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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure

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on the fires of this summer in southern Europe and the floods in central Europe

European Parliament resolution on the fires of this summer in southern Europe and the floods in central Europe

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 174 of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to the Commission report on climate change and the European water dimension,
 - having regard to the 'Forest Focus' regulation,
 - having regard to the Commission communication on the European forestry strategy,
 - having regard to the Commission's proposals on the future Life+ instrument,
 - having regard to the new European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD),
 - having regard to the Commission communication on the EU's capacity of reaction to disasters and crises,
 - having regard to the Commission communication on improving civil protection operations,
 - having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. having regard to the instability displayed by the European climate this summer, ranging from the severe fires in southern Europe which have devastated more than 300 000 ha of vegetation and forests in Spain, Portugal and France to the torrential rains in Austria, southern Germany, Hungary and Romania which have brought on large-scale flooding,
- B. having regard to the deaths of several dozen people in the Member States affected - firefighters, military personnel, civilians and volunteers - who lost their lives combating those unusually fierce fires or in the wake of those tremendous floods,
- C. whereas the last few years have been marked by numerous cases of drought and a growing number of forest fires in the regions of southern Europe, accentuating desertification in many regions and affecting agriculture, stockbreeding and the forest heritage,
- D. having regard to the economic and social damage caused by these fires and floods to the local economies, productive activity and tourism,
- E. whereas these fires are a shared and recurrent problem throughout southern Europe and the nature of the forests and climate of this part of Europe makes it one of the Union's most vulnerable areas,

- F. whereas for the second time in four years the countries of central Europe have been hit by severe floods, whose damage has directly affected thousands of households and their possessions, as well as public infrastructures,
- G. whereas the Member States, especially those which are beneficiaries of the Cohesion Fund, often have difficulty in tackling such huge natural disasters unaided, and it is clear that they require solidarity and assistance,
- H. whereas the impact of the fires and the damage provoked by the flooding in many cases cross internal borders, and it is therefore essential to strengthen the joint resources for combating natural disasters and the Community civil protection mechanisms,
- I. whereas the rural development policy is insufficient for dealing with this problem; noting with surprise that under the new European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) there will no longer be financing for aid to farmers for creating firebreaks,
- J. whereas the Commission's communication on the European forestry strategy proposes no specific measures to combat fires, even though they are the main factor in the deterioration of Europe's forests,
1. Expresses its solidarity with the relatives of those who lost their lives and with the inhabitants of the areas affected; pays homage to the devotion of the firefighters and civilians who risked their lives putting out the fires;
 2. Considers that the consequences of these disasters are of more than purely national scope, and call for a genuine commitment at European level;
 3. Expresses its concern at the increasing number of natural disasters, attributed to a large extent by the experts to climate change;
 4. Calls, accordingly, on the Member States to take all steps to meet the Kyoto targets;
 5. Calls for the mobilisation of the European Solidarity Fund for natural disasters in order to tackle the severe damage arising from the fires and floods;
 6. Welcomes the Commission's communications on the EU's capacity of reaction to disasters and crises and on improving civil protection operations; calls for a major increase in funding for the EU's civil protection actions;

On the forest fires:

7. Considers that intervention is needed at European level to prevent such fires from occurring in the future, through the creation of suitable legal and budgetary instruments, and, in particular, a Community forest protection body;

8. Calls on the Commission to undertake a detailed analysis of the causes, consequences and repercussions of this summer's fires, especially for Europe's forests, to submit proposals for the development of a Community policy for mastering forest fires, and to draw up a common firefighting protocol;
9. Deplores the Council's decision to eliminate aid to farmers for creating firebreaks, and calls for this funding to be reinstated;
10. Calls on the Member States to cooperate more closely in combating fires, given that they often affect more than one Member State, and, in particular, to make available additional civil protection resources for major emergencies and to create joint border civil protection corps;
11. Calls for a Community strategy to coordinate fire prevention measures in the context of the rural development regulation and for the introduction of specific budget headings for firefighting under the regulations governing crossborder cooperation and the ERDF;
12. Calls for the creation of a temporary committee whose main tasks would include carrying out a detailed analysis of the causes of the fires, examining their consequences and repercussions, and proposing the necessary additional measures to ensure that such natural disasters do not occur in the future;

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and Council, the governments of the Member States affected by the fires and floods, and the local authorities of the affected areas.