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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

by Diana Wallis and Paavo Väyrynen on behalf of the ELDR Group
and Matti Wuori on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

on the Northern Dimension Action Plan

European Parliament resolution on the Northern Dimension Action Plan

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Second Northern Dimension Action Plan, 2004-2006, as endorsed by the European Council held in Brussels on 16 and 17 October 2003,
 - having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2003 on the Commission's draft Action Plan for the Northern Dimension of the European Union 2004-2006,
 - having regard to the Commission's Communication of 11 March 2003 on Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours (COM(2003) 104),
- A. whereas, since its creation in 1999, the Northern Dimension has shown great potential but has not yet reached the desired level in developing the northern areas of our continent and the Arctic,
- B. whereas in March 2003 the Commission published its first outline for the Wider Europe - Neighbourhood Policy, and the Council conclusions of 16 June 2003 now serve as the basis for the Commission's further work; whereas this policy places a new emphasis on relations with current and future neighbours of the enlarged Union, and the Northern Dimension forms an integral part of this,
- C. whereas the principal objective of the future Northern Dimension policy is to address the opportunities and challenges posed by enlargement, which extends the EU border with Russia and make Belarus and the Ukraine new neighbouring countries to the EU, and whereas several of the Northern Dimension partner countries will become members of the EU, thus increasing the importance of the internal aspects of the Northern Dimension,
- D. whereas the new border regions have great human and economic potential and it is therefore important to strengthen efforts to stimulate sustainable development and economic growth, to facilitate the movement of people and goods across borders while working closely together to combat organised crime, to reduce poverty and social disparities, to improve public health and social well-being, to promote productive employment as well as social and cultural exchange, the overall aim being the strengthening of democracy and stability in the area,
- E. whereas maritime safety remains an important issue, especially as regards the Baltic Sea, where oil transport by tankers is increasing rapidly; whereas the Baltic Sea is already heavily polluted and its position as an inland sea makes it especially vulnerable,
- F. whereas in the Northern and Arctic regions the effects of global climate change could be dramatic,

- G. whereas the scope of the Northern Dimension covers much more than north-western Russia, extending also to the entire Arctic region and the Baltic basin,
- H. whereas increased interaction at all levels between Russia and the EU in the context of the Northern Dimension is essential to achieve these overall objectives and will act as a catalyst for Russia's closer ties with the EU,
- I. whereas the Luxembourg Foreign Affairs Council (9 April 2001) decided to set up a Northern Dimension Forum, and whereas this decision still remains to be implemented,
1. Welcomes the Second Action Plan for the Northern Dimension as an important part of the development of the Northern Dimension policies and an important contribution to the region concerned;
 2. Underlines that the forthcoming accession of the 10 new Member States will further increase the importance of the Northern Dimension, as will the further development and implementation of the Union's Wider Europe - New Neighbourhood policies; considers that the New Neighbourhood Policy and the New Neighbourhood Instrument must be implemented in the relations with all EU neighbours, thus enhancing financing of Northern Dimension policies, and expects that some pilot projects could be carried out in parts of the border region even before the launch of the New Neighbourhood Instrument;
 3. Welcomes the emphasis on developing the economy, business and infrastructure in the region, and fully exploiting the economic opportunities presented by the Union's enlargement;
 4. Welcomes the environmental aspects presented in the Action Plans, in particular with regard to maritime safety in the Baltic Sea, the decision to propose the designation of the Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Area within the International Maritime Organisation and the overall emphasis on sustainable development and sustainable use of natural resources; supports, in particular, the goal of enhanced monitoring of pollutants and more effective waste water management;
 5. Expresses its concern at the tendency to over-emphasise the exploitation of fossil fuels and neglect the significant role which renewable sources of energy could play in the region;
 6. Welcomes, in particular, the approach used in the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership, including the NDEP support fund; welcomes, therefore, the establishment of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing in Oslo on 27 October 2003;
 7. Welcomes the signing on 21 May 2003 of the Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Programme (MNEPR) as a major step towards greater transparency, efficiency and speed in internationally financed nuclear clean-up and dismantlement programmes in Russia; encourages Russia to ratify this agreement without delay; stresses the importance of environmental impact and risk assessment in the implementation of projects;

8. Regrets the lack of coordination between the existing international environmental, nuclear safety and non-proliferation programmes; calls on the European Union to take an initiative to examine the establishment of an International Environmental and Non-Proliferation Oversight Agency for the purposes of coordinating efforts to help Russia to tackle the serious environmental problems caused by radioactive waste;
9. Welcomes the emphasis on increased cooperation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs, in particular with reference to the fight against organised crime, trafficking in human beings, cooperation in border management and civil protection;
10. Recognises the special role north-western Russia has in the Northern Dimension policies, but points out that both the development of the Arctic Window and the need for increased political and scientific cooperation with Canada and the United States remain unaddressed in the Action Plan; emphasises the role of the Arctic Council in this context and the need for active EU participation in it at all levels;
11. Considers that the desirability of including Belarus in the geographical area covered by the Northern Dimension, once the political conditions in Belarus make this possible, should have been recognised in the Action Plan; believes that the current policy of isolation does not provide a sufficient response to the situation in this country and maintains that a strategy for support to civil society development and independent media in Belarus should be prepared, that people-to-people contacts between Belarus and the EU should be encouraged and that more EU aid should be mobilised for Chernobyl victims;
12. Regrets the lack of concrete proposals explicitly targeted to benefit the indigenous peoples in the area;
13. Believes that stronger links between the Northern Dimension policies and the EU budget are necessary;
14. Is concerned at the implementation difficulties affecting the TACIS cross-border cooperation budget line; stresses the need to improve the regulatory and budgetary framework for implementation of the TACIS cross-border programme along the lines suggested for the New Neighbourhood Instrument and will closely examine proposals to extend lending facilities for the TACIS countries; also stresses the importance of cooperation between Interreg and TACIS operations;
15. Underlines the importance of incorporating projects with a northern dimension into the TEN package proposed by the Commission;
16. Welcomes the proposals to increase European Investment Bank lending to Russia and extension to Ukraine and Moldova; regrets, however, the limited amounts suggested for this mandate;
17. Calls for further involvement of elected representatives at all levels in the implementation and evaluation of the Action Plan; regrets that this democratic dimension is missing;

18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments of the Member States, the 10 accession countries, Russia, Belarus, Canada and the USA.