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PRESS RELEASE

Restoring democracy in Mauritania

Urgent resolution

Directorate-General for Communication
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

SITUATION IN MAURITANIA

Debate: 26.11.2008

Vote: 28.11.2008

Restoring democracy in Mauritania

The Assembly condemns the overthrow of President Sidi Mohamend Ould Cheikh Abdullahi and the government by the armed forces in Mauritania in August 2008, and calls for his immediate release, in a resolution adopted on 25 November. It also urges the ruling military authorities to commit themselves forthwith to a timetable for restoring constitutional order, democratic institutions and the ineligibility of the military to stand in elections.

President Abdallahi was ousted on 6 August 2008, by a military junta, led by General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, and is being kept under arrest in his home village.

Democratic transition

The President had been in April 2007, as part of a democratic transition process that was hailed as exemplary by the international community and validated by the European Union election observation mission and the European Parliament delegation.

The EU has backed the democratic transition process and is providing a €156,000,000 "support programme" for 2008 - 2013 under the 10th European Development Fund.

Sanctions

The Assembly calls on the African and European Union to look at all targeted sanctions that might be taken against the military putschists (travel ban, freezing of assets, etc.), should no commitment be made in the near future to a relevant and credible plan for ending the crisis and restoring constitutional order.

It also warns against taking any steps that might jeopardise Mauritania's development and the improvement in the living conditions of its people.

The European Commission has begun consultations on the basis of Article 96 of the agreement, which provides, in the event of failure to respect human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law, for the possibility of taking certain measures. Suspending the agreement is the ultimate step.

Plenary debate

"Mauritania once represented hope for democracy, but is a disappointment today. Its coups d'état are not an error of youth, but a return to an old tradition", said Jean-Pierre Audy (EPP-ED, FR).

"Democracy has succumbed to partisan interests", said Benjamin Bounkoulou (DRC), adding that "the results were reversed without sound reason. We need a rapid return to constitutional order, early elections and a government of national unity to manage the transition process".

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/acp/60_16/default_en.htm

Link to website of the ACP/EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly

Further information:

Andrew Boreham

Press Service

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

Mob. + 352 661 430055

Tel.: +675 323 88 75

e-mail: andrew.boreham@europarl.europa.eu