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#### **Committee on Development**

- November, 28, 2007

#### **Committee on Foreign Affairs**

- November, 28, 2007

#### **Subcommittee on Human Rights**

- December, 18, 19, 2007

#### **Subcommittee on security and defence**

- February, 11, 2008

#### **Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and home affairs**

- November 29, 2007

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

- December, 17, 2007

#### **Committee on budgetary control**

- November, 26, 27, 2007

### **CONFERENCES / EVENTS**

## **REGIONS:**

### **AFRICA**

#### **Rwanda**

##### **▶ ACP-EU: workshop looks at "Justice on the grass" Rwanda's victims (22/11/2007)**

Meeting in Kigali, capital of a nation torn asunder by Genocide, MPs from Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific met this week to discuss trade and development issues. They were in Rwanda for the ACP-EU Parliamentary Assembly. The situation in neighbouring DR Congo, natural disasters and healthcare were also discussed. A workshop discussed Rwanda's attempts to find justice for the hundreds of thousands killed in the 1994 genocide through traditional open air "Gacaca" courts.

Meaning literally "Justice on the grass" the Gacaca court system is based on traditional Rwandan ways of settling disputes. Villages elders usually act as mediators and try to find a solution that must be respected by everyone. **If someone is found guilty then "punishment" usually involves an act of Contrition.** This method was first used in 2002 for victims of the Genocide. In the summer of 1994 Hutu extremists launched a wave of terror against Rwanda's minority Tutsi population and moderate Hutu's. Estimates of the number of people killed in the slaughter range from 500,000 to 1 million - all of this in a country of around 9 million people. It was only brought to an end when a Tutsi led army based in DR Congo invaded the country and overthrew the militia.

The Genocide turned neighbour against neighbour and left the social and judicial fabric of the country devastated. In the wake of the terror the prison and court system were overwhelmed by 100,000 people in jail on suspicion of involvement in the massacres.

The mission of the Gacaca courts is to search for "truth" and "reconciliation" so that similar atrocities do not happen in the future. The legal process that began in Rwanda following the Genocide has to date tried 10,000 people. The Judges at Gacaca courts can impose life sentences on suspects.

#### **MEP praises Gacaca justice for helping victims find relatives**

The MEP who chaired the session on the Gacaca courts praised the role they can play in reconciliation and in helping people find the bodies of their relatives. Irish MEP Gay Mitchell (EPP-ED) said that "it was a privilege to chair the session on Gacaca courts and hear directly from the Minister for Justice on how the system works. The entire judicial system was completely destroyed in the Rwanda genocide". He went on to say that "given the enormity of the massacre, it proved impossible to try those accused of participating in the genocide through conventional courts. Five years after the massacre, only 6,000 of the 120,000 detainees were tried. At that rate, it would have taken more than a century to try all suspects". A crucial part of the success of the Gacaca courts is their legitimacy in a country that has suffered so much sectarian division. As Mr Mitchell pointed out "85% of the population actively participates in these courts, including administrative and religious authorities and civil society".

The process also has a practical purpose as "it helps the victims of the genocide to find out where the bodies of their relatives are, so that they can bury them with dignity".

#### **ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly explained**

The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly brings together representatives from 78 countries from across Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The European dimension is supplied by the participation of 78 MEPs from the European Parliament.

The Assembly meets twice a year for a Plenary session, alternating between locations in the EU and either an African, Caribbean or Pacific country.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story\\_page/030-13237-321-11-46-903-20071115STO13225-2007-17-11-2007/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/030-13237-321-11-46-903-20071115STO13225-2007-17-11-2007/default_en.htm)

## AMERICAS

### Bolivia

- ▶ **EU Presidency Statement on the current situation in Bolivia** (26/11/2007)

The EU Presidency regrets the weekend's tragic events in Sucre and, expressing its condolences to the families of the victims, wishes that Bolivia can find a path of unity and consensus in the framework of the Constituent Assembly. At the same time, the EU trusts that the constituent process may proceed according to democratic principles and respect for legality and legitimacy.

[http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias\\_Documentos/Declaracoes\\_PESC/20071126BOLIVIA.htm](http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/Declaracoes_PESC/20071126BOLIVIA.htm)

## ASIA

### Fiji

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the detentions in the Republic of Fiji** (20/11/2007)

The European Union remains concerned at the internal situation in the Republic of Fiji and in particular on reports of detentions perpetrated by Fijian authorities concerning an alleged plot against members of the Fiji Interim Government.

In this context, the Presidency of the European Union:

- urges the interim Government to ensure that the Rule of Law is upheld and that due legal process is followed;

- notes with concern the **alleged abuses perpetrated by the Military and Police** on those arrested on suspicion of plotting to overthrow the government. The EU calls on the Interim Government of Fiji to respect the human rights of everyone in Fiji;

- **urges the Interim Government of Fiji to conduct a full investigation into these alleged human rights abuses in line with its commitments to the EU made in Brussels on 18 April**, as part of the consultations under Article 96 of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement.

[http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias\\_Documentos/Declaracoes\\_PESC/20071120PESCFiji.htm](http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/Declaracoes_PESC/20071120PESCFiji.htm)

## EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE ) AND CIS

### Russia

- ▶ **Joint statement of the EU-Russia Permanent Partnership Council on Freedom, Security and Justice - 22 November** (23/11/2007)

The Portuguese presidency of the European Union and the Russian Federation held the 7th Justice and Home Affairs meeting (JHA) on 23 November 2007, in Brussels. The themes that were debated, under home affairs, were visa policy, documents security, fight against illegal immigration, border management, terrorism prevention and fight against human trafficking.

The minister for home affairs, Rui Pereira, the head of the presidential administration, Viktor Ivanov, the minister of the interior from the Russian Federation, Rashid Nurgaliev, the vice-president of the European

Commission, Franco Frattini, the Slovenian minister of the interior, Dragutin Mate, and the Portuguese, Russian and Slovenian ministers of justice were all present in this meeting.

The delegations welcomed the entry into force of the Agreement between the European Union and Russia on visa facilitation and readmission. They also stressed the importance of giving the agreement full execution.

During the meeting they decided to reinforce the cooperation in the fight against illegal immigration and human trafficking, and the collaboration in the management of joint borders, by strengthening relations between the Frontex Agency and the recently created Federal Russian Agency for the Development of State Borders. In fact, an Action Plan 2007-2010 for cooperation in this area was agreed upon. They also decided that an experts' meeting should be held, to deal with the simplification of foreign citizens' registers.

[http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias\\_Documentos/20071123Declaracaofinal.htm](http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/20071123Declaracaofinal.htm)

## Russia

- ▶ **EU Presidency Statement on incidents and detentions in Russia over the weekend (26/11/2007)**

The Presidency of the EU expresses its concern at the weekend's events in Moscow, St. Petersburg and elsewhere in Russia, and recalls the fundamental importance of the freedoms of association, assembly and speech. Russia, as a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, is also bound to uphold such values and obligations.

The Presidency of the EU trusts that the competent authorities and all parties involved will create the adequate conditions for the upcoming election.

[http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias\\_Documentos/Declaracoes\\_PESC/20071126RUSSIAPESC.htm](http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/Declaracoes_PESC/20071126RUSSIAPESC.htm)

## MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

### Iraq

- ▶ **Council conclusions on Iraq (19-20/11/2007)**

2831st EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- The Council warmly welcomes the attendance of Foreign Minister of Iraq, H E Hoshyar Zebari, and the opportunity to enhance the political engagement of the EU with Iraq and to reiterate the commitments made by the EU to support Iraq. Following discussions with FM Zebari and taking into account the views of the Government of Iraq, the Council, recalling its current actions, agreed that the EU should work closely with the UN to further identify and deliver support for it to fulfil its role as set out in UNSCR 1770; identify further contributions to help alleviate the humanitarian situation in Iraq and the region; identify and take opportunities to provide further human rights support; and assist the Iraqi authorities in meeting their responsibilities in accordance with the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) and identify and provide further support.

- The Council recalls the obligation of the Government of Iraq, its neighbouring countries and the international community, as expressed in Istanbul, to protect and assist displaced Iraqis by addressing their immediate and foreseeable needs and ensure their safety. It calls upon the Iraqi Government to assist vulnerable groups, including refugees and internally displaced persons and to promote the protection of human rights. The EU reiterates that it stands ready to support the Iraqi authorities in the field of human

rights and fundamental freedoms, underlining the need to protect the rights of all Iraqis, including those of women and persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities. The Council calls upon the Iraqi Government to suspend the practice of the death penalty as a step towards abolition. The EU especially welcomes work of UNAMI in the field of human rights and calls upon all relevant parties to support UNAMI in this endeavour. The EU will continue to identify in a concerted way possibilities for further assistance to the Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries and internally displaced persons. It recalls the commitment made by participants in the Istanbul Conference to deliver assistance in coordination with the Government of Iraq also by contributing to the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI)

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/97152.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/97152.pdf)

## **Iraq**

- ▶ **Iraq's fate "will determine fate of entire region" says Foreign Minister Zebari (21/11/2007)**

Security, relations with Turkey and the integrity of the country were among the issues discussed on Tuesday when Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari held talks with EP President Hans-Gert Pöttering. The Kurds and an EU-Iraq parliamentary delegation were also discussed during Mr Zebari's visit to Brussels where he also met senior EU and NATO officials. Whilst at the EP we managed to question him on his troubled nation. He told us Iraq's fate "would determine the fate of the entire region".

In remarks after their meeting Mr Pöttering welcomed the improved security situation in the country saying that "Iraq seems to be on the right track". He also defended the integrity of the state and in a reference to tensions with Turkey he said that "no neighbouring country should interfere". Speaking to the Parliament's website Mr Zebari gave us a frank assessment of the picture from Baghdad.

### **Mr Zebari, what role can the EU play in the region?**

There is the EU mission in Bagdad, so the EU is represented and it has been very helpful. The EU is carrying a number of programs that involve the support for human rights and the rule of law. One of them is dedicated to training of judges and prison wardens in standards of protecting human rights. The EU is also a major donor that supports Iraq in a number of projects.

### **We then asked him about the situation in Iraq.**

The improved security situation in Iraq is a major achievement, it is a turning point. On this basis we accordingly expect more support and more engagement from the European Union. My message is that we need a collective approach from the EU towards the situation in Iraq. Iraq is a very important country and what happens there will determine the fate of the entire region.

### **The President of the Iraqi Parliament Mahmoud Al-Mashhadani asked MEPs to help build a democracy in Iraq when he visited the EP last month. How can this be done?**

I am very pleased that there will be an ad hoc parliamentary delegation and Iraqi parliamentarians will get support in training towards capacity building, drafting of legislation and technical areas linked to democracy. This is a new experience for Iraq and the EP has a huge expertise as an organisation as do the individual MEPs. They can help us to strengthen our democratic constitution.

### **On the situation in the Kurdish region of Iraq (where Turkey is considering military action against PKK attacks on its territory), what is the response of the Iraqi Government?**

We understand fully the legitimate Turkish security concerns about any terrorist attack that could harm their people. On the other hand, we believe that it is the responsibility of all countries to respect the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq by not interfering or undermining the current relatively stable situation in the North and in other parts of Iraq.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story\\_page/030-13236-323-11-47-903-20071115STO13224-2007-19-11-2007/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/030-13236-323-11-47-903-20071115STO13224-2007-19-11-2007/default_en.htm)

## **Lebanon**

### ► **EU Presidency Statement on Lebanon** (23/11/2007)\_\_\_\_\_

A few hours before the end of the mandate of the President by the Constitution, the EU Presidency notes with regret that it hasn't been possible to elect a President of the Republic of Lebanon. The EU Presidency appeals to all political parties to continue dialogue with a view to electing President as soon as possible.

The EU Presidency calls all concerned to respect the Lebanese Constitution and to abstain of all actions that could upset public order and the security of the citizens.

The EU Presidency, more than ever, is attached to the independence and sovereignty of Lebanon and stands by the lebanese people at this difficult time.

The EU Presidency recalls the importance of stability in Lebanon for the whole region.

[http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias\\_Documentos/Declaracoes\\_PESC/20071123LIBANO.htm](http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/Declaracoes_PESC/20071123LIBANO.htm)

**THEMATIC :**

**FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES**

## JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

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## MISCELLANEOUS

### UN Children's Day: Interview with MEP Roberta Angelilli

#### ► EP child's rights rapporteur interviewed on UN Children's Day (20/11/2007)

Today marks the **UN's Universal Children's Day**, a day inaugurated to promote and protect the rights of young people. Children make up one third of the world's population. As well as poverty and disease they can be at threat from human traffickers or can be conscripted as soldiers. To mark the day we spoke to Italian MEP Roberta Angelilli (UEN) who is drafting a Parliamentary report on proposals by the European Commission on children's rights.

In a Civil Liberties Committee public hearing in April, Ms Angelilli said any EU policy on children must be positive and not merely "against" things. It must "affirm the fundamental rights of children and young people". In this exclusive interview she elaborates on her views.

#### **In your view, are European children's lives getting better or worse compared to 30 years ago?**

It is a difficult question. The general situation has improved even if in modern societies we experience degradation and poverty, even in Europe. For instance, two days ago in Italy a 3-4 year-old Roma baby got burned. He was living in a shanty town under absolutely unacceptable conditions. Around 20% of minors live below the poverty line. On the one hand, wealth has increased; on the other hand, there persists extreme marginalisation. For example, the risk of poverty increases for children who live in a one-parent family.

#### **As the Parliament's rapporteur on the rights of the child, what should the key components of a policy be?**

First, minors should participate in things that they are concerned with. We have to give minors a voice, making them protagonists and letting them express their views. Secondly, as we are doing already in Europe with women's rights, we should mainstream minors' rights into all EU policies.

#### **How can the Parliament help promoting the rights of children?**

With this report we have created the basis for a legislative process; it is very important to recognize the rights of children and to codify them from a legal point of view. In this context, the new reformed Treaty will represent an important step, since it will provide a legal basis.

#### **Since Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU, the Roma now constitute a very significant minority in the Union. You have been very active in Parliament asking questions related to the situation of Roma children. What measures would you like to see in place to address their situation?**

We need to provide these children with the right to education, without which they are doomed to failure! This is because they will be either exploited, becoming marginalized adults, or in the worst cases they will

fall into crime networks. We also need to provide them with proper sanitary and hygienic conditions. In my opinion, the key point is education, a view also shared by the UN and UNICEF. Education is the basis for children's future.

**Initiated in 1954**

The Universal Children's Day was introduced by the UN General Assembly in 1954 as a "day of worldwide fraternity and understanding between children". Tuesday also marks the 18th anniversary of the UN convention on the rights of the child. The EU explicitly recognised children's rights in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The Report being drafted by Ms Angelilli will go to the Civil Liberties Committee on 18 December and before the full House in the Spring.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story\\_page/015-13234-324-11-47-902-20071115STO13222-2007-20-11-2007/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/015-13234-324-11-47-902-20071115STO13222-2007-20-11-2007/default_en.htm)