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- ▶ Parliamentary questions: subject – human rights (09.03.05)

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#### THEMATIC :

### JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

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- ▶ International Women's Day (08.03.05)
- ▶ Parliament set to vote on Resolution on Women's Rights (08.03.05)
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- ▶ Marie-Josée Jacobs salue la création d'un Institut européen pour l'égalité des hommes et des femmes (08.03.05)

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- ▶ Parliamentary questions – Subject : death penalty (11.03.05)

◆ Slovakia

- ▶ Council of Europe Anti-Torture Committee visits the Slovak Republic (09.03.05)

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

◆ Human rights

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## IMPORTANT COMING MEETINGS

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- ◆ EU- Algeria Association Council

26 April 2005

- ◆ EU- Croatia Association Council
- ◆ EU- Turkey Association Council

26 may 2005

- ◆ EU- Chile Association Council
- ◆ EU- Mexico Joint Council

### THIRD COUNTRY MEETINGS

7 March 2005

- ◆ EU-Turkey (Troika)

10 March 2005

- ◆ EU-Indonesia (Troika)

30 March 2005

- ◆ EU- Ukraine (Troika)

7 April 2005

- ◆ EU- India (Troika)

10-11 April 2005

- ◆ EU- African Union (Troika)

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26 May 2005

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**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEETINGS**

◆ **Plenary Session**

➤ 7-10 March 2005:

◆ 8 March 2005:

- Oral questions: Follow-up to the **Fourth World Conference on Women - Platform for Action (Beijing + 10)**, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
- Council and Commission statements: **Situation in Lebanon, Health workers detained in Libya**
- International Women's Day: Open debate on **combating violence against women**

➤ 11-14 April 2005

➤ 9-12 May 2005

◆ **Committee on Foreign Affairs**

➤ 9 March 2005

➤ 15 March 2005

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➤ 26 April 2005

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➤ 14 June 2005

#### ◆ Subcommittee on Human Rights

- 7 March 2005
- 17 March 2005
- 31 March 2005
- 25 April 2005
- 28 April 2005
- 16 June 2005

#### ◆ Subcommittee on Security and Defence

- 17 March 2005
- 18 April 2005
- 26 April 2005
- 26 May 2005

#### ◆ Committee on Development

- 10 March 2005
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- 15 March 2005
- 26 April 2005
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- 26 May 2005

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

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- 16 March 2005
- 30 March 2005
- 21 April 2005
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- 28 April 2005
- 24 May 2005
- 26 May 2005

**REGIONS:**

**AFRICA**

◆ **Senegal**

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union concerning the "Ezzan" amnesty law in Senegal (11.03.05)**

On 17 February 2005, in the framework of the Union's regular political dialogue with Senegal under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement, the European Union troika in Senegal made a démarche at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Senegal concerning the "Ezzan" amnesty law which had been adopted on 7 January 2005 by the National Assembly.

The troika referred amongst other matters to the Constitutional Council's decision on the unconstitutionality of Article 2 and on its incapacity to judge whether the law complied with the stipulations of an international treaty or agreement.

**The European Union troika then reaffirmed its commitment to the unconditional respect to the principles of the rule of law and human rights, to which Senegal had also shown that it attached importance by ratifying various international treaties, and reiterated the European Union's position that no impunity should be permitted in respect of any criminal act, whatever its motivation.**

[http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/84093.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/84093.pdf)

**AMERICAS**

◆ **Cuba**

- ▶ **Parliamentary question: subject – human rights (09.03.05)**

The EU position on Cuba is that stated in the Common Position and its continued evaluations. **The EU has pursued all efforts to obtain the release of all political prisoners and respect for human rights in Cuba, including fundamental freedoms such as the freedom of expression and the freedom of movement.**

As the Honourable Parliamentarian was informed, the HR Javier Solana has already in the past expressed his readiness to meet Oswaldo Paya if he is allowed to travel.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2004-2068-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

**ASIA**

◆ **China**

- ▶ **China rebuffs fears about its future arms deals with Europe** - By Lucia Kubosova (07.03.05)

Chinese officials have suggested their country has no money and appetite for "useless" and "expensive" European weapons, amid concerns over the expected lifting of the EU arms embargo later this year.

"China is a developing country, we do not have the money to buy a lot of weapons from your country [the EU] that are very expensive and useless to us", the Chinese foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing, told journalists on Saturday (5 March), according to the AFP press agency.

He suggested that the continuing EU arms embargo against China amounted to "political discrimination", pointing out that Beijing is "committed to peaceful development".

**The European arms embargo was introduced after the violent backlash against the student pro-democracy movement by the Chinese communist government in 1989.**

**EU leaders are expected to agree on lifting the arms ban at their June summit, despite protests from both human rights activists and Washington.**

Opponents of the controversial step point to severe violations of citizen rights in China and express concerns **that China could use weapons purchases against Taiwan**, with the Chinese parliament set to pass a law aimed at curbing the island's bid for formal independence.

Last week, Beijing announced a 12.6 per cent increase in its defence budget for 2005, its largest increase for three years, while the official budget does not match real defence spending as it excludes most procurement costs, according to the Financial Times.

The Chinese embargo will also be under the spotlight during the Strasbourg session of the European parliament, starting today, with a public hearing scheduled for Wednesday.

<http://www.euobserver.com/?sid=24&aid=18605>

## ◆ Cambodia

### ▶ **Democratic progress undermined in Cambodia** (10.03.05)

In a resolution on Cambodia, adopted by 75 votes in favour with none against and two abstentions, MEPs state their belief that lifting the parliamentary immunity of opposition legislators creates a dangerous precedent which weakens the legislature as an independent institution of the State and the heart of democracy. They say this action undermines the democratic progress already accomplished by Cambodia.

Parliament calls upon the government of Cambodia immediately and unconditionally to release Cheam Channy, who should not, as a civilian, be subject to military jurisdiction. It considers that the criminal charges brought by the leaders of the ruling coalition against opposition party members constitute a major setback for democracy in Cambodia, casting doubts on the government's commitment to genuine pluralistic democracy.

**MEPs call on the authorities of Cambodia to abide by their international commitments, particularly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified in 1992 and urge the government of Cambodia to put an end to persecution of political opponents and human rights activists in their country.**

Parliament also calls on the National Assembly of Cambodia to restore immunity immediately to all three Members of Parliament and to ensure that members of the opposition are allowed to sit on its parliamentary committees. It calls on the Commission, the Council and the governments of the Member States to raise this question with the Cambodian government and to consider imposing appropriate sanctions if the National Assembly and the government of Cambodia do not reverse their recent actions.

MEPs say the Commission, the Council and the Member State governments, in anticipation of the ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting to be held on 10 and 11 March in Jakarta, should raise these concerns about the current political situation and the threats to democracy resulting from attempts to silence the political opposition in Cambodia. They suggest that an EU ad hoc delegation visit Cambodia as soon as possible to evaluate the country's political situation.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=PRESS-DAILYNB&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20050310-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#SECTION12>

## ◆ Burma

### ▶ **EU shifts its strategy towards Burma** By Lucia Kubosova\_(11.03.2005)

After more than four years, the **EU is planning to break its diplomatic silence with Burma and start high-level talks with its officials.**

**The country of 50.1 million governed by a military junta since 1988 has been isolated and under strong international pressure for its gross human rights abuses, including the widespread use of forced labour and the forcible relocation of civilians.**

The EU has put in place several sanctions against the military regime since the 1990s - including an arms embargo and a visa ban on government officials - and has time and again frozen all its dealings with the country.

Except for political measures, restrictions have been authorised to prohibit EU companies from investing in Burmese state-owned enterprises.

However, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the EU external relations commissioner, told journalists on Thursday (10 March) that European officials were now ready to engage Burma at the official level in what she called a shift in strategy, according to the Financial Times.

"There is a certain shift because we have not talked to them for a very long time", she was reported as saying on the sidelines of a meeting of EU foreign ministers with counterparts from the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Jakarta.

The Commissioner said Brussels would consider suggestions by the ASEAN leaders to initiate more active engagement with Burma, both of which the EU and the USA have been resisting so far.

Burma's entry to ASEAN in 1997 was boycotted by the EU and caused an interruption in their meetings.

Mrs Ferrero-Waldner's predecessor, Chris Patten, was particularly determined not to meet with Burmese officials, but his Austrian successor wants to change tactics.

"It is better to have a clear, tough-linguaged, constructive but critical dialogue. Because then you can really have a dialogue", she said.

The Commissioner pointed out that **EU officials would continue to push for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Prize-winning leader, who has spent nine of the past 15 years under some form of detention.**

They will also **ask the Burmese government to include her National League for Democracy, the main opposition party, in a constitutional convention started in 1993 and re-opened in February this year.**

<http://www.euobserver.com/?sid=24&aid=18640>

## MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

### ◆ Palestine

#### ▶ Parliamentary question: subject – human rights (09.03.05)

The Honourable Members of the EP referred in their questions to the Advisory Opinion rendered by the International Court of Justice on 9 July 2004 concerning "**Legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the occupied Palestinian Territory**".

The European Union is committed to upholding and developing international law including **respect for the International Court of Justice, as laid down in the European Security Strategy "A secure Europe in a better world"** which was adopted by the European Council in December 2003.

In its reaction to the Advisory Opinion, **the Council** recalled at its meeting of 12 July 2004 that the EU, while recognising Israel's right to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks, **has repeatedly demanded in the past that Israel stops and reverses the construction of the Barrier inside the occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem.**

The Council underlined that the political process, as laid down in the Roadmap, represents the only route to achieving a negotiated two-State solution agreed between the parties which would result in a viable, contiguous and independent Palestinian State existing side by side in peace with an Israel living within recognised and secure borders.

The Council also noted that it will now be up to the political bodies of the United Nations to decide how to act upon the Court's Advisory Opinion, as it actually did in the UN Resolution adopted on 20 July 2004.

With respect to the assessment of damage incurred to Palestinian infrastructure financed in whole or part by the EU to which reference was also made, the European Commission has established an inventory to that effect. Inquiries regarding this matter should be addressed to the European Commission.

**The EU conducts continuous political contacts with Israel on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict including all human rights issues related to this conflict.**

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2004-2161-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

### ◆ Iran

#### ▶ Iranian Nobel peace prize winner pins hope on democracy for Middle East (10.03.05)

The Iranian human rights lawyer and Nobel peace prize winner Shirin Ebadi denied that democracy was incompatible with Islam, when she addressed MEPs on Wednesday, saying that the establishment of democracy was the only way for the Middle East to overcome its problems. She stressed that democracy was a single concept and rejected notions such as "western democracy" or "Islamic democracy". She stressed that the Iranian people were tired of oppression and violence and that they were striving for reforms by political and cultural means. Ms

Ebadi rejected US threats of an attack on Iran and said that **democracy cannot be promoted by the force of arms**.

In an appearance before the Foreign Affairs Committee and the EP Delegation for Iran, Ms Ebadi said there are **two major reasons why the Middle East has been engulfed in chaos and rebellion: a lack of democracy and the presence of rich natural resources**. She explained that dictatorships and despotism in Middle East countries made the populations unable or unwilling to resist colonialist and hegemonic powers which target such countries for their oil. She referred to the current situation in Iraq and to the overthrow by the US of Iranian prime minister Mossadeq in the 1950s.

In reply to questions by MEPs, Ms Ebadi said that second or third generation immigrants in western countries were less willing to put up with humiliation than their fathers, who still remembered the situation in their countries of origin. Younger immigrants have become disenchanted with the societies in which they have grown up but which rejects them as different and they thus become easy targets for terrorists. **She therefore called on western countries not to humiliate immigrants and not to oppress them**.

Committee chair Elmar BROK (EPP-ED, D) and delegation chair Angelika BEER (Greens/EFA, D) both expressed concern over the present state of EU-Iran relations and said they hoped for a peaceful solution.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=PRESS-NEWSRP&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050310-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

## ◆ Saudi Arabia

### ▶ Local elections just a start, say MEPs (10.03.05)

MEPs welcome the first-ever nationwide electoral process in Saudi Arabia, witnessed by a European Parliament delegation and considered as a positive step towards social and political reform, but deeply regret the fact that women are not allowed to participate in these elections, according to a resolution on Saudi Arabia, adopted by 78 votes in favour with one against and five abstentions on Thursday 10 March.

**Parliament reminds the authorities of their obligations expresses under the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to which Saudi Arabia is a State Party, expresses its solidarity with those Saudis who look forward to the inclusion of all citizens in the electoral process, and calls on the authorities to take all appropriate measures to eliminate segregation and discrimination against women, and to gradually increase the participation of women in the political decision-making process, on equal terms with men, and enable them to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government. The resolution calls on the Saudi Arabian Government to lift restrictions on women's free movement (including the prohibition to drive), on employment opportunities, on their legal personality and on their representation in legal proceedings;**

MEPs reiterate their **call for the abolition of the death penalty and call for an immediate moratorium on the carrying out of death sentences in Saudi Arabia, where, according to Amnesty International, 31 executions took place in 2004**. They call on the authorities to take steps to upgrade the working conditions and treatment of immigrant workers, in particular for women and regret that there is still no freedom of religion in Saudi Arabia. They **encourage the authorities to pursue their efforts to foster greater moderation and tolerance of religious diversity**.

**Parliament underlines the importance of countering terrorism and fundamentalism whilst safeguarding basic human rights and civil liberties and, on this basis, would favour a strengthening of EU-Saudi relations**. It calls, more specifically, for the EU and Saudi Arabia to support each other's efforts in achieving a satisfactory outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

MEPs call on the Council and the Commission to raise these issues during the next Joint Council and ministerial meeting between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council and urge the EU institutions to increase their presence in the region and to strengthen working relations with Saudi Arabia, by increasing resources to the Delegation in Riyadh and by planning an early visit to the Kingdom by the EU External Affairs Commissioner and/or the EU CFSP High Representative.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=PRESS-DAILYNB&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20050310-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#SECTION12>

## ◆ Lebanon

- ▶ Parliamentary questions – Subject: death penalty (10.03.05)

The Council continues to be **gravely concerned about the plight of the five Bulgarian nurses and the Palestinian doctor convicted to death on 6 May 2004**. Over the last past years, their case has been followed very closely by the Council and the Libyan authorities have been approached several times on the matter.

At its meeting on 11 October 2004, the Council considered that Libyan authorities, upon re-examination of existing evidence, may wish to conclude that justice be served by their early release. The Council also insisted that Libya resolves remaining EU concerns, notably the case of the Bulgarian and Palestinian medical workers. The Council and the Presidency continue to attach a high priority to the case and work towards a positive resolution.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2004-2793-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

## ◆ Iraq

- ▶ Déclaration de la présidence de l'Union européenne sur l'annulation par l'Irak de son adhésion au statut de Rome de la Cour pénale internationale (09.03.05)

La Présidence regrette l'annonce faite par les autorités irakiennes en vertu de laquelle **l'adhésion de l'Irak au statut de Rome de la Cour pénale internationale est annulée**. Elle entend que cette décision a été prise pour des raisons formelles et espère que les nouvelles autorités irakiennes issues des élections du 30 janvier 2005 reviendront sur cette décision et que l'Irak adhérera au statut de Rome de la Cour pénale internationale le moment venu.

**La Présidence réaffirme son soutien constant à la Cour pénale internationale et l'importance qu'elle attache à la lutte contre l'impunité pour les crimes les plus odieux qui outragent la conscience humaine.**

Elle demeure déterminée à continuer à promouvoir l'universalité du statut de Rome en encourageant sa ratification.

<http://www.eu2005.lu/fr/actualites/pesc/2005/03/09irak/index.html> (FR)

## EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE ) AND CIS

## ◆ Turkey

- ▶ Statement by the EU Troika following incidents during a women's rights demonstration in Istanbul on 6 March 2005 (07.03.05)

Ahead of a Ministerial Meeting between the EU Troika and Turkey in Ankara on 7 March, the representatives of the European Union - Jean Asselborn, current President of the Council of the European Union, Olli Rehn, European Commissioner in charge of Enlargement and Denis MacShane, British Minister for Europe – issued the following joint statement:

**"We were shocked by images of the police beating women and young people demonstrating in Istanbul in connection with International Women's Day. We condemn all violence, as demonstrations must be peaceful.**

**On the eve of a visit by the EU during which the rights of women will be an important issue, we are concerned to see such disproportionate force used against demonstrators.**

**We ask the Turkish authorities to carry out an investigation into this event to prevent similar incidents in the future."**

[http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/communiqués/2005/03/07turkey\\_troika\\_statement/index.html](http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/communiqués/2005/03/07turkey_troika_statement/index.html)

- ▶ EU frowns at Turkey for police riot against women - By Lucia Kubosova (08.03.05)

The police reaction against women protesting in Turkey over the weekend is likely to dominate today's International Women's Day debates in the European Parliament, after several EU representatives condemned the events.

Sunday's (6 March) riot in Istanbul came just hours before a high level EU visit to Turkey, set to discuss issues related with membership talks, which are scheduled to start in October.

EU enlargement commissioner Olli Rehn, Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn and British Europe minister Denis MacShane issued a statement expressing their concern over the "disproportionate force" used against demonstrators. (...)

President of the European Parliament Josep Borrel also condemned the Turkish police action, suggesting that "such suppression was not helpful to Turkey's application for EU membership."

The leader of the Socialist group, Martin Schultz stated, "The police behaviour demonstrates the gulf that exists between the official position that reforms are underway and the reality of life on the ground".

He welcomed the determination of the Turkish authorities to prevent similar scenes and investigate the events of Sunday.

Violence against women - especially in families - is still present also in the EU member states, and it will be under the spotlight during the second day of the March session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

Statistics show that one woman in five in the EU has suffered violence by her male partner, while 25 percent of all violent crimes reported in Europe involve a man assaulting his wife or partner.

The new EU Constitution - currently in process of ratification - explicitly mentions domestic violence and obliges the member states to take measures to prevent and properly punish it as a criminal act.

Social affairs commissioner Vladimir Spidla is set to announce the details of the European Gender Institute, aimed at monitoring gender-related discrimination across Europe, and evaluating initiatives aspiring to curb it.

While the gaps in access to education and jobs between men and women are on decrease, the gender pay gap has not changed significantly over the past years in the EU, remaining at 15 percent.

<http://www.euobserver.com/?sid=15&aid=18613>

► **Les progrès de la Turquie dans son rapprochement avec l'Union européenne au centre des pourparlers UE-Turquie à Ankara** (07.03.05)

Jean Asselborn, ministre des Affaires étrangères et de l'Immigration et président en exercice du Conseil de l'Union européenne, a mené une délégation de la Troïka européenne lors d'une réunion ministérielle entre l'Union européenne et la Turquie le 7 mars 2005 à Ankara.

La Turquie était représentée par son Vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Affaires étrangères, Abdullah Gül. Du côté de l'Union européenne, le commissaire européen chargé de l'Elargissement, Olli Rehn, et le ministre britannique des Affaires européennes, Denis MacShane, ont également participé aux pourparlers.

La réunion ministérielle s'est concentrée sur les progrès accomplis par la Turquie dans son rapprochement avec l'Union européenne, et plus particulièrement sur **les réformes des droits et libertés des citoyens**.

Les deux parties ont également eu un échange de vues sur un nombre de sujets d'actualité internationale, tels que le Processus de Paix au Proche-Orient, l'Iraq, l'Iran, le Caucase du Sud et relations entre l'OTAN et l'Union européenne.

En début de réunion, le ministre Asselborn a fait part de la préoccupation de l'Union européenne face aux images de **policiers malmenant des manifestants lors d'une démonstration à Istanbul le 7 mars**. La partie turque a répondu favorablement aux **inquiétudes de la troïka européenne** et a **promis une enquête détaillée des autorités compétentes sur les incidents signalés**.

Concernant les réformes législatives en cours en Turquie, le ministre Asselborn s'est félicité de la présentation par son homologue turc "d'une longue liste de changements législatifs intervenus, qui documentent l'irréversibilité et la profondeur du mouvement de rapprochement entre la Turquie et l'Union".

Toutefois, Jean Asselborn a souligné "l'importance de maintenir le rythme des réformes intact afin d'éviter tout risque de perdre la dynamique. Les réformes sont comme une course cycliste: dès qu'on arrête de pédaler ou qu'on freine brusquement, on risque de chuter."

Selon le Président du Conseil, la délégation européenne a indiqué qu'elle s'attendait à des progrès additionnels dans le domaine de **la liberté des cultes**, et plus spécifiquement **en faveur des minorités non-musulmanes**.

Aux yeux de l'Union européenne, la nouvelle loi sur les fondations devrait notamment résoudre tous les problèmes liés à la propriété des communautés religieuses et la liberté des cultes.

**Quant à la question de l'abolition de la torture, l'Union européenne a constaté que la politique de "zéro tolérance" produisait ses effets, tout en soulignant qu'il s'agissait maintenant d'amplifier cette politique partout dans la droite ligne de la volonté déclarée par le gouvernement turc.**

Les deux parties ont également discuté de la situation dans le Sud-est de la Turquie. La délégation européenne a souligné **la nécessité de réduire les disparités régionales et assurer le retour des personnes déplacées**.

Jean Asselborn a également estimé que "l'emploi progressif des langues couramment utilisées en Turquie dans le domaine culturel et politique comme dans l'éducation constitue un encouragement et je suis convaincu que cette utilisation ira grandissante."

Finalement, le Président du Conseil de l'Union européenne a complimenté le gouvernement turc pour ses accomplissements dans l'europanisation des relations entre les pouvoirs civil et militaire.

<http://www.eu2005.lu/fr/actualites/communiqués/2005/03/07troikatr/index.html> (FR)

► **Turkey calls for study into Armenia genocide claims** -By Honor Mahony (09.03.05)

Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan has called for an unbiased study by historians of Armenian claims that their people suffered genocide at the hands of Ottoman Turkish troops around 90 years ago.

"We have opened our archives to those people who claim there was genocide. If they are sincere they should also open their archives", Mr Erdogan said at a press conference on Tuesday (8 March).

"Teams of historians from both sides should conduct studies in these archives".

He added, "We do not want future generations to have a difficult life because of hatred and resentment".

Armenia says that up to 1.5 million of its people were killed between 1915 and 1923 after a decision to carry out the killings by the political power in Istanbul at the time, known as the Young Turks.

**Armenia also says that the killings amount to genocide.**

**Ankara has denied that it was genocide** and insists that between 250,000 and 500,000 Armenians as well as thousands of Turks were killed when they clashed during World War 1.

**This is not the first time the issue has been raised recently. In December, France angered Turkey by calling for recognition of the Armenian genocide.**

Paris made it clear that the demand was not a condition for opening membership negotiations with Turkey but said it would be raised once talks are opened - expected in October.

France also officially recognised the Armenian genocide in 2001.

Mr Erdogan's call for a study into the issue follows strong criticism by the EU for Turkey's handling of a separate issue.

The EU on Monday condemned the use of "disproportionate force" used by Turkish police during a protest in Istanbul.

The police used truncheons and tear gas to break up a demonstration on Sunday ahead of International Women's Day.

The police crackdown has re-opened the debate in some quarters in the EU about whether Ankara will start EU talks on 3 October, as planned.

<http://www.euobserver.com/?sid=24&aid=18621>

◆ **Romania**

► **Parliamentary questions: subject – childcare insitutions in Romania** (08.03.05)

Given the likelihood that the Accession treaty with Romania will be signed in April, **can the Council outline the progress, if any, made in the human rights situation in Romania**, with particular regard to the conditions for children and young adults in orphanages and other state-run institutional facilities? Is it satisfied that sufficient progress has been made in this area to allow for the signing of the Accession treaty?

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=QT&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+QT+H-2005-0172+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

◆ **Albania**

► **Parliamentary questions: subject – minority rights** (09.03.05)

**The Council is aware of the general problem of illegal construction in Albania and that the authorities sometimes take the decision to demolish the illegally constructed buildings.** So far, the Council has no information on the specific case raised by the Honourable Parliamentarian nor has it received any reports of discriminatory actions in this regard. It closely **follows issues relating to minority rights in Albania, including those of the ethnic Greek minority in Himara.**

Respect for minority rights is an important component in the EU's policy towards the Western Balkans, including Albania. The *Commission's staff working paper on Albania, published in March 2004* as part of the yearly review of the Stabilisation and Association Process, contains a chapter on minority rights in Albania. In the *European Partnership with Albania*, which was adopted by the Council in June 2004, the EU enumerates a number of short term measures it expects Albania to address within one to two years in order to ensure respect of minority

rights(...). **The issue of respect for human rights and minorities was also recently mentioned in the Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union of 14 September 2004 on Albania in which it expressed its concern regarding the rule of law and the respect of human rights and minorities, in particular in the fields of education, property and access to media as well as in the subsequent demarches by the EU-troika to Prime Minister Fatos Nano and opposition leader Sali Berisha.**

Over the past five years, Albania has received a total of approximately EUR 230 million (from the PHARE-programme in 2000 and from the CARDS-programme in 2001-2004) in Community assistance.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2004-2200-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

## ◆ Belarus

### ▶ MEPs condemn the Lukashenko dictatorship in Belarus (10..03.05)

In a resolution on Belarus adopted by a clear majority, **the European Parliament strongly condemns the systematic and increasing harassment and intimidation carried out by state officials against journalists and the media critical of the government or of the President. MEPs call for the immediate release of Mikhail Marynich, Valery Levonevsky, Alexander Vasilyev and all other imprisoned political opponents of the regime, as well as Professor Bandazhevsky, who criticised the authorities over research into the Chernobyl disaster.**

Parliament also calls for an independent investigation into the disappearance of the former minister Yuri Zakharenko, former parliamentarian Victor Gonchar, businessman Anatoly Krasovsky and television cameraman Dmitry Zavadski.

**MEPs say there are massive human rights violations in Belarus and call on the Council to condemn President Lukashenko as a dictator.** His assets and those of senior colleagues should be frozen.

Parliament calls for an end to the harassment of educational institutions in Belarus and for respect of academic freedom, teaching autonomy and tolerance in education. MEPs stress that sanctions should be targeted at the authorities and not Belarus society as a whole. They say no diplomatic and political efforts should be spared to bring Belarus back to the European family.

MEPs support the creation of alternative and accessible information sources such as TV and radio stations in neighbouring countries. They also insist that Belarus should feature in all regular consultations with Russia.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=PRESS-DAILYNB&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20050310-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#SECTION12>

## ◆ Moldavia

### ▶ Déclaration de la Présidence au nom de l'Union européenne sur les élections parlementaires en Moldavie, le 6 mars 2005 (08.03.05)

L'Union européenne prend acte des conclusions préliminaires de la Mission d'Observation Electorale Internationale (IEOM) concernant les élections parlementaires en République de Moldavie du 6 mars 2005, stipulant qu'elles ont répondu de manière générale aux engagements pris auprès de l'OSCE, du Conseil de l'Europe et à d'autres standards internationaux. L'Union européenne salue le fait que les élections aient été marquées par un système de partis plus compétitif et pluraliste, le respect par la Commission Electorale Centrale des dispositions légales, une plus grande variété de la presse écrite ainsi qu'une implication accrue de la société civile dans le processus électoral.

L'Union européenne regrette toutefois que les élections n'aient pas réussi à remplir certaines obligations fondamentales nécessaires à la mise en œuvre d'un processus électoral compétitif, notamment des conditions de campagne impartiales et un accès équitable aux médias. **L'Union européenne est préoccupée par les entraves posées aux activités des partis lors de la campagne électorale, par des cas de harcèlement des candidats et médias d'opposition, par la pression exercée sur des employés du secteur public ainsi que par des cas d'abus du denier public.** L'Union européenne invite les autorités moldaves à remédier aux manquements identifiés par la Mission d'Observation Electoral Internationale et confirmés par le rapport final de l'OSCE/BIDDH. L'Union européenne est prête à coopérer avec les partis élus pour soutenir la Moldavie et est déterminée à apporter, dans le cadre de la Politique Européenne de Voisinage, son soutien à l'ancrage démocratique et à la modernisation de la Moldavie.

L'Union européenne appelle les forces politiques moldaves à continuer à travailler ensemble pour poursuivre le processus de démocratisation et de développement politique et économique de la Moldavie, y compris la résolution du conflit transnistrien dans le cadre de l'intégrité territoriale de la Moldavie.

<http://www.eu2005.lu/fr/actualites/pesc/2005/03/08moldavie/index.html> (FR)

## THEMATIC :

### JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

#### ◆ Equal Opportunities / Women's Rights

##### ▶ International Women's Day (08.03.05)

Parliament President Josep BORRELL opened the debate on International Women's Day, saying that **millions of women still face discrimination and violence every day**. The dreadful scenes of Turkish police action against a women's demonstration in Istanbul were only the latest example. He invited all MEPs - men included - to take part in the seminar planned for the afternoon on tackling violence against women. With one European woman in five saying she has been the victim of abuse there is still much to do. There were alarming signs that **poverty was becoming feminised**, as women were still paid around 16 per cent less for the same work. Within Parliament, one member of each committee was now asked to take responsibility for issues of equality between men and women. The aim, said the President, was for Parliament to have equal representation of men and women, not through legal imposition, but through the equal abilities of men and women being reflected in social and political practice throughout Europe.

Lissy GRÖNER (PES, DE), spoke next as the tabler of the questions that were the basis for the debate. "Today is an important day, as it gives us the chance to say **that women are not sufficiently involved in the decision making process.**" (...)

Women's participation in the political process in the EU was not bad by international standards, but there was still much to do, she said, calling for quotas to ensure women's involvement. Anti-discrimination policy was in place, but was not always well implemented in the Member States. The DAPHNE and STOP programmes aimed to tackle violence against women and were welcome, but were not enough. "**It is not acceptable that one in five women is a victim of violence. We cannot accept the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation.**" A European Union gender equality institute was essential to gather together the statistics and information, she said, asking when it would be set up. **She also questioned whether the Commission had taken action to make 2006 the 'Year against violence against women.'**

Commissioner Vladimír ŠPIDLA responded to these points during his speech, saying that the setting up of **a gender equality institute would be an important step in gathering the proper evidence base for actions in combating discrimination.** He said that the Commission supported Parliament's call for 2006 to be the 'Year against violence against women.'

The Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, Anna ZABORSKA (EPP-ED, SK) spoke of her gratitude to all those women who had defended women's rights and dignity over the years, despite criticism that such action was not feminine or was even exhibitionist. There were still problems for women including exclusion, poverty, rights in the workplace and equality between spouses(...)

Avril DOYLE (EPP-ED, IE) recalled that ten years ago she had represented the Irish government at the Beijing Conference. (...)

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20050308-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION1>

##### ▶ Parliament set to vote on Resolution on Women's Rights (08.03.05)

Following today's debate on International Women's Day (8 March), Parliament will vote on a joint resolution on Thursday on the follow up of the Fourth World Conference on Women Platform for Action (Beijing + 10).

**The draft resolution condemns strongly the brutality of the Turkish police in Istanbul during the demonstration on the occasion of the International Women's Day on March 6, 2005, and asks the Commission to present to the EP a full report on what has happened. The draft resolution welcomes the legal reforms that have been carried in Turkey but reiterates its concern that women are still victims of**

**honour killings and violence and calls, therefore on the Commission and the Council to continue their cooperation with the Turkish authorities and to follow closely the women's rights situation in Turkey.**

The draft resolution also welcomes the adoption of the directive implementing the principle of equal treatment for women and men in access to and supply of goods and services and regards the directive as an important tool to ensure gender equality. The resolution as it stands, regrets, however, that not enough progress has been made towards completely eliminating the use of gender as a discriminating factor for determining premiums and benefits in relation to insurance and related financial activities.

The draft resolution recognises that some positive measures have been taken in relation to violence against women. The draft stresses, however, the **lack of a clear political commitment to address and eradicate domestic violence against women, sexual tourism and trafficking in women, including legislative measures, such as asylum rights for victims.**

Finally, the draft resolution calls on the Commission to declare 2006 the European Year against Violence towards Women and urges it, further, to include Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and neighbouring countries fully in the preparations for and all events, programmes and projects in connection with the year against violence.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20050308-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION1>

**Full text of the joint resolution :** <http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+MOTION+P6-RC-2005-0176+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y>

► **Commission proposes Institute for Gender Equality** (08.03.05)

Vladimír Špidla, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, today announced that a **new European Institute for Gender Equality will be set up to support the EU institutions and the Member States in promoting equality between women and men and combating sex discrimination.**(...)

The Institute will be an independent centre of excellence at European level. It will gather, analyse and disseminate reliable and comparable research data and information needed by policy-makers in Brussels and in the Member States. It will have a documentation centre and a library which will be open to the public.

The Institute will stimulate research and exchanges of experience by organising meetings between policy-makers, experts and stakeholders and it will raise awareness of gender equality policies with events including conferences, campaigns and seminars. Another vital task will be to develop tools for supporting the integration of gender equality into all Community policies.

**The creation of an institute for gender equality was requested by the European Council in June 2004 and has also been demanded by the European Parliament. It will start operating twelve months after the regulation establishing it has been adopted by Parliament and Council and should be up and running in 2007.** It will be funded by the Commission, with a proposed budget of 52.5 million EUR for the period 2007 to 2013.

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/266&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&qu ilLanguage=en>

► **Marie-Josée Jacobs salue la création d'un Institut européen pour l'égalité des hommes et des femmes** (08.03.05)

A l'occasion de la journée internationale des droits de la femme, Marie-Josée Jacobs, en sa qualité de ministre pour l'Egalité des chances et de présidente en exercice du Conseil, a pris la parole en plénière du Parlement européen à Strasbourg pour répondre aux questions posées par les membres du Parlement européen.

La ministre a tout particulièrement traité les problèmes de **la violence à l'égard des femmes, de la relation entre femmes, pauvreté et exclusion sociale** ainsi que ceux de **l'emploi des femmes et leur discrimination en matière de rémunération**. Elle a fait le lien entre les objectifs de la Stratégie de Lisbonne et du rôle que devraient pouvoir jouer les femmes sur le marché du travail européen.

Dans ses conclusions, **la ministre a salué l'initiative de la commission relative à la création d'un institut européen pour l'égalité entre hommes et femmes.**

Sur l'invitation du Président de la commission européenne, José Manuel Barroso, la ministre a également participé à une réunion du groupe de Commissaires ayant à charge les droits fondamentaux, la lutte contre la discrimination et l'égalité des chances.

Finalement, Marie Josée Jacobs a pris part à un débat ouvert avec la presse internationale dont le sujet a été la lutte contre la violence envers les femmes.

[http://www.eu2005.lu/fr/actualites/communiqués/2005/03/0802pe\\_jacobs/index.html](http://www.eu2005.lu/fr/actualites/communiqués/2005/03/0802pe_jacobs/index.html) (FR)

## ◆ Death penalty

### ▶ Parliamentary questions – Subject : death penalty (11.03.05)

The Council would remind the Honourable Member **that Protocols No 6 and 13 to the ECHR provide for the complete abolition of the death penalty. The current position is that:**

*Protocol No 6 has been ratified by all Member States of the European Union including Poland, which ratified it on 30 October 2000 without any reservation.*

*Protocol No 13 has been signed by all Member States of the European Union including Poland, which signed it on 3 May 2002. Eight Member States have yet to ratify it. Denmark and the United Kingdom accompanied their ratification with a Declaration.*

Article 6(2) of the Treaty on European Union states that the Union shall respect fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the ECHR and as they result from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, as general principles of Community law.

The European Union is firmly opposed to the death penalty. In its Declaration of 14 July 2003, to mark the entry into force of Protocol No 13 to the ECHR, **the European Union reiterated "its longstanding and firm position against the use of the death penalty in all circumstances"** and pointed out that all European Union countries had abolished the death penalty.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+P-2004-2910-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

## ◆ The Slovak Republic

### ▶ Council of Europe Anti-Torture Committee visits the Slovak Republic (09.03.05)

A delegation of the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) carried out a visit to the Slovak Republic from 22 February to 3 March 2005. It was the Committee's third periodic visit to the Slovak Republic.

During the visit, the CPT's delegation followed up a number of issues examined during previous visits, in particular **the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty by the police**, as well as **the situation in prisons and social services homes**. For the first time in the Slovak Republic, the CPT visited **psychiatric establishments**.

In the course of the visit, the delegation held consultations with Daniel LIPŠIČ, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice, Vladimír PALKO, Minister of the Interior, as well as senior officials responsible for the police, prisons, psychiatric hospitals, and social services homes. It also met Pavel KANDRAC, Human Rights Ombudsman, and representatives of the Prosecutor-General's office.

<http://www.cpt.coe.int/documents/svk/2005-03-09-eng.htm> (EN)

## EXTERNAL RELATIONS

## ◆ Human rights

### ▶ A challenging year ahead for the EU in the UN Commission on Human Rights (07.03.05)

Speaking at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, **Commissioner Ferrero Waldner** welcomed the input which Parliament is making into the process of EU deliberations prior to the 61st session of the UN Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in Geneva. She outlined the range of challenges facing the EU, not least the growing hostility of many CHR Member States to the very concept of country resolutions, and **called for support for such resolutions in drawing attention to human rights violations and in establishing special rapporteurs who are mandated to investigate and report on such violations.**

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/newsdigest/00wn.htm#A%20challenging%20year%20ahead](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/newsdigest/00wn.htm#A%20challenging%20year%20ahead)