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REGIONS:

AFRICA

◆ **Togo**

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the situation in Togo**
(03.06.05)

The European Union expresses its support for the new initiatives taken by the African Union through its Peace and Security Council, in particular, the appointment of a special envoy to facilitate dialogue between the Togolese parties. The Council's meeting in Addis Ababa on 27 May followed on from the mini-Summit held in Abuja on 19 May under the chairmanship of President Obasanjo, and ECOWAS' efforts to find a solution acceptable to all.

In this regard, the European Union reiterates its encouragement to the leaders of all Togolese political forces to realise their commitment to the national reconciliation process and to achieve a satisfactory and inclusive transition. It welcomes the start of discussions between the executive power and the opposition, and calls on all political players to cooperate with the African Union's special envoy and to work together for national reconciliation.

The European Union also welcomes the African Union's decision to send an observer mission to monitor the political, security, social and humanitarian situation, as well as the human rights situation in the country. It notes the Togolese authorities' decision to set up a commission of enquiry "into the acts of violence and vandalism which took place before, during and after the Presidential election". The European Union urges that there should be impartial, exhaustive and credible investigations into the acts of violence against the civilian population. It wishes to stress the importance of respecting human rights and dispensing justice, so as to ensure a peaceful transition process. It also calls on the Togolese authorities to create the right conditions to ensure that refugees return home.

The European Union declares that it is ready to support the national reconciliation process, and it will continue to monitor the political situation in Togo closely, particularly in relation to the twenty-two engagements undertaken by the Togolese Government during the consultations under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement and the Council Decision of 15 November 2004.

<http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/pesc/2005/06/03togo/index.html> (EN)

◆ **Guinea-Bissau**

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Guinea-Bissau**
(01.06.05)

The European Union expresses its grave concern for the evolution of the situation in Bissau and in particular, the occupation of the presidential palace by Mr Kumba Yala.

The European Union strongly condemns this attitude as well as Mr Yala's recent declarations, which constitute a blatant violation of the transitional charter and represent a grave attempt against the successful conclusion of the political transition through the conduct of a presidential election on 19 June that is credible, free, fair and transparent, in line with international standards for democratic elections.

The European Union commends the determination of the political and military leaders of Guinea-Bissau to remain loyal to the legitimate State institutions and strongly encourages them to make all possible efforts to continue guaranteeing that the constitutional order and the election date be respected.

The European Union will continue to work closely with the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), in order to ensure the full return to democratic legitimacy in Guinea-Bissau. In this regard, it should be noted that an EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) has been deployed in Guinea Bissau for the presidential election.

<http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/pesc/2005/06/01guineab/index.html> (EN)

ASIA

◆ Afghanistan

- ▶ **Statement of the Presidency of the European Union concerning the recent attack in a mosque of Kandahar** (01.06.05)

The Presidency of the European Union condemns unreservedly the attack of this morning at a mosque in Kandahar which cost the lives of more than twenty people and caused a large number of injured.

The Presidency presents its sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the Afghan government.

The Presidency wishes to **reiterate the firm and categorical opposition of the EU against any act of violence**, no matter where it comes from, and **reaffirms its attachment to a sure, stable, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan which is respectful of human rights and which cooperates in a constructive manner with its neighbours and with the international community.**

<http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/pesc/2005/06/01kandh/index.html> (EN)

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

◆ Turkey

- ▶ **Turkey urged to enforce legislation on women's rights** (27.5.05)

"Women's rights should be right at the top of the agenda for the negotiations with Turkey", says Parliament's Women's Rights Committee in a report adopted on Thursday 26 May.

Women's rights and gender equality are embedded in the Community's basic principles and in much legislation which Turkey has to accept if it is to join the EU. MEPs emphasise that Turkey's "progress in the field of legalisation now needs to be implemented in practice".

The committee's report, drafted by Emine BOZKURT (PES, NL), which followed on from a hearing held on 16 March this year, was adopted by 27 votes to 0, with 4 abstentions.

The report emphasises the **key role of civil society in pushing for the recent legislative reforms**. MEPs believe that the entire political class as well as grassroots organisations, religious communities and the media must be involved if democratic change is to be achieved.

Violence against women is another issue raised in the report. **MEPs call on the Turkish Government to take action to protect women at risk**, such as providing easily accessible **healthcare and legal support and protection**. According to local NGOs, in 1995 almost all women living in slum areas of

Ankara had experienced domestic violence, while of 1,259 women interviewed between 1990 and 1996, 88% claimed to be living in a violent environment. (...)

Finally, MEPs say that they intend to monitor the situation of women in Turkey closely and report on it annually through the EP Women's Rights Committee. They call on the European Commission to do the same.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050527-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION1> (EN)

- ▶ **New Turkish penal code prompts controversy** By Elitsa Vucheva (02.06.05)

The new Turkish penal code, one of the reforms requested by the EU to start membership talks with Turkey, entered into force on Wednesday (1 June), but is already being criticised by opposition and media in the country.

Journalists, in particular, believe that the new code is a menace for them, as they feel it imposes rules threatening press freedom and leaves the door open to arbitrary decisions, international media report.

For example, **if a journalist publishes a story on an on-going police investigation, he or she can face imprisonment,** according to the code.

Furthermore, **criticism of a political figure can also lead to imprisonment of journalists,** as it may be interpreted as a personal insult, AKI agency writes.

The minimum sentence for committing a crime "against a state official because of his or her post" **is one year of imprisonment.**

And one of the articles of the code states that **those who use the media to spread propaganda against "fundamental national interests" in exchange of material benefits from foreigners, risk up to 15 years in prison.**

According to Forbes agency, explanatory notes in the draft make it clear that the article particularly threatens those who would raise their voices in favour of the withdrawal of Turkish troops from Cyprus, or those who would support the recognition of the Armenian genocide.

Ignoring the president's veto

The penal code is part of key reforms Turkey has to undertake in order to improve democratic and human rights in the country - a key demand to start EU accession talks as planned, on 3 October.

In the beginning, the law was welcomed for introducing a more liberal criminal justice system and improving the rights of women and children.

But some parts, such as those concerning the media, had forced Ankara to delay the entry into force of the code, which was initially planned for 1 April, in order to allow the parliament to make several amendments.

Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer had then to approve the amendments by midnight on Tuesday (31 May), which he did not do.

However, **the code still took effect in its original form, despite the president's veto.**

Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul argued that the code could enter into force even without the president's approval, as the main reforms demanded by the EU were part of the code's original version anyway.

"The issues of concern to the EU - in other words, provisions related to the [EU] political criteria - have already been amended", Mr Gul was quoted as saying by Forbes agency.

<http://www.euobserver.com/?sid=9&aid=19227> (EN)

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions: Teacher's organisation banned in Turkey – oral question by Inger Segelström to the Commission**

The Turkish Supreme Court decreed on 25 May that the teachers' organisation Egitim Sen would be disbanded. This decision means that the organisation, which has some 200 000 members, will lose the right to represent its members in relations with employers and public authorities. The main argument

for the ruling is given as **Egitim Sen's open defence of the right to tuition in the mother tongue and the right of children to personal development on the basis of their own cultural background**. The Supreme Court considers this position to contravene the Turkish Constitution.

Turkey has ratified the ILO Convention establishing standards for civil liberties and civil rights, which includes the right of association and minority rights. What action does the Commission intend to take to demonstrate that democratic rights and liberties, such as the right of association in this case, must be upheld and respected in the EU candidate countries?

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=QT&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+QT+H-2005-0453+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

- ▶ **Parliamentary questions: European Court of Human Rights and the Öcalan case (Turkey) – oral question by Vittorio Agnoletto to the Council**

On 12 May 2005 the European Court of Human Rights delivered its judgment on the conditions of arrest and forced transfer of former PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, the conduct of his trial and ill-treatment inflicted on him (application 46221/99 to the ECHR). The Court held that Öcalan had not had a fair and impartial trial in Turkey, ruling that various articles of the European Convention on Human Rights had been violated and suggesting that Turkey hold a new trial. It also established that there had been serious violations of Öcalan's right of defence, with further substantial violations of the European Convention in this case.

What overall conclusions does the Council draw from the ruling of 12 May 2005 of the European Court of Human Rights? Does the Council agree, in particular, that Öcalan must be given a new trial before 3 October 2005, and does it not consider that the holding of this second trial is of essential importance if Turkey is to show that it adheres to the principles underpinning the rule of law?

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=QT&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+QT+H-2005-0401+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

◆ Georgia

- ▶ **OSCE, Permanent Council No 558: EU Statement on the shooting incident in South Ossetia** (02.06.05)

The EU is very concerned about the shooting incident on 29 May in the zone of conflict in South Ossetia, Georgia, as reported by the OSCE Mission to Georgia. The EU calls on all sides to exercise maximum restraint. All efforts should be aimed at the prevention of any further escalation of the situation. In this respect, the EU welcomes the decision of the sides to set up a joint investigation team, which will report on the incident.

The EU again underlines the importance of full implementation of the demilitarisation agreements in order to improve the overall security situation in the area. Furthermore, the presence of unauthorized armed formations in the zone of conflict is totally unacceptable and should be solved in the earliest possible timeframe. The EU calls on all sides to address these issues with the utmost urgency and welcomes the work carried out in the context of the recent meetings of the Joint Control Commission in this respect.

The EU continues to support the role of the Mission as a facilitator of dialogue between the parties. The EU urges all sides to keep up this dialogue as negotiations and confidence building are the only means towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. In this context, the EU would support the early holding of a meeting between Georgian Prime Minister Noghaideli and South Ossetian leader Kokoity. The EU welcomes the determination, expressed in the joint declaration by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and Georgia of 30 May, to continue active cooperation in the interest of political settlement of the conflict exclusively by peaceful means, based on respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia.

<http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/discours/2005/06/03osce-georgia/index.html> (EN)

◆ Azerbaijan

- ▶ OSCE, Permanent Council No 558: EU Statement on Azerbaijan (02.06.05)

Recalling the Declaration by the Presidency of the European Union of May 24, distributed to Delegations under reference SEC.DEL/131/05, **the European Union would like to state its concern about the cancellation of an opposition rally scheduled for 21 May and the subsequent detention of various members of the opposition bloc and affiliated youth and civil society organizations.** The EU is particularly concerned about the **incidents of violence and of police heavy handedness against opposition supporters and journalists** during the attempted rally.

The European Union renews its appeal to the Azerbaijani authorities to **restore freedom of assembly** as foreseen by the presidential decree of May 12 2005 and looks forward to the undisturbed holding of future political rallies. The EU also notes that the opposition parties themselves have responsibilities to **ensure that political rallies and demonstrations take place in a peaceful atmosphere.** The EU will continue to closely monitor the situation in the light of coming developments.

<http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/discours/2005/06/03osce-azer/index.html> (EN)

◆ Belarus

- ▶ OSCE, Permanent Council No 558: EU Statement on Belarus (02.06.05)

In a statement to the Permanent Council on 19 May, **the European Union expressed its concern over the situation of the civil society, harassment of the independent media and intimidation of the political opposition and NGOs in Belarus.** Regrettably, we continue to receive information that the **pressure against the opposition and independent media from the side of the Belarusian authorities does not diminish.** The latest disturbing examples are the **reopening of the criminal proceedings against the deputy head of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Mr. Harry Pahanyajla, and the sentencing of Mr. Statkevitch and Mr. Severinets to restricted freedom for organizing protest actions after the referendum.** The EU was also disappointed to learn of the recent **seizure of copies of the independent weekly newspaper Den by Belarusian authorities.**

The European Union also continues to monitor closely the proceedings against Mr. Skrebets and expects his case to be handled in a transparent and fair manner.

The EU has already voiced its concerns regarding certain requirements of the Belarusian Housing Code. It is inevitable that such requirements will seriously hamper and in many cases make impossible the activities of many parties and organizations.

As on many previous occasions, **the EU calls on the Belarusian authorities to refrain from their negative approach towards the civil society and to fulfil their commitments regarding the democratic standards, the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.**

<http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/discours/2005/06/03osce-belarus/index.html> (EN)

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

◆ Lebanon

- ▶ Declaration by the Presidency of the EU concerning the assassination of Samir Kassir (03.06.05)

The Luxembourg Presidency of the European Union condemns with the utmost severity the attack carried out in Beirut yesterday morning (2 June 2005), which took the life of Samir Kassir, editorial writer for the An-Nahar newspaper and renowned historian. The Presidency presents its sincere condolences to his family and relatives.

Beyond being a human tragedy, the assassination of Samir Kassir occurred at a crucial moment when the electoral process in Lebanon requires a climate of stability to enable the Lebanese people to hold democratic elections in peace and tranquillity.

The Presidency of the European Union is confident that the Lebanese authorities are determined to shed full light on the attack and to bring those responsible to justice.

The Presidency of the European Union reiterates its full support for a sovereign, democratic and independent Lebanon.

<http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/pesc/2005/06/03lib/index.html> (EN)

◆ **Libya**

- ▶ **Déclaration de la Présidence au nom de l'Union européenne sur le report de la décision concernant le jugement de la Cour Suprême libyenne à l'encontre des infirmières bulgares et d'un médecin palestinien** (31.05.05)

La Présidence de l'UE a pris acte du report de la décision concernant le jugement prononcé à l'encontre des infirmières bulgares et d'un médecin palestinien. Elle veut y voir **un signe encourageant et l'espoir que le jugement attendu le 15 novembre 2005 puisse aboutir rapidement à la libération du personnel médical bulgare et palestinien, qui demeure une priorité de l'Union européenne.** Elle réitère ses appels en faveur d'une solution juste, équitable et humanitaire dans l'affaire du personnel médical bulgare et palestinien.

<http://www.eu2005.lu/fr/actualites/pesc/2005/05/31libye/index.html> (FR)

THEMATIC :

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

◆ **European Agency on Fundamental Rights**

- ▶ **A new EU Agency to monitor respect for human rights in Europe** (26.05.05)

MEPs adopted an own-initiative report in which they analyse the current human rights situation in the Member States and the future tasks of the new European Agency on Fundamental Rights which is due to start work in 2007.

The decision to set up the agency was taken by the European Council on December 2003 in Brussels, the aim is described as follows: "*to build upon the existing European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia and to extend its mandate to make it a Human Rights Agency*". **MEPs welcome this initiative and consider that the creation of an agency to promote the respect of human rights on EU territory will be a positive step, as long as its activities do not interfere with existing bodies inside and outside the EU, such as the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Council of Europe.** They also ask for the agency to be created under the **co-decision procedure**, giving legislative power to the EP. Commissioner Franco **FRATTINI** hinted that the Commission will probably recommend using the consultation procedure for the creation of the Agency.

The main activities of the Agency should be the collection, analysis and processing of information regarding the respect of fundamental rights in Member States with the view to achieving three main objectives: promoting fundamental rights, monitoring the situation in Member States and raising

the awareness of the key players. As part of the promotion activities, the Agency will **identify legislative gaps in the different EU countries and monitor the implementation of existing laws** to protect human rights. The new Agency should also have an **"advisory and consultative role"**.

Finally, the **main areas of concern** for the Agency should be those mentioned in the Charter of Fundamental Rights: **freedom of expression; fight against racism; gender equality; fight against human trafficking or the protection of the linguistic diversity**, for example. A special mention was made of **protecting rights of national minorities**.

The Agency should be designed as a *"network of networks"* with horizontal competences according to the members, and it should absorb not only the existing monitoring centre against racism in Vienna but also other bodies dealing with fundamental rights, like the future *"Gender Institute"* on women rights - which has not yet been created.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20050526-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION9> (EN)

♦ Terrorism

- ▶ **EU under fire for anti-terror measures** By Lucia Kubosova (31.05.05)

European counter-terrorism measures lack concrete human rights safeguards, which leads to legal confusion and breaches in human rights, according to **Amnesty International**.

In a report presented on Tuesday (31 May), the organisation challenged the claims by Brussels that there **could be no security without human rights**, suggesting **"in practice, the EU and the Member States are too often prepared to remain silent on breaches of rights protection within or outside the EU"**.

The paper examines the legislation introduced at EU level after the 2001 terrorist attacks in the US. It argues the **proceedings against terrorist suspects tend to turn into violations of their human rights**. Miscarriages of justice in such cases leave the real perpetrators at liberty, while some societal groups feel unfairly targeted in the fight against terrorism.

The paper points to some concrete cases in several EU countries, mainly in the UK, Spain and France. "Our main conclusion is that the counter-terrorism effort itself can be undermined if it leads to breaches of human rights or does not prevent it effectively", said Dick Oosting, Director of the AI Brussels office. Gijs de Vries, the EU's chief for counter-terrorism, argued that **the Union does pay attention to the issue and tries to balance its approach with human rights safeguards**.

However, he pointed out **"we should not forget that terrorism precludes the fundamental right - right of life, as well as other rights. Our fight against terrorism is the fight to protect those rights"**.

What exactly is terrorism?

Amnesty argues that **the Commission should rethink its definition of "terrorism", as in its current form it is too ambiguous to provide legal certainty for dealing with terrorist suspects**.

It also questions the legislation concerning **terrorist black lists**, as they have been **established without sufficient democratic scrutiny** and **"there is no judicial supervision regarding inclusion on them, while individuals placed on them are effectively deprived of an effective remedy to challenge their inclusion"**.

The paper has expressed **concerns over the proposed minimum standards on procedural rights for terrorist suspects and defendants**.

According to Mr Oosting, it is **"unacceptable"** that terrorist and organized crime offences could be **excluded from the scope of those standards**.

Safe and unsafe cooperation

The NGO **calls on the Union to carefully consider its cooperation with third countries in counter-terrorism initiatives**.

The EU has so far one extradition agreement with the US, which "leaves an unacceptable margin of discretion with regard to the death penalty and fair trial", according to the paper. But Mr de Vries argues "We can't make Europe safe unless we co-operate with other countries", pointing to the other cooperation deals with Russia and Mediterranean countries.

"When negotiating them, we explicitly stated the counter-terrorism measures should not go against the human rights principles", he said.

"War on terror"

Amnesty points to the cases of **transferring suspects across borders that bypass the requirements of due process, like "extraordinary rendition", expulsion with diplomatic assurances and illegal abduction.**

The "increasingly worrying trend" has been registered within the context of the "war on terror," mainly carried out by the US, according to its paper.

However, it **criticises the EU member states for allowing their territory to be used as landing points for planes involved in renditions, as well as their air space to allow these transfers.**

"Media and other reports state that Frankfurt, Mallorca and Shannon airports are known stop-off points for unmarked CIA jets carrying irregular renditions," according to the document. It accuses the countries allowing this to happen of "colluding in serious breaches of human rights."

Extradition and asylum

The paper argues that the EU fails to give enough attention to credible concerns about the possible **abuse of terrorist suspects** when they are sent outside the bloc's borders.

The EU's final draft directive on asylum procedures makes it possible for member states to extradite asylum seekers while their asylum application is still pending, which can lead to sending them to a country where they may face serious human rights violations.

<http://www.euobserver.com/?aid=19213&print=1> (EN)

- ▶ **Strong backing for anti-terrorism action plan** (02.06.05)

The Civil Liberties Committee is proposing a package of seven recommendations to the Council suggesting the next steps to be taken as part of the Action Plan against Terrorism, which is to be reviewed by the European Council at the summit on 16-17 June.

The recommendations put forward by MEPs focus on various aspects of **prevention and response to terrorist attacks** such as **protecting key infrastructure, cutting off funding for terrorism, aiding victims of terrorism** and **improving the exchange of information.** (...)

Remembering the victims

In a report by Rosa **DÍEZ GONZÁLEZ** (PES, ES), MEPs call for a **special unit** to be set up to **help the victims of terrorism**, under the responsibility of the European Anti-Terrorism Coordinator. This unit would organise a European Forum to give a voice to the victims of terrorism.

The report also urges a **common and global definition of terrorism** as well as **"the possible inclusion of terrorist attacks within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court"**, so these crimes would not be time-barred and would be included among those considered **"most serious and inadmissible"** under Community and international law.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+BR-20050606-S+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION3> (EN)

◆ **The Hague Programme**

- ▶ **Adoption of an action plan to translate the Hague programme into specific action** (03.06.05)

Responding to the European Council request of December 2004, the JAI Council on June 2 and 3 2005 has drawn up an **action plan to translate The Hague programme into specific action.** This

multiannual programme for 2005-2010 aims to **reinforce cooperation between European states in the fields of justice and home affairs**, in order to **make Europe "an area of freedom, security and justice"**.

At the Council's request, the Commission presented a communication on an action plan in May 2005. Following the meeting of Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs, Luc Frieden stated "after very intensive discussions, we came to an agreement on an action plan. With this programme, we know exactly what we need to do over the next five years. This does not mean that the Council agrees with all the measures proposed by the Commission, because the Council has yet to examine the content of these proposals. But today, we have a specific action list with a schedule for 2005 and 2010".

Underscoring the specific action with this action plan, the current President added that "**this plan will provide added value for European citizens** because it discusses the **implementation of common teams of experts to reinforce external borders controls, of an asylum procedure and new European visas, of an exchange of information between Member States' criminal records** and of **trans-European witness protection measures**. These are very concrete measures, which will allow us to build a real European area of freedom, security and justice".

<http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/communiqués/2005/06/03jai-lahaye/index.html> (EN)

◆ Torture

- ▶ Parliamentary questions : Torture by proxy – oral question by Sajjad Karim to the Council (03.06.05)

In the face of the absolute ban on torture and other forms of ill-treatment, states have defended the practice of transferring purported terrorist suspects to other countries, by insisting that they seek diplomatic assurances that detainees will not be tortured. However, **there is mounting evidence that, both within and outside the European Union, certain states have seized and rendered terror suspects from one state to another, which is widely recognised as employing torture as an interrogation technique**. Victims allege that they have been tortured and that the sending states actually provided the recipient authorities with lists of questions to be answered during interrogation. In the context of these reported practices, 'reliance' on diplomatic assurances constitutes a clear attempt to pervert justice that must be exposed and brought to an end.

Given that the prohibition on torture and other forms of ill-treatment is an erga omnes obligation, what steps does the Council plan to take to prevent such violations and provide remedies once they have occurred?

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/OM-Europarl?PROG=QT&L=EN&PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+QT+H-2005-0449+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (EN)

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

◆ Democracy

- ▶ The European Parliament as a promoter of democracy in the world (26.05.05)

The European Parliament has an important role to play in spreading democratic values and is in a unique position to do this since it is made up of representatives from 25 Member States. This point was made several times in the course of a public hearing held on 26 May under the auspices of Parliament's Bureau.

With more than 30 standing delegations for relations with non-EU parliaments, the European Parliament is well placed to promote democracy, pointed out EP President Josep BORRELL. He said training

programmes, seminars and election observations were activities through which the EU had made major contributions but he emphasised that *"a lot remains to be done in this area"*.

The aim of the hearing was to examine how to further expand and coordinate Parliament's activities in supporting parliamentary democracy inside and outside the European Union. EP Vice-president Edward McMILLAN-SCOTT (EPP-ED, UK) has put forward a proposal to set up a **Centre of Democracy** in order to **help countries to the south and east of the EU to build and strengthen democracy**. He stated that this body should not be a new kind of agency. *"We are trying to elevate a lot of the work that is already being done in the Parliament into something which is more visible,"* he explained.

Peter Ashman, Human Rights Adviser at the UK Foreign Office, said he believed the **lack of flexibility in the European Commission programmes** and the **need for better targeting of EU funds** must be addressed. Mr McMillan-Scott agreed but said that current regulations were often obstacles to *"adventurous or interesting work in the field of democracy promotion or human rights work"*.

Hannes SWOBODA (PES, AT) felt that the fight for democracy should not be left to others who have a different agenda. *"We in Europe should fight for democracy"*, he said. Adrian SEVERIN, representing the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, stressed the need for an institutionalised forum. Pia BUNGARTEN, Director of the International Department at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, warned however against a **duplication of work**, saying there was already a great mass of expertise available from sources such as national foundations.

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050527-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION4> (EN)

◆ **Barcelona Process**

- ▶ **Euromed Ministerial in Luxembourg: Barcelona Partnership's second decade** (30.05.05)

Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers meet in Luxembourg on 30-31 May to map out a work programme for the years ahead, as the partnership approaches its tenth anniversary. Discussions will centre on the recent **European Commission Communication** which outlines **proposals to strengthen EU relations with the Mediterranean**, including proposals in three critical areas: Economic Reform, Education, and **Human Rights and Democracy**.

Debate on these and other themes in Luxembourg will help to shape proposals for a new political agreement at the special 10th Anniversary Conference to be held in Barcelona in November. (...)

The Commission seeks a new focus within the Euromed partnership on protection of human rights, empowerment of women, strengthening of democracy, pluralism and independent judiciary, and is creating a new **Democracy Facility** to support those partners who show a clear commitment to political reform. (...)

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/news/ip05_630.htm (EN)