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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on statements by the Council and Commission

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

by Graham Watson, Karin Riis Jorgensen, Jean-Marie Cavada, Annemie Neyts
and Sarah Ludford

on behalf of the ALDE Group

on the right to freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs

European Parliament resolution on the right to freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations,
 - having regard to Articles 6 and 11 of the Treaty on European Union,
 - having regard to Articles 9 and 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Articles 10 and 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
 - having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas twelve cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed were first published in the newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on 30 September 2005 in the context of a debate on self-censorship and freedom of speech, and some or all of them have subsequently been reprinted in 40 other countries, including an Egyptian newspaper as early as October 2005,
- B. whereas the cartoons have been perceived as offensive or blasphemous by many Muslims, and whereas consequently the newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* has apologised for any offence the cartoons may have caused,
- C. whereas this has led to legitimate protests and consumer and trade boycotts as well as violent unrest around the world, some of it orchestrated, particularly in Islamic countries,
- D. whereas free and independent media are an essential requirement for the full respect of the right of freedom of expression and reinforce the principle of democracy on which the Union is founded,
- E. whereas in democratic and secular societies a range of opinions and viewpoints, be they political or religious, can be freely expressed, reflecting the diversity within society; whereas abuse of this right is exclusively a matter for the law to determine,
- F. whereas this principle is universally acknowledged in international conventions and in the constitutional traditions of secular democracies,
1. Strongly believes that freedom of expression is a fundamental right that must be guaranteed and exercised in the fullest possible way;

2. Condemns in the strongest possible terms the burning down of embassies of EU Member States, as well as the threats against EU citizens; deplores the failure of some governments to prevent violence and the fact that other governments have apparently orchestrated violent attacks; calls on all states to honour their obligations under the Vienna Convention;
3. Stresses that while the cartoons may be perceived as offensive or blasphemous, such attacks and threats cannot be legitimised on any grounds and are utterly unacceptable;
4. Expresses its full support for and solidarity with the countries affected and their peoples under these unprecedented and difficult circumstances; recalls the solidarity clause in Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union and calls, therefore, for a strong EU response, which has so far been lacking;
5. Calls, in this respect, on the Commission and the Austrian Presidency to take the necessary steps to ensure that individual Member States are not the victims of diplomatic and trade sanctions;
6. Supports all democratic forces - politicians, media and civil society - that are confronted with and struggling against authoritarian or oppressive religious regimes;
7. Supports the 'Alliance of Civilisations' initiative of the UN Secretary-General;
8. Considers that the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the advancement of mutual understanding and respect represent an ongoing challenge for the globalised world;
9. Firmly believes that the development of these steps will make full use of the framework of cooperation and dialogue with the Mediterranean and Asian partner countries;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Council of Europe, the Governments and Parliaments of the Member States, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, and the Arab League.