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IMPORTANT COMING MEETINGS

EU - THIRD COUNTRY MEETINGS

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Committee on Foreign Affairs

- **December, 11, 2006** (Preparatory meeting for the Sakharov Price Ceremony) Strasbourg

Subcommittee on Human Rights

- **December, 18, 2006**
- **December, 19, 2006**

Subcommittee on security and defence

- **November, 27, 2006**
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- **November, 28, 2006**

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REGIONS:

AFRICA

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► **Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, welcomes the signature of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Nepal** (22/11/06)

Javier SOLANA, European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), wrote a letter to Girija Prasad KOIRALA, Prime Minister of Nepal, **to express his great satisfaction at the historic signature of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that puts an end to bloodshed and violence in Nepal and opens up the path to peace and stability for that country.** Mr Solana indicated that the EU would continue to support the peace process in close co-operation with the international community and he expressed the hope that all the parties to the process would keep up the momentum in its implementation.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/declarations/91834.pdf

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

Russia

► **Parliament hears voice of independent Russian media** (23/11/06)

To what extent the media is free in Russia was the subject of a hearing held by Parliament's human rights subcommittee this week. The meeting was dedicated to the memory of campaigning Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya who was murdered on 7 October. She had been a fierce critic of the Kremlin and in particular the Russian army's behaviour in Chechnya. Hers is the latest in a series of deaths, disappearances and arrests of independent journalists in Russia.

Opening the meeting H el ene Flautre, the French Green Party MEP who chairs the human rights subcommittee, put it bluntly when she said that "Anna Politkovskaya was murdered because she told the truth. The European Parliament is also in search of justice and truth".

Vitaliy Yarochevskiy - deputy editor of the newspaper she worked on - told the hearing that "there is no independent media left in Russia" and that "the heads of TV stations are clones of each other, which spread

the regime's propaganda". He also questioned to what extent the police were looking for the killers of his friend and colleague.

Criticism of the government of Vladimir Putin also came from Marie Mendras - an academic based in Paris. She told the hearing **that Russia was becoming "more and more authoritarian" and thought that the country had a "system of impunity" for criminals.**

Democracy, human rights should be central to future EU-Russia accords say MEPs
Following the death of Mrs Politkovskaya, **MEPs adopted a resolution calling for democracy, human rights and freedom of expression to be put at the centre if any future agreements the EU adopts with Russia.** MEPs also called on the Russian authorities to find her murderers as soon as possible. Tomorrow the leaders of Russia and the EU meet in Helsinki for summit. Writing in the Financial Times newspaper ahead of the meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin said that "Europe has nothing to fear from Russia". He also said that "we should respect the historical diversity of European civilization" and "not force artificial standards on one another".

Energy is usually a big subject at such meetings as 24% of the EU's gas and 25% of its oil is imported from Russia. At an informal summit last month - Parliament's President Josep Borrell warned that Europe could not "exchange human rights for energy resources".

The last word should go to Anna Politkovskaya - in the wake of her death an unpublished article of hers mentioned the death threats she had received for writing about the war in Chechnya.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/015-263-325-11-47-902-20061123STO00262-2006-21-11-2006/default_en.htm

Turkey

► MEPs press Turkey for more action to prevent 'honour killings' (24/11/06)

The European Parliament's women's rights committee has urged Turkey to boost efforts to tackle violence against women and honour killings.

Dutch socialist MEP Emine Bozkurt presented a report on gender equality and women's rights in Turkey on Thursday (23 November) saying that the EU candidate country has made some progress in the area - but mainly by introducing new laws.

She suggested however **that "in practise, there needs to be a political will to implement these laws and protect women from violence.** There is a need to change the mentality of people in order to fully implement the existing laws."

The Dutch deputy also pointed out that over the past year there were attempts in Turkey to overturn the women's rights set out in the national laws as part of the integration process to the EU.

"The efforts to revise legislation on prosecuting violence against women were only dropped after the incident where a Turkish deputy used violence against his wife," Ms Bozkurt noted, insisting that to prevent such attempts "the practical implementation" plus "endurance" of the women's rights legislation should remain
a
priority.

For her part, Turkey's minister for women's affairs Nimet Cubukcu acknowledged the problem of violence against women but also listed a number of steps her government has taken to fight against the phenomenon.

She said that Turkish women get financial aid to cover their legal expenses if taking the perpetrators to courts, while "honour killings" are now being punished with life imprisonment under the revised penal law.

Only eight cases of such crime have been punished under the stricter terms so far however, with the Ms Bozkurt calling for more objective data on how many incidents have happened across the country.

In its November report on Turkey, the European Commission noted that "crimes in the name of honour and suicides committed by women due to the influence of the family still occur, especially in the regions of the East and Southeast."

Ms Cubukcu argued that the government-led campaign has brought along some positive results, adding that the efforts to raise the awareness of the issue include trainings for men, particularly young soldiers coming to serve in Turkey's army.

Another aspect of Ankara's gender equality dossier is its shortcomings in the area of female education.

According to UNICEF figures mentioned in the parliament's report, between 600,000 and 800,000 Turkish girls per year are either prevented by their families to go to school or can not attend the classes as they live in rural areas too far from school.

Defending her government, Ms Cubukcu said that the latest campaign and special measures to enforce the eight-year-long obligatory education has led to a boost by 22 percent in the number of girls going to school, with the government hoping to achieve their 100 percent attendance by 2010.

The situation of women and gender equality is one of the key issues stressed by the EU as a challenge for Turkey on its path to become a member state of the bloc, with Brussels urging Turkish officials to make use of EU funds available for projects dealing with the problem.

<http://euobserver.com/851/22943>

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

Liban

► **Javier SOLANA, le Haut représentant de l'Union européenne pour la PESC, condamne l'assassinat du Ministre libanais Pierre Gémayel (21/11/06)**

Javier SOLANA, le Haut Représentant de l'UE pour la Politique étrangère et de sécurité commune (PESC), **a condamné aujourd'hui l'assassinat de Pierre Gémayel**, Ministre libanais de l'Industrie. M. Solana a eu un entretien téléphonique avec le Premier Ministre Siniora, à qui il a réitéré lesoutient total de l'Union européenne. Le Haut Représentant a déclaré: "J'apprends avec consternation l'assassinat de Pierre Gémayel, Ministre de l'Industrie de laRépublique libanaise. Mes premières pensées vont à sa famille dont l'histoire est intimement mêlée à l'histoire du Liban. A sa famille et à ses proches, j'adresse mes plus sincères condoléances. Il faudra que les responsables de ce lâche assassinat d'un autre temps soient retrouvés et jugés. Le Liban paie une nouvelle fois un lourd tribut pour sa volonté de vivre en paix et dans l'indépendance. En mon nom propre et au nom de l'Union européenne, je rends hommage au courage et à la détermination de tous ceux qui entendent faire vivre un Liban indépendant, souverain et uni."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/fr/declarations/91813.pdf

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Human Trafficking

- ▶ **Human Trafficking: protect not punish victims, say MEPs** (21/11/06)

Human trafficking is a trade in human misery that affects 100,000 people in the EU annually. The total worldwide is believed to be about 7 times that. After arms and drugs it is the 3rd most lucrative criminal activity. In Plenary last week MEPs backed a report that **called for a "coherent EU strategy to fight human trafficking"**. Introducing her report - Slovak MEP Edit Bauer told members that **"although most victims are women, it is alarming that children seem to make up 40-50% of victims"**.

Trafficking in human beings thrives in poverty, corruption, social breakdown and discrimination. Thousands are lured to an apparently "better life" in the EU with empty promises of work opportunities.

When they arrive their identity documents are taken by criminal gangs who then force them into a life of sweatshop labour or the sex trade. As the person may have entered the country illegally they are afraid, unwilling or unable to go to the police. Internationally, complications in cross-border police and judicial cooperation also make tackling the problems more difficult.

Health care, education key

Edit Bauer's report emphasises **the need to protect not punish the victims**. It stresses the need to take into account all forms of human trafficking - such as illegal adoption and the selling of human organs. It calls for more EU members to implement the 2004 directive on issuing residence permits to victims (only two states have adopted it). In addition, access to health care, education and legal advice should be made more readily available to victims. More international cooperation between Europol, the United Nations, and NGO's in the field and the EU's border Agency "Frontex" is also needed.

MEPs also asked the European Commission to investigate the links between the legalisation of prostitution and human trafficking. In the debate Swedish Liberal Maria Carlshamre of the Women's Committee said "more than 90% of the girls in the sex industry in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, where prostitution is legal, are from abroad. How can you know that a girl is doing it of her own free will?"

British Green Jean Lambert, who gave an opinion on the subject for Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs Committee, said "we have seen evidence of workers who have no rights. They may be beaten and sometimes even left to die. Demand for low-cost workers contributes to human trafficking. Even if costs may be driven down, it happens at the expense of human dignity, labour standards, health and safety measures.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/015-124-327-11-47-902-20061121STO00123-2006-23-11-2006/default_en.htm

International Crimes

► International solutions for international crimes (22/11/06)

The prosecution of the perpetrators of some of the most appalling crimes imaginable - genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture - was a question considered by MEPs and experts at a hearing this week. The aim of the joint hearing by Parliament's Civil Liberties and Justice Committee and the Human Rights sub-committee was to add impetus to national, European and international efforts to tackle the most serious international crimes.

Sadly, the genocide in Rwanda and, before that, ethnic cleansing in the Balkans show the catalogue of crimes that are committed. In these two cases there was at least some attempt at legal redress with criminal tribunals being set up to try those deemed to be responsible. Similar examples have been found in Sierra Leone and Cambodia.

The hearing brought together prosecutors, judges, NGOs, professors and lawyers. **Putting the perpetrators on trial can be a major part of the process of reconciliation and healing - without it there continues a feeling that they "got away with it".** As Sarah Ludford, the British MEP who opened the meeting said, **"it is essential that those that perpetrate the most serious crimes of international concern do not enjoy impunity by leaving the jurisdiction in which they have committed their crimes"**.

Universal jurisdiction

One of the main ways to prosecute people for these crimes is through universal jurisdiction. This principle allows a Court to hold a trial in a country even if the victims or defendant are not from that country. It would be like Saddam Hussein standing trial in Ireland. This reduces the places suspects can flee to.

The hearing was told that the International Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and the "grave breaches" clauses of the Geneva Convention permit universal jurisdiction. The use of this legal principle has steadily been on the rise - several former Nazi war criminals have been tried in the UK for example - as it becomes more integrated into national criminal systems.

However, some barriers exist to its use: the first is practical - such trials are resource intensive, secondly prosecutors may be unfamiliar with the history and politics of foreign regions, also witnesses may be dispersed over countries and continents and finally many foreign governments fear the trial of their nationals as it could be "embarrassing" as secret leaks out.

Some steps to improve situation

The European Council's decision to create a "Network of contact points in respect of persons responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes" in 2002 marked a first step in increasing cooperation and the exchange of information in prosecuting international crimes.

The hearing was told that Western European states and the EU as a whole are uniquely situated to serve as examples to the wider international community of how universal jurisdiction can be strengthened as an effective, practical and realistic means of combating impunity for the worst international crimes. Also, there is a need to better use existing laws and ensure that international law doesn't lead to conflicting jurisdictions.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/012-183-331-11-48-902-20061122STO00182-2006-27-11-2006/default_en.htm