

REGIONS:

AFRICA

♦ Sudan

- ▶ Oral question to the Commission on the situation in Sudan (04.05.05)

AMERICAS

♦ Colombia

- ▶ Oral question to the Commission on the disappearance of the Commission official Mr Ayala (04.05.05)

ASIA

♦ Burma/Myanmar

- ▶ EU calls on Burma-Myanmar to release all political prisoners and co-operate with the United Nations (07.05.05)

♦ China

- ▶ Japan presses EU on China arms embargo (02.05.05)

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

♦ Turkey

- ▶ Schröder urges Turks to change mentality - By Lisbeth Kirk (03.05.05)

THEMATIC :

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE

- ▶ MEP points to French contradictions in EU budget debate - By Lucia Kubosova (03.05.05)

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

- ♦ Gender equality

- ▶ New member states criticised for gender policies - By Lucia Kubosova (04.05.05)

- ♦ Fundamental Rights

- ▶ Austria failed to implement EU race anti- discrimination law (04.05.05)
- ▶ Fundamental rights check for EU legislation (06.05.05)

- ♦ Terrorism

- ▶ The fight against the financing of terrorism (04.05.05)

IMPORTANT COMING MEETINGS

ASSOCIATION / COOPERATION COUNCIL MEETINGS
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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

♦ **Sudan**

► Oral question to the Commission on the situation in Sudan (04.05.05)

On January 9 of this year, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), bringing an end to the 21-year civil war that has left some two million people dead and twice as many displaced. But the situation is recognised as being very fragile, with growing concern over the situation in the Darfur region of Western Sudan. The EU has thus stated that the resumption of cooperation with Sudan, including its dispersion of **€590** million for the period 2005-2007, depends on the effective implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the evolution of the situation in Darfur. With the aim of supporting the constructive development of the situation in Sudan, the EU signed a Country Strategy Paper (CSP) with Sudan on 25 January, 2005.

Lapo PISTELLI (ALDE) will be putting an oral question to the Commission amid concerns over the still volatile situation in Sudan and in the context of the European Union's commitment to promoting peace, democracy, good governance and respect for human rights in Sudan through the CSP.

The three-part question, after first noting that the CSP envisages a contribution to Sudan of around € 400 million, is as follows: "However, given that the situation in Darfur remains unstable and violent and that concerns are growing about the escalating conflict in the eastern region, **does the European Commission intend to upgrade the EU's political responsibility in Sudan and its involvement in the ongoing peace process?** In particular, **does the European Commission envisage appointing a special envoy, creating a no-fly zone in Darfur and increasing the number of AU troops, within the AMIS framework, to at least 8000 men?**" Finally, **can the Commission give precise information about the allocation and disbursement of EU humanitarian aid to Sudan?**"

The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, meeting in Mali, adopted a resolution on the situation in Sudan on 21 April calling on the international community and all parties concerned in the region to act to stop the escalation of conflict and to guide the country towards peace and stability.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+BR-20050509-S+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=S#SECTION3>

AMERICAS

♦ **Colombia**

► Parliamentary Question - Subject: Disappearance of the Commission official Mr Ayala Saavedra by Manuel Medina Ortega to the Commission (04.05.05)

Could the Commission indicate what steps it is taking to ascertain the whereabouts of Carlos Ayala Saavedra, an official of that institution posted to Colombia, who disappeared near Cucutá on 15 April 2005?

ASIA

♦ Burma/Myanmar

- ▶ EU calls on Burma-Myanmar to release all political prisoners and co-operate with the United Nations (07.05.05)

On 6-7 May 2005, Jean Asselborn, Minister for Foreign Affairs and current President of the Council of the European Union, took part in an Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) of Foreign Ministers in Kyoto, Japan. On the margins of the meeting, Minister Asselborn and External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner also held talks – in an EU troika format – with U Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burma/Myanmar.

At the final press conference of the Asia-Europe Meeting, Jean Asselborn made the **following statement on Burma/Myanmar**: "The European Union remains concerned about the situation in Burma-Myanmar. We call on the State Peace and Development Committee to renounce past hostilities and enter into a constructive dialogue with the National League for Democracy, other legitimate representative bodies and the ethnic groups. Only such an inclusive approach can bring real and lasting reconciliation, peace and development to the country and lead to the drawing up of a constitution that can win the true support of the people.

The European Union also called once more for the release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi. Yesterday, I furthermore presented a list of some 19 political prisoners to the Burmese authorities, which the EU would like to see freed immediately on humanitarian grounds.

Finally, we have **appealed to the Burmese authorities to establish permanent and sincere cooperation with the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy Ismael Razali and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar Sergio Pinheiro and with all the UN agencies involved.**

The Foreign Minister of Burma-Myanmar agreed to study the list of political prisoners and the demands formulated by the European Union."

<http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/communiqués/2005/05/07asem3/index.html>

♦ China

- ▶ Japan presses EU on China arms embargo (02.05.05)

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi used an EU-Japan summit to raise concerns that lifting the embargo would mean unfettered sales of arms to China.

Countering Japan's fears, Luxembourg prime minister and current head of the EU Jean-Claude Juncker said the EU does not intend "to simply resume exports" and ignore the concerns of Japan and the US.

Both countries fear that lifting the embargo, imposed after the massacre of democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in 1989, would lead to a deterioration of security in the region by giving China access to advanced weapons technology.

Mr Juncker also said "it is not our intention to take any immediate practical steps in respect to this embargo".

Speaking at the joint press conference, Mr Koizumi said his concerns had been listened to.

"The response was that Japan's concern is very well understood on this question of the arms embargo.

The European Union while fully understanding the concerns of Japan should like to deal with the matter so that it will not lead to a problem".

Japan's request not to lift the embargo follows tension between Tokyo and Beijing last month.

There were major demonstrations last month in China to protest Japanese aggression against China before and during World War Two.

Earlier in the year, it had been expected that the EU would agree to lift the embargo at a meeting of EU leaders in June. However, following intense pressure by the US, the issue has been slipped down the political agenda.

France and Germany are the main proponents of lifting the ban, and, the UK, which takes over the EU presidency in the second half of this year and through that will give political direction to the EU, is unlikely to want to antagonise the US over the issue.

<http://www.euobserver.com/?sid=843&aid=18983>

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

♦ Turkey

► Schröder urges Turks to change mentality - By Lisbeth Kirk (03.05.05)

On the eve of a visit to Turkey, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder has urged the Ankara government to continue its EU accession-related reform process.

In an interview with Turkish daily Milliyet on Monday (2 May), **the Chancellor also urged Turkish citizens to change their mentality.(...) This is particularly important concerning basic democratic rights, minority rights and human rights, he explained.**

EU leaders decided in December last year to open negotiations with Turkey on 3 October 2005, which is now just five months down the road. But some sectors of public opinion in EU member states remain hostile to accepting the 70 million mainly Muslim Turks into the Union (...)

In the newspaper interview, **the German Chancellor welcomed an initiative by the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to allow an unbiased historical study of Armenian claims that their people suffered genocide at the hands of Ottoman Turkish troops around 90 years ago (...)**

Before visiting Turkey, Mr Schröder is set to stop over in Sarajevo today (3 May) to visit German soldiers serving in the European Union Force in Bosnia-Herzegovina (...)

<http://www.euobserver.com/?sid=15&aid=18988>

THEMATIC :

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE

► MEP points to French contradictions in EU budget debate - By Lucia Kubosova (03.05.05)

The limit on future EU spending proposed by France and five other rich member states can hardly be pushed forward without changes to farming subsidies, argues the parliamentary rapporteur for the next European budget (2007 - 2013).

Centre-right German MEP Reimer Böge said the suggestion by the "group of six" (France, Germany, UK, the Netherlands, Sweden and Austria) about a lower ceiling on EU income would lead to cuts that some of them might find very hard to explain to their domestic audiences.

"They have to understand that they cannot provide the financing of the agricultural reform with such low figures and at the same time keep the same direct payments for farmers", Mr Böge told Euobserver (...)

According to Mr Böge, the debate on the next budget was difficult even before the current Luxembourg presidency put forward actual figures for concrete budgetary packages (...)

But Mr Böge still believes that a compromise solution should not just be a linear cut across the categories included in the Commission's proposal, hoping that Luxembourg will change its strategy (...)

Mr Böge believes the European parliament will be fully prepared to debate the final compromise with both the Commission and the Presidency before the June summit of EU leaders to finalise the deal.

According to Professor Alan Mayhew from Sussex European Institute, **the decision on the financial perspective is doomed to be influenced by a series of non-economic, political issues**.(...)

He noted that the "group of six" seemed to be pretty firm on their request that future EU spending should be capped at 1 per cent of GNI. However, there is a clear scope for agreement (...)

<http://www.euobserver.com/?sid=19&aid=18993>

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

♦ Gender equality

► New member states criticised for gender policies - By Lucia Kubosova (04.05.05)

A new report has slammed new EU member states for the disparities women face in jobs, wages and political representation.

Bulgaria, Estonia and Slovakia top the bad stakes as the countries with 25 to 30 percent pay gap between men and women.

The report by the Open Society Institute argues that the countries took the necessary legal measures to improve gender equality, but these have so far not been "translated into a meaningful impact on the daily lives of men and women".

The paper directed the most criticism at the existing pay gap in the new member states, as it has remained at almost the same level as two years before the 2004 enlargement.

The pay gap of 25 to 30 percent, such as in Estonia and Slovakia, is almost twice the current EU average of 15 per cent.

Having more women in politics is still more of an academic desire in the region rather than a reality.

"While women are slightly more than 50 per cent of the population in Hungary — as in all the region — they make up only 9 per cent of Hungary's parliament," says the report.

The figures are even worse in cabinet representation, with two women ministers in Lithuania, one in Poland and none in Slovakia.

According to Zita Gurmai, a Hungarian vice-chair of the Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, "These findings show us that we need to drastically increase our efforts to get legally binding EU instruments addressing gender equality in decision-making".

She said **more effort should be made to support gender mainstreaming in policies, as the new member states and candidate countries generally consider it as a possible tool to tackle the lack of equality in employment, but tend not to use it in practice.**

<http://www.euobserver.com/?sid=9&aid=19005>

♦ Fundamental Rights

► Austria failed to implement EU race anti-discrimination law (04.05.05)

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) today ruled that Austria had breached EU law by failing to transpose fully a European Directive prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin (Directive 2000/43/EC). The deadline for EU Member States to transpose this Directive was 19 July 2003 – except for the 10 new Member States, who had to ensure that their legislation complied with the Directives by their accession to the EU on 1 May 2004.

Commenting on the ECJ ruling, European Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Commissioner, Vladimír Špidla, said: "This Directive was agreed unanimously by the Member States and adopted in 2000, and the deadline for implementing it was in 2003. Member States have now had five years to put this EU law into their national legislation. I urge Austria to move quickly to meet their all obligations in this area, which is vital for the protection of fundamental rights in the EU".

The 'Racial Equality Directive' prohibits direct and indirect discrimination in a wide range of areas including employment, vocational training, education, social security and healthcare, access to goods and services and housing. It also requires Member States to designate a body to promote equal treatment and provide practical and independent support to victims of racial discrimination.

Legislation to implement the Directive has been adopted at federal level, but certain aspects fall under the competence of the Länder, and they have not yet all adopted the necessary legislation.

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/543&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

► Fundamental rights check for EU legislation (06.05.05)

Under the new system, announced on 27 April 2005, proposed legislation will be 'systematically and rigorously' screened from the outset for compatibility with the Charter of Fundamental Rights. As a second step, **the new Commissioners group on fundamental rights, anti-discrimination and equal opportunities**, set up in October 2004, **will ensure the results are integrated into final proposals**.

In addition, proposed new measures, such as those on anti-terrorism, will be subject to impact assessments to check whether they respect fundamental freedoms.

Since he took up his post, President Barroso, who chairs the new Commissioners group, has insisted that fundamental human rights underpin all EU action. Commissioner Frattini most recently re-iterated this message at a public seminar of the European Parliament on promoting the EU's fundamental rights policy.

The Commission will also shortly unveil details of a new European Fundamental Rights Agency, based on the results of a public consultation completed earlier this year.

<http://www.euractiv.com/Article?tcaturi=tcm:29-138710-16&type=News>

♦ Terrorism

► The fight against the financing of terrorism (04.05.05)

As part of the transatlantic cooperation between the European Union and the United States of America in the war against terrorism, **the Luxembourg Presidency organised an international seminar in Luxembourg on 28 and 29 April 2005, on the subject of the funding of terrorism**.

The aim of the workshops was to enable legal, police and administrative experts to exchange views on their experiences and to set out the best methods of identifying people and terrorist groups, how best to

carry out investigations and to track terrorist funding. The seminar, chaired on behalf of the European Union by Carlos Zeyen, Prosecutor in charge of Luxembourg's Financial Intelligence Unit, and Nicolas Mackel from the Permanent Representation of Luxembourg to the European Union, was held in the presence of the Minister of Justice, Luc Frieden, and the United States Ambassador, Peter Terpeluk Jr. During his opening remarks, the Minister of Justice underlined the importance of continued dialogue and effective legal cooperation with the United States with regard to the funding of terrorism. The seminar gathered representatives from the Member States of the European Union, from the United States of America, the EU Commission, the General Secretariat of the Council, Europol and Eurojust.

<http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/communiqués/2005/05/04friedenterro/index.html>