

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Committee on Foreign Affairs

2007/2139(INI)

4.10.2007

OPINION

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Development

on the European Union and humanitarian aid
(2007/2139(INI))

Draftsman: Vittorio Agnoletto

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Supports the Commission proposal to sign an interinstitutional declaration on the 'European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid' to enhance the political objectives, procedures, principles and technical instruments of European humanitarian aid, which looks set to become the first true policy orientation document since the approval in 1996 of the technical regulations concerning aid management;
2. Is convinced of the urgent need to make the humanitarian actions of the EU and its 27 Member States complementary, consistent, effective and coordinated from a technical and political point of view, in order to optimise the global humanitarian response; supports the emphasis placed by the Commission on the need for greater coordination between the EU and the Member States, which is a key and decisive aspect of the future declaration; calls on the Council and the Member States to support the Commission's strategy and to make humanitarian action a moral and political imperative based on the solidarity of European citizenship and effectiveness of the aid, rather than on national or post-colonial interest;
3. Calls on the Council and Member States, above all, to respect the political commitments and deadlines set out in the 'Hyogo Framework for Action', signed in Kobe by 168 countries during the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction, which seeks to reduce by 50% the loss of human lives in humanitarian disasters by 2015 and to promote greater coordination between humanitarian aid and development;
4. Is aware of the need to protect and deepen the principles of the humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian aid – breach of which could comprise both humanitarian workers and the populations involved – without overlooking genuine humanitarian needs and emergencies, while paying special attention to the most vulnerable sections of the population, such as women and children, and to respect also the principle of non-discrimination in the distribution of that aid; is, moreover, convinced that emergency humanitarian aid is a political complement to the revival of, or support for, the attempt to find political and diplomatic solutions to the crises which gave rise to the emergency; takes the view that the concept of 'Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development' (LRRD) should be a strategic feature of the EU's external and humanitarian action; concurs, therefore, with the Commission's proposal to identify a number of LRRD pilot countries with experience in this field, with particular reference to specific regions which are suffering drastically from the effects of climate change and need to be kept under special surveillance, and considers this to be a vital factor for the success of the EU's humanitarian strategies;
5. Stresses that humanitarian aid must take account of self-development and self-sufficiency and must not be geared towards making the countries or regions to which the aid is given too dependent on further aid or external assistance;

6. Considers that more attention should be paid to the safety and protection of aid workers, who regularly have to venture into dangerous areas; deplores the fact that they are far too frequently the victims of senseless violence, imprisonment or hostage-taking; roundly condemns any action taken against aid workers;
7. Considers that priority for humanitarian aid should as far as possible be given to the weaker and most vulnerable groups, particularly women and children; takes the view, therefore, that humanitarian aid should pay more attention to development, education and training, so that vulnerable groups can become more rapidly aware of their situation and the aid supplied can contribute more effectively to remedying the local situation;
8. Believes that EU humanitarian aid should be backed up also by political and diplomatic measures to make compliance with international law, especially international humanitarian law, a priority for the country receiving the aid; in this regard, considers compliance with and implementation of the 2005 operational guidelines by third countries and, possibly, by 'non-state' stakeholders in international humanitarian aid to be a priority;
9. Is convinced that the neutral, independent nature of the EU's humanitarian action should go hand-in-hand with the promotion of the neutrality of the action and its independence of any form of active military assistance; notes that in the case of some humanitarian disasters it may prove necessary to provide military protection, in accordance with international law, for the delivery of humanitarian aid;
10. Points to the need to ensure the safety of aid workers and humanitarian workers as a whole, and to make sure that under no circumstances does the use of civil-defence resources and military capabilities hamper the work of humanitarian organisations, but rather complements and supports that work;
11. Shares the growing alarm over the impact of climate change on humanitarian food-related emergencies which are chiefly due to natural disasters (flooding, fires, desertification, agricultural crises, etc.); calls on the Commission to link humanitarian aid with action against climate change in the relevant international fora and to place greater emphasis on the preventive aspects of humanitarian aid, so as to reduce the risks of disasters through better preparation ahead of crises;
12. Considers it important that special attention be paid to the position of vulnerable groups (women, children and elderly people); also takes the view that this should be included in the definition of humanitarian aid;
13. Is prepared to accept the proposed criteria for the selection of partners such as the UN, NGOs and the Red Cross, and is aware how vital it is that there should be accountability and transparency with regard to the results achieved; stresses, however, the need to prevent the unnecessary proliferation of red tape in these partner organisations, so that they can allocate their staff and resources principally to the provision of humanitarian aid.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	2.10.2007
Result of final vote	+: 21 -: 0 0: 3
Members present for the final vote	Vittorio Agnoletto, Christopher Beazley, Véronique De Keyser, Richard Howitt, Metin Kazak, Vytautas Landsbergis, Pasqualina Napolitano, Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, Raimon Obiols i Germà, Vural Öger, Hubert Pirker, Samuli Pohjamo, Libor Rouček, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Hannes Swoboda, Josef Zieleniec
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Giulietto Chiesa, Alexandra Dobolyi, Árpád Duka-Zólyomi, Evgeni Kirilov, Marios Matsakis, Yiannakis Matsis, Luis Yañez-Barnuevo García
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	