noting that the Council Decision of 24 March 1997 sought the termporary withdrawal of the benefits of the Generalised System of Preferences for not respecting human rights in the country. In Latin America the Union, mainly concerned itself with deepening its relations with each of the countries in the Rio Group. Particular importance was accorder to Mexico with the signature of the Cooperation and Partnership Agreement the firstArticle of which provides that respect for human rights should be a principle element of the Agreement. Lastly, in Africa, the most worrying situation comes from the Great Lakes region. The situation there led the Union to send a Special Convoy (Mr Aldo Ajello) with a view to monitoring the evolution of human rights in the region. The situation remains worrying in the Congo (former Zaire) and Burundi. A Troika was sent to the region so as to explain the Union's position on human rights and the conditions for the granting of aid in the future. No improvement in the human rights situation was observed in Rwanda where reprisal massacres by way of genocide took place throughout 1997. The Union remains concerned about the situation in Nigeria, requiring it to maintain its common position imposing restrictions on the granting of visas to certain categories of Nigerian citizens. The European Union also strongly condemns the military coup d'état in Sierra Leone.

Human rights in the world: Union's activities from 1997 to June 1999. Memorandum and annual report

1999/2002(INI) - 01/10/1999 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : the presentation of the first EU annual report on Human Rights (part of which is devoted to human rights in the world). CONTENT : the Council submitted the draft EU annual report on human rights to the European Parliament. The report was made up of two different parts : the first deals with human rights in the Union (see INI/1999/2001), the second, with the evolution of human rights in the world. This report takes the place of the traditional memorandum on the Union's activities in the domain of human rights prepared up to now each year by the Council for the European Parliament to inform it of EU action on human rights in the world over the past year. In presenting this report, the Union would like to contribute to a

better understanding of the motives and institutional structures and policy instruments of the Union. The report explains who the actors in the Union's human rights policies are, and looks at their goals, methods and activities. Unlike the Union's Memorandum on human rights, this report does not look into each region of the world in particular in order to discover violations on human rights and the Union's actions in order to contribute to reducing them. Rather, the report analyses the instruments at the Union's disposal in order to act and their practical application from 1 June 1998 to 30 June 1999. Essentially, the European Union's international action for the promotion and protection of human rights is based on a mix of instruments, whether they relate to the Common Foreign and Security Policy or to development cooperation. With the entry into force of the Treaty of Amsterdam on 01/05/1999, the Treaty's main aim is to make the external policies of the Union more coherent, effective and visible in promoting peace, prosperity and stability in the world. Provisions to that end include strengthening the role of the European Council which has been reinforced with the designation of a High Representative, Mr. Javier Solana for the CFSP. A Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit will also be created in the Council Secretariat in order to reinforce the EU's international presence, visibility and effectiveness, including in the field of human rights. Among the EU's main instruments in this field are the common strategies (a new instrument created since the Amsterdam Treaty which seeks to strengthen the coherence of the Union's action at international level), the joint positions (which define the Union's approach on a particular subject), and joint actions (which address specific situations and imply immediate reaction, in the form of humanitarian aid). The EU's first common strategy concerned Russia in June 1999. The common positions in 1998 to 1999 have rather concerned the irresponsible and criminal attitudes of several foreign authorities with, for example, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the lead, followed by several leaders from African countries. Through a joint action, the EU notably supported the democratic process in Nigeria and the Palestinian Authority. In addition, other instruments have also been mobilised, such asdeclarations or even political dialogue with 48 countries or regional groupings at all levels of power (Heads of State and government or experts). A specific dialogue has also been implemented during this period on human rights with China. Even if tangible advances cannot be obtained with this country, the Union has institutionalised the debate via a Troika made up of Union Ambassadors who are working on the democratisation process in China. Important work on the difficult situation in Tibet was initiated with the competent authorities. Furthermore, there are also specific and horizontal actions on a given policy. This is the case, in particular, for the abolition of the death penalty. The European Union has clearly expressed its position on the subject and has urged several governments to take steps towards its abolition or at least that it it should no longer be applied. The so-called human rights clause introduced in the 1990s in most of the bilateral trade and cooperation agreements with third countries allows the Union to maintain the pressure for the respect for human rights in the countries with which it is associated. This clause does not transform the basic nature of the agreements which are otherwise concerned with matters not directly related to the promotion of human rights. It simply constitutes a mutual reaffirmation of commonly shared values and principles, a precondition for economic and other cooperation under the agreements, and expressively allows for and regulates suspension in cases of non-compliance with these values. Other initiatives also deserve mention: for example, a regional and cooperation partnership initiative. In the spring of 1999, against the background of the Kosovo conflict, the Union took the initiative to launch the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe which was adopted on 10 June 1999 by a Conference in Cologne, Germany. The Pact aims at supporting countries in S.E. Europe in their efforts to foster peace, democracy, respect for human rights and economic prosperity. Another EU initiative in the region is the process on Stability and Good Neighbourliness in SE Europe (known as the "Royaumont Process"), launched in 1995. It aims at developing democracy and civil society in the countries of the region and at promoting transborder contacts between the different components of civil society. In addition, the Union supports several other initiatives, such as electoral assistance (observation of the elections in particular) or ad hoc surveillance missions (e.g. : the Middle East, in the Balkans, and in Indonesia). Lastly, the Union supports financially a series of activities by the world in the framework of the European Initiative for Democracy and the protection of Human Rights (chapter B7-70) through projects set up by NGOs. The Union's common voice may also be heard within the competent international institutions on human rights : the United Nations, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe where more and more joint initiatives are carried out.

Human rights in the world: Union's activities from 1997 to June 1999. Memorandum and annual report

1999/2002(INI) - 16/03/2000 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted its resolution on the Annual Report on International Human Rights and EU Human Rights Policy drafted by Ms. Cecilia Malmström (ELDR, Sw). The resolution makes a number of recommendations that include: - in view of the priority attached by the EU to human rights and because of the need to establish a coherent and consistent approach across the different European Union institutions, that the Council urgently elaborates a common strategy on human rights in consultation with the Parliament; - that the Council and Commission ensure that human rights and democratic principles are actually respected firstly within the EU by all Member States and that future Annual Reports from the Council should include a record of human rights activities by the Member States, by the Commission and by Parliament and also of all actions falling under budget heading B7-70; - the establishment of an early-warning system for human rights violations in order to be able to respond to them as swiftly as possible; - that the Council, Parliament and Commission should jointly declare their determination to increase human rights and democratisation expenditure in each of the next five years; - that provision should be made in the Commission budget for support to a platform of human rights NGOs, on the lines of similar platforms concerning (inter alia) development policy, social policy and women's affairs; - that representatives of the governments, national parliaments, and civil society of the candidate countries be invited to contribute to the elaboration of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which will become part of the 'acquis communautaire'. The European Parliament calls: - on the Council and the Commission to convene a further conference to review the effectiveness of EU support for the efforts of the candidate countries to achieve the political criteria established at Copenhagen; - on the Council and the Commission to make particular efforts to improve the effectiveness and rigorous monitoring of programmes concerning protection and respect for the human rights of minorities in candidate countries, and to enhance the ability of these countries to pass and implement laws aimed at countering discrimination, including on grounds of race. Special reference is made to the need to improve the situation of Kurdish, Roma and Sinti minorities; - for particular efforts to improve the effectiveness of programme concerning the conditions of minorities in applicant countries, in particular those of religious, ethnic, linguistic and cultural minorities. The Parliament emphasises the importance of the human rights clause as a basis for a common effort to improve respect for human rights, and insists that the suspension mechanism for agreements which include the human rights clause should in all cases be based on clear procedures, and that implementing regulations should be speedily adopted where necessary. It reiterates its request to the Commission to draw up, as a matter of urgency, a detailed list of the rights which it considers to be covered by the human rights clause, referringto the international and regional human rights instruments to which the EU and its Member States subscribe. Parliament calls on governments to take the necessary measures so that domestic violence is covered by human rights and not by private

law, with the aim of making it easier to pursue offenders, as well as to intensify cooperation between the states of origin and of destination of trafficking in women by supporting investigation and judicial processes and ensuring an effective exchange of information encompassing governmental and non-governmental action. It also calls on the EU to initiate a UN Convention on punishment of anybody who is responsible for incitement to, or organisation or execution of, any form of trafficking in persons. The European Parliament reaffirms its commitment to the abolition of capital punishment and salutes the diplomatic efforts made by the EU and its Member States in favour of a global moratorium on the death penalty and the ultimate abolition of capital punishment; to this end, it calls on the EU to renew its efforts within the UN to ensure that the Assembly takes a stance as soon as possible on a universal moratorium and the abolition of the death penalty. It insists that the abolition of the death penalty should become a key element of European human rights policy and calls on the Council to raise this issue in dialogue with third countries. The Council and Commission are invited to step up their efforts to establish common definitions and strategies at EU level on asylum seekers and refugees, respecting and, where appropriate, supplementing the Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees; in this connection, the Parliament is concerned at the growing number of reports of ill-treatment suffered by asylum seekers in EU Member States and calls on these Member States, as a matter of urgency, to introduce a policy on treatment, detention and, if necessary, expulsion of asylum seekers that is more respectful of human rights. Parliament reiterates its request to the Commission and the Council for a detailed study to be made of existing codes of conduct on human rights for business and to submit a draft code for business designed to ensure that fundamental, social and trade union rights are respected in the EU. It recalls its support for the setting of fair social standards in economic activity and its commitment to take part in efforts to combat the exploitation of labour throughout the world. Lastly, the Parliament calls on the Council and the Commission urgently to develop, as an alternative to sanctions which may harm the general population, 'smart actions' targeted at illegally expropriated assets of the heads of abusive governments, and to promote coordinated international efforts to restore such assets to the country of origin as soon as a genuine process of democratisation has started.