DRAFT REPORT

on the EU foreign policy in a world of cultural and religious differences
(2013/2167(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

Rapporteur: Marietta Giannakou
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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

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The European Parliament,

– having regard to Articles 2 and 21 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

– having regard to the Charter of the United Nations,

– having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights and to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,

– having regard to the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (11855/2012), adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council on 25 June 2012,

– having regard to the Council conclusions of 20 November 2008 on the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in the external relations of the Union and its Member States,

– having regard to the European Agenda for Culture (COM(2007)0242), which aims to promote awareness of cultural diversity and EU values, dialogue with civil society and exchanges of good practices,

– having regard to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions,

– having regard to its resolution of 12 May 2011 on cultural dimensions of EU external actions¹,

– having regard to its recommendation to the Council of 13 June 2013 on the draft EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief² and to the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief, adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council on 24 June 2013,

– having regard to the UN resolutions on freedom of religion or belief and on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief, in particular Resolution A/RES/67/179 of 20 December 2012, and to Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/22/20/L.22 of 22 March 2013,

– having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education (A7-0000/2013),

A. whereas the EU is founded on the principles of human rights and democracy and has a legal and a moral duty to promote these values in its relations with all other countries;

B. whereas under the conditions of globalisation all nations, states and civilizations actively interact with each other, and the rules and norms which guide the functioning of economic and political systems are becoming more closely linked;

C. whereas all civilizations highly value the cultural foundations on which their very identity depends;

**Principles of EU foreign policy**

1. Whereas the necessity to combat extremism remains a condition for the successful construction of a new international order based on widely shared universal values;

2. Reiterates its conviction that the EU must defend its own global interests in a determined, unified manner, while always basing its policies on the promotion of the fundamental values upon which the Union is founded (namely, respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights) and on respect for other countries;

3. Insists in particular on the promotion of women’s rights and their empowerment as well as the fight against any sort of discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation;

4. Calls for the EU to promote the ratification and implementation of the key international human rights treaties, including core labour rights conventions, as well as regional human rights instruments;

5. Considers the development of stable, liberal democracies to be a tool of peace, international cooperation and willingness to constructively tackle global issues, and considers that it is in the interest of the EU to actively promote a political culture of tolerance, openness and secularism, as well as the development of democratic institutions throughout the world;

6. Notes in particular that the democratisation of numerous states throughout the world in the past two decades, and more recently the events of the uprisings in the Arab world, have shown that the quest for democracy, human dignity and equal participation is not only a Western ideology but an important action driver within and across diverse cultural systems and religious backgrounds;

7. Considers that the notion of cultural and religious differences has, until now, been used repeatedly as a pretext for blatant violations of human rights by authoritarian and radical regimes;

8. Rejects essentialist visions of cultures as fixed entities; believes that the growing interaction of people belonging to different cultural backgrounds can lead to the development and strengthening of a common core of universal values;

9. Recalls that defending smaller and minority cultures and promoting their ability to express themselves is a way to avoid a vision of cultural differences as a confrontation between
irreconcilable blocks;

10. Calls for the EU to promote the ratification and implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression;

11. Emphasises the importance of cultural diplomacy and cultural cooperation in communicating the values that make up European culture and in advancing the interests of the EU’s and its Member States; stresses the need for the EU to act as a world player with a global perspective and global responsibility;

**EU’s role in the UN system and in multilateral fora**

12. Recognises that the current structure of the UN system and in particular that of the Security Council should reflect more adequately the diversity of global actors;

13. Notes however that the EU and its Member States have been able to find a common ground for dialogue and cooperation towards achieving common solutions with UN member states which go beyond cultural and religious differences; notes also that the tensions and deadlocks that hamper the development of such solutions stem from the opposition of states to such agreements on strategic grounds rather than on the basis of conflicting moral values;

14. Highlights the importance of coordinating fora aimed at promoting dialogue and mutual understanding between cultures and religions; is, nevertheless, of the opinion that the effectiveness of these fora should be assessed and that means of leveraging their reach should be considered;

**Challenges of religious influence in the international political arena**

15. Notes with concern that beyond the threats that terrorist networks represent for the Union, as well as for the rest of the world, fundamentalist religious groups which seek to influence societies and legislation undermine the very principles that the Union promotes in its foreign and development policies and operate with the support – be it open or covert – of certain states;

16. Calls for the EU to cooperate with those Islamic states which uphold an inclusive and tolerant vision of Islam to counter the attempts to promote fundamentalist and exclusivist interpretations of religion; notes that radical religious resurgence is not limited to the Muslim world but it is taking place on a global scale;

17. Expects that in their political statements EU representatives should make clear the fact that fundamentalist, exclusivist interpretations of religion are incompatible with the EU’s values and must be opposed with the same assertiveness as would be any repressive political regime;

18. Considers that the EU should be more assertive in its support of the promotion of human rights, social and political rights by civil society, as well as of more liberal interpretations of religious dogma in those countries the governments of which promote fundamentalist and exclusivist views of religion;
19. Recalls that freedom of religion and conscience implies equally both the right to promote religious beliefs and the right to change one’s belief; expects both of these aspects to be present in the EU’s initiatives for intercultural dialogue;

**Credibility, coherence and consistency of EU policy**

20. Considers that the effectiveness of EU action rests on its exemplarity and consistency between internal practice and external action;

21. Calls on all Member States to repeal existing legislation which contradicts the fundamental freedom of religion and conscience and freedom of expression;

22. Stresses the importance of the EU taking action throughout the world to promote respect for freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of access to media and new information technologies;

23. Calls on the EU to make culture an even stronger part of political dialogue with partner countries and regions around the world, promoting cultural exchanges and systematically integrating culture into development programmes and projects;

24. Calls for a coherent EU policy on human rights based on common fundamental standards and a constructive, results-oriented approach; stresses that, when faced with human rights violations, the EU should make use of the full range of tools at its disposal, including sanctions;

25. Reaffirms its support for all EU agreements with third countries to include reciprocal conditionality and political clauses on human rights and democracy, as a common reaffirmation of the mutual commitment to these values and regardless of the state of protection of human rights in a given country, with appropriate safeguards to ensure that the suspension mechanism cannot be abused by either side;

26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights and the governments of the Member States.