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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 Tobias Pflüger

on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

on the international treaty for the protection of the Arctic

European Parliament resolution on the international treaty for the protection of the Arctic

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the International Polar Year (IPY), a joint initiative of the World Meteorological Organisation and the International Council for Science aimed at providing better observation and understanding of the Earth's polar regions,
 - having regard to the Commission communication on the European Union and the Arctic region (COM(2008)0763),
 - having regard to the 'Arctic Transform' Conference held in Brussels on 5 March 2009,
 - having regard to its resolution of 9 October 2008 on Arctic governance,
 - having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Arctic region is currently not protected by any multilateral norms and regulations,
- B. 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 North-West Passage,
- C. whereas the Arctic region may contain some 20% of the world's undiscovered oil and gas reserves, with all that this implies for the unique Arctic environment should these reserves be commercially exploited,
- D. 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, walruses and foxes are in danger of seeing much of their habitats disappear,
- E. whereas the existence of different jurisdictions in the Arctic region risks triggering off major conflicts between countries,
- F. whereas the geopolitical neutralisation of the region would allow an increase in cooperation between the circumpolar nations,
1. Calls on the Council and Commission to initiate international negotiations for the adoption of an international treaty for the protection of the Arctic, along the lines of the existing Antarctic Treaty, in order to make the Arctic a zone of peace and cooperation reserved solely for peaceful activities;
 2. Stresses that efforts must be made to avoid an increased military presence in the Arctic

and to work for the demilitarisation of the area so as to maintain the Arctic as a region of low tension;

3. Calls for the Commission and Council, given the vulnerability of the Arctic environment, to establish, as a first step, a 50-year moratorium on any exploration or expansion of mineral resource extraction in the region;
4. Urges the Commission to ensure that international rules on maritime traffic safety in the particularly sensitive parts of the region are tightened up, by making appropriate amendments to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) regulations and working towards establishing an 'Arctic Navigation Polar Code', and calls for the establishment, under an international authority, of towing, rescue, and accident and disaster response facilities for the Arctic Ocean;
5. Calls on the Commission to initiate negotiations with the Russian, US and Canadian authorities to guarantee freedom of navigation and right of passage and ensure the environmental sustainability of any new shipping routes;
6. Is deeply concerned about 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 icecap and permafrost, rising sea levels and flooding) and the natural habitat (the retreating icecap poses problems for polar bears' feeding habits), and stresses that any international decisions relating to these issues must fully involve and take account of all Arctic peoples and nations;
7. Draws attention to the fact that changes in the Arctic ice sheets will have an impact on global sea levels, affecting coastal cities and low-lying areas, and thermal degradation of permafrost will release vast reserves of frozen carbon, some of which will, as methane, increase the global greenhouse-gas effect; calls therefore on the Commission and the Council to ensure that the Arctic region, by virtue of its impact on the world's climate and its unique natural environment, is given special consideration as the EU formulates its position for the COP 15 UN Climate Change Conference, due to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009;
8. 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.