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### **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEETINGS**

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

- December, 18, 2006

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- December, 19, 2006

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

- December, 19, 2006

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

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### **CONFERENCES / EVENTS**

## REGIONS:

### AFRICA

#### Madagascar

- ▶ Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the elections in Madagascar (14/12/06)

The European Union welcomes the smooth, peaceful and serene conduct of the first round of the Presidential election held in Madagascar on 3 December and the citizenship shown by the Malagasy people on that occasion.

The European Union congratulates the Malagasy authorities on the smooth organisation of the poll in general despite difficulties encountered in the drawing up, for the first time, of a computerised national electoral register and in the distribution of voting cards.

The European Union notes with satisfaction the efforts made by the Malagasy authorities to improve respect for the basic principles of a free, fair and transparent election. However, it would like the improvements to continue in the next elections, notably as regards media access, funding of the electoral campaign, use of the single ballot and the boosting of the role and independence of the CNE (National Electoral Council).

The European Union welcomes the announcement of the provisional results of the elections. It will monitor the further electoral proceedings which will not be completed until the definitive results have been proclaimed by the Supreme Constitutional Court.

[http://www.eu2006.fi/news\\_and\\_documents/cfsp\\_statements/vko50/en\\_GB/1166088546745/](http://www.eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/cfsp_statements/vko50/en_GB/1166088546745/)

### AMERICAS

### ASIA

#### Bangladesh

- ▶ European Union Election Observation Mission to Bangladesh (15/12/06)

The European Commission will deploy an EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the Parliamentary elections in Bangladesh scheduled to take place on 23 January 2007. The EU EOM will be led by Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Member of the European Parliament. The EOM is a further contribution by the European Commission to supporting democracy in Bangladesh.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, said: *"The forthcoming parliamentary elections are the most important in Bangladesh since 1991, when eight years of military rule came to an end. In the current very difficult and tense situation in the country, it is essential to ensure that the elections conform to international standards in order to increase confidence in the democratic process. Successful and credible elections will be a positive contribution to the long term*

*stability of Bangladesh. I have decided to deploy an EOM to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the entire election process.”*

The EU will provide the largest international observer presence at these crucial elections. This will consist of a Core Team of ten election experts to be deployed in the middle of December to co-ordinate the assessment of the entire election process, 40 Long Term Observers (LTOs) to be deployed at the end of December to assess the campaign period and pre-election preparations around the country and one hundred Short Term Observers (STOs) to observe voting, counting and the tabulation of results. They will be joined by locally recruited STOs from diplomatic representatives of EU Member States resident in the country around the Election Day. It is planned that the EU EOM will remain in the country for up to four weeks after Election Day to observe the post-election period. However, the deployment of the EU EOM will be kept under careful review, taking into account the progress made towards a satisfactory electoral process.

EU Election Observation Missions are an important instrument for building confidence in the democratic processes of a country and are deployed in line with the EU's commitment to promote democracy, human rights and the respect for the rule of law. The EU has made available some €3 million, from the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), for this mission.

The European Commission is one of Bangladesh's most important partners and is providing funds to assist the country in implementing its development policy reform agenda. Assistance is being provided to a number of important sectors, including education, health, trade-related support, food security, rural development, good governance and human rights. The Commission has also channelled €1.6 million for projects to enhance civic awareness ahead of the elections, in particular to vulnerable groups.

<http://www.europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/1816&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

## **Thailand**

- ▶ **EU Presidency statement on the situation of 152 Lao Hmong in Nong Khai Province in Thailand** (14/12/06)

The Presidency of the European Union welcomes the news that the Royal Thai Government has taken steps to reconsider the deportation of 152 Lao Hmong, including 85 children. The majority of the 152 Hmongs, who are being detained at an immigration centre in Nong Khai Province in northeastern Thailand, have already been recognised as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The Presidency stresses the importance of respect for the principle of non-refoulement and urges the Royal Thai Government to ensure that the 152 Lao Hmong will not be deported to their country of origin, and that they and other Lao Hmong held for illegal entry are released from detention in order to determine their protection needs.

The Presidency of the European Union urges the Royal Thai Government to find a durable solution to the situation of Lao Hmongs in Thailand with participation by the international community.

[http://www.eu2006.fi/news\\_and\\_documents/cfsp\\_statements/vko50/en\\_GB/1166119604035/](http://www.eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/cfsp_statements/vko50/en_GB/1166119604035/)

## EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE ) AND CIS

### Uzbekistan

- ▶ **EU-Uzbek experts discussed Andijan events in Tashkent** (14/12/06)

The EU took up the proposal made by the Government of Uzbekistan at the recent EU-Uzbekistan Cooperation Council in Brussels on 8 November 2006 to hold EU-Uzbek Experts talks on **the events of Andijan in May 2005**.

The Experts conducted their talks in Tashkent and Andijan from 12 to 14 December 2006. The EU side comprised representatives of the Presidency, the Council Secretariat and the European Commission as well as other experts from four member states, i.e. Germany, Great Britain, France and Sweden.

The talks were held with governmental departments and state institutions that dealt with the events and were involved in the investigation thereof and the trials held afterwards. The group also met with prisoners, lawyers and local officials.

The presidency will report to the EU Council on behalf of the group.

[http://www.eu2006.fi/news\\_and\\_documents/other\\_documents/vko50/en\\_GB/1166085153941/](http://www.eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/other_documents/vko50/en_GB/1166085153941/)

### Nagorno-Karabakh

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the "constitutional referendum" in Nagorno Karabakh on 10 December 2006** (11/12/06)

The European Union is aware that a "constitutional referendum" has taken place in Nagorno Karabakh on 10 December 2006. The EU recalls that it does not recognize the independence of Nagorno Karabakh. It recognizes neither the "referendum" nor its outcome.

The EU reiterates its firm support to the OSCE Minsk Group and its Co-Chairmen, and their efforts towards a settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The EU considers that conducting such a "referendum", thus pre-empting the outcome of the ongoing negotiations, did not contribute to constructive efforts at peaceful conflict resolution. It calls on all parties to the conflict to intensify their efforts to find a negotiated solution to the conflict.

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/cfsp/92102.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/cfsp/92102.pdf)

## MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

### Middle East

- ▶ **Middle East facing 'worst crisis' in years, EU says** (15/12/06)

EU leaders meeting in Brussels on Friday (15 December) said the Middle East is facing one of the "worst crises in years" after fighting broke out on Friday between rival Palestinian factions and Lebanon continues to stand on the verge of internal conflict.

"The Israeli-Arab conflict is at the heart of this crisis," the EU said, urging Israel and Palestine to live "side-by-side" on the basis of a 1967 UN agreement on borders and agreeing to an extension until March 2007 of the EU's so-called "TIM" aid mechanism that delivers cash while bypassing Hamas militants. The violence in

Palestine began when gunmen fired on Hamas' political leader Ismail Haniya, killing a bodyguard and injuring his son, while he was going through the EU-controlled Rafah border crossing between Egypt and Gaza in a fire-fight that forced the 80 or so EU customs officials to flee.

Hamas said the move was an assassination attempt by Fatah, a rival political faction controlled by Mahmoud Abbas which is considered more friendly to western and Israeli ideas on conflict resolution, with supporters of the two factions engaging in skirmishes throughout the region on Friday. In broader statements on Middle East problems, Europe repeated calls for Palestinian and Lebanese kidnapers to release three Israeli soldiers being held hostage since summer and urged Jerusalem to "stop violations of Lebanese airspace by the Israeli air force" at a tense time in Lebanon following the murder of pro-western industry minister Pierre Gemayel.

Europe scolded Iranian leader Mahmoud Ahamdinejad for cancelling a scheduled December meeting with the EU on human rights, adding that it "condemns any denial of the Holocaust as a historical fact" which forms the "underlying premise" of a Holocaust conference currently taking place in Tehran. The 25-strong EU bloc also lent tentative support to sending an EU police training mission to Afghanistan in future, after EU top diplomat Javier Solana briefed EU leaders on Thursday that both Kabul and international organisations such as NATO and the UN would "welcome" such a move.

"The EU will examine ways of strengthening its engagement, including by looking at opportunities and conditions for a potential civilian...mission in the field of policing," the EU stated. "This is significant - it clears the way for EU projects in civilian actions in both the north and the [more dangerous] south. It means that once NATO has cleared a space that is safe, the EU might come in to help with institution building and development," an EU diplomat explained.

<http://euobserver.com/9/23115>

## **Iran**

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the arrest of Mansour Ossanlou (13/12/06)**

The EU strongly condemns the re-arrest of Mansour Ossanlou, the President of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, which appears to be without credible justification. The EU is deeply concerned by reports that Mr Ossanlou was arrested by plain clothes officers who did not present an arrest warrant and that he has not been allowed proper access to legal assistance.

The EU urges Iran to respect fully the rights to freedom of expression and association and the right to form or join trade unions. The EU calls on Iran to uphold its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and to honour its commitments under the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/cfsp/92152.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/cfsp/92152.pdf)

**THEMATIC :**

## FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

### EU budget

#### ► The EU 2007 budget adopted (14/12/06)

The budgetary authorities - the Council and the European Parliament - reached an agreement on the EU budget in the Budget Council on 21 November 2006 and the subsequent tripartite meeting on 28 November 2006. The European Parliament confirmed the agreement, and thus the 2007 budget, in its plenary session on 14 December 2006.

The allocations of the 2007 budget are €126.5 billion in commitments and €115.5 billion in payments.

The Coordinate Minister for Finance, Ms Ulla-Maj Wideroos, who chaired the Council for EU budgetary matters during Finland's EU Presidency, was happy to see the budget finally adopted:

- In the perspective of the Council and the Presidency, we can be happy that the main elements of the 2007 budget correspond with the Member States' views: There is an increase of some 3% in the 2007 budget compared to that for the year 2006, while the Parliament had proposed an increase of 9% and the Council of 2%. The budget remains within the maximum limits of the financial frameworks, and it does not resort to the flexibility instrument. The expenditure on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was €159 million, as proposed by the Council. We can also be satisfied because for the first time, the Council proposals concerning pilot projects (bioenergy and the knowledge triangle) were included in the budget.

- The recently approved budget also contains some disappointments. As regards administration, the Commission and the Parliament were not prepared to initiate vital measures to improve productivity. As early as in July, the Council had announced that increases in staff numbers should be restricted. In other words, the Member States did not in any stage advocate a reduction in the numbers of civil servants in the EU institutions. It is unfortunate that these Institutions do not see the reality as many Member States do. It is a fact that the productivity programmes should be self-evident necessity in the EU Institutions as well. In other words, we only want to slow down the increase in the administration of EU institutions and to cut down on the bureaucracy. This is the message we would like to pass on to the EU citizens.

[http://www.eu2006.fi/news\\_and\\_documents/press\\_releases/vko50/en\\_GB/178547/](http://www.eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/press_releases/vko50/en_GB/178547/)

## JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

## EXTERNAL RELATIONS & DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ISSUES

## EU / UN REFORM



## UN

- ▶ **UN: EU Explanation of vote after the vote on the amended draft resolution on the Declaration on the Rights on Indigenous Peoples (L.18/Rev.1 as amended) (15/12/06)**

(...)

The European Union could not support the resolution on the Working group of the Commission on Human Rights to elaborate a draft declaration in accordance with paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 49/214 of 23 December 1994, as amended. We note with regret that, despite the agreement reached in the Human Rights Council and the continued efforts in the III Committee, it was not possible to find a common ground on this resolution.

The European Union has, on several occasions, reiterated its full support to the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as recommended by the Human Rights Council. We therefore deeply regret the deferral of a final decision on the adoption of the Declaration. The European Union, along with numerous other countries from different regions, welcomed the adoption of the Declaration at the first session of the Human Rights Council. The Declaration is the best achievable outcome of a thorough and open process of work reflecting the wide-ranging discussions of more than twenty years. We value highly the inclusiveness of this unique process of standard-setting, where governments and indigenous peoples themselves were involved on an equal footing. It is requisite to the value of the Declaration as it stands before us, yet the amendments adopted today disregard this.

Contrary to the recommendation of the Human Rights Council, the amendments adopted today paved way for a further delay in establishing this Declaration which would be a valuable addition to the UN toolbox for the promotion and protection of the rights of the indigenous peoples around the world and their continued development.

Consequently, the European Union abstained on the draft resolution.

[http://www.eu2006.fi/news\\_and\\_documents/other\\_documents/vko50/en\\_GB/1166167448697/](http://www.eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/other_documents/vko50/en_GB/1166167448697/)

## UN: General Assembly

- ▶ **UN: EU Statement on Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly - Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/483) (15/12/06)**

(...)

The European Union would like to thank the Secretary General for his report presenting an overview of the status of implementation of the resolutions regarding the revitalization of our work in the General Assembly and its main committees.

The European Union believes that the role and authority of the General Assembly has benefited from the revitalization efforts carried out under the leadership of a number of General Assembly Presidents over the past 15 years. Most recently, last September the Ad Hoc Working Group on the General Assembly revitalization completed its work, after six months and several rounds of negotiations, and adopted Resolution 60/286 containing further decisions aimed to improve its efficiency and its effectiveness. The EU would like to take this opportunity to thank the Co-Chairs of the Working Group, His Excellency Mr Abdullah Alsaïdi, Ambassador of Yemen and Her Excellency Mrs Solveiga Silkana, Ambassador of Latvia for their valuable work.

(...)

Any reform requires all parties to agree upon, and then to implement, realistic and action-oriented steps to be taken at the practical level. The EU welcomes the achievements that have been set out to improve the working methods of the General Assembly. Most of the decisions and recommendations already taken can not be implemented by the General Assembly as such, or by the Secretariat.

The real challenge in implementing these decisions is for the Member States. We - every single delegation in this room - have to act accordingly and apply in our own performance in the General Assembly what has been found useful and necessary to revitalize this body. For that reason, the EU would like to highlight some of the decisions adopted by the Member States.

Firstly, the General Assembly revitalization is an ongoing process, not just one event or series of meetings. Therefore, we would like to encourage the Main Committees to review their agendas and working methods on a continuous basis. In particular, the General Assembly and its Main Committees should continue to rationalize and streamline their agendas, including through clustering as well as biennialization or triennialization of agenda items, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. The EU welcomes the fact, as noted in the Secretary General's report that the General Assembly is continuing to make efforts to streamline the agenda of the plenary. In addition, innovative means should be further considered to make our debates more in-depth, focused, and interactive in order to make the Organization serve the international community.

The EU notes with concern that according to the Secretary General's report there has only been a limited success to consolidate the reports on related subjects. The question of rationalization of reports and their issuance is one area where more progress should be made to avoid duplication but also to allow the work of Member States to be more meaningful.

In addition, the EU would like to stress the need to make reports available in all official languages in a timely manner and in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, as agreed in the resolution 48/264. This is a necessity to allow all delegations to consider the substance of the reports in advance of meetings.

Secondly, we have emphasized that the UN should be directed to preserving its institutional memory. Exchange of experiences between the outgoing and incoming Presidents and bureau members of the Main Committees need to become a regular practice in order to bring us to work for a common goal. The EU looks forward to receiving a study by the Office of Legal Affairs to provide precedents and past practice of the General Assembly available.

Thirdly, in many aspects of modern technology may be useful to facilitate our intergovernmental work. The introduction of new websites assists delegations to be better informed. They also help us to be more open and visible to the world outside. Greater public visibility through mass media could make the UN more understandable to the world constituency.

Information technology may also be useful in improving monitoring the implementation of those General Assembly resolutions that are relevant for the advancement of the international development goals. The EU also looks forward to the upcoming study on the use of optical scanners that would be presented to the GA later during the ongoing session, which could be an essential tool for delegations during the very frequent elections.

(...)

Coordination and cooperation should guide our work. In that regard we welcome the regular meetings of the General Assembly President with the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social

Council. In this regard the EU would like to acknowledge **the increased level of transparency** in the recent selection process of the Secretary General.

While reaffirming the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security the EU would like to reiterate the decision taken in the context of revitalization process to invite the Security Council to submit to the General Assembly special subject-oriented reports on issues of current concern, as it is enshrined in the article 24 of the Charter.

(...)

In conclusion, the process of the General Assembly revitalization should not be perceived as a separate task. Rather, it should be framed in the broader context of the ongoing UN reforms where issues are interconnected. Furthermore, the EU would like to underline that the full involvement of the General Assembly in the reform process of the Organization is a concrete proof of its own revitalization.

The EU is ready to engage in further discussions on the General Assembly revitalization.

[http://www.eu2006.fi/news\\_and\\_documents/other\\_documents/vko50/en\\_GB/1166167613322/](http://www.eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/other_documents/vko50/en_GB/1166167613322/)

## MISCELLANEOUS

### European Parliament

#### ► 2006 Sakharov Prize - supporting Freedom of Thought around the world (14/12/06)

Every year, the European Parliament awards the Sakharov Prize for "Freedom of Thought" to exceptional individuals or organisations fighting against oppression, intolerance and injustice. Nelson Mandela, Kofi Annan and the UN are among former winners. The award is a visible means for Parliament to honour and support those who have put themselves at risk in the cause of liberty. This focus looks at the 2005 winners and profiles those who have been nominated for 2006.

The prize is named after Andrei Sakharov (1921-1989), one of the leading scientists who developed the hydrogen bomb for the Soviet Union, and who later became an outspoken critic of the nuclear arms race. In 1970 he founded a committee on human rights. His activities did not go unnoticed, in the Soviet Union he was jailed, while in the West he received the Nobel Peace prize in 1975.

The award founded in 1988 that bears his name is to recognise achievement in the following fields:

defence of human rights and fundamental freedoms, particularly the right to free expression

safeguarding the right of minorities

respect for international law

development of democracy and implementation on the rule of law

The prize is awarded to persons, associations or organisations irrespective of their nationality, place of residence or seat.

**Why does the European Parliament support the prize?**

The promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law is one of the most fundamental of the European Parliament's roles. It has a number of "tools" to help this aim, they include:

A Subcommittee on human rights to monitor the situation internationally. There is also a yearly report on the human rights situation in countries both inside and outside the European Union. The reports list breaches of human rights and make practical suggestions for improving matters.

During Parliament's monthly plenary sessions, Thursday afternoon is reserved for debates on human rights. In September MEPs debated Zimbabwe, North Korea and Sri Lanka. Parliament also adopted regular resolutions condemning governments that breach human rights - the latest being on China. Parliament can also decide to allocate EU money to projects promoting human rights or democracy.

### **Who selects the winner?**

Every year Political Groups in the Parliament and MEPs nominate potential candidates. From this list, the Committees on Foreign Affairs and Development jointly select three "finalists". The chairpersons of the political groups (the "Conference of Presidents") then select a winner. The prize is formally awarded by the President of the Parliament during the December Plenary session, on or around 10 December, which is also the day on which the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed in 1948.

The winner receives a certificate and a cheque for €50,000. One of last year's winners, Hauwa Ibrahim, used the prize money to fund children's education in her native Nigeria.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/focus\\_page/008-10518-254-09-37-901-20060911FCS10501-11-09-2006-2006/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/focus_page/008-10518-254-09-37-901-20060911FCS10501-11-09-2006-2006/default_en.htm)