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IMPORTANT COMING MEETINGS

ASSOCIATION / COOPERATION COUNCIL MEETINGS

16 March 2005

- ◆ EU- Algeria Association Council

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

26 may 2005

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

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30 March 2005

- ◆ EU- Ukraine (Troika)

7 April 2005

- ◆ EU- India (Troika)

10-11 April 2005

- ◆ EU- African Union (Troika)

27 April 2005

- ◆ EU- Pakistan (Troika)

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- ◆ EU- Japan (Troika)

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◆ **EU- China (Troika)**

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◆ **EU-Russia Summit**

18 May 2005

◆ **EU- ECOWAS (Troika)**

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◆ **EU- Central America (Troika)**

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEETINGS

◆ **Plenary Session**

➤ 11-14 April 2005

➤ 9-12 May 2005

◆ **Committee on Foreign Affairs**

➤ 15 March 2005

➤ 29 March 2005

➤ 19 April 2005

➤ 26 April 2005

➤ 23 May 2005

➤ 14 June 2005

◆ **Subcommittee on Human Rights**

➤ 17 March 2005

➤ 31 March 2005

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➤ 28 April 2005

➤ 16 June 2005

◆ **Subcommittee on Security and Defence**

➤ 17 March 2005

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◆ **Committee on Development**

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

➤ 16 March 2005

➤ 30 March 2005

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

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REGIONS:

AFRICA

◆ **Libya**

▶ **Parliamentary questions – Subject: human rights** (15.03.05)

Following the steps taken by Libya in dismantling its weapons of mass destruction programme and the settlement reached on 3 September 2004 on compensation for the victims and their dependants of the 1986 Berlin discotheque attack, the Council, at its meeting on 11 October 2004, adopted comprehensive conclusions on Libya and agreed to embark upon a policy of engagement with Libya. The Council expects Libya to respond positively to the EU's policy of engagement. In this light, it insisted in particular that Libya resolves inter alia all outstanding issues with EU Member States.

The Council also stressed that it regarded improvements in the human rights situation in Libya an essential element in the development of relations and decided to follow closely the human rights situation in Libya.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2004-2344-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

◆ **Sudan**

▶ **The EU wishes to put an end to the violence and impunity in Darfour** (17.03.05)

Jean Asselborn, current President of the European Council, stated at the end of the General Affairs and External Relations Council that "the Council has had an exchange of views on the situation in Sudan, especially as concerns the implementation of the signature of the global peace agreement between the SPLM/A and the conflict in Darfour. **The council expressed the hope that the negotiations underway in the Security Council of the UN will come to a positive end soon leading to a consensus that allows resolutions to be adopted for the implementation of a UN mission to Sudan and of measures that can end the violence and impunity in Darfour through appealing to the International Criminal Court.**"

<http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/communiqués/2005/03/16soudan/index.html> (EN)

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

◆ **Romania**

▶ **Parliamentary questions – Subject: Recognition of International Roma Day** (14.03.05)

8 April marks International Roma Day for nearly 10 million people in Europe. We would like to see this symbolic event recognised as European Roma Day.

A symbolic gesture of this nature towards one of the largest ethnic minority groups within the EU would also celebrate Europe's cultural variety, and demonstrate a commitment to the EU's campaign against racism and xenophobia and to the protection of human rights.

Our Roma citizens include the most economically disadvantaged and socially marginalised ethnic group in Europe. As a result, many of them are forced to seek asylum. The prevalence of racial discrimination and the campaign against the segregation of the Roma is well-documented.

Does not the Commission agree that recognition of 8 April as European Roma Day would raise awareness of their situation and help to play a role in furthering inclusive policies for our fellow EU citizens?

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=OQ&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+OQ+O-2005-0028+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

► **Parliamentary questions – Subject: children’s rights** (15.03.05)

As the Honourable Member is aware, in the case of Romania, one of the specific areas covered by the pre-accession strategy is that of childcare, an important issue on which the Council has already had the opportunity to reply to a number of questions from the European Parliament. **The EU line on this matter has always been**, and remains, geared towards one major objective - **the welfare of children**. As a candidate for accession to the Union, Romania has to comply with high standards for the protection of children's rights.

In 2001, a moratorium on international adoptions was introduced by the Romanian Government, largely in response to the concerns expressed by the European Union that previous legislation and practices were not in the best interests of the child. The EU has consistently held that the moratorium should be maintained until new legislation compatible with the best interests of the child and Romania's international obligations is in place and the administrative capacity to implement the new legislation is ensured. During the moratorium, the Romanian authorities have made exceptions only in special cases.

At its meeting on **11 October 2004**, the Council noted that, in June 2004, **Romania adopted new legislation on children’s rights**. The new legislation limits inter-country adoptions to very rare cases and, according to the terms of the regular report presented by the Commission on 6 October 2004, appears to be in accordance with Romania's international obligations, in compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in line with practices in EU Member States.

The focus is now on the **implementation of the new legislation**. Over the last years, the EU has financially supported Romania's efforts to improve the quality of public care for children. As the Commission stated in its 2004 regular report on Romania's progress towards accession, **continued progress has been made with the reform of child protection, in particular through the closure of large old-style institutions and the creation of alternatives such as smaller homes and foster care. Although much work still remains to be done**, in general, the living conditions of children in public care in Romania today can be said to have improved.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=WQA&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+WQA+E-2004-2393-N+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

◆ **Turkey**

► **Public hearing - Fighting gender discrimination: Turkey under the spotlight** (16.03.05)

Turkish women suffer discrimination and violence but the government is fully committed to finding solutions, a public hearing at the European Parliament was held on Wednesday.

In a frank and open debate, MEPs, European and Turkish experts and a Turkish minister of state discussed the political, social and cultural role of women in today's Turkey. All speakers agreed that **much still has to be done to fight discrimination**. A key issue is the implementation of reforms introduced by Ankara.

The hearing, held by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, was intended to contribute to an own-initiative report by Emine BOZKURT (PES, NL), due to be put to the vote in committee on 26 May. According to invited experts, **forced marriages, honour killings and domestic violence are still common in many regions of Turkey. Discrimination also exists in the education system, particularly among young women**, who attend school noticeably less than young men. Women's share of the labour market is very small too: only 27% of employees are women, most of them working in agriculture and the public administration.

After referring to the police repression of the International Women's Day rally in Istanbul on 6 March, Ms Bozkurt said "**one of the conditions for Turkey's accession to the EU is respect for women's rights**". She acknowledged Ankara's efforts in reforming the civil and the criminal code to combat gender discrimination, but added that this was not sufficient. "The government has to invest enough money and staff to ensure the implementation of these changes", she said. The lack of reliable information on women's living conditions was another major problem. Without official and updated statistics, it was very difficult to plan any action. According to local NGOs, in 1995 almost all women living in slum areas in Ankara had experienced domestic violence, while of 1200 women interviewed between 1990 and 1996, 88% claimed to be living in a violent environment.

"**Women should enjoy the same rights as men**", said Güdal AKIIT, Turkish Minister of State for Gender Equality, as she outlined her government's efforts to fight discrimination and social exclusion. The ratification of major international conventions on women's rights, the amendment of the Constitution with a specific article to promote gender equality, and the reform of the civil and the criminal code with the removal of patriarchal concepts (e.g. chastity, public morality) were the most significant reforms already achieved by the Turkish government. She admitted that there were "still problems in the implementation of this legislation", adding that "the government is trying to improve the situation". Indeed, Ankara had started a campaign to increase public awareness about women's rights, with the involvement of local football champions. Concerning the 6 March rally, Ms Akiit strongly criticised the repression and said "the police needs training on women's issues".

Other speakers provided more detailed information. According to Feride ACAR, lecturer in political science in Ankara, the degree of discrimination in Turkey is not uniform. There are substantial dissimilarities "between different regions, and between the urban and the rural communities", where for instance the patriarchal mentality is more widespread. The EU integration process is also helping to accelerate legal changes but, she said, "it is too early to say anything on implementation yet". Serap CILELI, a campaigner against forced marriages and honour killings, said the patriarchal mentality was a major obstacle in combating discrimination against women, while Vildan YIRMIBESOGLU, an Istanbul lawyer, said "a change in mentality has begun to occur in society. We are becoming more aware of women's rights".

There was a general consensus on the chances of improving Turkish women's living conditions. MEPs agreed with experts that the implementation of the reforms was feasible, since Turkish society is more aware of the importance of gender equality, and were generally satisfied by the minister's answers. In her concluding remarks, Ms Bozkurt said "one thing is clear: the strong commitment of the Turkish government".

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050317-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION3>

THEMATIC :

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

♦ Freedom of the press

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions –Subject: Investigation into the murder in Iraq of the journalist José Couso** (15.03.05)

Whilst carrying out their work as journalists José Couso, a Spanish citizen (cameraman for the Spanish TV channel Tele 5), Taras Proyk (Reuters press agency) and Tarek Ayoub (the TV channel Al Jazeera) were killed by the United States' attack on the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad on 8 April 2003.

The US authorities have remained totally silent about this dramatic murder ever since and there have not been any investigations or judicial process.

However, the same authorities have decided to start an investigation, together with the Italian government, into the unjustified attack by the same forces on 4 March 2005, which caused the death of Nicola Capilari, following the release of the Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrana.

What steps will the EU take to ensure that an investigation is started, with adequate guarantees of impartiality, to ascertain responsibility for the murder of José Couso and his colleagues, who died whilst carrying out their duties?

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=QT&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+QT+H-2005-0191+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

◆ Terrorism

- ▶ **EU looks to have terrorism in scope of international court** By Meghan Sapp (17.03.05)

The global fight against terrorism must take fundamental individual rights into account, EU Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini told a European Parliament hearing on the inclusion of terrorism within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

"The fight against terrorism is on one hand and the protection of fundamental rights is on the other hand", said Mr Frattini. The EU is working with the US to come to an agreement on this issue, he said on Thursday (17 March).

The US was criticised in the wake of the terrorist attacks on 11 September for tightening civil control and disregarding civil rights when deemed necessary as part of its "War on Terror." Mr Frattini said at the hearing - which also included representatives from national parliaments - that he hopes the transatlantic allies can come to an agreement on the definition of terrorism. He hopes to begin **a bilateral discussion that could end in a UN convention to define terrorism**. A large number of member states of the UN General Assembly have been reluctant to adopt one up until now.

"We must guarantee the free exercise of individual rights. We cannot have the free exercise of individual rights if we do not have security and we cannot have it if we sacrifice individual rights in the name of security," said Mr Frattini.

Terrorism not included in ICC
The International Criminal Court (ICC) does not include terrorism as part of its scope, which was limited to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes when it was established under the Statute of Rome in 2002, according to the court's vice-president, Elizabeth Odio Benito. However, **the EU, which in 2002 was the first group of nations to come to a multilateral definition of terrorism, is looking to guide the reform of the ICC in 2009 towards including terrorism within its jurisdiction.**

It wants to provide the international community with "inspiration" by offering up the EU's definition, said Mr Frattini.

The court was set up for crimes that national courts would not or could not prosecute, which is not the case with terrorism, said Professor Maria Luisa Cesoni from the Catholic University of Louvain during the hearing.

She said the ICC was developed to be complementary to national courts as a forum to deal with the most heinous crimes, which would leave it as something of a last resort.

"Including terrorism in the court would widen the jurisdiction and turn it into an international super court", said Ms Cesoni.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

♦ Trafficking

► **Parliamentary questions - Subject: European Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings** (15.03.05)

In the negotiations on the European Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings held in Strasbourg in March, **the Commission rejected the incorporation of a number of amendments to enhance the protection of the victims of trafficking**. During the week of the negotiations the author of this question received a written answer backing measures that were eventually rejected in the negotiations.

Can the Commission explain its reasons for rejecting the possibility of extending medical protection for the victims of trafficking to include psychological care where necessary? Does it not consider that it has failed in its efforts to advise the Member States, since the clause concerning the non-penalisation of victims has not been clearly incorporated and that using the services of a victim of trafficking is not criminalised either? Does it not consider that the families of the victims should, if need be, also be protected by the authorities?

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=QT&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+QT+H-2005-0184+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

► **548e Conseil Permanent de l'OSCE : Déclaration de l'UE sur la lutte contre la traite des êtres humains** (17.03.05)

Orateur : Jacques Reuter, représentant permanent du Luxembourg auprès de l'OSCE:

(...) L'Union européenne soutient l'effort engagé par la Représentante spéciale afin d'établir sur le terrain un dialogue régulier avec l'ensemble des acteurs concernés, tant publics qu'issus de la société civile, dans les 55 Etats participants. Elle réitère la détermination de tous les Etats membres de l'Union à mettre pleinement en œuvre **le Plan d'action contre la traite des êtres humains**, endossé lors de la Réunion ministérielle de Maastricht en décembre 2003, et leur volonté de seconder les initiatives lancées par Mme Konrad en ce sens. En outre, **une évaluation systématique et structurée** devrait accompagner la mise en œuvre du Plan d'action afin d'assurer les meilleurs résultats, notamment pour les personnes concernées.

Nous souhaitons renouveler notre appui aux initiatives de Mme Konrad visant à **renforcer la coopération entre les Etats participants et les organisations internationales dans le cadre de l'Alliance pour la lutte contre la traite des êtres humains**, notamment en suivant une approche fondée sur **les droits et les besoins des personnes concernées**. Une lutte efficace contre cette forme de criminalité transnationale exige une coopération étroite entre les Etats et entre les organisations et institutions concernées. Nous apprécions les efforts mis en œuvre pour assurer des synergies renforcées entre les structures compétentes de l'OSCE, et en particulier le BIDDH et l'Unité stratégique de police.

L'Union européenne partage le souci de Mme Konrad de promouvoir, au sein de chaque Etat participant, **une approche globale et interactive impliquant l'ensemble des acteurs concernés par la lutte contre la traite**. Il est essentiel d'accroître la coopération entre ces différents acteurs et les structures concernées de l'OSCE, en étroite concertation avec la Représentante spéciale, en prenant pleinement en compte les besoins spécifiques des pays d'origine, de transit et de destination et en utilisant toute la gamme des instruments disponibles dans le cadre de **la lutte contre les réseaux, de la sensibilisation des populations à risques et de l'assistance aux victimes**.

Le renforcement de la coordination interministérielle doit s'appuyer sur **une mobilisation de l'ensemble des services concernés**. Pour être pleinement efficace, **la lutte contre les réseaux de trafiquants doit aller de pair avec l'amélioration de la protection des victimes**. L'Union européenne a entrepris de se doter de solutions juridiques adaptées dans ce domaine.

La récente réunion d'experts sur l'assistance et la protection des victimes, qui s'est tenue à Vienne le 28 février a confirmé la disponibilité de l'Union européenne à soutenir l'action de Mme Konrad dans ce domaine, y compris dans les volets juridiques et sociaux. **L'Union européenne souligne à cet égard le rôle irremplaçable de la société civile** et invite Mme Konrad et le BIDDH à **faciliter la mise en place, à l'échelle de l'OSCE, de réseaux d'ONG spécialisées et à promouvoir l'échange de bonnes pratiques**.

Nous accueillerons demain la première conférence de l'OSCE consacrée à la traite des enfants. La traite des êtres humains, et en particulier celle des femmes et des enfants, reste un sujet de préoccupation prioritaire pour l'Union européenne. Elle entend coopérer pleinement avec la Représentante spéciale dans le traitement de ce douloureux problème, notamment en ce qui concerne l'élaboration d'un complément relatif à la lutte contre la traite des enfants au Plan d'action contre la traite des êtres humains. (...)

<http://www.eu2005.lu/fr/actualites/discours/2005/03/17oscehumantrafficking/index.html> (FR)

◆ Immigration

- ▶ **Public hearing : « Migration, integration and development: towards a European policy ? »** (16.03.05)

At least 500,000 illegal immigrants enter the EU each year, according to latest Europol figures. The need to stem illegal immigration but also to integrate legal migrants into EU societies was discussed this week at a joint hearing held by Parliament's Civil Liberties and Development committees. Opening channels for legal migration was seen as the best way to reduce illegal immigration flows.

In April Parliament will vote on a report on immigration drafted by Patrick GAUBERT (EPP-ED, FR) for the Civil Liberties Committee. Alain HUTCHINSON (PES, BE) is drafting the opinion of the Development Committee. Speaking at this week's hearing, both MEPs agreed that in a Europe without internal borders the EU needs to develop a common immigration policy. "We need to adopt a global report to urge Member States not to adopt total security-based or total liberal measures", said Mr Gaubert. He added that the key to good management of migration flows was "a common policy based on cooperation with third countries of origin, the reinforcement of border controls and the fight against human trafficking".

Respect for human rights

The final part of the hearing looked at **links between migration policies and human rights**. *Tana de ZULUETA* (Council of Europe) stressed that human rights are often disregarded in migration-related issues like the detention and later deportation of many of the 200,000 illegal immigrants who arrived at Lampedusa Island last year. Institutions and NGOs were not allowed into such centres to monitor the situation of the immigrants. "The Council of Europe is developing a mechanism to react rapidly and send experts to visit immigrants in similar situations", she said.

The previous day, Development Commissioner Louis MICHEL had been the first to touch on this topic. He mentioned the idea of undertaking humanitarian projects in migrant camps in non-EU countries as part of development policy, saying "I have my own opinion about that. But there are different schools of thought. Member States need to reach an agreement on these preliminary questions before setting up a common immigration policy".

Claire RODIER (Information and Support Group for Migrants, France) agreed that **fundamental rights in Europe had fallen victim to other priorities like fighting terrorism and protecting borders**. "The recent green paper from the European Commission shows the same perception: it mentions the impact of migration on demographic decline and on prosperity in the EU but not the migrants' rights".

Nicoletta DENTICO (Working group on **Temporary Detention Centres**, Italy) said the **actions taken in such centres did not respect the basic human rights of migrants**. "This sort of centre tends to **criminalise immigrants**. They are provided with non-existent facilities, and NGOs and mass media are not allowed access. Delays and inefficiency are common obstacles", she concluded.

Mr Gaubert brought the hearing to a close by criticising temporary detention camps on the grounds that "they are harmful and useless and the money they receive should be spent on something else". He also suggested Commissioner Michel might provide more accessible information, and asked him not to waste the money earmarked for the Argo Programme.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=PRESS-NEWSRP&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050316-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#SECTION7> (EN)

◆ Human rights

▶ Jean Asselborn for better integration of the Human Rights dimension into the United Nations system (14.03.05)

Jean Asselborn, Minister for Foreign Affairs and current President of the Council of the European Union, addressed, on behalf of the European Union, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva on 14 March.

In his opening speech, Jean Asselborn congratulated Louise Arbour on her becoming the new Human Rights High Commissioner.

"We consider daily the factors that still separate us from a full application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights throughout the world and in all of our societies", stated the Minister, and added: "The respect of individual freedom will never be completely acquired in any of our countries. (...) The European Union is quite aware of its own imperfections and the risks of xenophobia, racism and intolerance threatening our European societies. In concert with its partners of the Council of Europe, the European Union has created an efficient and exacting judicial framework to guarantee respect for Human Rights."

Referring to the recommendations of the High Level Panel on human Rights, Jean Asselborn expressed **the European Union's support for "better integration of the Human Rights dimension to the United Nations system, in particular in deliberations of the Security Council", saying that "human rights violations constitute a major threat to peace and security."**

Touching on several areas of human rights violations, Jean Asselborn emphasised that "in cases of conflict, non-warring people should not be in a situation of no rights in which civil populations who are affected by armed conflict would be without protection."

As far as the fight against terrorism is concerned, he cautioned against the temptation of relativising the rule of law and the Geneva Conventions and "combating evil with evil." He outlined the **importance the EU attaches to "the outright prohibition of all forms of torture."**

He went on to praise "the worldwide trend towards **abolishing the death penalty**" and encouraged **"all countries to declare a moratorium which would at least be the first step towards its total abolition** and, to put an immediate end to the execution of mentally handicapped people or minors at the moment of committing the acts they have been charged with."

Reaffirming the EU's support for the action of the **International Criminal Court**, describing it as an **"essential instrument to end impunity and prevent crimes against humanity"**, Jean Asselborn reiterated the EU's call for the ratification of the Statute of Rome which provides the basis for the ICC.

For Jean Asselborn, "equal importance should be given to achieving civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights." It is consequently necessary to fight extreme poverty and prevent humanitarian catastrophes which "could have disastrous effects on stability and enjoyment of certain fundamental rights."

Expressing his respect for civil society and the press, "who inform, observe and condemn abuse, sometimes at the risk of their own lives", the Minister asserted that "constraints upon their work are constraints to the respect for human rights."

Alongside his speech before the Human Rights Commission, the minister for Foreign Affairs had a meeting with the Sudanese Justice Minister Ali Mohamed Osman Yassin. Their discussions centred on the situation in Darfour and the follow-up that is to be given to the recommendations of the international enquiry Commission.

<http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/communiqués/2005/03/14jacdh/index.html> (EN)