

REGIONS:

AFRICA

♦ **Togo**

- ▶ Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Togo (25.04.05)
- ▶ Statement by the Presidency of the European Union on the situation in Togo (29.04.05)

♦ **Rwanda**

- ▶ Louis Michel assure le Président Kagame du soutien de l'UE au processus de réconciliation au Rwanda (27.04.05)

ASIA

♦ **Pakistan**

- ▶ EU-Pakistan Troika: Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner proposes major increase in aid to Pakistan (26.04.05)

♦ **China**

- ▶ Chinese delegation discusses arms embargo with MEPs (27.04.05)

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

♦ **Romania**

- ▶ MEPs call to improve Roma rights - By Honor Mahony (28.04.05)

♦ **Russia**

- ▶ MEPs worry about Russia's democracy but stress need for more cooperation (27.04.05)

♦ **Belarus**

- ▶ Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union concerning the closure of the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) (29.04.05)

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

♦ Algeria

- ▶ No files said to exist on Algerians who disappeared in conflict (26.04.05)

♦ Syria

- ▶ MEPs and Syrian representatives discuss association agreement (26.04.05)

THEMATIC :

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE

- ▶ Budget 2007-2013: prospects for deal look bleak (26.04.05)

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

♦ Fundamental rights

- ▶ President Barroso proposes a new framework to “lock-in” a culture of fundamental rights in EU legislation (27.04.05)
- ▶ New EU Agency to monitor fundamental rights in Europe (26.04.05)

♦ Immigration

- ▶ Finding ways to manage immigration (26.04.05)

♦ Terrorism

- ▶ Money laundering directive to cover funding of terrorism (27.04.05)

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

♦ European Neighbourhood Policy

- ▶ Extract from the press release of the 2656 th session of the EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Council meeting - Luxembourg (25.04.05)

♦ **Cour pénale internationale**

- ▶ Accord de coopération et d'assistance (25.04.05)

♦ **United Nations**

- ▶ UN High Commissioner on First Official Visit to Brussels (27.04.05)

♦ **Human rights**

- ▶ Human rights around the world in 2004 (28.04.05)

IMPORTANT COMING MEETINGS

ASSOCIATION / COOPERATION COUNCIL MEETINGS

26 April 2005

- ♦ EU- Croatia Association Council
- ♦ EU- Turkey Association Council

26 may 2005

- ♦ EU- Chile Association Council
- ♦ EU- Mexico Joint Council

THIRD COUNTRY MEETINGS

6-7 May 2005

- ♦ EU- Japan (Troika)

8-9 May 2005

- ♦ EU- China (Troika)

10 may 2005

- ♦ EU-Russia Summit

18 May 2005

- ♦ EU- ECOWAS (Troika)

26 may 2005

- ♦ EU- Central America (Troika)

31 may 2005

- ♦ EU- Arab Group (Troika)
- ♦ EU- Israel (Troika)

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEETINGS

♦ Plenary Session

➤ 9-12 May 2005

♦ Committee on Foreign Affairs

➤ 23 May 2005
➤ 14 June 2005

♦ Subcommittee on Human Rights

➤ 16 June 2005

♦ Subcommittee on Security and Defence

➤ 26 May 2005

♦ Committee on Development

➤ 23 May 2005

♦ Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

➤ 26 May 2005

♦ Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

➤ 24 May 2005
➤ 26 May 2005

REGIONS:

| |
|--------|
| AFRICA |
|--------|

♦ Togo

► Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Togo (25.04.05)

On the eve of a presidential election that is vital for the country's future, the European Union makes an urgent appeal to all parties to enable the election to proceed in a peaceful and proper manner. It voices its concern over the tension that has arisen in the run-up to the election, leading to deterioration in the political climate in Togo.

The European Union also calls upon all Togolese political forces and institutions to show responsibility and openness to ensure that each citizen can vote freely, against a background of calm and transparency, so that the elections can be credible.

The European Union renews its support for the efforts of ECOWAS in mediating and monitoring the electoral process in the context of the agreement between the majority and the opposition reached on 28 February under the aegis of President Tandja.

The European Union is paying close attention to the electoral process before, during and after the vote, and will determine its future positions in the light of all these aspects.

The European Union reiterates the importance of compliance with the 22 undertakings entered into by the Togolese Government in the context of the consultations under Article 6 of the Cotonou Agreement, as regards the restoration of democracy, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

http://ue.eu.int/cms3_applications/applications/newsroom/loadDocument.ASP?directory=en/cfsp&fileName=84643.pdf

► Statement by the Presidency of the European Union on the situation in Togo (29.04.05)

The Presidency expresses its grave concern regarding the development of the situation in Lomé, as in the rest of Togo, following the elections of 24 April. It pays tribute to the people of Togo, who have taken part in the ballot despite difficult conditions.

The Presidency steadfastly condemns the current wave of violence and launches an urgent appeal to all of the parties to restore calm. In this respect, it exhorts the Security Forces to exercise their duty to maintain order with strict respect for human rights, in order to avoid any exaction against the population.

The Presidency encourages the leaders of all the political forces and civil and military institutions to prove their total commitment to undertake the route of national reconciliation and to achieve a successful transition.

http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/84729.pdf

♦ Rwanda

- ▶ Louis Michel assure le Président Kagame du soutien de l'UE au processus de réconciliation au Rwanda (27.04.05)

Le Commissaire européen au Développement et à l'Aide humanitaire, Louis Michel, a assuré aujourd'hui le Président du Rwanda, Paul Kagame, du **soutien de la Commission européenne à toute démarche visant à réinsérer les milices ex-FAR/Interahamwe, qui opèrent dans l'est de la RDC. Louis Michel a réitéré l'appui de la Commission européenne à « la reconstruction du Rwanda sur une base non ethnique, avec un processus de réconciliation qui rende justice aux victimes du génocide et une démocratie stable et pluraliste, dans le respect des droits fondamentaux ».**

Le Commissaire Michel a indiqué que les groupes armés qui opèrent dans la zone frontalière à l'est de la RDC « représentent un facteur d'instabilité important pour la région entière et constituent un frein à son développement humain et économique ». Il a marqué son soutien à tout règlement de ce problème qui garantisse en même temps le droit à la sécurité du Rwanda et le respect de l'intégrité territoriale de son voisin congolais.

Lundi dernier au Luxembourg, l'Union européenne a **accueilli favorablement la déclaration des Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) faite à Rome et a exhorté leurs responsables en Europe et sur le terrain à mettre en œuvre l'engagement pris sans délais.** Elle a aussi renouvelé son appel aux gouvernements de la RDC et du Rwanda à travailler ensemble et à coopérer étroitement avec la MONUC afin d'assurer le désarmement, le rapatriement et la réintégration des milices FDLR en ligne avec le calendrier proposé.

Lors de son entretien avec le Président Kagame, Louis Michel s'est félicité de « l'accélération importante que connaît la coopération CE-Rwanda depuis 2002 », avec une aide programmable qui est passée de 124 à 176 M d'euros pour le 9ème FED (Fonds européen de développement).

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/496&format=HTML&aged=0&language=FR&guiLanguage=en>

ASIA

♦ Pakistan

- ▶ EU-Pakistan Troika: Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner proposes major increase in aid to Pakistan (26.04.05)

The EU-Pakistan Ministerial Troika met on 27th April 2005 in Luxembourg. Discussions at the meeting focused on bilateral relations and steps that can be taken to strengthen the existing partnership, including a Commission proposal to increase annual assistance from the EU four times over. **The agenda will also cover political developments in Pakistan, Pakistan-India relations, Afghanistan, counter-terrorism and non-proliferation.** The EU Troika was represented by the Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Luxembourg's Foreign Minister, Mr. Jean Asselborn, and the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Mr Javier Solana. The Pakistani delegation was led by Foreign Minister Mr. Khurshid M. Kasuri.

The European Commission would now like to consolidate this support by substantially increasing our aid to Pakistan in the coming years(...). The European Commission now proposes to increase the annual allocation for Pakistan from **€15** million to up to **€60** million in the period 2007-13 to assist Pakistan in implementing its development plans. (...)

On the eve of the meeting, Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner also commented on recent progress in the so-called "composite dialogue" between India and Pakistan(...). The Commission recognises the strategic importance of Pakistan's role in maintaining regional stability and in the fight against terrorism. The Commission is prepared to work with the Government of Pakistan in the field of counter-terrorism, for instance on anti-money laundering.

In the field of democratisation and human rights, the Commission will encourage Pakistan to continue with its policy of "Enlightened Moderation". The Commission has played an active role in supporting democratisation in Pakistan, and will indicate an interest in further cooperation in this area. The importance of Pakistan's role in facilitating the September parliamentary elections in Afghanistan were also emphasised.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/pakistan/intro/ip05_483.htm

♦ China

► Chinese delegation discusses arms embargo with MEPs (27.04.05)

After hearing the views of Javier Solana's personal representative for weapons of mass destruction on the lifting of the arms embargo against China in the morning of 26 April, Members of the EP **Foreign Affairs Committee** met a delegation of the Chinese parliament in the afternoon. They **asked the Chinese delegation to respond to objections made by opponents of the lifting of the arms embargo, in particular their concerns about the human rights situation and the risk of upsetting the balance of power in Asia.**

In answer to questions by Jas GAWRONSKI (EPP-ED, IT), LU Congmin, **vice-chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the People's Congress, said it was inappropriate to link the matter of the arms embargo to other issues,** adding that the embargo was imposed at the end of the 1980s and that things had changed greatly since. China was not out to buy masses of weapons from the EU, he stressed, and could not even afford to do so but the embargo was perceived as an act of discrimination at a time when relations between China and the EU in general had improved greatly.

MEPs Cecilia MALMSTRÖM (ALDE, SE), Raül ROMEVA i RUEDA (GREENS/EFA, ES) and Hélène FLAUTRE (GREENS/EFA, FR) pointed out that the embargo had been imposed as a reaction to the bloody suppression of the student protests at Tienanmen Square and that some of the protesters were still in prison. Mrs Malmström also wondered what the point was of lifting the embargo if the EU did not intend to sell more equipment to China. Véronique DE KEYSER (PES, BE) pointed to the anti-secession law against Taiwan, which was recently adopted in China, and the tensions between China and Japan as other points of concern. Vytautas LANDSBERGIS (EPP-ED, LT) asked where the Panchen Lama, who had been abducted ten years ago, now was.

ZHANG Chunsheng, vice-chair of the People's Congress' Legislative Affairs Committee, said that the main thrust of the anti-secession law was to achieve its aims by peaceful means. With regard to human rights, he stated that these were indeed universal but that they needed to be looked at in the context of each individual country. Moreover, he said, the situation in China was steadily improving. LI Yuanzheng, deputy defence minister, said the **former Panchen Lama was in good health in China and was going to school there.** On Chinese relations with Japan, Mr LU admitted that the demonstrations in Beijing, Shanghai and other cities were perhaps excessive, but that Japan needed to adopt a more responsible attitude to its past. He criticised the text books which approved atrocities committed by Japan in the past and the continuing reverence for the Yasukuni shrine, where war criminals are honoured among others.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050427-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION1>

♦ **Romania**

- ▶ MEPs call to improve Roma rights - By Honor Mahony (28.04.05)

MEPs have tried to raise awareness about the plight of Europe's 12-15 million Roma with a resolution calling on member states to do more to help this ethnic minority.

The resolution notes that **Roma in Europe "are suffering racial discrimination and in many cases are subject to severe structural discrimination, poverty and social exclusion"**. It also highlights the every-day difficulties faced by Roma such as racist attacks, hate speech, unlawful evictions and police harassment. Other practices include the **sterilisation of Roma women without their consent and segregated education for Roma children**.

Hungarian Liberal MEP Viktoria Mohacsi, one of only two Roma deputies in the Brussels assembly, said the adoption of the resolution is a "very important" step. "I am particularly concerned about the fact that Romani children are declared mentally disabled and segregated into separate schools", said Mrs Mohacsi. "In my experience, generally 60% of children who are declared mentally disabled in the European Union happen to be Roma".

The non-binding resolution calls on the EU and member states to recognise the Roma as a European minority - currently countries such as Greece, Denmark and Italy do not - and **says future member states such as Croatia and Turkey should do so as well**. It also says that the atrocities committed against the Roma by the Nazis should be formally recognised and asks for the removal of the pig farm situated at the site of a former concentration camp to be removed(...)

Roma are thought to be Europe's largest minority having made their way to this Continent from India around 1,000 years ago. However, precise demographic figures are not available "due in large part to the stigma associated with the Romani identity ... and the refusal of many governments to include Roma as a legitimate category for census purposes" says a European Commission report on Roma.

Roma also continue to live in abject poverty in several of the new member states including in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. A UN committee ruled recently that policies in Slovakia kept Roma in sub-standard slum-like housing.

But "old" member states do not fare much better. The European Roma Rights Centre website notes that there have been a "number of recent violent and abusive actions committed against Roma by public authorities and others in Greece, Italy ... Spain and Sweden"

<http://www.euobserver.com/?sid=851&aid=18959>

♦ **Russia**

- ▶ MEPs worry about Russia's democracy but stress need for more cooperation (27.04.05)

The Foreign Affairs Committee has called for further integration of Russia into the world economy and closer involvement of the country in European security, while voicing concern over human rights and the development of democracy.

In a report drawn up by Cecilia MALMSTRÖM (ALDE, SE), which was adopted unanimously on 26 April, **MEPs warned of the "apparent weakening of Russia's commitment to democracy, the market economy and the protection of human rights"**. They highlighted reports of discrimination and antisemitism, restrictions on the media and the use of the judicial system for political goals. However, they also acknowledged Russia's potential as a strategic partner, not only in the economic and trade areas, but also in **fighting international terrorism, trafficking in drugs, arms and people, and addressing environmental and nuclear hazards**.

Mentioning Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Georgia, MEPs said they rejected "foreign policies aimed at creating spheres of influence" and asked Russia to see the spread of democracy in neighbouring countries and the development of stronger ties to the EU in these countries not as a threat but as "a chance to renew political and economic cooperation with those countries".

The Foreign Affairs Committee remained deeply concerned about the "continuing failure to end lawlessness in Chechnya" and the "lack of will to seek a negotiated solution as exemplified by the rejection of the ceasefire proposed by the late President Maskhadov and of his subsequent brutal killing", which it condemned. It urged the Council again to be prepared to give assistance to a peaceful and constructive dialogue.

On the other hand, the report **underlined the importance of Russia's support for the ICC and the Kyoto Protocol**. MEPs stressed the importance of setting up a common external security area. They also called for further cooperation in the field of maritime safety, especially on a ban for single-hull tankers in the Baltic and Black Seas. And they urged the EU to offer Russia help in the dismantling of its nuclear arsenal, while calling on Russia to contribute to worldwide non-proliferation and disarmament, especially concerning Iran. They also advocated the opening of negotiations with Russia on a free trade area as soon as it has joined the WTO.

Finally, MEPs urged the EU and individual member states to ensure that agreed positions are always fully respected in their contacts with Russia.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050427-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION1>

♦ Belarus

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union concerning the closure of the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS)** (29.04.05)

The European Union is concerned at the recent measures by the Belarusian authorities regarding control and closure of non-governmental organisations and, in particular, at the decision by the Supreme Court of Belarus to shut down the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS).

The Institute plays an important and essential role in assessing Belarusian public opinion, including as regards elections. It has gained an excellent reputation for its professional and objective work. **The closure of the Institute will further limit the availability of information on public opinion regarding various aspects of political, social and economic life in Belarus.**

Conducting independent research into citizens views on topical issues is a normal activity in any democratic society and we therefore urge the Belarusian authorities not to deprive their people – and themselves – of valuable information about public opinion.

We note that the decision by the Supreme Court is yet another sign of attempts by the authorities in Minsk to turn Belarusian society into a closed one. **We constantly receive reports of harassment and intimidation of civil society in Belarus. Freedom of the media and access to independent information have been seriously undermined by the activities of the Belarusian Government. Freedom of association is curtailed by unduly restrictive formalities.**

As a result of its policy, the Belarusian Government has cut itself off from the offers and advantages held out by the European Union's neighbourhood policy. The European Union once again calls on the Government to respect the OSCE commitments freely undertaken by Belarus and to start developing good relations with civil society in a constructive manner (...)

http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/84744.pdf

♦ **Algeria**► No files said to exist on Algerians who disappeared in conflict (26.04.05)

Organisations of families of people who disappeared in Algeria in the internal conflict which broke out in 1992 will soon be officially recognised by the Algerian authorities. In addition, international human rights organisations will be issued with visas to allow them to look into the cases of the "disappeared", Farouk KSENTINI of the Algerian National Commission for the Promotion of Human Rights announced during a meeting with Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights on 25 April.

MEPs discussed the convention the United Nations is drafting for the protection of people against "forced disappearances" and heard Algerian representatives speak about recent events in their country. A proposal made by Mr Ksentini's commission to grant a general amnesty for human rights abuses and to pay compensation to relatives was fiercely opposed by Nassera DUTOIR, a spokeswoman for the association of families of disappeared people and the mother of a son who disappeared in 1997. "They have never asked me for forgiveness, so I do not forgive them", she said, stressing that what her organisation wanted was to know the truth about what happened to their relatives and to see justice done.

Mr Ksentini said that one of the reasons for proposing a general amnesty was that there were no files on which to base possible cases, a statement which was met with disbelief by some MEPs. Mr Ksentini said that according to official figures, 6,146 people had "disappeared" in Algeria during the conflict. His commission concluded in a report that the Algerian authorities were responsible but not culpable. Algerian ambassador Halim Benattallah stressed that the proposal of an amnesty was only one possible way of dealing with the past and that nothing had been decided yet. He added that no-one was talking about the tens of thousands of victims of terrorist action in Algeria.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050426-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION1>

♦ **Syria**► MEPs and Syrian representatives discuss association agreement (26.04.05)

The question whether Syria has done enough to win Parliament's approval for a new association agreement with the EU was the key issue in a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee with Syrian representatives. Parliament is to vote on the agreement in September and needs to give its assent for it to enter into force.

Abdullah DARDARI, Minister of Planning, said that his country will no longer intervene in the future of the Lebanese people. Three decades after Syria sent its armed forces into Lebanon, the last Syrian soldiers and intelligence agents left the country on Tuesday. The Minister also stated that the association agreement between Syria and the EU should be the basis for "a dialogue between partners who trust each other (...) and offer a platform for talks about peace, security and weapons of mass destruction". Future relations between Europe and the Middle East are unthinkable without Syria, he said. Mr Dardari concluded by saying that, as far as human rights are concerned, Syria is making progress but still has a long way to go.

Rapporteur Véronique DE KEYSER (PES, BE) welcomed the withdrawal of the Syrian forces as well as plans for free and transparent elections. But she also urged Syria to release two political prisoners, Riad SEIF and Maamoun HOMSI, and wanted to know if political reforms could be expected

after the next conference of the ruling Baath Party. "Syria won't be the same after the next Baath party conference", Mr Dardari replied, adding that "there will be both economic and political reforms".

Nevertheless, a number of MEPs sounded a critical note. "How long will it take to outlaw torture?" asked Baroness NICHOLSON OF WINTERBOURNE (ALDE, UK). Carlos GONZALEZ CARNERO (PES, ES) insisted that when it came to the association agreement, what was needed was "a scrupulous respect for democratic principles and human rights and full freedom of expression and representation".

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050428-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION2>

THEMATIC :

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE

► Budget 2007-2013: prospects for deal look bleak (26.04.05)

The Presidency presented its latest proposals for the financial perspective 2007-2013 to the General Affairs Council on 25 April. The revised 'negotiating box' was sharply attacked because it maintains the maximum limit (4% of GDP) a country can get from the structural funds. The Luxembourg proposal introduced further differentiation by tying the precise percentages to the prosperity level of the beneficiaries.

Poland, the Czech Republic, the Baltic States and Portugal condemned the Presidency's proposals as "unacceptable" and "a giant leap backwards".

As expected, the financial perspective debate is turning out to be a struggle more about national interests than about the real long term priorities of the Union. It looks highly unlikely that the Presidency will be able to conclude a compromise before the end of June.

With Germany and France unwilling to re-discuss the 2002 Berlin agreement on financing CAP, the UK's stubbornness over its rebate and the fight between the old EU-15 and the new EU-10 states over structural funds, this debate could stretch well into 2006.

http://www.euractiv.com/Article?tcaturi=tcu:29-138571-16&type=News&_lang=EN&email=37503

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

♦ Fundamental rights

► President Barroso proposes a new framework to "lock-in" a culture of fundamental rights in EU legislation (27.04.05)

The European Commission has today adopted a new mechanism to ensure that all Commission legislative proposals are systematically and rigorously checked for compatibility with the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The new mechanism is based on a process of systematic screening of legislation from the earliest preparatory work through to inter-service consultation. The other key instruments consist of: impact assessments on the effect of legislation on individual rights; and an examination of the legal reasoning for legislation - with an assessment of its effects on fundamental human rights. The new Commissioners Group on Fundamental Rights, Anti-

discrimination and Equal Opportunities will ensure that the results of these examinations are taken into account throughout the legislative process.

(...)This initiative responds to concerns that, as the Union's impact on citizens' daily lives increased, it did not always take fully into account classic civil rights like those guaranteeing freedom of expression and information and those protecting citizens against intrusive powers of the state. (...)This is the first initiative of the new Commissioners Group on Fundamental Rights, Anti-discrimination and Equal Opportunities which was established under the Barroso Commission. Other issues under preparation by the new Commissioner's group include: **proposals for a Fundamental Rights Agency and for an Institute for the Equality between Men and Women; the preparation of proposals for an anti-discrimination strategy and a European Year for equal opportunities for all; the preparation of an initiative on the protection of children.**

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/494&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

► **New EU Agency to monitor fundamental rights in Europe** (26.04.05)

The EP Civil Liberties Committee held a public hearing this week to discuss the current human rights situation in the Member States and the future tasks of the new European Agency on Fundamental Rights which is due to start work in 2007. **The committee later adopted two reports on related issues: one on the role of the Agency and one on the protection of minorities in Europe.**

The decision to set up the agency was taken by the European Council on December 2003 in Brussels, the aim being described as **"to build upon the existing European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia and to extend its mandate to make it a Human Rights Agency"**.

Most of the experts and civil society representatives who spoke at this week's public hearing agreed that **the creation of an agency to promote the respect of human rights on EU territory will be a positive step, as long as its activities do not interfere with existing bodies inside and outside the EU, such as the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Council of Europe.**

The High Commissioner Álvaro GIL ROBLES said that **the EU agency must have its own sphere of action, based on writing opinions, drafting recommendations, monitoring EU legislation and working not only with international institutions but also with NGOs.** "Nobody has a monopoly on the protection of fundamental rights. We cannot compete with one another, we have to cooperate with common goals", he concluded. Another point of controversy was the overlap of responsibilities between the agency and the Monitoring Centre against Racism and Xenophobia in Vienna, which will be absorbed by the new agency.

Representing the views of civil society and NGOs, Dick OOSTING (Director of Amnesty International, Belgium) welcomed the creation of the agency but voiced concern that there was **"a strong push towards a minimalist conception of the agency in order to ensure that its tasks fit existing mechanisms and do not offend political sensitivities"**.

As regards the responsibilities of the agency, EU Commissioner Franco FRATTINI said **"We need an active EU policy to promote rather than just monitor the protection of fundamental rights"** and he added that the agency's role should not be limited to compiling **"a shame list"** of Member States who fail to protect human rights. To a question on the specific role of the agency in protecting different kinds of **"family status"** - including the union of homosexuals, which she said could conflict with some national constitutions - Mr Frattini replied: **"I cannot imagine that there will be a single European family status. Defining what constitutes a family remains a national competence. However, we have to tackle the consequences of these differences in legislation, when it comes to the free movement of people or the divorce of two people from different nationalities, for example"**.

On the question of women rights, Maria CARLSHAMRE (ALDE, SE) said that although a specific EU Gender Institute will soon be set up, the agency should be the body responsible for preventing violence against women.

The draft resolution by Kinga GÁL (EPP-ED, HU) adopted by the Civil Liberties Committee after the debate states "The agency should be designed as a multi-layered structure (network of networks), a specialised body with horizontal competences". It "should gather all relevant information, analyses and experience available" in the European and international institutions, national governments, supreme courts, NGOs, etc. **The resolution concludes that "once it has been demonstrated that it is absolutely necessary to create bodies in charge of monitoring specific aspects of human rights policy throughout the Union (such as the Gender Institute) in order to improve the implementation of EU policies ... these bodies should be formally connected to the agency", becoming part of the "network of networks".**

The Civil Liberties Committee also adopted a draft resolution on the protection of minorities and anti-discrimination policies in an enlarged Europe. The rapporteur Claude MORAES (PES, UK) stressed that the EU has some recent achievements to its credit in the field of equal treatment and non-discrimination of minorities, although important steps still need to be taken. Minority issues have not been high enough on the agenda of the Union and greater attention is needed through the adoption of legislative measures and the provision of financial support. However, late or incomplete transposition of measures, the failure to set up equality bodies and the difficulties in gathering information are mentioned by the report as frequent problems in the Member States.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050428-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION2>

♦ Immigration

► Finding ways to manage immigration (26.04.05)

Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee is proposing guidelines for a new immigration policy in Europe, seeking to strike a balance between fighting illegal immigration effectively and integrating legal arrivals. **The committee set out its views in a draft resolution by Patrick GAUBERT (EPP-ED, FR) adopted on 26 April.**

Among the key points regarding illegal immigration, MEPs highlighted the **need for closer cooperation with countries of origin and criticised the measures taken by some countries such as the mass regularisation of illegal immigrants and the creation of "reception centres" for migrants in Mediterranean countries.**

They agreed "that mass regularisation of illegal immigrants should be a one-off event, since such measures tend to encourage illegal migration and do not resolve the real underlying problems".

In one amendment adopted by only two votes, the members say they are "worried by the setting up in the Mediterranean countries, at the request of certain EU Member States, of preliminary reception centres for immigrants heading for the Union's territory, which do not offer minimum guarantees to the people concerned in terms of fundamental rights".

The committee wants to see "punitive measures taken against networks of 'people smugglers'" and believes that action is needed to combat illegal working, particularly "in the areas of domestic work and childcare".

Turning to the management of legal immigration, **the resolution calls for an approach based not only on the EU's labour needs but also on the respect of the immigrants' human rights and their integration in society. Immigrants must be encouraged to learn the language of the host country, stresses the resolution. It is also important to organise civics courses, combat ghettoisation and encourage immigrants to take part in local elections.**

Around 500,000 illegal immigrants enter the European Union each year, and even those who arrive legally often have difficulty integrating into the economic, social and cultural landscape of the host country.

The EU needs a coherent policy to deal with this issue, a point recognised by the Member States last year when they decided to use co-decision for more key areas of immigration and asylum in line with the Hague programme of November 2004. The programme will be implemented by means of a Commission Action Plan to which the EP is contributing with this first report.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050428-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION2>

♦ Terrorism

► Money laundering directive to cover funding of terrorism (27.04.05)

Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee gave its backing on 26 April to Commission proposals to revise the current money laundering directive so that it covers the funding of terrorism. However, MEPs adopted amendments to define more clearly the responsibilities of financial institutions, lawyers, insurance agents and others involved in money laundering or the funding of terrorism.

The original 1991 directive set up a warning system to prevent financial transactions being used for money laundering but this only covered drugs-related offences. The new proposal declares the financing of terrorist activities 'a criminal offence', like money-laundering, and brings it within the scope of the directive.

Banks, credit companies and other financial institutions will have to check a customer's identity when they open an account or whenever the customer carries out a transaction of EUR 15,000 or more. Anonymous accounts and those opened under false names will be banned. Stricter checks will be required where the risk of money laundering is higher, e.g. where there is no face-to-face contact with the customer or in relations with "politically exposed persons" (individuals holding important public positions, their direct relatives or close associates). If customers cannot be identified, the business relationship must be terminated and the accounts examined. Clients must never be informed that their transactions are under investigation.

Each Member State will have to decide under what circumstances a financial operation poses a high risk of money laundering or of financing terrorism. In such cases, the financial institution or any other players - such as insurers or lawyers - will be legally obliged to report the transaction to a "financial intelligence unit" of the Member State, which will process the information and deliver it to the competent authorities. Member States must penalise anyone who fails to do this(...)

Since the committee's main amendments follow an agreement with Council, the directive is likely to be adopted at first reading in June. The committee's report was drafted by Hartmut NASSAUER (EPP-ED, DE).

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050427-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION1>

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

♦ European Neighbourhood Policy

► Extract from the press release of the 2656 th session of the EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting - Luxembourg (25.04.05)

The Council recalls its conclusions of 14 June 2004 on European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and reaffirms the special role of this policy for the European Union's external relations, offering the possibility of increased political, security, economic and cultural cooperation between the European

Union and its neighbours. The Council confirms its desire for the European Union's commitment in the Mediterranean, Eastern European and South Caucasus regions to be carried forward.

The Council reaffirms the importance that the European Union attaches to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia and Lebanon as neighbours and partners. The EU hopes that these five countries will maintain close links with the Union, on the basis of common values of democracy, the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, including the freedom of the media, and common interests, as defined in the framework of the ENP.

The Council welcomed the Commission communication of 2 March on European Neighbourhood Policy, as well as the national reports for the five countries, drawn up in close cooperation with the SG/HR. It endorsed the main thrust of these documents and thought they would form an excellent basis for further development of the ENP.

The national reports give a clear and accurate account of the progress made by each country, but also of the challenges to be taken up by each of them both in political and in economic and social terms. These reports, pointing out the priorities for action which the Union would like to pursue with those five countries, form the basis on which the European Union should be able to enter into joint preparations for the ENP action plans.

The Council notes that the Commission has already begun discussions to prepare an action plan jointly with **Egypt and Lebanon**(...)The Council notes that Member States will be kept fully informed of the progress of those consultations. The Council notes the Commission's intention to finalise the ENP action plans as far as possible by the end of this year. The Association or Cooperation Councils concerned will be invited to approve the action plans after their adoption by the Council. The action plans should run for a minimum period of three years and be renewable by common agreement. Their implementation will be monitored in the framework of the institutions provided for in the relevant Association or Cooperation Agreements (...)Council believes the action plans will prove to be useful tools by means of which the European Union will be able to strengthen its relations with the countries in question and actively encourage the necessary rapprochements.

The Council stresses that the **ENP action plans to be negotiated with each of the partners will be on a level of intensity and ambition reflecting the real extent to which common values are shared, the state of relations with each country, its needs and capabilities, and common interests.** The Council also notes that possible difficulties which could arise in the joint preparation of an action plan with a partner should not impede the adoption of action plans with the others.

With regard to the **South Caucasus countries**, particular attention will be paid to encouraging regional cooperation and progress in conflict resolution. On this point, **the Council welcomes the determination expressed by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to use the action plans as essential instruments for strengthening regional cooperation.**

The Council notes with satisfaction the recent ratification of the Association Agreement by the Algerian Parliament and notes the Commission's intention to draw up a national report on Algeria.

http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/84651.pdf

♦ Cour pénale internationale

► Accord de coopération et d'assistance (25.04.05)

Le Conseil a autorisé la Présidence, assistée par le Secrétaire Général/Haut Représentant, ainsi que par la Commission européenne le cas échéant, à **négoier un accord de coopération et d'assistance entre l'UE et la Cour pénale internationale (CPI)**.

Le soutien à la CPI est une priorité pour l'Union (voir position commune du Conseil de 2001, mise à jour en 2003 - Journal officiel n° L 10 du 18/06/2003 p. 0067 - 0069).

http://ue.eu.int/cms3_applications/applications/newsroom/loadDocument.ASP?directory=fr/gena/&fileName=84674.pdf

♦ United Nations

► UN High Commissioner on First Official Visit to Brussels (27.04.05)

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, made her first official visit to the European Commission on 28th April 2005. She met the President of the Commission, José Manuel Durão Barroso, the Vice President of the Commission, Franco Frattini, Commissioner for Freedom, Security and Justice, and Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

Key topics likely to be addressed included UN reform, the international rule of law and advancement of international justice and the recent session of the UN Commission on Human Rights.

The Commission underlined that continued support will be extended under the EIDHR (European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights) to the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Special Tribunal for Sierra Leone and that the EC intends to make a €1 million contribution to the Khmer Rouge Special Tribunals.

The developing relationship between the Commission and the OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) will also be discussed, including the robust level of funding extended through the EIDHR. Last year the EC was the second-highest voluntary donor to the OHCHR and support is expected to be sustained in 2005, with EIDHR projects totalling approximately €4 million.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/un/news/270405.htm

♦ Human rights

► Human rights around the world in 2004 (28.04.05)

Parliament adopted its **annual report on human rights around the world**. The wide-ranging report raises concerns about human rights issues in many countries, both in Europe's immediate neighbourhood and further a field. It also addresses a number of wider themes, including human rights and the fight against terrorism, children's rights, the impact of conflict on women and children, abolishing the death penalty, trafficking in humans and human organs, the sex industry and child labour, the role of international business in human rights and impunity and the role of the International Criminal Court.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20050428-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION1>