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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

by Gerardo Galeote, Daniel Varela Suanzes-Carpegna, Francisco José Millán Mon, Françoise Grossetête, Konstantinos Hatzidakis, Margie Sudre, Antonio Tajani, Duarte Freitas, João de Deus Pinheiro, José Ribeiro e Castro, Luís Queiró, Ioannis Varvitsiotis, Ioannis Kasoulides and Antonios Trakatellis

on behalf of the PPE-DE Group

on the fires in the European Union this summer

**B6-0460/2006**

**European Parliament resolution on the fires in the European Union this summer**

*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 an EU forest strategy,
  - having regard to the Commission proposals on the future LIFE+ programme,
  - having regard to the new European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD),
  - having regard to the Commission communication on the European Union's disaster response capacity,
  - having regard to the Commission communication on improving European civil protection measures,
  - having regard to the European Parliament's resolution of 5 September 2005 on natural disasters (fires and floods) in southern and central Europe in summer 2005,
  - having regard to the European Parliament's position adopted at first reading on 18 May 2006 with a view to the adoption of Regulation (EC) of the European Parliament and the Council amending the European Union Solidarity Fund,
  - having regard to the European Parliament's legislative resolution on the natural disasters (fires, drought and floods) of May 2006,
  - having regard to point 12 of the conclusions of the Brussels European Council of 15 and 16 June 2006,
  - having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas in summer 2006 the European Union has suffered devastating fires, especially in the southern Member States, which caused deaths and large-scale material damage,
- B. whereas more than 200 000 hectares of vegetation and woodland were devastated in the EU, more than half of which were situated in Spain, although other countries such as Portugal, Greece, France and Italy were affected, as well as a number of countries and regions traditionally considered to be at less risk, such as the Netherlands, Ireland, Lithuania, the United Kingdom, Austria, Sweden and the Czech Republic,

- C. whereas these disasters were particularly serious in regions such as Galicia, where they killed four people, injured 515 and caused considerable material damage which has yet to be finally assessed,
- D. whereas in the last few years the persisting drought and high temperatures have caused an increasing number of forest fires in Europe, which have aggravated the desertification of a large number of regions and affected agriculture, stockbreeding and forestry,
- E. having regard, furthermore, to the serious economic and social damage these natural disasters (drought and fires) caused to regional economies, production and tourism,
- F. whereas the Member States, in particular the Cohesion Fund beneficiaries, often find it difficult to tackle natural disasters on such a scale by themselves, which means they need Community solidarity and assistance,
- G. whereas fires often cross borders, which means that the joint facilities for combating natural disasters and the Community's civil protection mechanisms need to be reinforced,
- H. whereas the rural development policy is not enough to tackle the problem and the budget line for aid to farmers for the creation and maintenance of firebreaks has disappeared from the framework regulation on the new European Agricultural Fund for Regional Development (EAFRD),
- I. whereas the European Council meeting in Brussels on 15 and 16 June 2006 approved the Presidency's report on stepping up the EU's response capacity in the event of emergencies and crises and the report submitted by Michel Barnier in May 2006,
- J. whereas, according to the Conclusions of the Brussels European Council of 15 and 16 June, the ad hoc Crisis Steering Group in Brussels was to be operational as of 1 July 2006,
- K. whereas the European Parliament, as a continuation of the work it is carrying out on natural disasters, particularly since August 2005, plans to hold a public hearing on fires and floods this October,
- L. whereas there is no specific European legislation to tackle drought and fires,
  - 1. Expresses its solidarity with the families of the victims and the inhabitants of the regions affected, especially Galicia, which accounts for 70% of the land affected by fires in Spain this summer 2006 and almost 50% of the total area affected by fires in the whole EU;
  - 2. Pays homage to the courageous work of the fire-fighters and civilians who took part in extinguishing fires, sometimes with very inadequate means, thereby putting their lives at risk;
  - 3. Stresses once again that such disasters cannot be tackled on a merely national scale, but require an effective response at European level by strengthening and, if necessary, introducing Community instruments to prevent and combat the phenomenon;
  - 4. Expresses its concern at the growing number of disasters that, in the opinion of experts, can be largely attributed to climate change; thus calls on the Member States to do

everything necessary to meet the Kyoto objectives;

5. Calls on the Commission to mobilise the European Solidarity Fund and apply it flexibly in order to tackle the serious damage caused by fires, bearing in mind that the damage affects the way of life of the population, especially in the less prosperous regions that have to cope with the adverse effects on infrastructure, economic potential, employment, the natural and cultural heritage, the environment and tourism, which all have an adverse effect on economic and social cohesion;
6. In this connection deplores the fact the Council has not yet responded to the amendments proposed by the European Parliament for reform of the European Solidarity Fund (Berend report) nor has it acted on the rest of the proposals approved by the European Parliament in the last year;
7. Once again stresses the need to launch European intervention mechanisms by creating the appropriate legal and budgetary instruments, in particular via a Community body for the protection of forests;
8. Calls for an increase in the resources made available in the area of civil protection in the event of major emergencies and deplores the half-hearted response the Council has given to the proposal to create a European civil protection body (Barnier report);
9. Welcomes the Commission's proposals on the development of the European Union's rapid response capacity in the event of disasters;
10. Calls on the current Finnish Presidency to devote particular attention to the development of the European Union's rapid-response capability with regard to such disasters, to the proposals by the Commission and the European Parliament on strengthening the Community's civil protection capabilities and to propose the adoption of legal provisions by end of 2006, in accordance with the mandate of the European Council of 15 and 16 June 2006;
11. Renews its call to the Commission to submit specific proposals for directives to combat fires and drought in the European Union, in order to achieve better coordination of the Member States' policies on the subject and to make the best use of the Community instruments available;
12. Calls on the Commission, in the framework of the directives, to consider the creation of a Community monitoring centre for fires and drought;
13. Calls on the Commission to carry out a thorough analysis of the causes, consequences and repercussions of this summer's fires, in particular for European forestry, and to submit proposals on the development of a Community policy to monitor forest fires, as well as a joint protocol on preventing and combating fires;
14. Calls for the establishment of a Community strategy for the coordination of fire-prevention measures in the context of the Regulation on rural development and to introduce specific budget lines to combat fires in the context of the regulations on trans-border cooperation and the European Regional Development Fund;

15. Calls on the Commission to reintroduce, in the regulation implementing the new EAFRD, agricultural aid for the establishment and maintenance of firebreaks;
16. Instructs the Bureau of the European Parliament to send a delegation to the main areas affected before the holding of the public hearing to analyse the Barnier report, scheduled for this October;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council, the governments of the Member States affected by the fires and the regional authorities of the areas affected.