

Programme on the Hearing on Transitional Justice

Brussels, 28 August 2006

Transitional Justice is becoming an important concept all over the world, as societies try to find different strategies to deal with massive human rights abuses in the past, in order to prevent future abuses and find their way to peace, democracy, the rule of law and respect for individual and collective rights.

This hearing on Transitional Justice is designed to take a closer look at the concept and the strategies chosen in different parts of the world: in Africa, Latin America, and the Arab World as well as in Europe, and to better understand what consequences massive human rights abuses have on different societies, and how they can be prevented. Another objective is to see how these experiences and knowledge achieved can inspire the policy of the European Union, as well as the positions taken by the European Parliament, in their support for societies or countries who are going through a major political transformation.

Transitional Justice refers to a field of activity and inquiry focused on how societies address legacies of past human rights abuses, mass atrocities, or other forms of severe social trauma, including genocide or civil war, in order to build a more democratic, just and peaceful future.

This generally involves a combination of complementary judicial and nonjudicial strategies, such as prosecuting perpetrators; establishing truth commissions and other forms of investigations about the past; forging efforts toward reconciliation in fractured societies; developing reparations packages for those most affected by the violence or abuse; memorializing and remembering victims; and reforming a wide spectrum of abusive state institutions (such as security services, police, or military) in an attempt to prevent future violations.

The approaches to transitional justice are based on a fundamental belief in universal human rights, and rely on international human rights and humanitarian law in demanding that states halt, investigate, punish, repair and prevent abuses. Transitional justice approaches consistently focus on the rights and needs of victims and their families.

Programme:

Mrs Hélène Flautre

Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights

Mr Alex Boraine

Founder of the International Centre for Transitional Justice, former deputy chair of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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Mrs Esther Mujawayo-Kiener

Rwanda survivor and a therapist in a refugee centre in Germany. Author of two books, the second on her personal experience of *gacaca*, Rwandan traditional courts

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