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REGIONS:

AFRICA

Chad

► **Conflict in eastern Chad** (13/12/2007)

Concerned about the escalating conflict in eastern Chad, MEPs call for rapid deployment of EU and other troops as approved under a UN Security Council resolution, as well as negotiations as part of a comprehensive peace process.

An armed struggle between the Chadian army and two rebel groups has resumed after a fragile peace deal which unravelled at the end of November. About 238,000 refugees from Sudan, 44,600 refugees from the Central African Republic and 170,000 internally displaced persons are hosted in twelve camps along Chad's eastern border with Sudan. Food distribution and other humanitarian aid efforts are being hampered.

The international community has responded to the crisis. A UN Security Council resolution of 25 September 2007 provides for the deployment of a multidimensional international presence in eastern Chad and the north-eastern Central African Republic (CAR), including an EU mission known as EUFOR TCHAD/RCA. On 15 October the EU Council adopted a joint action on this mission but the timetable for deploying the troops has been put back.

Swift troop deployment needed

In its resolution Parliament emphasises that "the recent violence and unrest in Chad underscore the urgent need for the deployment of EUFOR TCHAD/RCA without further delay". It stresses that "these forces must have and use all means necessary, in full compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law, to protect civilians at risk".

Parliament regrets, however, that the mission still lacks vital equipment "such as helicopters and medical supplies" and "calls on the EU and its Member States to honour the political decision made and to provide this mission with more troops and appropriate financial, logistic and air support". However, MEPs welcome the Commission funding of over €50 million for this mission and observe that "this is evidence of a coherent interinstitutional EU approach to European security and defence policy".

Referring to the Darfur crisis taking place next door to Chad, Parliament stresses "the urgent need to address the destabilising impact of the crisis on the humanitarian and security situation in neighbouring countries".

It also highlights the issue of sexual exploitation in this conflict region and urges that outside forces be made aware of this problem and be trained in a gender-sensitive approach.

A longer term solution

MEPs urge the EU "to press for a comprehensive peace process, using pressure and incentives to encourage all parties to return to the negotiating table". They also call for "talks to address all levels of conflict currently taking place within Chad, including government/rebel tensions and interethnic conflict". Chad itself, in cooperation with Sudan and Libya, is pressed "to create the necessary conditions for a lasting political solution in implementation of the Sirte peace accord". Indeed, the EP argues that no peacekeeping mission in the eastern part of Chad and the northern part of the CAR can be successful without a genuine political reconciliation process.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/015-14857-344-12-50-902-20071211IPR14818-10-12-2007-2007-false/default_en.htm

AMERICAS

United States of America

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the formal abolition of the death penalty in the State of New Jersey, USA** (17/12/2007)

The European Union warmly welcomes today's signing of bill S-171 by Governor Jon Corzine. His signature, passing the bill into law, heralds the abolition of the death penalty in the State of New Jersey.

The European Union believes that elimination of the death penalty is fundamental to the protection of human dignity, and to the progressive development of human rights.

The European Union is unreservedly opposed to the use of the death penalty under all circumstances and has consistently called for the universal abolition of this punishment.

There is no evidence to suggest that the use of the death penalty serves as a deterrent against violent crime and the irreversibility of the punishment means that miscarriages of justice - which are inevitable in all legal systems – cannot be redressed. Consequently, the death penalty has been abolished throughout the European Union.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/97736.pdf

ASIA

China

- ▶ **EU-China: Beijing summit and human rights dialogue** (13/12/2007)

In a resolution on relations with China, Parliament welcomes closer ties but highlights remaining differences over trade, Tibet and human rights, notably with a view to the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. EU-China summit: trade, counterfeiting and human rights.

While welcoming the Joint Statement of the 10th EU-China Summit of 28 November 2007, in which both sides speak of developing a comprehensive strategic partnership to meet global challenges, Parliament's resolution calls for "a more balanced trade and economic partnership which should lead to sustainable growth and social development, in particular in the areas of climate change, environment and energy".

It also notes that "the pirating and counterfeiting of European products and brands by Chinese industries constitutes a serious violation of international trade rules" and urges the Chinese authorities to take action.

In addition, Parliament regrets that "once again the Council and Commission have failed to raise in a firm manner human rights issues" and that "the EU did not take the opportunity of the approach of the Olympics

to address serious human rights concerns in China". It calls on the Council "to make a comprehensive evaluation of the human rights situation before finalizing any new Partnership and Cooperation Framework Agreement" and stresses that any such agreement will require the EP's formal assent. MEPs also insist that the EU arms embargo on China following the Tiananmen events "must remain intact until substantial progress is made on human rights issues".

Human rights dialogue: Tibet, Olympic Games, Myanmar and Darfur

In addition, the resolution refers to the recent rounds of the EU-China Dialogue on Human Rights. It stresses that "China's human rights record remains a matter of serious concern" and stresses the need to improve the EU-China human rights dialogue. MEPs highlight key issues that must continue to be raised in the dialogue: ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, reform of the criminal justice system, freedom of expression, particularly on the Internet, freedom of the press, freedom of access to information, freedom of conscience, thought and religion, the situation of minorities in Tibet, the release of Tiananmen detainees and workers' rights.

On Tibet, MEPs regret that "the sixth Sino-Tibetan round of talks has brought about no results". They call on the Chinese government "to engage in substantive negotiations taking into due consideration the demands of the Dalai Lama for autonomy for Tibet". China is also urged to refrain from exerting pressure on states that have friendly relations with the Dalai Lama. Reports of "continuing human rights violations in Tibet and other provinces inhabited by Tibetan people" are noted with concern and MEPs call on China to allow an independent body to have access to the Panchen Lama.

Turning to the 2008 Olympic Games, Parliament argues "that human rights concerns should receive much more focus in the build-up to the Beijing Olympic Games" and points in this connection to Articles 1 and 2 of the Olympic Charter. It also requests the International Olympic Committee "to publish its own assessment of China's compliance with the undertakings given in 2001 before the Games were awarded to Beijing".

The resolution highlights political persecution related to the Olympics, of human rights defenders, journalists and others. The repression of ethnic groups such as the Uighurs and religious groups such as the Falun Gong is also condemned, as is the surveillance and censorship of information on the internet. In addition, Parliament wants the Chinese authorities "to establish a moratorium on executions during the Olympic Games in 2008, and to withdraw the list of 42 banned categories of people".

Lastly, among other demands, the resolution calls on China "to implement the recommendations of the UN special rapporteur on torture" and "to stop its ongoing support for the regimes in Myanmar and Darfur".

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/015-14848-344-12-50-902-20071211IPR14803-10-12-2007-2007-false/default_en.htm

Japan

► Use of sex slaves by Japanese forces in World War II (13/12/2007)

A resolution on the 'comfort women' (sex slaves) used by Japan in World War II calls for a change of official attitudes in modern-day Japan, a right for survivors or families to apply for compensation and measures to educate people about these historical events.

The resolution states that the government of Japan, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s until the end of World War II, officially commissioned the acquisition of young women, who became known to the world as ianfu or 'comfort women', for the sole purpose of sexual servitude to its Imperial Armed Forces. The system "included gang rape, forced abortions, humiliation, and

sexual violence resulting in mutilation, death or eventual suicide, in one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the 20th century".

The survivors are still waiting for justice to be done. The dozens of 'comfort women' cases brought before Japanese courts have all ended in the dismissal of plaintiffs' claims for compensation, despite court judgements acknowledging the Imperial Armed Forces' direct and indirect involvement, and the state's responsibility.

Call for formal acknowledgment of responsibility by government

The EP refers to the acknowledgements of these abuses made by Japanese politicians and officials, although "some Japanese officials have recently expressed a regrettable desire to dilute or rescind those statements". At all events, the EP believes more needs to be done.

The resolution calls on the Japanese government "formally to acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical and legal responsibility, in a clear and unequivocal manner, for its Imperial Armed Force's coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as 'comfort women', during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s until the end of World War II".

Legal obstacles to compensation must be removed

It also calls on the Japanese government "to implement effective administrative mechanisms to provide reparations to all surviving victims of the 'comfort women' system and the families of its deceased victims".

The Japanese National Assembly is urged "to take legal measures to remove existing obstacles to obtaining reparations before Japanese courts". In particular, say MEPs, "the right of individuals to claim reparations against the government should be expressly recognized in national law, and cases for reparations for the survivors of sexual slavery, as a crime under international law, should be prioritized, taking into account the age of the survivors".

Education about the past

MEPs also want the government of Japan "to refute publicly any claims that the subjugation and enslavement of 'comfort women' never occurred".

Lastly, the resolution "encourages the Japanese people and government to take further steps to recognize the full history of their nation, as is the moral duty of all countries, and to foster awareness in Japan of its actions in the 1930s and 1940s, including in relation to 'comfort women'" and "calls on the government of Japan to educate current and future generations about those events".

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/015-14857-344-12-50-902-20071211IPR14818-10-12-2007-2007-false/default_en.htm

Pakistan

- ▶ **Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the CFSP, welcomes the lifting of the state of emergency in Pakistan (15/12/2007)**

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), today made the following statement on the latest developments in Pakistan:

"I welcome the lifting of the state of emergency and the restoration of the constitution in Pakistan today. This step is important for the country's return to the path of democracy, especially ahead of parliamentary elections on 8 January 2008. It is important now to continue all necessary legal and practical preparations for holding free, fair and transparent elections with the participation of all parties.

I would like to reconfirm once again my support for Pakistan. This country is an important partner of the European Union in many fields, including in the fight against terrorism."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_applications/applications/solana/list.asp?BID=109&lang=EN&cmsid=422

Pakistan

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the lifting of the state of emergency on Pakistan (18/12/2007)**

The European Union welcomes the lifting of the State of Emergency and the Provisional Constitutional Order on 15 December as important steps towards the return of constitutional order in Pakistan. The EU urges President Musharraf to lift all restrictions on the media, imposed since 3 November 2007, to release all remaining political detainees and fully to respect the independence of the judiciary.

The European Union notes the assertion by President Musharraf that the elections for the National and Provincial Assemblies on 8 January 2008 will be free, fair and transparent. It urges the Pakistani authorities to ensure that all appropriate and timely measures are taken to comply with internationally recognized standards for free, fair and transparent elections.

http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/Declaracoes_PESC/20071218Paquistao.htm

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

Algeria

- ▶ **EU Presidency Statement on recent attacks in Algiers (11/12/2007)**

The EU Presidency strongly condemns the terrorist attacks on 11 December in Algiers, which killed a large number of people and wounded dozens more. The EU Presidency conveys its deepest sympathy, condolences and solidarity to the families of the victims.

The EU Presidency firmly condemns any attempt to undermine peace and stability in Algeria. It also reiterates its support to the Algerian authorities' endeavours to overcoming the great suffering of past decades and stands ready to support Algeria in achieving full reconciliation.

These horrific attacks clearly demonstrate that terrorism is a threat to all States and to all peoples. It poses a serious threat to our security, to the values of our democratic societies and to the rights and freedoms of people, especially through the indiscriminate targeting of innocent people. No cause, no grievance, can justify acts of terrorism.

The European Union sincerely hopes that those responsible for these barbaric acts of terrorism will be brought to justice.

http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/Declaracoes_PESC/20071211PESCARG.htm

Algeria

- ▶ **(FR) Javier Solana, Haut Représentant de l'Union européenne pour la PESC, condamne les attentats perpétrés à Alger (11/12/2007)**

Javier SOLANA, le Haut Représentant de l'UE pour la Politique Étrangère et de Sécurité Commune (PESC), condamne avec la plus grande fermeté les attentats perpétrés aujourd'hui à Alger, devant le siège du Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés (HCR) et à proximité de la Cour suprême et du Conseil constitutionnel: "Je condamne avec la plus grande fermeté les attentats sanglants commis aujourd'hui à Alger, qui ont coûté la vie à un nombre très élevé de personnes. Ces actes sont odieux et lâches.

J'adresse aux familles des victimes, aux autorités algériennes et aux représentants des Nations Unies mes plus sincères condoléances et ma profonde sympathie. Je souhaite aux personnes blessées un prompt rétablissement.

Ces nouveaux attentats dans la capitale algérienne nous rappellent combien, face à la menace terroriste, la vigilance, la détermination et la coordination entre tous restent essentielles. Je tiens à exprimer au peuple algérien la solidarité de l'Union européenne."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/FR/declarations/97593.pdf

Algeria

- ▶ **The President of the European Parliament condemns bomb attacks in Algiers (11/12/2007)**

EP President Hans-Gert Pöttering has vehemently condemned the terrorist bombings in Algeria. He sent a message of solidarity to the Algerian people and authorities.

Following the explosions this morning in Algiers, the President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, said: "I have heard the terrible news that two bomb blasts have killed at least 47 people in the Algerian capital and dozens were wounded including a group of students travelling on a college bus. According to the Algerian authorities, the explosions were caused by two car bombs, and at least one was triggered by a suicide bomber. For the time being there is no claim of responsibility.

I vehemently condemn these tragic acts. On behalf of the European Parliament, I would like to convey a message of solidarity to the Algerian people and their authorities. Terrorism is a challenge for everyone- not only for western countries, but also the Arab world. Terrorism is a global problem that affects both sides of the Mediterranean. We all suffer from terrorism. We are all victims of terrorism- and we have to solve it together.

We need a determined policy with the objective of preventing terrorism and terrorist acts, both on European Union soil and anywhere else in the world, in line with the principles of the international community and our system of law.

Terrorism is a crime that cannot be tolerated under any circumstances. It represents one of the greatest dangers to the security, stability and democratic values of the international community and is a direct assault on our citizens."

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-14886-344-12-50-903-20071211IPR14883-10-12-2007-2007-false/default_en.htm

Lebanon

- ▶ **EU Presidency statement on the assassination of General Hajj in Lebanon (12/12/2007)**

The EU Presidency condemns in the strongest terms the attack perpetrated in Baabda, south-east of Beirut, which claimed the life of Brigadier General François Al-Hajj, chief of the Army operations, and several others. The EU Presidency conveys its heartfelt condolences and solidarity to the families of the victims.

This hideous attack is another targeted attempt to destabilize Lebanon amid the country's efforts to elect the new President. However it should not weaken the Lebanese people's resolve to take a firm stand against violence and to bring promptly to justice those responsible for committing this cowardly act.

The EU Presidency strongly urges all Lebanese parties and all actors to refrain from any activities that might further endanger the political stability of Lebanon. The EU has continuously pushed for constructive dialogue between the parties and will continue to do so.

The EU Presidency reiterates its full support to the Lebanese Army efforts to ensure security and stability in the country and recalls that the current impasse can only be resolved through dialogue and in respect of its democratic and legitimate institutions.

http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/Declaracoes_PESC/20071212PESCLEB.htm

Lebanon

- ▶ **Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the CFSP, condemns the terrorist attack in Beirut (11/12/2007)**

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), has strongly condemned the terrorist attack carried out today in Beirut: "I condemn in the strongest possible terms the assassination this morning of General Francois Hajj and others accompanying him.

My thoughts go primarily to the families of the victims to whom I extend my most sincere condolences. I also wish a speedy recovery to those wounded in the attack.

This is the latest in a heinous series of attacks on the integrity of the Lebanese state. I am greatly concerned that it comes at a time when, despite many difficulties, opposing parties have been using dialogue to forward their positions.

I emphasise that the EU will continue, undeterred, in its support to the independence, democracy and sovereignty of Lebanon."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/declarations/97618.pdf

Saudi Arabia

- ▶ **Women's rights in Saudi Arabia (13/12/2007)**

In a resolution on women's rights in Saudi Arabia, Parliament calls for the Saudi government to improve the lot of women in the kingdom, who it says "continue to face many forms of discrimination in private and in public life, are frequently victims of sexual violence and often face enormous obstacles in the criminal justice system" - even though Saudi Arabia has signed up to a range of international human rights conventions.

Among the demands made in today's resolution, Parliament "insists that the Saudi Arabian Government take further steps aimed at lifting restrictions on women's rights, including women's free movement, on the driving prohibition, on their employment opportunities, on their legal personality and on their representation in judicial processes, eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in private and public life and promote their participation in the economic, social and political spheres".

Concern over fate of 'Qatif girl'

The resolution states that in October 2006 a 19-year-old woman, known as 'the Qatif Girl', was sentenced to 100 lashes following an incident in which she was alone in a car talking with a man who was not a close relative when she was attacked and gang-raped. Parliament "deplores the decision taken by the General Court of Qatif to punish the rape victim" and "calls on the Saudi Arabian authorities to quash the sentence and drop all charges against the victim of the rape."

Domestic violence

Parliament notes that "on 3 October 2007, King Abdullah announced a judicial reform, promising the setting-up of new specialised courts and improved training for judges and lawyers" and "recalls that, in May 2007, it was reported that King Abdullah had ordered that a new court be established which would specialise in hearing domestic violence cases".

Nevertheless, MEPs believe that "a campaign to promote awareness regarding violence against women in Saudi Arabia, especially domestic violence, would be a most welcome initiative, which should be introduced as a matter of urgency".

Lastly the resolution calls on the Council and Commission "to raise these issues at the next Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council".

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/015-14857-344-12-50-902-20071211IPR14818-10-12-2007-2007-false/default_en.htm

Iran

- ▶ **EU Presidency Statement on the Supreme Court's decision concerning the death sentences on Mohammad Latif, Ali Mahin Torabi and Hossein Haghi (17/12/2007)**

The EU Presidency is deeply concerned about the decision by the Supreme Court concerning the death sentences on Mohammad Latif, Ali Mahin Torabi and Hossein Haghi.

The EU Presidency recalls Islamic Republic of Iran's international commitments and obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 37) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 6, n.5).

The EU Presidency calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to review the sentences on Mohammad Latif, Ali Mahin Torabi and Hossein Haghi under Islamic Republic of Iran's international commitments and obligations.

The EU Presidency calls on the Iranian authorities to approve by the due instances the new law on juvenile courts and to make sure that the waiver of the death sentences for minors and for crimes committed during childhood is clearly stated there. The EU Presidency asks the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran to convey this message to the Majlis and the Guardians Council, as well as to the Judiciary. The EU Presidency reiterates EU's longstanding opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances and strongly condemns the application of capital punishment to minors.

http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/Declaracoes_PESC/20071217Irao.htm

THEMATIC :

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

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Sakharov Prize 2007

- ▶ **Sakharov Prize 2007 awarded to Salih Mahmoud Osman, who calls for world to intervene in Darfur** (11/12/2007)

The European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought was awarded on Tuesday to this year's winner, Sudanese human rights lawyer Salih Mahmoud Osman, by EP President Hans-Gert Pöttering. Addressing a packed Strasbourg plenary chamber, Mr Osman spoke of the horrors taking place in Darfur and of the need for the international community to intervene, even against the wishes of the Sudanese government.

He told the House "I am from Darfur, I was born in Darfur. I have been a victim of detention and torture because of my work. Members of my own family have been tortured and displaced by the militia in Darfur". Describing his work in detail, he said: "For many years, in my work, I have represented thousands of people who needed my help in front of the courts. I have seen thousands of people who have been tortured; I have seen hundreds of women and young girls who have been victims of sexual abuse; I have seen the four million who have been forcibly displaced from their homes".

No peace without protection: time for world to act, in particular Europe

The UN Security Council has adopted several resolutions on Darfur, unfortunately none has been implemented effectively. "The victims feel disappointed", said Mr Osman. "They are waiting to hear from you; from the people of Europe. Your leaders have been talking tough about the policies of the Sudanese Government in Darfur. But so far we haven't seen any concrete steps".

"The people of Darfur need the European Union to show a strong, united position regarding the protection of innocent civilians", went on Mr Osman. He insisted that protection was possible "through the deployment of the UN-AU hybrid forces", adding that "the involvement of the international, and especially European forces, is imperative even though the Government of Sudan may be unwilling to accept that at the present moment". "In Darfur, and in Sudan, there will be no peace without justice and without protection".

No peace without justice: human rights violators still outside the law

A further problem is that, despite serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, "none of the perpetrators has been brought to justice", said Mr Osman. "All perpetrators are beyond the reach of domestic justice. This conflict is one which is marked by a culture of total impunity". The International Criminal Court has been partly successful in promoting accountability and "the people of Darfur ask you to support the work of the ICC", said Mr Osman, adding "As a lawyer, there can never be a lasting peace in the region without justice".

In conclusion, the laureate said he was proud to accept the honour "on behalf of so many Sudanese who believe - as I do - in human dignity and in the pursuit of justice".

EP President: "Parliament confirms solidarity with people of Darfur"

In his introductory address, EP President Hans-Gert Pöttering stressed that Mr Osman was the unanimous choice of Parliament's Conference of Presidents for the 2007 Sakharov Prize. By this decision, he said, "Parliament confirms its solidarity with the people of Darfur and restates its belief that any lasting solution for this region will require justice, democracy and human rights".

Mr Pöttering reminded the House of the shocking figures of 400,000 dead and over 2.5 million displaced persons and refugees in Darfur. Mr Osman has courageously chosen to fight back. "For many years, he has defended the rights of victims of the Darfur conflict" and as a result he "puts his life in peril every day for the cause of human dignity and justice".

He is "actively committed to the defence of women's rights", in particular of victims of sexual violence. He also "fights daily to make those guilty of war crimes face up to their responsibilities, at national and international level". Mr Osman does not work only to provide legal aid to victims, emphasised Mr Pöttering. He has also decided to shoulder a political role and has been an opposition member of the Sudanese parliament since 2005.

In his closing words, Mr Pöttering said: "Mr Osman, we congratulate you on your tireless work" and "we hope that the recognition conferred by this prize gives you strength and protection, year after year, as long as your struggle lasts".

Mr Osman's name is now added to the list of past African winners of the Sakharov Prize: Nelson Mandela (1988), Salima Ghezali (1997), Dom Zacarias Kamwenho (2001) and Hauwa Ibrahim (2005).

The Sakharov Prize comes with a cheque for €50 000. The session ended with the playing of the European Hymn in honour of Mr Osman.

Osman also honoured at a joint meeting of three EP committees

On Monday evening Mr Osman addressed a joint meeting of the three EP committees involved in the process of choosing candidates for this year's Sakharov Prize.

In his address and his replies to MEPs' questions, Mr Osman spoke of his own periods of imprisonment and stressed time and again the world's duty to intervene in his country to prevent further deaths. "You have a moral duty to act now, not to say sorry tomorrow", he said.

Josep Borrell (PES, ES), chair of the Development Committee, praised Mr Osman's courage but also took the opportunity to draw attention to the disastrous situation in other parts of the region, including Somalia and Eritrea. Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (EPP-ED, PL), chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, stressed that "human rights are universal, indivisible and a fundamental prerequisite for democracy and that even a little progress, in whatever part of the globe, contributes to peace and democracy throughout the world".

Hélène Flautre (Greens/EFA, FR) chair of the Human Rights Subcommittee, highlighted Mr Osman's work in documenting acts of violence, thereby helping bring people to justice, such as the two individuals who had been indicted by the ICC.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/015-14774-345-12-50-902-20071211IPR14773-11-12-2007-2007-true/default_en.htm

MEPs: 'Fighting terrorism can never be an excuse to violate human rights'

- ▶ **Fighting terrorism can never be an excuse to violate human rights, say MEPs**
(12/12/2007)

Governments and EU institutions have often responded to terrorist attacks by adopting laws that have not been sufficiently discussed and some times in violation of basic human rights such as right to privacy or to a fair trial, say MEPs in a resolution which analyses EU counter-terrorism policy, adopted today by 359 in favour to 293 against and 38 abstentions. Members call for further scrutiny of intelligence operations and for more proportionate and evidence-based legislation in the future.

Analysing specific activities related to Europe's current counter-terrorism strategy - based on the goals of "prevention, protection, preparedness and response" - MEPs stress the need for the Commission to carry out "an overall evaluation" on the effectiveness of legislation adopted, the degree of transposition by Member States, "and the positive and negative effects of these laws, both in terms of security and in terms of citizen's rights". Commissioner Frattini's recent proposals regarding the use of passenger name records (PNR) in Europe for law enforcement purposes and the directive on explosives will be assessed by Parliament "on evidence based argumentation", say MEPs.

Avoid profiling

One of MEPs' major concerns is the potential misuse by authorities of the personal information contained in numerous data bases - PNR, Eurodac, Schengen and Visa information systems - "to create profiles through data-mining techniques", which is not allowed at European level. MEPs say that profiling (the use of racial, ethnic or similar characteristics in determining whether a person is considered likely to commit a particular type of crime) should be avoided altogether and raised concerns in this regard on Mr Frattini's new proposal for an EU PNR system.

Democratic control of secret services

How can we avoid serious breaches of human rights in cases like the CIA illegal renditions in Europe? Although MEPs reiterate the importance of sharing intelligence information, both at EU level and among national secret services, further rules are needed to ensure the necessary democratic scrutiny and parliamentary control over their activities, the Chamber reiterated. They call for the resettlement of Guantanamo prisoners from third states who cannot be returned to that countries of origin because they risk being persecuted or tortured.

Preventing radicalisation

Parliament believes that "cases such as the recent rejection of the US Supreme Court to deal with the Khalid Al-Masri complaint tend to reinforce the impression particularly by Muslim minorities in Europe that the anti-terror measures promulgate double standards". EU counter-terrorism policy should not only be based on police measures but should also support local actions aimed at "preventing violent radicalisation by fostering the integration of people through intercultural dialogue", say MEPs. Measures were proposed to support democracy movements in Islamic countries, including the creation of more student exchanges and funding mass media stations which spread democratic ideas.

At the same time, staff involved in borders security and counter-terrorism activities should be trained about the different cultures composing the European reality, conclude MEPs.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/019-14845-344-12-50-902-20071211IPR14800-10-12-2007-2007-false/default_en.htm

Proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights

► **European Institutions proclaim Charter of Human Rights** (14/12/2007)

Wednesday 12 December saw the Presidents of the EU's three main Institutions sign the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the Hemicycle Chamber in Strasbourg. The Charter will be a part of the new EU Reform Treaty that was signed on Thursday. There to sign the document and speak to MEPs were Parliament's President Hans-Gert Pöttering, Commission President José Manuel Barroso and Portuguese PM José Sócrates whose country currently holds the Presidency of the EU.

Hans-Gert Pöttering underlined in his speech the importance of the Charter for citizens. "Today's formal proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights gives us both an opportunity and an obligation to make clear to the inhabitants of the European Union, to its almost 500 million citizens and the generations of tomorrow, just what European unification signifies. The Treaty of Lisbon which will be signed by the Heads of State and Government tomorrow confers on the Charter the same legally binding character as the Treaties themselves.

In the European Union not everything revolves around economic calculations of costs and benefits. Such calculations are important and will continue to have a bearing on our lives in the EU. First and foremost, however, we are a community of values; we put solidarity, freedom and equal rights into practice every day. These shared values, at whose heart the respect for the inviolable dignity of the individual enshrined in Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights lies, are the foundations of the European unification process.

Without this clear set of fundamental values, one which we must keep in mind at all times, the European Union has no future. We would also have no right to invoke human rights in other parts of the world if we were to fail in the task of recognising our own values as an integral part of European Union law."

José Sócrates: The Portuguese Prime Minister and President in office of the Council José Sócrates, started his speech by saying that "today represents a fundamental date in the history of Europe".

PM Sócrates expressed all his satisfaction for today's ceremony. He said: "This ceremony is probably the most important one I participated in my political career". He added: "I am honoured we are proclaiming it during Portuguese Presidency."

He explained that the long process that brought to the Charter started in 2000 under Portuguese Presidency. He said: "It is an honour for my country to be associated to such an import stage of European history".

The Charter, as said by the Portuguese Prime Minister: "includes values that are part of our traditions and derive from international instruments such as the Convention on human rights". Therefore, "from today, fundamental rights become a heritage of the EU", he affirmed.

José Manuel Barroso: Commission President José Manuel Barroso said: "Today's ceremony reaffirms the commitment we took in December 2000", when the Charter was firstly proclaimed. Anyway, he stressed that today's proclamation represents "a crucial step forward: in 2000, the Charter was not legally binding as the treaties". In fact, if the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, the Charter will have the same legal status.

Mr Barroso then explained that the Charter brings "concrete progress for European citizens". He stressed that while, so far, these rights were recognised by the EU Court of justice on a case by case basis, the new text will provide a proper legal framework for ensuring their respect.

The proclamation ceremony was interrupted on several occasions by a minority of MEPs sitting towards the back of the Chamber. The minority was shouted down by the applause of the majority of MEPs.
(...)

Concerns about the exceptions on the Charter

A Protocol annexed to the Lisbon Treaty introduces specific measures for the United Kingdom and Poland establishing exceptions with regard to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice and national courts for the protection of the rights recognised by the Charter.

In its resolution of 29 November, the European Parliament urged Poland and the United Kingdom to make every effort to arrive, after all, at a consensus on the unrestricted applicability of the Charter.

Content of the Charter

The European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights sets out in a single text the whole range of civil, political, economic and social rights of European citizens and all persons resident in the EU, defined as the EU's common values. The purpose of this Charter is to make those principles more visible in order to strengthen the protection of fundamental rights in the light of changes in society, social progress and scientific developments.

These provisions apply to the EU institutions and bodies and to the Member States only when they are implementing Union law. The Charter does not establish any new power for the Union.

The European Court of Justice would be, if the Lisbon Treaty is ratified by all Member States, in charge of ensuring the respect of the Charter in all acts of the European Union.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/017-15084-014-01-02-902-20071212STO15083-2008-14-01-2008/default_en.htm

Human Rights and Extremism discussed in Plenary on 13/12/2007, resolution adopted

- ▶ **Human Rights and extremism discussed in Plenary on 13/12/2007** (14/12/2007)

Combating the rise of extremism in Europe

MEPs adopted a resolution showing its concern of recent racist and hate attacks and killings in several European countries.

The main points are:

Condemnation of racist and hate attacks and solidarity with victims of such attacks and their families.

Fighting extremism while respecting fundamental rights and fundamental legal principles.

Withdrawal of public funding from political parties - or media businesses - that incite hatred of a group of people on the basis of their race, religion, handicap, sexual orientation or nationality.

Speeches coming from public personalities should be considered an aggravating circumstance.

Improvement of anti-racist laws and campaigns on information and raising awareness within media and education of young people.

Support NGOs and civil society organisations that promote democratic values, human dignity, social inclusion, intercultural dialogue and social awareness.

MEPs called for an improved EU-China human rights dialogue.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/008-15251-344-12-50-901-20071213STO15249-2007-10-12-2007/default_en.htm

Civil Liberties Committee on Rights of the Child

► **Rights of the child: Civil Liberties Committee sets out its strategy (19/12/2007)**

The proposed EU strategy on the rights of the child won the backing of the EP Civil Liberties Committee on 18 December, but also inspired many new proposals from MEPs, including tougher measures to combat paedophilia on the internet. The committee also advocated creating a single set of extraterritorial criminal laws to counter child sex tourism, and a system enabling the prosecution within Europe of suppliers of products manufactured with child labour.

The Civil Liberties Committee reiterated the European Parliament's opposition to all forms of violence against children, and called for a specific budget heading for their rights, with which to fund work required by the future strategy. Its own-initiative report was approved almost unanimously (just one abstention).

Combating paedophile pornography and violence on the internet

The committee's many proposals included devising technical measures to combat the dissemination of paedophile content via the internet. They would like to involve access suppliers, search engines and even banks, so as to block payment by would-be purchasers of illegal content.

MEPs also wish to protect children by tightening up rules on the transmission of harmful content via the internet or multimedia messaging services and the sale of violent video games. They would like a uniform classification and labelling system to be created for such games, and for all audiovisual content.

Finally, they would like children to be better informed of their rights, via a dedicated internet site to be set up for this purpose.

Enforce ban on child labour

MEPs advocate a mechanism to enable the prosecution, in Europe, of suppliers of products that have been manufactured with child labour. The European Commission is urged to check whether production lines comply with rules prohibiting child labour.

European kidnap alert system and prosecution of sex criminals in Europe

The committee recommends establishing a European kidnap alert system, and a telephone help line for children. It also advocates devising a European strategy, and creating a single EU-wide set of extraterritorial criminal laws, to counter child sex tourism.

Community instrument on adoption

Reiterating every child's right to a family, MEPs suggest establishing a Community instrument to facilitate adoption. Finally, they urge the EU to adhere to the UN and Council of Europe conventions on the rights of the child.

The report, draft by Roberta Angelilli (UEN, IT) is scheduled for a plenary vote at the January session, in Strasbourg.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/019-15679-351-12-51-902-20071217IPR15664-17-12-2007-2007-false/default_en.htm