

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

1999



2004

Session document

11 December 2002

B5-0641/2002

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Oral Questions B5-0508/2002 and B5-0509/2002

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

by Elmar Brok

on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common
Security and Defence Policy

on the conclusion of an Association Agreement with the Republic of Lebanon

B5-0641/2002

European Parliament resolution on the conclusion of an Association Agreement with the Republic of Lebanon

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal for a decision of the Council presented by the Commission (COM(2002) 170)¹,
 - having regard to the draft Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement between the European Community and its Member States of the one part, and the Republic of Lebanon, of the other part,
 - having regard to its assent of to the proposal for a decision of 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 Republic of Lebanon, of the other part (10820/2002 - COM(2002) 170 - C5-0395/2002 - 2002/0083 (AVC)),
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 March 1998 concerning Lebanese citizens illegally detained in Syria,
- A. having in mind the close relationship which has existed between the European Union and Lebanon for decades and the importance of the current political, economic and cultural relations,
 - B. mindful of the importance that Lebanon has always had and the role this country could play in the search of an acceptable and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East,
 - C. whereas with the consolidation of democracy it was possible to achieve the reconciliation of the people in the country - the most important goal after 16 years of destructive war; hoping that the existing diversity and pluralism in Lebanese society will be taken as a positive foundation to support civil peace,
 - D. whereas the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the south of the country in May 2000, implementing UNSC Resolution 425, marked a step forward in the process of normalisation of the country, although the situation of the Shebaa farms and the establishment of definite borders with Israel are still pending issues,
 - E. welcoming the withdrawal of a part of the Syrian troops and hoping that those still stationed in the country will in the future also leave the country by virtue of an agreement with the Lebanese government,
 - F. having regard to Article 2 of the Association Agreement, which stipulates that respect for democratic principles and fundamental human rights, as set out in the Universal

¹ Not yet published

Declaration on Human Rights, guides their internal and international policy and constitutes an essential element of this agreement,

- G. whereas 17 000 Lebanese citizens are still recorded as missing, and their families are distraught in the absence of a response from the authorities on the fate of their relations, and calling the countries of the region concerned to find a solution as regards citizens of neighbouring countries detained illegally,
- H. deeply concerned by the precarious situation of more than 300 000 Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon,
- I. having regard to the exchange of letters between the two sides on cooperation in the fight against terrorism which had accompanied the signing of the agreement and by which the two sides undertake to co-operate in preventing and punishing acts of terrorism, in particular by means of the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1373, to exchange information on terrorist groups and their support networks and on the resources and methods used against terrorism, as well as sharing their experiences in the prevention of terrorism,
- J. having regard to the current enormous national debt and the interest on the debt repayments, which accounts for a large proportion of public revenue,
- K. welcoming the results of the Conference of Donors held in Paris on 23 November,
- L. whereas a too general reference to parliamentary control of the agreement has been included in the new agreement, and whereas the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly would increase the parliamentary input in the follow-up to the Euro-Mediterranean association agreements,
 1. Welcomes the Council proposal to conclude a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement with Lebanon and hopes that this agreement will help to improve the political, economic and social situation of this country;
 2. Calls on the Lebanese Government to submit to the consideration of the Lebanese Parliament the issue of the presence of Syrian troops stationed in the country by virtue of an agreement with the Lebanese Government, with regard to the relevant UN resolutions, notably Resolution 520/1982 of the Security Council, in order to reach agreement on the withdrawal of all non-Lebanese troops from Lebanon, with full respect for that country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence;
 3. Reaffirms that respect for human rights constitutes an essential element of the new Association Agreement, which must be implemented and closely monitored in order to really enhance respect for human rights in Lebanon;
 4. Encourage the Lebanese authorities to give positive signs in this direction by abolishing the death penalty, by ratifying the UN Convention against torture, by signing the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, by launching reform of the legal system, setting clear and defined limits to the competences of the military jurisdiction, by settling

the question of missing persons and by cooperating with all the UN human rights agencies;

5. Believes that freedom of expression and association are a cornerstone of a democratic society, recalls that it implies in particular freedom of the press, whatever the instrument (paper, radio, TV, etc.) used to disseminate the information, and stresses the need to extend the scope of its effectiveness and to avoid any discrimination on political grounds; expresses concern at the forced shut-down of the MTV television channel on 4 September 2002;
6. Undertakes to cooperate with the Lebanese Parliament to establish procedures for a regular political dialogue also in the framework of Article 2 of the agreement and calls on the Council and Commission to establish combined procedures for the regular assessment and the implementation of the principles laid down in Article 2; these common procedures shall take into account the views of Lebanese civil society;
7. Calls on the Commission to reconsider its priorities in relation to Lebanon by including human rights issues in the national indicative programme 2002-2004, and to embark upon cooperation in this area immediately by supporting civil society and the independent NGOs through the MEDA programme;
8. Expresses its support for the programme of economic reforms undertaken by Prime Minister Hariri and hopes that these reforms will improve Lebanon's position in the regional and international economy; calls on the Member States to take into consideration the enormous public debt problem faced by the Lebanese authorities;
9. Encourages both the Lebanese authorities and the Council and the Commission to take advantage of the political dialogue created by the new agreement, including it in the framework of increased regional cooperation with all the Euro-Mediterranean partners, in order to play together a proactive role in the Middle-East region, in order to reach a fair, global and lasting peace to the conflict in the region, in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions; social and economic development in Lebanon would thus be favoured;
10. Welcomes the reference to the interparliamentary relations explicitly made in Article 5.2 of the new agreement and reiterates that this dialogue should specially take place in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, whose creation was decided in April 2002 at the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial meeting in Valencia and whose main task should be the follow-up and parliamentary control of the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements; calls therefore on the Council to set up this Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly in close contact with the parliaments involved as soon as possible;
11. Expresses its concern about the periodic episodes of tension at the border between Lebanon and Israel and calls on the players involved to abstain from any action that could hamper regional stability;
12. Welcomes Lebanon's strong commitment to the implementation of Resolution 1373 of the UN Security Council, including the freezing of assets of terrorist groups, and calls on the

Council and Commission to include an anti-terrorist clause with a similar content in all future agreements of this kind as decided at the Seville European Council; calls on the Lebanese Government to remain vigilant against possible acts by armed groups operating along the border line with Israel;

13. Welcomes the declared objective of establishing a free trade area over a transitional period not exceeding 12 years for the entry into force of the agreement;
14. Supports the European Union determination to assist Lebanon in the economic restructuring of the country, including modernising the customs authority, competition legislation, trade enhancement, strengthening the trade administration needed to implement the agreement and to prepare for Lebanon's WTO accession, improvement of intellectual property agencies and some other related fields, such as administrative reforms and anti-corruption policies;
15. Welcomes the agreement's provisions on dialogue and co-operation on social and cultural matters;
16. Urges the parties to conclude a bilateral readmission agreement, such as the one referred to in Article 69 of the Association Agreement, that should also cover arrangements for the readmission of third country nationals;
17. Calls on both parties to the Association Agreement to commit themselves to cooperate and to use all the instruments at their disposal to tackle the problems caused by illegal immigration;
18. Is convinced that the Lebanese authorities will carefully respect their commitments on judicial cooperation and respect for the rule of law included in the Association Agreement, as well as the international rules on money laundering, on combating organising crime and illicit drugs and on migration and readmission issues for Lebanese and third country nationals;
19. Notes that there are large areas of land intended for the cultivation of crops for the production of illicit drugs, and calls on the Lebanese authorities to eradicate crops of this kind with extreme firmness;
20. Welcomes Lebanon's solidarity effort regarding the temporary hosting of Palestinian refugees; calls on the international community to increase its efforts in the region concerning the problem of the Palestinian refugees; encourages the European Union and the Lebanese authorities to implement this new Association Agreement in a way that could also benefit the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian people living in difficult conditions in the country; calls on the Lebanese authorities to ratify the Geneva Convention on the status of refugees, to put an end to possible discrimination against refugees and asylum seekers, ensuring the protection of those subject to expulsion, and to facilitate the integration of those who wish to do so;
21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Lebanese Government and the Parliament of Lebanon.