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- ▶ Parliamentary questions – subject: terror and violence - Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-3675/02) (17.12.04)

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- ▶ 31 December 2004

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- ▶ 10 - 27 January 2005

#### ◆ Committee on Development

- ▶ 18 January 2005
- ▶ 19 January 2005
- ▶ 20 January 2005

#### ◆ Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

- ▶ 18 January 2005
- ▶ 19 January 2005

#### ◆ Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

- ▶ 24 January 2005
- ▶ 25 January 2005

#### ◆ Subcommittee on Human Rights

- ▶ 27 January 2005

(Calendar of meeting for the year 2005 available on :

[http://www.europarl.eu.int/meetdocs/2004\\_2009/documents/FD/DROI\\_Calendar\\_2005\\_/droi\\_calendar\\_2005\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.eu.int/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/FD/DROI_Calendar_2005_/droi_calendar_2005_en.pdf))

### MISCELLANEOUS

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- ▶ 21 December 2004

(By Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration Jean ASSELBORN and Minister Delegate for Foreign Affairs and Immigration Nicolas SCHMIT)

## **REGIONS:**

### **AFRICA**

#### **Ghana**

- ▶ **Declaration by the EU Presidency on the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Ghana** (13.12.04)

The European Union welcomes **the democratic and transparent manner in which the Presidential and Parliamentary elections were held in Ghana on 7 December 2004** and wishes to extend its warmest congratulations to His Excellency Mr John Agyekum Kufuor on the occasion of his new term as President of the Republic of Ghana. **The Ghanaian people have given a clear sign of their commitment to the further consolidation of democracy in their country.** The high turnout and the orderly and peaceful conduct of the elections demonstrate the maturity of the democratic process in Ghana.

[http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/83080.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/83080.pdf) (EN)

**see also the EU Presidency declaration on:**

[http://www.eu2004.nl/default.asp?CMS\\_ITEM=E3FA50D3F0F843CCA6E9FDEF8B24B560X1X66836X92](http://www.eu2004.nl/default.asp?CMS_ITEM=E3FA50D3F0F843CCA6E9FDEF8B24B560X1X66836X92) (EN)

#### **Democratic Republic of Congo**

- ▶ **Situation in Democratic Republic of the Congo** (16.12.04)

In adopting a joint resolution on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, **MEPs condemn the unilateral military action by Rwanda and calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of its troops from Congolese territory.** Parliament considers that **this unilateral action may have serious consequences for the peace process and stability in the Great Lakes region.** Parliament stresses that all commitments must be respected. **The House calls on the Government of Rwanda to respect the territorial integrity of the DRC and on all parties to the conflict to respect and comply with the 2003 peace agreements and United Nations Security Council resolutions.** MEPs stress that at the International Peace and Security Conference on the Great Lakes, held on 20 November in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, the heads of state committed themselves to ending conflicts in the region. **The House strongly condemns the sexual violence and rapes committed in very large numbers in the DRC by armed groups and by certain members of the military and civilian personnel of MONUC.**

Parliament calls on the Government of the DRC to implement an emergency medical programme for victims of sexual violence in the eastern part of the DRC. MEPs call on the Government of the DRC, in connection with the restoration of the rule of law, to bring to justice all the individuals responsible for acts of violence. The House welcomes the decision by the United Nations to carry out an inquiry into the allegations of acts of sexual violence against women and, pending the conclusions of the inquiry, calls for the persons involved to be suspended.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=PRESS-DAILYNB&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20041216-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#SECTION5> (EN)

#### **Liberia**

- ▶ **Declaration by the EU Presidency on the preparation for the elections in Liberia** (15.12.04)

The European Union is deeply concerned about the slow progress in carrying out electoral reform in Liberia, and in particular about the provisions introduced by the National Transitional Liberia Assembly into the draft law on the electoral systems to be applied for the 2005 elections. The European Union considers that the provisions adopted by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly lead to the creation of an electoral system which does not conform to universally accepted standards. (...)

[http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/83134.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/83134.pdf) (EN)

## ◆ Senegal

- ▶ Declaration by the EU Presidency on the abolition of the death penalty in Senegal (15.12.04)

The European Union welcomes the decision taken by the authorities of Senegal to **abolish the death penalty**. On International Human Rights Day, 10 December 2004, the Parliament of Senegal adopted the bill that was unanimously adopted by the Senegalese government in July 2004. **The European Union considers that abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and the progressive development of human rights and reaffirms its objective to work towards its universal abolition**, or at least the introduction of moratoria on executions as a first step towards that aim. In this regard, **the European Union considers that the decision of the Senegalese authorities further confirms the high priority Senegal is attaching to the promotion of human rights.**  
[http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/83137.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/83137.pdf) (EN)

## ◆ Zimbabwe

- ▶ Situation in Zimbabwe (16.12.04)

In adopting a joint resolution by 76 votes in favour, 0 against with 1 abstention, **MEPs insist that all political interference in the distribution of international food aid be halted without delay, to prevent the Zanu-PF government from using food as a political weapon.** The House insists that repressive legislation such as the Public Order and Security Act be repealed and that **the forthcoming elections in Zimbabwe be held in accordance with the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections, including those agreed in Mauritius on 17 August 2004, with unimpeded access for international observers and an end to intimidation of opposition supporters.** Parliament demands the immediate release of Roy Bennett MP and the cessation of all violence and intimidation towards his family and employees. (...)

Parliament welcomes the steps taken by the African Union Commission on Human and People's Rights to report on abuses in Zimbabwe, and stresses that the AU must continue to monitor, and also act in regard to, the human rights, civil rights and political situation in Zimbabwe and to keep up this process of peer review throughout Africa. (...)

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=PRESS-DAILYNB&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20041216-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#SECTION8> (EN)

## ◆ Ethiopia and Eritrea

- ▶ Declaration by the EU Presidency on the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea (17.12.04)

The EU welcomes Eritrea's statement on **progress on the demarcation of the boundary with Ethiopia contained in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' declaration issued on 12 December**, indicating that the peace process has arrived at a propitious juncture. The EU agrees that the way forward lies in the full implementation of the 2000 Algiers agreement and the subsequent final and binding decision of the Boundary Commission. (...)

**The EU reiterates its firm commitment to assist Eritrea and Ethiopia in overcoming the current stalemate.** The EU considers sustainable peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea as fundamental for further national development and for the enhancement of peace and security in the region as a whole.

[http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/83198.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/83198.pdf) (EN)

## ◆ Egypt

- ▶ Parliamentary questions - Subject: the Christians situation - Joint answer to Written Questions E-3644/02, E-3645/02 and E-3652/02 given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission (17.12.04)

The Commission has closely followed events in the largely Christian village of El Khosheh since August 1998 when there were widespread allegations of police brutality in the questioning of witnesses and suspects following the murder of two Coptic Christians. The Commission is also aware of the controversy surrounding the subsequent arrest in September 1998 of William Shaiboub Aرسال, the cousin of one of the victims. Following his imprisonment in June 2000, his lawyers immediately appealed against the sentence but warned that it could take several years for the appeal to be heard. The

Commission is concerned at the lengthy delays between his arrest and original trial and between the trial and the appeal hearing (for which no date has yet been given). Although such delays are common, the Commission will consider raising them with the Egyptian authorities should they persist.

**The Commission has also monitored the follow-up of the violent events of early January 2000 when 21 Coptic Christians were killed.** In its statement to the Parliament (Emergency debate 20 January 2000), the Commission indicated that it was encouraged by the initial measures taken by the Egyptian authorities to restore calm to the area and bring those responsible to justice. However, the Commission also noted the widespread concern at the outcome of the subsequent trial which resulted in the acquittal of nearly all the defendants and very light sentencing for the remaining four. The Commission was therefore encouraged by the decision of the Court of Appeal to order a retrial at the request of the prosecution. This retrial is currently underway and it is being closely followed by the Commission Delegation and Member State embassies in Cairo. (...)

**The Parliament can be assured that the Commission will continue to raise individual human rights cases with the Egyptian authorities whenever it is appropriate to do so.**

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WOA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WOA+E-2002-3652-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

## ◆ Liberia

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions - Subject: the situation of women - Answer given by Mr Nielson on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-3664/03)** (17.12.04)

Through its local representative and various field missions, **the Commission is fully aware of the situation of women in Liberia.** The Commission had its concern by this situation and also in the tremendous impact the civil war has on women's health either directly through **all sorts of abuse and rape or indirectly through displacement, widespread poverty and absence of a health system to cover basic health needs.** (...)

**The "Reintegration programme for returnees and displaced people in Liberia"** (EUR 25 million) under implementation since 2001, has a strong health component. The purpose is the improved delivery of basic health services through the County Health Teams assisted by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and improved access to good quality and cheaper drugs through improvements in the functioning of the non-government National Drug Service.

**The "Post Conflict Rehabilitation and Capacity Building Programme"** (EUR 40 million) has been recently decided. Its purpose is to facilitate and support the initiatives of peace and national reconciliation contained in the Accra Peace Agreement, in order to ease socio-political tensions and ensure reconciliation (demobilization and economic and social reinsertion of the fighters) at the national and community levels (re-establishment and functioning of key public Ministries and key other Institution). Notably its purpose is also to encourage and accelerate the process of social and economic rehabilitation of the affected populations (particularly at the community level) and to contribute to the physical rehabilitation of basic infrastructure and services (public and other), including the availability of health services, medicines, education and water.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WOA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WOA+E-2003-3664-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

## AMERICAS

## ◆ Cuba

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions - Subject: EU policy on Cuba - by Ryszard Czarnecki to the Commission** (17.12.04)

**Certain countries, such as Spain, have gone against the majority of the EU Member States and changed their policy towards Cuba.** They have done so despite the fact that the reasons why sanctions were imposed against Havana are still valid.

**Is this an indication of a new EU external policy where human rights take second place to economic interests?**

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=QT&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+QT+H-2004-0513+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions - Subject: situation in Cuba - by José Ribeiro e Castro to the Council (oral question H-0567/04)** (17.12.04)

In November 2004 the European Parliament once again expressed its views with regard to Cuba. Even **Cuba's democrats are expressing criticism and concern regarding the announced proposals to soften the EU's stance vis-à-vis Fidel Castro's dictatorship, in a show of apparent ideological inferiority and reverential fear.**

Is the Council aware of the European Parliament's views on Cuba? Or does it pay more attention to Fidel Castro and disregard Cuba's democrats? Does it deem acceptable an EU policy which is so subordinate to the views expressed and the pressures exerted by a communist dictatorship that it results in a failure to invite Cuba's democrats to meet the EU's and its Member States' representations, thereby directly prolonging the persecution of those individuals and their exclusion from society?

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=QT&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+QT+H-2004-0567+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

## ◆ Mexico

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions – subject: the promotion of human rights - Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-3829/02)** (17.12.04)

The commitment of the Commission to the promotion of human rights forms a central part to all bi-lateral agreements. **The process of safeguarding and ensuring human rights is institutionalised under the "democratic clause" which forms a central part of the Union-Mexico relations governed by the Agreement on Economic Partnership, Political Co-ordination and Co-operation (Global Agreement), which came into force on 1 October 2000 and which is founded on three pillars: political, cooperation and trade.**

Following article 1 of the Agreement, "respect for democratic principles and fundamental human rights ... underpins the domestic and external policies of both parties and constitutes an essential element of this Agreement". It also contains a "fulfilment of obligations" clause which enables the Commission to take into account the evolution of human rights in Mexico and the Member States as an essential part of their relations, and establishes a mechanism for the Parties to react in case of failure to comply with the objectives laid down in the Agreement. (...)

**While the Commission is aware of certain levels of impunity and the continuation of some human rights violations, it is hoped that greater political dialogue and focussed co-operation in this area will ensure that Mexico's ongoing struggle to reform is successful.**

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2002-3829-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

## ASIA

### ◆ Cambodia

- ▶ **Situation in Cambodia** (13.12.04)

Following interventions of Pasqualina NAPOLETANO (PES, IT) and Marco PANNELLA (ALDE, IT), President Josep BORRELL agreed to write a letter to the Cambodian authorities on **the illegal abduction of more than 80 women destined for the sex industry.**

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=PRESS-DAILYNB&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20041213-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

### ◆ China

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions – subject: repression and discrimination of the Uighur minority - Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-2045/03)** (17.12.04)

The Commission is well aware of reports on repression and discrimination of the Uighur minority. Since the beginning of the Union-China bilateral human rights dialogue, the question of minority



**rights has been very high on its agenda.** Basic rights as well as religious and cultural identity of the Uighur population have been regularly addressed in every session of the dialogue. Moreover it has been suggested that the next round of the dialogue, to be held in China in December 2003, be followed by a field visit to Xinjiang Province. The situation has not, as yet, fundamentally improved on the ground.

**Some years ago the Commission launched an extended human rights related co-operation programme which, in its view, constitutes a useful instrument to induce China to respect fundamental rights.** This programme has, up to now, mainly dealt with legal co-operation, support to local governance, the rights of more vulnerable groups like women or handicapped people and the ratification and implementation of the United Nations human rights covenants.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2003-2045-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions – subject: the situation of the 12 members of the Evangelical Church - Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-2216/03)** (17.12.04)

The Commission has no further details on the situation of the 12 members of the Evangelical Church and will endeavour to obtain information. Through the EU-China bilateral dialogue on human rights the EU regularly raises the issue of freedom of religion and faith and will certainly address the matter of these citizens arrested for practising their faith. Should a trial be held, the EU will consider the most appropriate means to monitor it and ensure that it takes place in satisfactory conditions.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2003-2216-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions – subject: Father Lu Xiaozhou's situation - Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-2250/03)** (17.12.04)

The Commission know nothing about Father Lu Xiaozhou's situation but will endeavour to find out. As it indicated in its answer to Written Question E-2216/03 from the Honourable Members, **religious freedom is one of the priorities pursued by the European Union its dialogue with China on human rights.** It will raise, as it has already done on several occasions in the past, the cases of persons who are persecuted for practising their faith.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2003-2250-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions – subject: the Tibetan question - Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission (written question: P-2909/03)** (17.12.04)

In its regular dialogue with China, particularly on human rights, the Commission has unfailingly expressed its opinion that establishing direct dialogue with the Dalai Lama is the only realistic way of seeking a practical and lasting solution to the Tibetan question based on granting the region full autonomy.

In this connection, it followed with interest the visit by the special envoys of the Dalai Lama to China between 25 May and 8 June 2003 and considers that everything should be done to avoid compromising the contacts made recently between the parties concerned.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+P-2003-2909-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

## ◆ Nepal

- ▶ **visit of the EU troika** (17.12.04)

A European Union (EU) Troika visited Nepal from 13-16 December 2004. The Troika travelled under a mandate from all 25 Member States of the EU to convey the growing level of concern felt throughout the EU at the situation in Nepal. **The aim of the Troika was to offer EU support to all efforts aimed at promoting multi-party democracy – within the framework of a constitutional monarchy – and human rights as well as curtailing violence and renewing dialogue between the His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMG/N) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) CPN(M).**

The EU sees no alternative to a Government with a broad-based democratic mandate, and urges all democratic and constitutional forces to rally behind the incumbent Government and present a united front.

Despite the difficulties in envisaging elections in the current climate, it is important to set out and begin work on the steps towards this goal. **It is essential that a security environment is created to allow elections that will be free and fair.** (...)

The EU expresses its full support to the incumbent Government's efforts to renew dialogue, and emphasises that a peace process must also address issues such as cease-fire monitoring, impunity, development and human rights. (...)

**The EU is gravely concerned about the rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in Nepal. It reminds all sides that they have obligations under both Nepali law and international law.**

**The EU strongly condemns CPN(M)'s systematic and gross human rights violations, including the use of child soldiers, which run contrary to official claims by the CPN(M) that they respect human rights.**

The EU recalls the international community's appeal for both sides to the conflict urgently to sign human rights accords as a first step toward curtailing the indiscriminate and arbitrary violation of rights.

The EU expresses its full support to the efforts of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the human rights movement in Nepal, and emphasizes that **intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders are absolutely unacceptable.** The EU draws attention to the importance it attaches to ensuring the safety and protection of human rights defenders in Nepal.

The EU welcomes the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between HMG/N and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The EU wishes to emphasise that urgent, targeted and concrete measures are needed to address a systemic culture of impunity and to implement the Government's Human Rights Commitments of 26 March 2004. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) must be given free and unhindered access to all places of detention without the need for prior notice.

**The EU will – in consultation with its other partners – revisit the human rights situation in Nepal at the 61st session of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva in March-April 2005.**

The EU recalls the support already being provided by the EU for human rights and offers full support to the Government to help it address the human rights crisis through practical, concrete and targeted assistance.

[http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/83197.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/83197.pdf) (EN)

## ◆ Laos

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions – subject: freedom of religion expression - Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-1309/03)** (17.12.04)

The Commission is aware of reports that **freedom of religious expression remains restricted in Laos, including reports of members of Christian groups being persecuted and/or detained on grounds of their religious affiliation. This is done despite the fact that the Constitution stipulates "the right and freedom to believe or not to believe in religion".** The level of tolerance of religious practice varies between regions. **There have been reports of arrest and detention of religious believers and their spiritual leaders without charges.** (...)

The Commission follows this and other matters relating to human rights in Laos closely and concerns are frequently raised in bilateral meetings between the Community and Laos. The Commission also participates fully in all Union démarches to convey our concerns to the Laotian authorities.

The Commission is fully committed to emphasising the need to strengthen respect for civil and political rights in Laos, including freedom of expression, assembly, association and religion. During this spring, the Commission will be opening a Delegation in Vientiane, Laos. This will increase opportunities to engage in a more profound and constructive dialogue on human rights issues with the Lao Government.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2003-1309-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

◆ **Turkey**

▶ **Paris demands that Ankara recognise Armenia genocide** (14.12.04)

French foreign minister Michel Barnier has demanded that Turkey recognise the genocide of the Armenians in 1915, adding that the European project was about reconciliation. But a spokesman for the Turkish foreign ministry told Le Monde that any recognition was out of the question: **"we do not recognise any so-called genocide and we will never do so"**. Barnier also called for negotiations with Turkey to begin in the "second half of 2005 at the earliest", according to Le Figaro, adding that "negotiation isn't accession". Turkey wants talks to begin in the first half of next year, but Barnier said that those who claimed that Ankara would quickly enter the EU were "liars". Meanwhile, the Guardian reports that the UK is ready to agree to Turkish membership talks beginning in the second half of 2005, during its EU presidency as well as a permanent get-out clause in negotiations, in order to give Turkey the green light later this week.

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▶ **Turkey's prospects for EU membership - "yes .... but"** (15.12.04)

The EU should begin accession negotiations with Turkey *"without undue delay"*. **Two days before a decision by the European Council, MEPs adopted a resolution saying that Turkey has made impressive progress in respecting the political criteria, enough for negotiations on EU membership to start.** The resolution was adopted by 407 votes in favour, 262 against and 29 abstentions in a secret ballot

Nevertheless, Parliament acknowledged that problems continue to exist, such as regarding minority rights, religious freedoms, trade union rights, women's rights, the role of the army, Cyprus and the relations with Armenia. Therefore it stressed that, in the first phase of negotiations, priority should be given to the full application of the political criteria. In case of serious breaches of the political criteria, negotiations must be suspended. MEPs also underlined that starting negotiations will not automatically result in Turkey's accession and that appropriate ways will have to be found *"to ensure that Turkey remains fully anchored in European structures"*, should negotiations not be successfully concluded.

MEPs were satisfied that Turkey had fulfilled a number of recommendations and requirements included in earlier EP resolutions, such as the abolition of the death penalty, the extension of important fundamental rights and freedoms, reduction of the role of the National Security Council and the lifting of the state of emergency in the south-east. **But they said that Turkey still had to adopt further reforms and put these, as well as current reforms, into practice. Thus it would have to lift all remaining restrictions on broadcasting and education in minority languages; put an end to the discrimination of religious minorities; completely eradicate torture; draft a new constitution; lower the threshold of ten percent in parliamentary elections; disband the village guard system in the south-east; apply ILO standards for trade union rights; limit the role of the army further; continue the process of reconciliation with Armenia and recognise the Republic of Cyprus.** MEPs also mentioned the eradication of violence against women, freedom of expression and press freedom as issues they would monitor closely.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=PRESS-DAILYNB&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20041215-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#SECTION1> (EN)

◆ **Swiss**

▶ **The Council of Europe Anti-Torture Committee publishes Swiss report** (13.12.04)

The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) has published the report on its fourth visit to Switzerland in October 2003, together with the response of the Swiss Federal Council.

The main purpose of this fourth visit was to assess the implementation in practice of the measures adopted by the Swiss authorities after the CPT's visit in 2001, in particular as regards **the procedures and means of restraint applied in the context of forcible removals by air. The delegation also reviewed the treatment of foreign nationals refused entry into Switzerland (whether asylum seekers or not), whilst held in the transit zone at Zürich International Airport, and of foreign nationals detained at Kloten Airport Prison No. 2, pending their removal from the country.**

As regards the removal by air of foreign nationals, the CPT noted the considerable work carried out by the Swiss authorities, at all levels, to implement both the letter and the spirit of the recommendations made by the Committee. That said, the CPT formulated some specific recommendations and comments, in particular as regards the systematic offer of a medical examination to every foreign national who had been the subject of a failed removal attempt, as well as the integration into the general police training programme of information concerning the risk of positional asphyxia during the physical restraint of recalcitrant persons.

<http://www.cpt.coe.int/documents/che/2004-12-13-eng.htm> (EN)

**Report available on:** <http://www.cpt.coe.int/documents/che/2004-38-inf-fra.htm> (EN)

## ◆ Bulgaria

### ▶ Tenth meeting of the Association Council between the European Union and Bulgaria (14.12.04)

The Association Council noted that Bulgaria continues to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria. It welcomed the continued progress achieved in important areas such as the reform of public administration and the judiciary and the fight against corruption. At the same time it called upon Bulgaria to ensure completion and effective implementation of these reforms and to increase its endeavours to tackle corruption and to combat organised crime. **The Association Council also reviewed progress achieved in other areas, and encouraged Bulgaria to pursue its efforts, in particular, to further improve the situation regarding child welfare and the integration of the Roma community.**

[http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/83093.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/83093.pdf) (EN)

### ▶ Bulgaria up to the mark, says European Parliament (16.12.04)

Bulgaria should be in a position to join the European Union on 1 January 2007, believes the European Parliament. **MEPs say Bulgaria meets the Copenhagen political criteria, has successfully overhauled its administration and judicial system, has a functioning market economy and has made efforts to resolve the problems of minorities.** (...)

However, when it adopted the report by Geoffrey VAN ORDEN (EPP-ED, UK) by 527 votes in favour, 19 against and 21 abstentions, Parliament did not simply heap praise upon Bulgaria. **MEPs are calling for even greater efforts to be made to fight organised crime, corruption and trafficking in human beings.** On the last point, they argue that a database on ill-treated people and those who have disappeared would be useful.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=PRESS-DAILYNB&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20041216-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#SECTION2> (EN)

## ◆ Russia

### ▶ EU-Russia relations - regret at lack of progress (15.12.04)

In a resolution adopted by 547 votes in favour, 30 against and 10 abstentions, **MEPs regretted the lack of substantial progress at the November EU-Russia Summit on creating common areas of freedom, security and justice, external security and education and culture. They condemned recent terrorist attacks in Russia and neighbouring countries and welcomed counter-terrorism cooperation measures, as long as these would not lead to an erosion of democratic rights or civil society.**

Parliament recognised that Russia has a legitimate interest in good relations with its neighbouring countries, such as Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and the South Caucasus, but stressed that **it should respect the principle of non-interference. MEPs also expressed their concern about "persistent and recurring mass violations of humanitarian law and human rights committed against the civilian population of Chechnya by Russian forces"** and about the democratisation process in Russia, including further accumulation of powers by the central government in Moscow. MEPs deplored President Putin's announcement that Russia is developing new nuclear weapons.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=PRESS-DAILYNB&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20041215-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#SECTION2> (EN)

**See the documents:** [B6-0197/2004](#), [B6-0198/2004](#), [B6-0206/2004](#), [B6-0207/2004](#), [B6-0208/2004](#), [B6-0209/2004](#)

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions – subject: situation in Chechnya - Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-3198/03) (17.12.04)**

The Commission is closely following recent developments in Chechnya. (...)

**The Commission is aware of disturbing reports of continuing human rights violations in Chechnya and of the closure of camps for internally displaced persons in Ingushetia. The authorities, by closing down these camps without authorising the international community, and primarily the Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), to build decent alternative shelter for those who want to stay, leave internally displaced persons no option but to return to Chechnya.** This, despite the fact that the security situation in Chechnya has, if anything, deteriorated since the constitutional referendum in March 2003 and Presidential elections in October 2003 and notwithstanding the poor humanitarian situation in Chechnya. It is all the more regrettable, then, that Russia has not responded in any concrete way to repeated requests by the Commission to facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid, by authorising the construction of alternative shelter in Ingushetia, by providing non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with access to United Nations very high frequency (VHF) communications, by ensuring security for aid workers and by allowing ECHO to open an office in Nazran, Ingushetia.

**These concerns were raised by the Commission at the Union/Russia Summit on 6 November 2003. The Commission will continue to use Union/Russia political dialogue meetings to call on the Russian authorities to improve all aspects of the situation in Chechnya.**

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2003-3198-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

#### ◆ Romania

- ▶ **Romania on track for 2007, although more to be done** (16.12.04)

The European Parliament "*hopes and believes*" that Romania can join the EU in January 2007. **MEPs adopted a non-binding resolution saying that Romania fulfils the political and economic criteria for accession, but that it still has to make important efforts.** They pointed out that if there is a serious risk that Romania might not be able to fulfil its obligations in time, accession may be postponed by one year, as is the case with Bulgaria. **In the resolution, Parliament lists a number of important steps that Romania will have to take.**

**Thus, MEPs urge Romania "to give full effect to the laws on freedom of information",** as they are alarmed at the growing number of serious assaults on investigative journalists. **Also, the country should complete the reform of the judicial system,** as MEPs were concerned about continuing attempts to influence the outcome of judicial proceedings. **Corruption remains a serious worry** as well, especially high-level corruption. **MEPs also expressed their alarm at continuing reports on cases of ill-treatment at police stations, prisons and mental hospitals.**

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=PRESS-DAILYNB&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20041216-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#SECTION1> (EN)

### MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

#### ◆ Iran

- ▶ **Minister Bot (Dutch Foreign Minister) on Iran** (13.12.04)

As you already know, the UK, France, Germany and High Representative Solana are to re-enter negotiations with Iran. This is about the enrichment and improvement of uranium and the possibilities for the IAEA to check whether Iran is honouring its agreements. (...)

**The EU cannot afford to lose sight of other important issues, in particular human rights,** the struggle against terrorism and the position of Iran in the Middle East.

[http://www.eu2004.nl/default.asp?CMS\\_ITEM=0566BE8CD5A343068CAEE0035A8D14DCX1X83417X52](http://www.eu2004.nl/default.asp?CMS_ITEM=0566BE8CD5A343068CAEE0035A8D14DCX1X83417X52) (EN)

## ◆ Israel/Palestine

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions - Subject: Continued breach of EU-Israel Protocols by Israel - by David Martin to the Council (oral question H-0552/04) (17.12.04)**

In the light of Israel's continued breach of the EU-Israel Protocols, will the Council consider the suspension of these agreements?

**The human rights clause in the EU-Israel Association Agreement places 'economic freedom and...the principles of the United Nations Charter, particularly the observance of human rights and democracy' as 'the very basis of the Association'.**

**Article 2, the Operative Clause, clearly states that 'relations between the Parties, as well as all the provisions of the agreement itself, shall be based on respect for human rights and democratic principles, which guides their internal and international policy and constitutes an essential element of this agreement'.**

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=QT&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+QT+H-2004-0552+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions – subject: terror and violence - Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-3675/02) (17.12.04)**

**The Commission has condemned, in the clearest terms, all acts of violence and terrorism, which have led to such tragic loss of life for Israelis and Palestinians alike.**

Regarding terror and violence the Union has pointed out the Palestinian Authority's (PA) responsibilities in fighting terrorism and will continue to press the Palestinian Authority, as the governing body responsible for maintaining law and order in the Palestinian territories, to do everything possible to put an end to terrorism and the armed intifadah, bring to justice perpetrators of criminal acts and dismantle all terrorist networks. On 20 December 2002, together with its partners in the international Quartet, the Union condemned the brutal terror attacks carried out by Palestinian extremist organisations. The international Quartet has called on Arab states to cut off public and private funding and all other forms of support for groups supporting and engaging in violence and terror. At the same time, efforts are under way to arrive at a cease-fire that would end all acts of terror against Israelis, in all locations. It is surely worthwhile to pursue all channels of negotiation to end these horrendous attacks.

As the European Council has declared on many occasions, a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict requires full recognition of the right of Israel to live in peace and safely inside internationally recognised borders, as well as the creation of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian state and the end of the occupation of Palestinian territories.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WOA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WOA+E-2002-3675-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

## ◆ Taylan

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions - Subject: Release of Sinan Bozkurt (Taylan) - by Athanasios Pafilis to the Council (oral question H-0540/04) (17.12.04)**

**Sinan Bozkurt (Taylan) is on the forty-third day of his hunger strike, after being held in Greek prisons for nine months pending extradition to Germany. He is being persecuted for his political activities against the antidemocratic regime in Turkey, his ideological beliefs and his struggle for democratic freedoms.** Tellingly, in the preliminary judicial investigation he underwent nine years ago in Germany, no evidence was produced against him, and he received compensation for unjust and illegal imprisonment.

Does the Council intend to take whatever action is necessary to put an end to this persecution, to secure Taylan's release and generally to stop prosecutions and extradition proceedings based on vague accusations concerning political convictions and activities?

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=QT&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+QT+H-2004-0540+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

### ◆ Human Rights

- ▶ **Parliamentary question - Subject: Implementation of the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict - by Claude Moraes to the Council (oral question h-0521/04)** (16.12.04)

What action does the Council propose taking so as to ensure that the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict are properly implemented?

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=QT&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+QT+H-2004-0521+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

- ▶ **Parliamentary question – subject: protection of human rights and minorities - Answer given by Mr Verheugen on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-0912/03)** (17.12.04)

**In the context of protection of human rights and minorities, the Commission considers the principle of anti-discrimination to be a very important part of the Community "acquis", as laid down notably in Article 13 of the EC Treaty and in the Council Directives 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation and as reaffirmed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.**

The Commission has paid close attention to the fulfilment of these criteria. **In its progress reports for the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, the Commission has attached high importance to the situation of the Roma minority.** Whilst underlining the progress achieved over a number of years, the reports have clearly identified the remaining problems and have called for continued efforts to remedy any remaining weaknesses. The Reports also underlined the need to fully transpose Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC and to make further efforts to comply with Article 13 of the EC Treaty, including the establishment of an Equality Body. (...)

**Necessary arrangements are also made to allow the participation of the Candidate Countries in the Community programme against discrimination.** Moreover, Phare is also funding important and specific assistance programmes in this field. (...)

**The Commission will continue to closely monitor and support preparations for accession in the area of non-discrimination.**

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2003-0912-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions – subject: Child pornography - Answer given by Mr Vitorino on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-3048/03)** (17.12.04)

**The Commission fully shares the concerns expressed by the Honourable Member about the growing problem of child pornography distributed through the Internet. There is a need for continuous efforts to combat harmful and illegal content on the Internet based on international co-operation amongst governments, particularly law enforcement and judicial authorities, but also between governments and the Internet industry, dedicated hotlines and non-governmental organisations to effectively tackle this horrifying phenomenon. (...)**

**The Union has been a forerunner in the fight against illegal and harmful content since 1996, with an approach agreed unanimously by the Parliament and the Council. The Safer Internet Action Plan adopted by the Council and the Parliament in 1999 is a major element in the Commission's activity in this field.** It provides funding for a European network of hotlines allowing users to report illegal content, including child pornography.

**The Union's strategy to combat child pornography also consists of legal instruments and practical measures against computer crime and child pornography.** These include the Commission proposal for a Council Framework Decision on approximation of laws and sanctions in the field of sexual exploitation of children, with particular reference to child pornography on the Internet, and the Council Recommendation of 27 September 1998 on the protection of minors and human dignity and the Council Decision of May 2000 to combat child pornography on the Internet. (...)

- **Parliamentary questions – subject: discrimination in the context of border controls - Answer given by Mr Vitorino on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-3304/03)** (17.12.04)

Until now, specific monitoring of racial and ethnic discrimination in the context of border controls has not taken place. The Commission deals with individual complaints concerning such alleged discrimination on a case by case basis.

Should it prove necessary, for instance due to an increase in the number of complaints, the Commission would certainly consider initiating a study to analyse the incidence of racial and ethnic discrimination in the context of border controls in the Union.

**Studying this issue would clearly fall under the remit of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 1035/97 of 2 June 1997 establishing this centre, expressly provides that free movement of persons is one of the fields in which the Centre shall collect information and data and conduct surveys and studies on phenomena of racism and xenophobia.**

The Commission has received a number of complaints on incidents of alleged racial and ethnic discrimination in the context of border controls and has each time taken contact with the Member State involved to remind it that such discrimination is contrary to fundamental rights and that it is the Member States' responsibility to ensure that their officials do not behave in a racist way in the exercise of their functions and that they respect fundamental rights as protected by the Treaty on European Union as general principles of Community law, and as reaffirmed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

**The Commission believes that the respect of the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnic origin in the exercise of border controls is a very important issue for all Member States.** It does not believe that enlargement will be cause for particular concern in this regard. The Commission will continue to monitor the situation in all Member States.

## EXTERNAL RELATIONS

### ◆ Council Conclusions

- **2630th Council Meeting - General Affairs and External Relations : General Affairs** (13.12.04)

◆ **Page 11: Ivory Coast - Arms embargo and visa ban**

The Council adopted a Common Position imposing restrictive measures against Ivory Coast aimed at implementing UN Security Council Resolution 172(2004) (15437/04).

The Common Position provides for prohibitive measures as regards:

- the sale or supply of arms by nationals of Member States or from EU territories;
- the supply of technical assistance related to military activities;
- provision of financial assistance or materials that may be used for internal repression;
- entry into the EU of persons who constitute a threat to the peace and national reconciliation process in Ivory Coast, or who are considered responsible for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as the freezing of those persons' funds and economic resources.

◆ **Page 11: Belarus- Extended visa ban**

The Council adopted a Common Position aimed at **imposing travel restrictions on officials from Belarus responsible for the fraudulent parliamentary elections and referendum on 17 October 2004 and for human rights violations** during subsequent peaceful political demonstrations in Minsk. (...)

◆ **Page 12: Colombia - Council conclusions**

The Council reaffirmed the European Union's full support for the Colombian Government, notably in its **efforts to establish the rule of law throughout the country** and in its fight against terrorism and illicit drug production and trafficking. (...)



The Council expressed the European Union's total solidarity with the Colombian people and **reiterated its concern over the grave human rights and international humanitarian law situation in Colombia, in particular as regards internal displacements.** The Council called on all parties to the conflict to respect human rights and international humanitarian law, and repeated its call on all illegal groups to cease all hostilities and engage in a negotiated peace process and to act accordingly. The Council welcomed the decision of the Colombian Government to pardon 23 members of the FARC. The Council reiterated its demand that the illegal armed groups that still detain hostages release them immediately and unconditionally. Such an act could possibly be part of a humanitarian agreement which would hopefully contribute to the involvement of all parties in the peace process. **The Council stressed the importance of ensuring the safety of those individuals, organisations or institutions, including human rights defenders, working for the promotion and protection of human rights, and of protecting the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples, as reaffirmed in the Declaration of Guadalajara. (...)**

◆ Page 13: Afghanistan - Council conclusions

"The Council reiterates its satisfaction with **the successful presidential elections held in Afghanistan on October 2004. These elections were a milestone in the democratisation process in Afghanistan and clearly demonstrated the will of the Afghan people to see change.** The Council now looks forward to the parliamentary, provincial and local elections to take place in 2005, and stands ready to assist the Afghan government and the UN in making these elections an equivalent success. (...)

The Council agrees that future EU involvement should focus on the following priorities:

1. **Support for the process of democratisation** through the development of legitimate public institutions and strengthening the rule of law. In this regard, strong emphasis must be given to judicial reform. The development of democratic and moderate political parties will reinforce the role of the future Parliament and **help Afghanistan to build a society promoting human rights for all, especially with regard to women, girl children and vulnerable groups.** The EU will support the efforts of the Afghan government and people in addressing the issue of transitional justice.
2. Support for Afghan and international partners in their efforts against cultivation, production and trafficking of narcotics.
3. The promotion of security and stability through the build-up of the security forces (army and police) under civilian government control, and meaningful implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme.
4. Continued support for the reconstruction process by providing substantial financial and technical aid to the Afghan government. (...)

◆ Page 15: Somalia - Council conclusions

The Council welcomed **the successful outcome of the Somali National Reconciliation Conference** and the establishment of the Transitional Federal Institutions as important steps towards sustainable peace, stability and the building of a transitional federal authority in Somalia. (...)

◆ Page 19: Human rights – EU guidelines

**The Council approved a report on the implementation of EU guidelines on human rights dialogues with third countries.** The report presents an overview of the different types of EU dialogue on human rights and draws a list of key areas of concern aimed at helping the Union whenever a new human rights dialogue is initiated with a third country. The Council adopted the EU guidelines on human rights in December 2001. (...)

[http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/83083.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/83083.pdf) (EN)

▶ 2631st Council Meeting - General Affairs and External Relations: External Relations (13-14.12.04)

◆ Page 7: IRAN - Council conclusions

(...) It confirmed the EU's readiness to explore ways to further develop political and economic co-operation with Iran, following action by Iran to also **address the other concerns of the EU regarding the fight against terrorism, human rights and Iran's approach to the Middle East Peace Process.**"

◆ Page 8: UKRAINE - Council conclusions

The Council welcomed the political agreement reached by parties in the Ukrainian Parliament on 8 December 2004, paving **the way for a free and fair repetition of the second round of presidential elections. At a difficult moment, Ukraine has chosen a peaceful and democratic path.** (...)

The Council underlined once more the importance of democratic elections for EU-Ukraine relations based on common values and shared interests, and calls on all sides to ensure that **the elections of 26 December 2004 will be held in accordance with international standards for democratic elections, including freedom of media and expression.** (...)

◆ Page 9: EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY - Council conclusions

"The Council welcomed the Commission's proposals for European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) action plans with Israel, Jordan, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia and Ukraine. (...)

In this context, the Council reaffirmed the importance it attributes to the European Neighbourhood Policy. **The Council reiterated that the ENP aims at increased stability, security and prosperity for the EU and its neighbours and that it will build on mutual commitment to common values, including democracy, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights,** to the principles of market economy, free trade, sustainable development and poverty reduction, as well as to essential concerns, including the fight against terrorism and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and efforts towards the peaceful resolution of regional conflicts as well as cooperation in justice and home affairs matters. (...)

The Council took note of the intention of the Commission, and the Secretary-General/High Representative for issues related to political co-operation and the CFSP, to present country reports on Egypt and Lebanon to the Council by March 2005, in view of engaging consultations with partner countries about action plans. (...)

◆ Page 11: AFRICAN GREAT LAKES - Council conclusions

"The Council expressed its **very deep concern about the multiple reports of military operations by Rwandan armed forces into the DRC. It condemned any threat to and violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the DRC and strongly opposed any attack by Rwandan or other foreign forces on the territory of the DRC.** It called upon the Rwandan Government to abide by the Declaration of Principles to which it subscribed in Dar es Salaam on the 20th of November 2004, to respect the sovereignty of the territory of the DRC and to withdraw any forces it may have in the DRC. (...)

**The Council underlined the importance of addressing the key problem of the FDLR and ex-FAR/Interahamwe, which was undermining peace and security in the region and constituted a source of instability and a threat to the local population as well as an impediment to good neighbourly relations.** (...)

The Council welcomed the organisation of a constitutional referendum in Burundi on 22 December 2004 as an important step for the peace process and especially for elections to be held from February until April 2005. The Council called upon all parties in Burundi to take their civic responsibility and to refrain from actions that might cause a rise in tension or political instability.

◆ Page 12: SUDAN - Council conclusions

The Council has taken note with great concern of the latest report of the UN Secretary General to the UN Security Council. **It is seriously concerned about the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Darfur and calls upon all parties to abide in full by their commitments made in N'djamena and Abuja, in particular the security and humanitarian Protocols.** (...)

The Council takes note of the announcement by the Government of Sudan that a number of people suspected of human rights violations have been arrested and will be put on trial.

The Council encourages the Government of Sudan to provide detailed information to the UN International Commission of Inquiry about these arrests, as well as any other information pertinent to the work of the Commission. (...)

[http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/83084.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/83084.pdf) (EN)

► **Brussels European Council – Presidency conclusions** (17.12.04)

◆ **Page 2: ENLARGEMENT**

The European Council recalled its previous conclusions regarding **Turkey**, in which, at Helsinki, it agreed that Turkey as a candidate state destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate states and, subsequently, concluded that, if it were to decide at its December 2004 meeting, on the basis of a report and recommendation from the Commission, that Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay.

**The European Council welcomed the decisive progress made by Turkey in its far-reaching reform process and expressed its confidence that Turkey will sustain that process of reform.**

Further more, **it expects Turkey to actively pursue its efforts to bring into force the six specific items of legislation identified by the Commission.** To ensure the irreversibility of the political reform process and its full, effective and comprehensive implementation, **notably with regard to fundamental freedoms and to full respect of human rights**, that process will continue to be closely monitored by the Commission, which is invited to continue to report regularly on it to the Council, addressing all points of concern identified in the Commission's 2004 report and recommendation, **including the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy relating to torture and ill-treatment.** (...)

The European Council welcomed the adoption of the six pieces of legislation identified by the Commission. It decided that, in the light of the above and of the Commission report and recommendation, **Turkey sufficiently fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria to open accession negotiations provided that it brings into force these specific pieces of legislation.** (...)

**In the case of a serious and persistent breach in a candidate state of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law on which the Union is founded, the Commission will, on its own initiative or on the request of one third of the Member States, recommend the suspension of negotiations and propose the conditions for eventual resumption.** The Council will decide by qualified majority on such a recommendation, after having heard the candidate state, whether to suspend the negotiations and on the conditions for their resumption. The Member States will act in the IGC in accordance with the Council decision, without prejudice to the general requirement for unanimity in the IGC. The European Parliament will be informed. (...)

◆ **Page 9: TERRORISM**

The European Council reiterated its unyielding determination to combat the continuing terrorist threat through a comprehensive and integrated approach reinforcing both internal and international cooperation, in accordance with the principles on which the European Union is founded.

**Democracy and respect for fundamental rights must not be allowed to be undermined by terrorism.**

**Efforts to combat terrorism must respect human rights and fundamental freedoms.** The European Council stressed the importance of promoting respect based on universal values, tolerance, inter-faith and cross-cultural dialogue and full participation in society. (...)

◆ **Page 15: EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**The European Council reaffirmed its objective of a secure, unified, prosperous and democratic Iraq** that will work constructively with its neighbours and the international community to meet common challenges. It reiterated its determination to support the Iraqi authorities and people, i.a. through elections support, financing of UN protection, reconstruction assistance, strengthening the criminal justice sector and promoting respect for the rule of law, and developing political and trade cooperation with Iraq. The European Council expressed the EU's full support for the political transition process leading to a democratically and constitutionally elected Iraqi Government as set out in UN Security Council Resolution 1546. It emphasized the importance of a broad, inclusive political process for the general elections in January 2005. (...)

**The European Council reaffirmed its commitment to the full implementation of the Thessaloniki agenda**, which underlines that the future of the countries of the Balkans is within the European Union. **The recent ministerial meetings of the EU-Western Balkans Forum served to assess progress achieved and identify challenges ahead.** The European Council underlined that the progress of each country

towards European integration depended on its own efforts in meeting the Copenhagen criteria and the conditions of the Stabilisation and Association Process, in particular on key issues such as democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, rights of persons belonging to minorities, and full cooperation with the ICTY. In addition, in this process regional cooperation will remain an essential element of EU policy. (...)

The European Council welcomed the statement by the United Nations Secretary-General and saluted the work he and the UN Secretariat were doing in many fields. It welcomed the report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, in particular the comprehensive approach to collective security. The follow-up to the European Security Strategy regarding effective multilateralism and a rule-based international order, as requested by the European Council in June, should aim at supporting the efforts of the UN Secretary-General. The EU is firmly determined to play a major role within the UN. The European Council welcomed the decision to appoint **a Personal Representative of the SG/HR on Human Rights** in the area of CFSP as a contribution to the coherence and continuity of the EU Human Rights policy, with due regard to the responsibilities of the Commission. (...)

◆ Page 23: EU Human Rights Agency

The European Council called for further implementation of the agreement by the representatives of the Member States meeting within the European Council of December 2003 **to establish an EU Human Rights Agency which will play a major role in enhancing the coherence and consistency of the EU Human Rights policy.** (...)

[http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/83201.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/83201.pdf)(EN)

◆ **Human Rights**

▶ Parliamentary questions – subject: freedom of religion- Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-2043/03) (17.12.04)

The Commission is well aware of the situation regarding religious freedom in the Russian Federation, China, Laos and Vietnam, and monitors this issue closely. This issue has been raised with these national authorities, within the framework of the political dialogue that the Union conducts with these countries. Furthermore, the Commission will continue to raise these problems through all channels available, as appropriate.

The Commission will also continue to impress upon the Russian authorities that the pattern of developments regarding freedom of religion — and other related human rights issues — is neither acceptable nor compatible with the major international and European Human Rights conventions that Russia has ratified, which include reference to freedom of religion or belief.

In the case of Laos, Commission concerns regarding freedom of religion are frequently raised in bilateral meetings between the Commission and the Government of Lao People Democratic Republic (PDR). Thus, the situation on human rights, including religious freedom, will also be on the agenda for the Commission-Lao PDR Joint Committee Meeting, scheduled to be held in the autumn of 2003. The recent opening of a Commission Delegation in Vientiane will provide further possibilities for the Commission to engage in a more profound dialogue on human rights issues with the authorities.

The Commission is well aware of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee's serious concerns that Vietnam's State party practice does not meet the requirements of Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The Union, the Member States together with the Commission, have repeatedly raised this issue with the authorities in the framework of Union démarches and regular discussions on Human Rights.

In the particular case of China, the Union has repeatedly expressed its concern about restrictions on unofficial churches and religious groups and on Islam. It has regularly raised the issue of freedom of religion and belief in the framework of the Union-China structured dialogue on human rights, and will continue to do so as appropriate.

The Union has repeatedly affirmed that human rights and democratisation must form an integral part of all political dialogues with third countries. Religious freedom, as one of the fundamental human rights, as well as the rights of religious minorities are thus addressed through the Union's bilateral political dialogues and, when appropriate, through démarches and public declarations, as

well as through Union action in fora such as the UN Commission on Human Rights or the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly.

As regards the provision of assistance and as outlined in its May 2001 Communication on the Union's role in the promotion of Democracy and Human Rights in third countries, the Commission is committed to mainstreaming Human Rights and democratisation issues in all Community assistance programmes. **Country Strategy Papers were used as a tool to take a more coherent and consistent approach to the promotion of human rights and democratisation, using the various financial instruments available to third countries, in addition to the assistance that is being provided through the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights.**

**In the specific case of assistance to Vietnam, the Commission's overall policy towards this country is to encourage and support its progress on human rights and democratisation, and to raise concerns where abuses occur or where a deterioration in the situation becomes evident.** The Commission has defined the promotion of good governance, best administrative practices and a properly functioning judiciary system as priorities for co-operation with Vietnam under the Country Strategy 2002-2006. The Commission believes that its co-operation programme, especially through its specific support for institutional reforms as well as the inclusion of governance related training activities into all co-operation projects **will contribute to strengthen Vietnam's overall governance and human rights commitments.** Overall, the Commission is of the opinion that an incitative approach is the most likely to lead to improvements in the respect of Human Rights, including religious freedom. The Commission will continue favouring dialogue and assistance in its relations with third countries. **The suspension of aid until religious or other freedoms are respected can only be a last resort approach, whose consequences are very likely to impact badly on the populations whose rights are violated.**

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2003-2043-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)