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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to the Council and Commission statements

pursuant to Rule 37(2) of the Rules of Procedure

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

on the outcome of the European Council (Brussels, 20-21 March 2003)

European Parliament resolution on the outcome of the European Council (Brussels, 20-21 March 2003)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Brussels European Council conclusions of 20 and 21 March 2003,
 - having regard to the Lisbon European Council conclusions of 23 and 24 March 2000, the Göteborg European Council conclusions of 15 and 16 June 2001, the Barcelona European Council conclusions of 15 and 16 March 2002, and the conclusions of 16 September 2002 on the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development,
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 February 2003 on the preparation of this year's Spring Summit,
- A. whereas the third annual spring meeting was intended to set the direction for the Union's economic, social and environmental action in order to meet the objectives of the Lisbon strategy, and whereas this Council took place in a particularly difficult political situation,

General remarks

1. Emphasises that the already weak outlook for economic development and employment has been exacerbated by the war waged in Iraq by the United States with the support of some other countries, including EU Member States;
2. Calls upon the Heads of State to instruct their ministers meeting in the decision-making Council formations to give up blocking important dossiers on the basis of purely national interests and to place the common interest of Europe in the forefront;
3. Strongly condemns in this context the manoeuvres of Italy's Prime Minister Berlusconi, who entered into an impossible horse-trading exercise on totally unrelated issues (taxation against milk quotas) and nearly caused the energy taxation proposal to fail; recalls that such attempts at blackmailing are only possible because of unanimity requirements in the Council; condemns the fact that Italy continues to block the long-awaited directive on savings taxation; urges, therefore, that unanimity on tax issues be replaced by a qualified majority in the Council with codecision by Parliament;
4. Deplores the fact that many short-term 'actions' enumerated in the Council's conclusions consist only in reiterating the Lisbon goals, or merely call for existing initiatives to be speeded up or for new paperwork to be presented;
5. Urges the Council to attach equal importance to the environmental pillar of sustainable development as it does to the economic and social pillars at the Spring Summit meetings, in order to reach a 'new impetus'; regrets that the European Council has not yet managed to ensure that sustainable development becomes the overarching aspect of the forthcoming Spring Councils;

Economic policies

6. Agrees with the Council that promoting sustainable growth, creating more and better jobs, and modernising the European social model must remain firmly at the top of the Union's agenda; notes, however, that agreement on general aims is not sufficient and needs to be complemented by agreement on the appropriate instruments to be employed to achieve these aims;
7. Is concerned about the economic prospects of the world economy and the European economy in particular; deplores, therefore, the fact that the Spring Summit failed to open the way to a flexible application of the Stability and Growth Pact with the aim of allowing for increased investment in fields crucial to enhancing the potential rate of growth in the European Union, including investment in education and training;
8. Regards the agreement reached on the taxation of energy products as a late and hesitant step in the right direction; criticises, however, the fact that some Member States tried to put the interests of particular national enterprises above the common interest; reiterates its view that common systems of taxation of energy products are necessary to avoid harmful tax competition between Member States at the expense of the environment;
9. Urges the Council to draw firm conclusions from its own analysis that pressing ahead with action in the environmental field is an important factor for innovation and that environmental targets work as a catalyst for innovation and modernisation in key sectors such as energy and transport, and will promote new investment and employment;

Building a knowledge-based society

10. Notes with satisfaction the welcome given to the Barcelona objective of allocating 3% of GNP (Gross National Product) to R&D (Research and Development), recalls the importance of the fundamental research that lays down the basis of scientific knowledge that is essential for innovation, and stresses that this budgetary increase must take place with an eye to sustainable development and respect for the environment;
11. Regrets the fact that the Council and the Commission intend to study the application of R&D to defence and security; takes the view that the possible creation of an intergovernmental agency for the development of defence capacity has no legal base and believes, therefore, that the Commission is circumventing Article 28 of the Treaty on European Union, which excludes from European funding 'expenditure arising from operations having military or defence implications', and calls for Parliament to be fully involved in any such procedure;
12. Underlines the importance, particularly for SMEs, of copyright protection for software in order to speed up the achievement of a knowledge-based society and to fulfil the Lisbon objectives;
13. Welcomes the adoption of the Community Patent and proposes that this opportunity should be taken to review the operation of the EPO (European Patent Office) with a view to ensuring that it is publicly accountable in the exercise of its functions, as called for by the European Parliament in its resolution published in the Official Journal of 8 December

2000;

14. Firmly supports the Commission's intention of encouraging sharing of 3G (third-generation mobile telephony) infrastructure for economic, health and environmental reasons; stresses the importance both of independent scientific research on the health effects of electromagnetic waves and of democratic rules on licensing the setting up of antenna repeaters, bearing in mind the precautionary principle, as enshrined in the EU Treaty, and the need for dialogue with affected residents;

Modernising the European Social Model

15. Invites the Council to draw practical conclusions from its acknowledgement that full employment must continue to be a major goal of the Union; takes favourable note of the Council's request to the Commission to report to next year's Spring Summit on improving the overall framework for social protection policies;
16. Criticises the fact that in recommendations on how to reduce unemployment no consideration has been given to reducing average working time; recalls that encouraging people to take up a job by tax-benefit reforms, as proposed in the Council's conclusions, will not work unless jobs are available in the first place;
17. Reminds the Council that the quality of jobs is part of the Union's employment strategy and reiterates its demand for labour market reforms to strike the right balance between flexibility and security;
18. Doubts whether the newly created European Employment Task Force (under its appointed leader Wim Kok), which will act in parallel with the Employment Committee established under Article 130 of the Treaty, is necessary and that it will be able to overcome the reluctance of the ministers concerned to implement appropriate policies;
19. Is disappointed that the European Council did not set out clear political guidelines for the safeguarding of high-quality services of general interest as part of the European Union;

The Environmental Dimension of Sustainability

20. Shares the Council's concerns that the Union has not yet succeeded in decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation and resource use; deplores the slow progress in the Member States towards meeting the Kyoto Protocol targets and the fact that no targets have been adopted on energy efficiency;
21. Strongly supports the urging of the European Council for other parties, and especially the Russian Federation, to ratify the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible, as this will allow its entry into force, and welcomes the forthcoming visit to the Duma by a specific EP delegation on this subject;
22. Is convinced that a fully fledged sustainable development strategy would have to highlight the important role of energy efficiency and demand-related policies when it comes to the competitiveness of the European economy; urges therefore that an indicator for energy use be incorporated in the list of general economic background indicators and a goal on

energy intensity be included in the list of headline Lisbon targets;

23. Believes that the environmental indicators developed by the Commission and included in the list of structural indicators cannot but be a starting point for future assessments of sustainable development, but that this list needs to be further elaborated and developed, notably in the fields of biodiversity and resource use;
24. Expresses its firm conviction that a successful sustainable development strategy, with its components of social, economic and environmental policies, requires more, rather than less, Europe, on the firm basis of the subsidiarity principle, and better, rather than simply less, regulation, on the basis of democratic governance;
25. Regrets that the Council did not state how its declared commitment to providing leadership in promoting sustainable development around the world would translate into action in external policy; expresses its dissatisfaction at the fact that the target of a worldwide share of at least 10% for OECD countries and 5% for the other countries in new renewable energy sources could not be agreed upon at the WSSD (World Summit on Sustainable Development) and calls therefore for every effort to be made by the EU to maintain pressure on upcoming international conferences for such a target to be adopted; urges that all agreements and investments involving EU funds in developing countries should be in line with the Marrakesh criteria and reflect the EU's responsibility when it comes to the external dimension of sustainable development;
26. Welcomes the European Council's proposal that the UNEP should be upgraded into a specialised UN agency in order to strengthen environmental governance, especially on issues related to trade and environment;

Enlargement

27. Regrets that the European Council did not give effect to Parliament's call for Article 32 of the Accession Act and Annex XV thereto to be amended; points out that Article 32 and Annex XV constitute a derogation to the EC Treaty and a violation of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 6 May 1999, and create inequality between current and new Member States in budgetary terms;

Cyprus

28. Regrets the failure of the UN-led talks in Cyprus, which were about to bring to an end the division of the island; urges the UN Secretary-General to keep up the momentum and continue his efforts to reach a comprehensive settlement, and calls on the Council, the Commission and the Member States to keep up the necessary pressure on both sides and to support concretely those forces on both sides striving sincerely for the reunification of Cyprus;

Serbia and Montenegro

29. Vigorously condemns the assassination of the Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic and expresses its condolences to his family and the people of Serbia; urges the governments of Serbia and Montenegro to keep up the pace of reform and to take all necessary steps to

strengthen democratic institutions and fight organised crime and corruption; calls on the Council and Commission to assist Serbia and Montenegro closely so as to help it move closer to the EU and play a primary role in the Stabilisation and Association Process;

30. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments of the Member States and candidate countries, and the social partners.