



EP calls for "High Official of Foreign Energy Policy"

"The Energy Charter Treaty should be the cornerstone of the common European foreign policy on energy," says a report adopted by a large majority in Parliament today. The own-initiative report, by Foreign Affairs committee Chairman Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (EPP-ED, PL), also advocates creating a post for a "High Official of Foreign Energy Policy" to co-ordinate the EU's activities in the field, and recommends diversification and increased energy efficiency to improve the EU's energy security.

The report, adopted by 553 in favour to 103 against with 27 abstentions calls on the Council and Member States to "create a solidarity mechanism" to deal with crises arising from disruptions of supply, infrastructure damage, or any other emergency. It also proposes appointing, "with the approval of the Council and the Commission, a "double-hatted" "High Official of Foreign Energy Policy", who would be "responsible for co-ordinating all policies under the scope of the common European foreign policy on energy, thereby contributing to the EU's ability to protect its energy security interests in negotiating with the EU's external partners."

Diversification and energy efficiency

The report prescribes various ways to reduce Europe's dependence on foreign sources of energy. It regards it as "vital for the EU to continue to lead the global fight against climate change" and to promote energy-saving technologies in all external relations. To this end, MEPs emphasised the need to create a "common European foreign policy on energy, covering security of supply, transit and investment related to energy security, and the promotion of energy efficiency and energy savings."

Members also called on the Commission and the Member States to pursue "active policies at the highest political level so as to enable the Community to diversify its natural gas sources," and noted that in all priority initiatives aimed at diversification, "special priority should be given to environmentally safe and renewable energy sources."

Foreign suppliers and investors

The House gave its support to "all efforts aimed at overcoming the existing dependencies of Member States on [...] energy imports from countries that systematically violate the letter and spirit of the UN Charter," and stressed that a comprehensive European foreign policy on energy must "contribute to the promotion and implementation of the values and interests of the European Union and the main aims of its foreign policy." Parliament also supported the Commission's intention to "take appropriate measures to prevent uncontrolled investment of state-owned foreign companies in the EU's energy sector, in particular, the gas and electricity transmission networks."

On the subject of Russia, in particular, MEPs said that "the energy partnership between the EU and Russia can only be based on the non-discrimination and fair treatment principle and on equal market access conditions." Finally, the report says that "in addition to the need for Russia to ratify the Charter, the EU should negotiate a formal framework document on energy relations with Russia in the context of the new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement."

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