



Plenary sitting

B8-0526/2017

12.9.2017

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on Gabon, repression of the opposition
(2017/2830(RSP))

Cristian Dan Preda, Joachim Zeller, Sandra Kalniete, Jarosław Wałęsa, Ivan Štefanec, Luděk Niedermayer, Tunne Kelam, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Tomáš Zdechovský, Lefteris Christoforou, Željana Zovko, Marijana Petir, Claude Rolin, Dubravka Šuica, Maurice Ponga, Francis Zammit Dimech, Ivana Maletić, László Tóké, Sven Schulze, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Milan Zver, Adam Szejnfeld, Elisabetta Gardini, Laima Liucija Andrikienė, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, Roberta Metsola, Eduard Kukan, Seán Kelly, Deirdre Clune, Andrey Kovatchev, Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra
on behalf of the PPE Group

**European Parliament resolution on Gabon, repression of the opposition
(2017/2830(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolution on the rule of law crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Gabon (2017/ 2510),
 - having regard to the final report of the European Union electoral observation mission to Gabon on the outcome of the elections,
 - having regard to the joint statement issued on 24 September 2016 by the VP/HR and the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, following the announcement by the Gabonese Constitutional Court of the official results of the presidential election,
 - having regard to the declaration of 28 March 2017 from the EEAS spokesperson on the national dialogue in Gabon,
 - having regard to the press release issued by the African Union on 1 September 2016 condemning the violence of the post-electoral conflict in Gabon and calling for its peaceful resolution,
 - having regard to the 11th European Development Fund 2014-2020 National Indicative Programme, which prioritises strengthening democracy, governance and the rule of law,
 - having regard to the Gabonese Constitution,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of June 1981,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance,
 - having regard to the African Union's Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa (2002),
 - having regard to the UN International Charter of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the Cotonou Agreement,
 - having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Gabon has faced a serious post electoral crisis following the Presidential Elections of 2016;
- B. whereas Ali Bongo, the Gabonese outgoing president, in power since the death of his father, Omar Bongo, in 2009, was declared the winner of the 2016 presidential election, although international observers, and in particular the EU EOM, identified clear anomalies in the compilation of the results;

- C. whereas Jean Ping, his main contender, immediately challenged and condemned this result, lodging an appeal alleging electoral irregularities and calling for a recount with the Constitutional Court, who eventually confirmed the result; whereas, however, consideration of the appeal has not dispelled all the doubts surrounding the outcome of the presidential election;
- D. whereas the situation in the country continues to remain unstable one year after the post-electoral crisis; whereas the opposition continues to contest the legitimacy of the re-election of Ali Bongo;
- E. whereas the authorities have clamped down on members of the opposition and of civil society opposing the power in place; whereas in recent weeks peaceful gatherings of the opposition have been quashed and dozens of opposition leaders and militants have been arrested and placed in detention for “unarmed gatherings disturbing public order and tranquility”;
- F. whereas on 18 August 2017 presidential candidate Jean Ping has launched an appeal on the people of Gabon to “civil disobedience” and called for the president’s ouster;
- G. whereas several senior leaders of the opposition have been denied the right to leave the country;
- H. whereas the Gabonese opposition has reportedly been denied access to state TV;
- I. whereas the publication of an opposition newspaper has been forbidden by the Gabonese authorities, while two other media outlets have been targeted by unidentified persons; whereas there has been a serious deterioration in the freedom of the media;
- J. whereas the national political dialogue launched in March 2017 at the presidential palace, to which Jean Ping refused to take part, has ended on 25 May 2017; whereas some members of the opposition coalition attended this dialogue stating they were prioritising peace and stability over permanent crisis; whereas the report adopted during this political dialogue has put forward a number of proposals for institutional and constitutional reform, including on the issue of term limits for presidents and parliamentarians;
- K. whereas one of the characteristics of democracies is respect for the Constitution, which underlies the state, the institutions and the rule of law; whereas peaceful, credible and transparent elections in Gabon would have contributed greatly to addressing the challenge of democratic progress and alternation of power faced by the Central African region; whereas parliamentary elections in Gabon, originally scheduled for December 2016, are overdue;
- L. whereas the 11th European Development Fund 2014-2020 National Indicative Programme prioritises strengthening democracy, governance and the rule of law; whereas both EU and African partners have a strong common interest in the continued development of democracy and the establishment of properly functioning constitutionalism;
- M. whereas in June 2017 representatives of the International Criminal Court (ICC) have, following requests by both Ali Bongo and Jean Ping, conducted a two day visit in the country in order to investigate allegations of human rights abuses committed during the

post-electoral crisis that followed the disputed August 2016 election; whereas the ICC is expected to decide by the end of the year on the possible opening of an investigation;

1. Reiterates its concern at the increasingly unstable situation in Gabon; urges the authorities, and above all the president, to abide by their international obligations, to guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms and to exercise the task of governing with due respect for the rule of law;
2. Underlines the fundamental role the opposition plays in a democratic society; strongly condemns the pressure and intimidation of the opposition in Gabon; deems unacceptable that several leaders of the Gabon opposition, including the candidate in the 2016 presidential election Jean Ping, have been denied the right to leave the country; urges the Gabonese authorities to immediately overturn this decision;
3. Insists that the freedom of expression and the freedom of assembly must be upheld in Gabon; stresses the importance of preserving the necessary space for the Gabonese opposition to play its proper role;
4. Calls on all political actors to show responsibility and restraint, and in particular, to refrain from inciting violence;
5. Notes the holding of a national political dialogue; believes that a genuine and inclusive dialogue is the only path to a peaceful and democratic Gabon; stresses the need to press forward with much needed truly democratic institutional reforms;
6. Reiterates the need for independent and objective investigation into the election-related violence and the allegations of serious violations for human rights and fundamental freedoms; welcomes the recent visit of ICC representatives to Gabon; stresses that there can be no impunity for the abuses committed during the post-electoral crisis and that ensuring proper follow-up is essential for reconciliation and the future of the country;
7. Urges the Government of Gabon to conduct a thorough and expeditious reform of the electoral framework, taking account of the recommendations made by the EU EOM, in order to improve it and make it fully transparent and credible; stresses that the Gabonese authorities must guarantee full and sincere cooperation with all relevant national and international stakeholders in order to ensure that the next parliamentary elections, already overdue, are fully transparent and credible and take place in a free, democratic, inclusive and peaceful environment;
8. Calls on the Gabonese authorities to ratify the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance at the earliest opportunity;
9. Calls on the EU Delegation to use all appropriate tools and instruments to support human rights defenders and pro-democracy movements, and to conduct an enhanced political dialogue with the authorities, as enshrined in Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement;
10. Recalls, moreover, that the EU and ACP countries, in collaboration with the UN and the African Union, will continue to monitor closely the overall situation in Gabon;
11. 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 African Union, the President, Prime Minister and Parliament of Gabon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the UN Human Rights Council and the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.