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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 Pervenche Berès, Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos, Rosa Miguélez Ramos and  
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on behalf of the PSE Group

on forest fires affecting Europe during the summer of 2006

**B6-0474/2006**

**European Parliament resolution on forest fires affecting Europe during the summer of 2006**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Articles 2, 6 and 174 of the EC Treaty,
- having regard to its resolutions of 13 January 2005 on the outcome of the Buenos Aires Conference on climate change, of 5 September 2002 on the floods in Europe, of 14 April 2005 on the drought in Portugal, of 12 May 2005 on the drought in Spain, of 8 September 2005 on natural disasters (fires and floods) in Europe and of 18 May 2006 on natural disasters (fires, drought and floods) - agricultural aspects, regional development aspects and environmental aspects (2005/2195(INI), A6-0152/2006, A6-0147/2006 and A6-0149/2006),
- having regard to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of 11 December 1997 and the Community's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol on 4 March 2002,
- having regard to the Commission's Report No 21553 on climate change and the European water dimension,
- having regard to the 'Forest Focus' regulation (Regulation (EC) No 2152/2003 of 17 November 2003),
- having regard to the European Commission's Communication of 3 November 1998 on a Forestry Strategy for the European Union (COM (1998)0649),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 29 September 2004 on the LIFE + programme (COM(2004)0621) and the European Parliament resolution of 2 May 2005 on LIFE +, financial instrument for the environment: multi-annual programme 2007-2013,
- having regard to the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and the 'Community strategic guidelines for rural development',
- having regard to the rapid response and preparation instrument for major emergencies (COM(2005)0113),
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 20 April 2005 on the improvement of civil defence measures and Michel Barnier's Report 'For a European Civil Protection Force: Europe Aid',
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 2012/2002 establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund, and the European Parliament resolution of 3 April 2006 on the revision of the aforementioned Regulation (A6-0123/2006),

- having regard to the Biomass Action Plan (COM(2005)0628) and the European Union strategy for biofuels (COM(2006)0034),
- having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. having regard to the devastating fires and the violent floods which have caused death and destruction throughout the European continent, in particular in Galicia, during the summer of 2006, including EU Member States, applicant countries and the EU's immediate neighbours, in particular in Russia, causing serious health and environmental cross-border damage,
- B. mourning the tragic loss of life of dozens of civilians, fire-fighters, soldiers and volunteers in their efforts to combat these catastrophes,
- C. considering the extensive damage caused by the fires in Europe, namely the destruction of hundreds of thousands of hectares of vegetation and forests, vineyards, orchards, houses and agricultural infrastructure in Portugal, Spain, France, Turkey and Greece,
- D. whereas these fires have partly been caused by the drought and high temperatures of this summer as well as the socioeconomic and cultural changes that have occurred in recent decades in rural areas: abandonment of rural areas, insufficient maintenance of forests, planting of insufficient varieties of trees and a considerable incidence of criminal activity,
- E. having regard to the serious damage to homes, infrastructure and agriculture caused by the floods, in particular in Austria, Hungary and other parts of Europe,
- F. whereas the abandonment of rural areas, as well as a decrease in the profitability of forests and the high cost of their maintenance, has affected good management by owners, with the consequence of an increase in biomass in undergrowth and the appearance of large areas of highly combustible thicket, while in those places where forests are socio-economically relevant fires are significantly less prevalent,
- G. whereas these fires represent a recurrent and common problem for the whole of the south of Europe and whereas the fact that 70% of land is owned privately but in a very fragmentary manner and that private owners are obliged to carry out prevention measures by themselves, together with special climate characteristics, has resulted in this region becoming the main risk area within the Union,
- H. whereas Member States often have to face difficulties alone and when natural disasters cross internal borders they are compelled to appeal for EU solidarity and assistance, necessitating enhancements and improvements to common actions to control natural disasters, as well as Community civil defence instruments,
- I. whereas neither the current Forest Focus Regulation nor the new regulation on rural development provide for adequate measures for the prevention of fires and disasters in the forests of southern Europe, and they do not provide the necessary resources commensurate with the seriousness of the problem,
- J. whereas the Commission's communication on a European Union Strategy in the forest

sector does not foresee specific measures to control fires, even though they are the main reason for the deterioration of forests in Europe, and whereas the Commission will soon present the 'EU Action Plan for the sustainable management of forests', announced last June,

- K. whereas the European Parliament has recently paid particular attention to natural disasters through the promotion of a huge number of initiatives that culminated with the adoption by an overwhelming majority of a concrete proposal that must be implemented,
1. Expresses its solidarity with the relatives of those who lost their lives as well as the inhabitants of the damaged areas, and thanks all those – professionals, volunteers and local authorities – who helped to extinguish the fires and rescue flood victims;
  2. Welcomes the prompt reaction of the authorities in some of the Member States concerned; while strongly regretting cases in which the reaction was not adequate and sufficiently effective, acknowledges the solidarity shown by the European Union and its Member States with the affected regions of both Member States and applicant countries and the praiseworthy help provided to their authorities and rescue services; considers that the dimensions of these phenomena and their consequences go beyond the regional and national scale and require an effective European commitment;
  3. Expresses its concern about the increasing number of natural disasters that, according to experts, can be attributed mostly to climate change, and calls on the Commission to take initiatives to guarantee respect for the Kyoto commitments and their follow-up;
  4. Calls on the Council to urgently modify the rules of the Solidarity Funds in line with the European Parliament resolution of 3 April 2006, and calls on the Commission to facilitate the implementation of the new criteria in the affected areas, on the basis of political considerations, ensuring implementation, as this has been lacking in the past;
  5. Urges the Commission and the Council to implement the European Parliament resolution of May 2006 on natural disasters (fires, drought and floods) - agricultural aspects, regional development aspects and environmental aspects (2005/2195(INI), A6-0152/2006, A6-0147/2006 and A6-0149/2006);
  6. Hopes that the Commission will rapidly mobilise the necessary funds as soon as the countries affected have submitted their requests for aid, with a view to helping the population concerned to quickly deal with the consequences of the fires;
  7. Calls on the Commission to continue collaboration with national authorities in order to help the population affected, to minimise the environmental impact of fires, to evaluate damage and consequences and to facilitate public aid to restore the potential productivity of the areas affected; calls for a reforestation policy based on respect for bio-climatic and environmental characteristics, using varieties that resist fire and drought better and are better adapted to the climate;
  8. Calls on the Commission and Member States to work in closer coordination on civil defence measures in the event of natural disasters with a view to preventing and minimising their devastating impact and allocating the resources needed for immediate

alerts, coordination and availability of logistical resources, in particular through additional civil defence measures in urgent cases and the creation of a European civil defence force, paying special attention to the vulnerability of border areas;

9. Urges the Commission to create an experience exchange programme on the implementation of new technologies for the control and follow-up of risks and effects of forest fires, as well as the preparation of a European authorisation procedure for qualified technical personnel, to improve their training;
10. Notes that, despite the fact that the EFFIS system has managed to harmonise data on fires within Member States and to provide updated information on the natural risk factors, the Commission does not permit investigation of the anthropogenic origins, does not determine socioeconomic risk factors and does not evaluate the repercussions of fires; calls on the Commission to submit a proposal to supplement this system with other data that make it possible to correct these shortcomings; also calls on the Commission to carry out an in-depth analysis of the reasons for and consequences of the fires this summer, in particular in the European forest sector, and submit proposals to develop a common protocol for fighting fires;
11. Expresses its concern because the aim of the 'Forest Focus' regulation regarding prevention has not been achieved: since its coming into force the number of fires and the area burned has increased rather than decreasing; calls on the Commission to include specific proposals to resolve these problems in the report it is due to present before the end of 2006;
12. Calls on the Commission, in the new 'EU Action Plan for the sustainable management of forests', to step up the European forest policy, granting greater pre-eminence to the multiple functions of European agriculture with a twofold aim: to maintain and provide employment for the rural population and substantially increase the mass of forest; calls likewise for support measures for fire prevention in silviculture cofinanced by the EU to help the owners and their organisations implement such activities as pollarding, non-commercial pruning, slashing, clearing the forest biomass, creating control lines and fire breaks, building forest roads and depositing water;
13. Confirms that the realisation of preventive silvicultural treatments and the provision and maintenance of fire defence infrastructure in private forests have been affected by the fall of almost 30% in the profitability of forest products, in particular in the south of Europe, and for this reason a Commission plan is needed to help the diversification of the use of wood and increase its consumption, supporting those activities that use forest products as a raw material, which would help to ensure the sustainability of forests;
14. Urges the Commission to present, within the Action Plan on Biomass, concrete proposals, for the forests of the south of Europe, to use forest biomass for energy purposes, providing a new source of income for the owner, and at the same time contributing to the best management of the forest;
15. Calls on the Commission to submit a Communication to make society aware of the value of our forests and their resources and the benefits of their conservation, promoting the involvement of civil society through organised volunteering or by other methods, for

example involving the associations for the defence and protection of forests and natural areas;

16. Calls on the Commission to accelerate the establishment of a European Drought Observatory that would collect knowledge and propose mitigation and follow-up measures in order to minimise the effects of droughts on Europe;
17. Calls on the Member States to strengthen penalties for criminal acts that damage the environment and in particular for those causing forest fires, and to enhance coordination, not only within the fire services but also within all the institutions that deal with the causes and consequences of fires, and the identification and processing of those responsible: observes that a prompt and effective investigation that would determine responsibilities, followed by appropriate disciplinary action, would discourage negligent and deliberately criminal behaviour;
18. Calls on Member States to ensure the maximum alertness and effectiveness of their civil defence and flood- and fire-fighting arrangements, including their staffing according to the highest standards of excellence and the existence and operability of the largest possible quantity of fire-fighting equipment, especially during periods of high risk of floods or fires;
19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and the national and regional authorities and parliaments involved in the EU as well as in the applicant countries concerned.