

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

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*Session document*

30.9.2008

B6-0523/2008

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Question for Oral Answer B6-0000/2008

pursuant to Rule 108(5) of the Rules of Procedure

by Diana Wallis, Bilyana Raeva, Johannes Lebech, Kyösti Virrankoski, Olle Schmidt and Danutė Budreikaitė

on behalf of the ALDE Group

on Arctic Governance

**European Parliament resolution on Arctic Governance**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the International Polar Year (from March 2007 to March 2009),
  - having regard to the Eighth Conference of Arctic Parliamentarians held in Fairbanks, Alaska from 12 to 14 August 2008,
  - having regard to the Commission communication on Arctic policy expected this autumn,
  - having regard to the ALDE Seminar on Arctic Governance in a Globalising World which was held in Brussels on 7 May 2008,
  - having regard to its earlier resolutions on the Northern Dimension (2003, 2005 and 2006),
  - having regard to the conclusions of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment report,
  - having regard to Rule 108(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union' (the 'Blue Book') published on 10 October 2007,
- B. having regard to the policy paper of 14 March 2008 from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council, entitled 'Climate Change and International Security',
- C. whereas the geopolitical and strategic importance of the Arctic region is growing, as symbolised by the planting of a Russian flag on the seabed below the North Pole in August 2007,
- D. having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which has not yet been ratified by the US Senate,
- E. whereas the recent conference of Arctic parliamentarians brought together elected representatives from the European Parliament, Canada, Denmark, Greenland, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Russia and the United States, to discuss the issues of maritime safety, health care, environmental protection and sustainable development,
- F. whereas the Arctic region is currently not governed by any multilateral norms and regulations, as it was never expected to become a navigable waterway or an area of commercial exploitation,

- G. whereas maritime traffic in Arctic waters has increased exponentially in recent years owing to increased interest in offshore drilling and the ever more frequent passage of cruise ships, as well as the prospects offered by the Northwest Passage,
  - H. whereas the Arctic region may contain close to 22% of the world's undiscovered oil and gas reserves,
  - I. having regard to the Ilulissat Declaration which was adopted by the 'A5 countries' (Denmark, Canada, Norway, the Russian Federation and the USA) in May 2008,
  - J. having regard to the chairman's conclusions at the conference on 'The Arctic: Our Common Concern' organised by the Nordic Council of Ministers in Ilulissat (Greenland) on 9 and 10 September 2008, in which the Commission participated fully,
  - K. whereas the conference also focused on climate change in the region, its effect on the indigenous populations and possible adaptation thereto,
  - L. whereas the rate of global warming in the Arctic region is much higher than in the rest of the world, with an increase of 2° in the last 100 years compared to an average of 0.6° in the rest of the world,
  - M. whereas the changes in climatic conditions in the Arctic are already such that the Inuit people for example can no longer hunt in the traditional manner, as the ice is too thin to hold their sleds, while wildlife such as polar bears, walrus and foxes are in danger of seeing much of their habitats disappear,
  - N. whereas the EU counts amongst its member states three Arctic nations, and amongst its closely related neighbours participating in the internal market through the EEA Agreement a further two Arctic nations, meaning that the EU and its associated states comprise more than half the numeric membership of the Arctic Council,
1. Is deeply concerned by the effects of climate change on the sustainability of the lives of the indigenous peoples in the region, in terms of both the general environment (melting ice cap and permafrost, rising sea levels, flooding) and the natural habitat (the retreating ice cap poses problems for polar bears' feeding habits), and underlines that any international decisions relating to these issues must both fully involve and take account of all peoples and nations of the Arctic;
  2. Welcomes the concluding conference statement adopted by the Conference of Arctic Parliamentarians in Fairbanks on 14 August 2008;
  3. Welcomes the fact that the High North forms part of the European Union's 'Northern Dimension' policy, but is convinced that awareness of the Arctic's importance in a global context needs to be raised further by delivering a stand-alone EU Arctic policy;
  4. Underlines the significance of the Arctic for the global climate in this respect and hopes that the present support for research activities in that region will be continued beyond the International Polar Year;

5. Awaits with great interest the forthcoming Commission communication on Arctic policy and hopes that it will lay the founding stone for a meaningful Arctic policy in the EU; calls on the Commission to address, at least, the following issues in its communication:
  - (a) the state of play of climate change in the region and adaptation thereto;
  - (b) policy options that respect the indigenous populations and their livelihoods;
  - (c) the need to cooperate with our Arctic neighbours on cross-border issues, in particular maritime safety;
  - (d) options for a future cross-border political or legal structure that could provide for the environmental protection and sustainable orderly development of the region or mediate political disagreement over resources and navigable waterways in the High North;
6. Calls on the Commission to place energy and security policy in the Arctic high on its agenda and, in its forthcoming communication on the Arctic, to take stock and to consider how the EU and the Arctic states can work closely together to reach common, ambitious goals with regard to climate change and sustainable development, increased security of energy supply, and a more efficient internal energy market;
7. Draws attention to the fact that the Arctic region, by virtue of its impact on the world's climate and its singular natural environment, merits special consideration as the EU develops its position for the 2009 COP 15 Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen;
8. Is of the view that the maritime traffic in the region (both tourist- and offshore drilling-related) does not enjoy anything near the kind of minimum international safety rules that prevail in other international waters, in terms of either protection of human life or protection of the environment, and urges the Commission to ensure, as soon as possible, that appropriate amendments are made to the IMO (International Maritime Organisation) regulations;
9. Emphasises the external aspects of energy policy and the role of the Arctic in the formulation of the Energy Policy for Europe (EPE), as proposed by the March 2007 European Council;
10. Supports the Arctic Council in maintaining the Arctic region as a region of low tension, open to international research cooperation, so as to allow its potential as a future energy supplier region to be fully developed within a sustainable environmental framework;
11. Urges the Commission to take a proactive role in the Arctic by at least, as a first step, taking up 'observer status' on the Arctic Council, and considers that the Commission should set up a dedicated Arctic desk;

12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States, Norway, Iceland, Russia, Canada and the United States, and the regional cooperation actors.