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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to the Commission statement

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

by Enrique Barón Crespo, Dagmar Roth-Behrendt, Hannes Swoboda, Carlos Lage, Joan Colom i Naval, Guido Sacconi and Gilles Savary

on behalf of the PSE Group

on the effects of the summer 2003 heat wave

European Parliament resolution on the effects of the summer 2003 heat wave

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the exceptional heat wave and drought which hit Europe and other parts of the world in the course of the last weeks,
 - having regard to the dramatic consequences of these climatic conditions, namely huge fires causing numerous victims in Portugal, France, Spain, Croatia, Russia and Canada, alarming ozone peaks and a dramatic increase in the death rate especially of the elderly,
 - having regard to the social and economic effects in the agriculture and forest industries,
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EC) 2012/2002 of 11 November 2002 establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund,
 - having regard to Article 87(2) of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to the decisions taken by the Commission at its meeting of 27/8/2003,
 - whereas solidarity between Member States in the case of natural disasters is part of the core of the European project,
 - whereas the European Parliament called on the Commission to pay special attention to the economic and social structural problems caused by natural disasters and to establish an appropriate instrument to help solve these problems, and whereas Regulation (EC) 2012/2002 consequently established an European Union Solidarity Fund,
1. Expresses its solidarity and deepest sympathy with the populations affected by the summer 2003 heat wave and fires, and with the families of the numerous persons who lost their lives; pays tribute to the dedication of the many rescuers and medical staff whose hard and continuous work helped to limit human and material damage; strongly condemns the criminal acts of pyromania committed in several cases;
 2. Welcomes the solidarity shown by the EU Member States with the affected regions and the praiseworthy help provided to their authorities and rescue services; calls for strengthened cooperation in the field of civil protection within the EU;
 3. Welcomes the Commission's rapid proposal to grant EUR 31 655 million from the European Solidarity Fund to Portugal, and encourages the Commission to rapidly take the necessary steps to provide other EU countries affected by fires with similar support;
 4. Welcomes the adoption by the Commission of regulations intended to put cereals held by various intervention agencies at the disposal of the internal market in order to offset

the deficit caused by the drought;

5. Calls on the Commission to rapidly apply Article 87(2) of the EC Treaty with a view to granting appropriate financial aid to all sectors affected by the disaster;
6. Insists on the need for flexibility in the management of the structural funds, in order to allow efficient reprogramming within the national allocations aimed at better tackling new local economic and social problems caused by catastrophes;
7. Insists on the need to continue an efficient prevention policy in the field of forest fires and reiterates its view that both monitoring and prevention measures should be encouraged by the Community, in particular in the scope of the forest focus regulation;
8. Calls on the Commission to draw up a report assessing civil protection measures aimed at combating fires in the Union, in particular using aircraft, in relation to identified needs;
9. Deeply regrets the shortcomings and delays in the reaction of some national authorities when responding to the implications of the heat wave for public health, with a dramatic increase in the death rate, especially among the elderly; calls for an in-depth inquiry into the management of this crisis in order to draw sound conclusions as regards emergency plans in the case of extreme weather conditions;
10. Believes that Europe's future ability to maintain a high level of social protection for those in need of health and long-term care will, in the future, be particularly influenced by population ageing, and that health-care systems will also have to adapt to the different pattern of illness linked to the change in the age-profile of patients; therefore strongly supports the open method of coordination launched by the Commission in the field of health care and care for the elderly, as part of a strategy to guarantee them a high level of social protection in the Member States; the process of mutual learning and cooperative exchange should be continued and strengthened, in exchanging experiences and best practice with regard to three broad objectives of access, quality and sustainability;
11. Considers, in the light of the health consequences of the summer 2003 heat wave and the need for improved cooperation to tackle such crises, that the future European Constitution should grant the Community more competencies as regards public health, and regrets the absence of progress in this field;
12. Considers that the European Union needs more binding target values for ozone in ambient air and that the current related Community legislation needs to be improved; calls on Member States, in the short term, to prepare and improve their action plans, including the promotion of public transport and an ambitious fuel taxation policy;
13. Calls on the Commission and Member States to accelerate action in the fields of transport and energy to combat climate change, including effective implementation of the Intelligent Energy Programme;

14. Underlines that these extreme climate conditions are another signal of the need for ambitious world action to halt climate change; considers that the EU should continue to play a leading role in this process; reiterates its view that the Kyoto Protocol remains the central tool in such a world strategy; calls again, therefore, on the US administration to change its policy and participate in the Kyoto process rather than develop its own unilateral climate change programme;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.