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REPORT

containing the European Parliament's recommendation to the Council on the conclusion of a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Syrian Arab Republic, of the other part
(2006/2150(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

Rapporteur: Véronique De Keyser

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

containing the European Parliament's recommendation to the Council on the conclusion of a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Syrian Arab Republic, of the other part (2006/2150(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal for a recommendation to the Council by Véronique De Keyser on behalf of the PSE Group on the negotiations with a view to the conclusion of a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Syrian Arab Republic, of the other part (B6-0373/2006),
 - having regard to the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Syrian Arab Republic, of the other part (COM (2004)0808)¹,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Syria, and particularly those of 8 September 2005 on the situation of political prisoners in Syria² and of 15 June 2006 on Syria³,
 - having regard to the Seventh European Parliament–Syria Interparliamentary Meeting, held in Syria from 11 to 18 June 2005,
 - having regard to the Barcelona Process Declaration of 28 November 1995 and its resolution of 27 October 2005 on the Barcelona Process Revisited⁴,
 - having regard to the UN's resolutions on relations between Syria and Lebanon, particularly Security Council Resolutions 1559(2004) of 2 September 2004 and 1701(2006) of 11 August 2006, and the recent report by Mr Serge Brammertz, head of the International Independent Investigation Commission, (S/2006/760) of 25 September 2006,
 - having regard to Rules 83(5) and 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A6-0334/2006),
- A. whereas Syria is of geostrategic importance in this region of the Near and Middle East, mainly in view of its potential role as a link between the parties in the peace process and a facilitator of a resolution of the regional conflict; whereas this role could be enhanced by stepping up the dialogue with this country,
- B. whereas at present the elements necessary for the signing of an association agreement

¹ OJ ...

² *Texts Adopted* of that date, P6_TA(2005)0340.

³ *Texts Adopted* of that date, P6_TA(2005)0279.

⁴ *Texts Adopted* of that date, P6_TA(2005)0412.

between the EU and Syria are not yet fulfilled, but whereas the European Parliament is convinced that Syria has the potential to meet the necessary conditions,

- C. whereas the Iraq war, Syria's strategic relations with Iran and its involvement in the affairs of Lebanon have all impacted on Syria's relations with its neighbours and the wider international community,
- D. whereas the aim of this agreement between the European Community and Syria is to encourage and support the transition to a democratic political system respecting human rights and civil liberties and an open and market-based economy, while remaining within the framework of an effective dialogue and real partnership,
- E. whereas Syria has already adopted a number of the economic measures advocated by the forthcoming association agreement,
- F. whereas the protection of fundamental freedoms is the foundation for any development towards a strong and independent civil society and whereas the government's position has in recent years been ambiguous but has nevertheless encouraged some hope for greater opening up of the Syrian political system,
- G. whereas in spite of its active and constructive participation in the Barcelona Process, Syria is the only country with which the EU has not yet signed an association agreement, thus preventing the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership from fully developing,
- H. whereas the decree of March 1963 on the state of emergency and all the legislative acts referring to it are still in force today, although in the recommendations following the tenth regional congress of the Baath Party (held from 6 to 9 June 2005) there was provision for their review,
- I. whereas the conclusions of the international independent commission investigating, in accordance with the Security Council's resolutions, the fatal attack on the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri are a fundamental element for the signing of a future association agreement,
- J. whereas the human rights situation in the country has worsened since the above-mentioned last European Parliament resolution on Syria of 15 June 2006, and whereas the activists detained in May 2006 for signing a petition for improved Syrian-Lebanese relations have not all been released,
 1. Is convinced that the association agreement could give a decisive impetus to the political, economic and social reforms needed to improve the country's situation;
 2. Reiterates, however, that respect for democratic values, human rights and civil liberties are prerequisites, and that, to this end, an effective control mechanism should be included in the agreement's human rights clause; calls, in particular, for greater respect for ethnic minorities and reiterates the need to maintain freedom of religion;
 3. Believes that anchoring Syria firmly within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership will reinforce Syria's relations with the Member States of the European Union and its partners

in the Southern Mediterranean, and facilitate the Middle East peace process;

4. Questions the Council and Commission on the next steps towards signing the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement, initialled as long ago as 19 October 2004;
5. Asks the Council to strengthen its initiatives with a view to deepening the cooperation between the EU and Syria and ultimately signing that agreement, while taking account of the following recommendations:
 - encourage and support actions by the Syrian Government towards the establishment of a democratic system;
 - call on Syria to respect Lebanon's sovereignty and abstain from interfering in its internal affairs, in particular by stopping arms supplies and preventing Hezbollah militias from rearming in full cooperation with UNIFIL, and make renewed efforts so as to restart a credible peace process in the region leading to a comprehensive settlement and the restitution to Damascus of the Golan Heights;
 - take account of the political signals emanating from the tenth regional congress of the Baath Party, of which the most conspicuous is the change in the leadership team to include younger figures close to President Al-Assad, as is shown by the appointment of Abdallah Dardari as deputy prime minister;
 - give particular attention to the application of the clauses in the agreement seeking to make public contracts more transparent; call on the Commission to ensure that other bilateral or multilateral agreements follow that approach;
 - call on the Syrian Government to adopt measures in the fields of democracy and human rights so as to comply with international human rights law as regards respect for freedom of expression, the protection of human rights defenders, the prevention of and the fight against torture and the abolition of the death penalty; in particular, draw attention to the necessary reform of the Syrian associations law so as to end all major restrictions as regards the activities of human rights organisations;
 - nevertheless, put to the Syrian Government its serious concerns about the absence of progress in such areas as opening up to multi-party politics and respect for human rights and civil liberties; point out that respect for human rights constitutes a vital component in this association agreement and call on Syria to respect its commitments within the framework of the Barcelona Process and along the lines of the European Neighbourhood Policy; call on Syria in this perspective to do what is needed to immediately lift the state of emergency;
 - call on the Syrian Government to reconsider the case of political prisoners and release all prisoners of conscience and peace activists, and to allow the existence of groups such as the signatories of the Damascus Declaration, signed on 16 October 2005 by five proscribed parties and by independent personalities, and the signatories of the Beirut-Damascus/Damascus-Beirut Declaration of 14 May 2006; call on Syria to ensure that detained or imprisoned persons are well treated, not subjected to torture and are given prompt, regular and unrestricted access to their lawyers, doctors and

families;

- denounce before the Syrian Government – as Parliament has done in its above resolution of 15 June 2006 – the wave of arrests in response to the Beirut-Damascus/Damascus-Beirut Declaration, the first joint initiative by Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals and human rights defenders, and call for their immediate release;
- address the concerns of the European Union with regard to respecting the rights of religious and other minorities, and of the Kurds in particular; call on the Syrian Government to report on the state of progress with these issues;
- re-open a genuine dialogue with Syria with a view to involving it in peace efforts towards an overall settlement of the Middle East conflict;
- urge Syria to play a constructive role in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701, and call on it specifically to step up controls on its side of the Syria-Lebanon border so as to prevent the supply of arms to non-state entities;
- point out that cooperation by the Syrian authorities with the UN International Independent Investigation Commission headed by judge Brammertz has improved, but insist that it is further stepped up and that practical action is taken to follow up the investigation and comply with its findings;
- insist that Syria fully complies with UN Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1562, 1680 and 1701 and with the European Council's declaration on Lebanon of 16 and 17 June 2006, which call on Syria and Lebanon to delineate their common frontier to reinforce regional stability; call on Syria to make a positive contribution to the clarification of the final status of the Shebaa Farms area in accordance with the UN Secretary-General's recommendations of 12 September 2006 and in compliance with international law;
- note positively in this connection the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanese territory; yet call firmly on the Syrian Government to establish formal diplomatic relations with Lebanon, which has so far been refused, and to stop supporting Hezbollah;
- call on the Syrian Government to give an account of its practical actions to combat the proliferation of weapons and against terrorism and al-Qa'ida and on the control of its frontiers to prohibit the smuggling of weapons and the crossing of terrorists into neighbouring countries;
- deplore in this connection the signing of a military agreement concluded with Iran on 15 June 2006 on strengthening mutual cooperation in the face of American and Israeli 'threats';
- draw the attention of Syria to the importance of its potential role in the Near and Middle East for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the region; address the concerns over Syrian support to Damascus-based Palestinian militant groups Hamas and Islamic

Jihad at the expense of moderate Palestinian forces that seek coexistence and peace with Israel;

- call on the Syrian Government to improve the living and environmental conditions of Palestinian refugee camps in Syria in accordance with international human rights standards;
 - call on the Syrian Government to release Yacoub Hanna Shamoun, an Assyrian Christian who has been incarcerated for over twenty years without due process or a release date in the near future;
 - exercise caution in the repatriation to Syria of immigrants and refugees belonging to religious minorities as long as repression continues; and, in any event, improve coordination of the different Member States' national approaches to this issue;
 - call for support for a dialogue between Syria and Parliament on these various points, so as to go forward with the cooperation between the EU and Syria with the expectation of signing the association agreement;
6. Requests the Council to consider additional incentives and benefits for Syria, going beyond those granted through the association agreement, in order to encourage Syria to review its current foreign policy and regional alignment in ways that will help promote regional peace, stability and prosperity and, in particular, recognition of the State of Israel's right to exist and support by Syria for progress in the Middle East peace process;
7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution containing the European Parliament's recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Government and Majlis al-Sha'ab of the Syrian Arab Republic.

19.6.2006

PROPOSAL FOR A RECOMMENDATION B6-0373/2006

pursuant to Rule 114(1) of the Rules of Procedure

by Véronique De Keyser,

on behalf of the PSE Group

on the negotiations with a view to the conclusion of a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Syrian Arab Republic, of the other part

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Syrian Arab Republic, of the other part (COM(2004)0808),¹ which is currently under negotiation,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Syria, particularly that of 8 September 2005 on the situation of political prisoners in Syria² and that of 15 June 2006,³
 - having regard to the United Nations resolutions on relations between Syria and Lebanon, in particular Security Council Resolution 1680 (2006) of 17 May 2006, and the latest report by Mr Serge Brammertz, head of the International Independent Investigation Commission, dated 14 June 2006,
 - having regard to Rule 114(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Syria is currently in a period of transition which may lead it towards a social market economy, a more democratic political regime and greater respect for human rights,
- B. whereas the future association agreement and the strengthening of relations between the European Union and Syria in permanent mutual respect may enable this development to be sustained,
- C. whereas the final conclusions of the International Independent Investigation Commission into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri are a decisive factor in the signing and ratification of the association agreement,

¹ OJ C 55, 4.3.2005, p. 7.

² Texts adopted on that date, P6_TA(2005)0340.

³ Texts adopted on that date, P6_TA(2006)0279.

1. Calls on the Council to step up its efforts towards the signing of the agreement, and to take account of the following recommendations:
 - (a) to be mindful of the fact that, while the draft accord between the European Union and Syria is modelled on the other Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements in force, it also contains new provisions, relating inter alia to non-proliferation of weapons, the fight against terrorism, reduction of customs tariffs, and the right of establishment, which has made the negotiations more complex;
 - (b) to take account of the political signals emerging from the 10th Baath Party Regional Congress, the most visible of which is the introduction of a new and younger leadership;
 - (c) to take steps with the Syrian Government to ensure that it lifts the state of emergency, which would help the rule of law to progress, while respecting the spirit of Article 2 of the agreement;
2. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council and, for information, to the Commission, and to the Syrian Parliament and Government.

PROCEDURE

Title	European Parliament recommendation to the Council on the conclusion of a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Syrian Arab Republic, of the other part
Procedure number	2006/2150(INI)
Committee responsible Date authorisation announced in plenary	AFET 6.7.2006
Committee(s) asked for opinion(s) Date announced in plenary	INTA 6.7.2006
Not delivering opinion Date of decision	INTA 11.7.2006
Enhanced cooperation Date announced in plenary	
Rapporteur(s) Date appointed	Véronique De Keyser 18.1.2005
Previous rapporteur(s)	
Discussed in committee	11.7.2006 13.9.2006 4.10.2006
Date adopted	5.10.2006
Result of final vote	+: 34 -: 1 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Bastiaan Belder, Simon Coveney, Ryszard Czarnecki, Véronique De Keyser, Camiel Eurlings, Alfred Gomolka, Richard Howitt, Ioannis Kasoulides, Bogdan Klich, Helmut Kuhne, Vytautas Landsbergis, Francisco José Millán Mon, Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, Raimon Obiols i Germà, Cem Özdemir, Tobias Pflüger, Hubert Pirker, Bernd Posselt, Michel Rocard, Raúl Romeva i Rueda, György Schöpflin, Gitte Seeberg, Marek Siwiec, Hannes Swoboda, István Szent-Iványi, Charles Tannock, Geoffrey Van Orden, Ari Vatanen, Luis Yañez-Barnuevo García
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Alexandra Dobolyi, Árpád Duka-Zólyomi, Patrick Gaubert, Jaromír Kohlíček, Erik Meijer, Jean Spautz
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	Viktória Mohácsi
Date tabled	10.10.2006
Comments (available in one language only)	...