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B5-0393/2000

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Oral Question B5-0217/00

pursuant to Rule 42(5) of the Rules of Procedure

by Mario Mauro and Dominique Souchet

on behalf of the UEN Group

on the economic consequences for the forestry industry of the exceptionally harsh storms which hit Europe, and particularly France, in December 1999

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B5-0393/2000**Resolution on the economic consequences for the forestry industry of the exceptionally harsh storms which hit Europe, and particularly France, in December 1999**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the objectives set out by the Commission in its communication COM(88) 255 on Community strategy and actions in the forestry sector,
 - having regard to its resolution of 30 January 1997¹ on the EU's forestry strategy, setting out a number of demands and calling on the Commission to react within two years,
 - having regard to the Commission's response to Parliament's resolution of 30 January 1997, as expressed in its communication of 18 April 1998 on 'A forestry strategy for the EU',
 - having regard to the communication of 5 October 1999 from the Commission's Enterprise DG on the state of the competitiveness of the EU forest-based and related industries (COM(1999) 457),
 - having regard to its resolution of 20 January 2000 calling on the Commission to submit practical proposals should it be established that the available funds for assistance are insufficient,
- A. having regard to the particular violence of the severe storms which hit the territory of several EU Member States between 24 and 28 December 1999,
- B. having regard to the economic, social and environmental consequences of this disaster,
- C. having regard to the number of jobs provided by the timber industry in the EU,
- D. having regard to the significant beneficial impact of the forestry industry on employment, especially in rural areas, and on the balanced development of the regions,
- E. having regard to the concerns it has voiced on numerous occasions in relation to the disappearance of forests worldwide,
- F. whereas it is essential to avoid an enormous waste of top-quality industrial raw materials, and whereas the sale of windfall timber should be supported,
- G. whereas the timber industry risks being disastrously affected by a raw materials shortage in the medium term,
- H. having regard to the difficulties relating to the transport of unsquared timber and the storage of windfall timber,

¹ OJ C 55, 24.2.1997, p. 22

- I. whereas a profitable and sustainable forestry sector is essential to ensure the competitiveness of the timber industry,
 - J. having regard to the severe problems facing local authorities in timber-producing areas which are suffering economic damage through the loss of their financial resources,
 - K. having regard to the lack of resources and information facing many local authorities in their search for suitable assistance and their efforts to use the timber from fallen or uprooted trees,
 - L. having regard to the plots of farmland, situated on the edge of forests, which are now covered by the trees uprooted by the storms and which are, as things stand, no longer eligible for EU aid,
 - M. having regard to the plant-health and forest-fire risks and the budget cuts affecting the anti-forest fire programmes,
 - N. whereas a large number of measures under the common policies have an impact on forests,
 - O. whereas the funds that have been released are not sufficient to replant the forests on the scale required,
- 1. Expresses concern at the economic vicissitudes represented by the slump in timber sales, the weakness of timber prices and the raw materials shortage which is likely to affect the timber industry within two or three years from now;
 - 2. Points out that the Union's forestry strategy is based on the subsidiarity principle and on a forestry model which is sustainable in economic, ecological, biological, social and cultural terms;
 - 3. Wonders at the paradoxical lack of a Community budget heading which would clear the way for emergency intervention to assist an EU Member State affected by a major natural disaster and support for national schemes to aid the victims and promote reconstruction, even though the budget earmarks resources for precisely this type of action if a disaster occurs outside the Union;
 - 4. Stresses the far-reaching implications of this disaster for the economy of the regions affected, especially for tourism and industry, as well as for agriculture, fisheries, marine crops and marine aquaculture;
 - 5. Stresses the extent of the damage caused, in particular, to communities located in wetlands where the cost of clearing waterway networks is particularly high;
 - 6. Calls on the Commission to promote investment in forestry undertakings in order to assist them with felling, carting and, above all, the organisation of storage;

7. Calls on the Commission to grant temporary derogations for forestry machinery which does not comply with EU standards;
8. Calls on the Commission, in the wake of this crisis, to relax the Community rules governing the markets concerned;
9. Calls on the Council and Commission to take exceptional, tailored measures to relax the Community rules on competition and aid to undertakings, as well as those concerning ecologically sensitive areas (in particular Natura 2000), with a view to facilitating reconstruction and the relaunching of economic activity;
10. Points out that the single market rules applicable to forestry products include the usual EU competition rules relating to state aids, amalgamations and mergers, and believes that the Commission should exercise a degree of tolerance in this area;
11. Calls on the Commission to step up its support for the forestry sector whenever there is a possibility of supplementing national aid with Community aid, and calls for appropriate assessment of the utilisation of Community funds;
12. Calls on the Commission to focus its efforts on improving coordination between its DGs on forestry matters;
13. Calls on the Commission to encourage the financing of R & D activities concerning, for example, the assessment of storage techniques and the potential impact on biodiversity, climate and public health;
14. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that all measures taken to implement the Kyoto Protocol respect the principle of sustainable forestry;
15. Calls on the Commission to submit a communication on the replanting of forests, based on a reforestation policy which gives priority to biodiversity, the precautionary principle and the sustainable development principle;
16. Calls on the Commission to organise an information campaign to promote forestry products, with a view to encouraging their consumption and, consequently, maintaining price levels;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments of the Member States and the local authorities of the regions affected.