

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0022/04

pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure

by Emilio Menéndez del Valle, Pasqualina Napoletano, Jannis Sakellariou and Johannes Swoboda, on behalf of the PSE Group
to the Council

Subject: A common initiative for peace, stability and democracy in the entire Middle East region

On several recent occasions, European and USA political representatives have stressed the need for a broader approach to the situation in the entire Middle East region, notably after the Iraq war, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the tensions generated by religious, cultural, social and economic factors.

Although different views of the problems exist and different solutions are also envisaged, all parties agree that one cannot tolerate this status quo any longer.

In this framework, it would be advisable to start a process in which the EU, NATO, the Arab League and all other countries of the region should participate, with the aim, as suggested by the German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, to reach a 'Declaration on a common future' addressed to the entire Middle East region.

Such an initiative could be consolidated through one or more treaties based on: peace and security; arms control and disarmament; respect for human rights, democracy and economic co-operation.

The EU, through the Barcelona Process and other cooperation agreements with countries of the Middle East region as well as its Wider Europe strategy with its Eastern and Southern neighbours, has a large set of instruments to re-launch their efforts in this context. NATO is also able to participate in such an initiative, through its partnership arrangements with some Mediterranean countries.

Does the Council have an opinion on this proposal?

What is the Council's view of the position of the Bush administration on the same question and the so-called 'Initiative for a greater Middle East'?

Does the Council consider that it would be opportune to define its position on the issue in view of the June EU-USA Summit?

What priorities does the Council envisage in the development of initiatives linked to this process? How will it press for the resumption of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians? Does the Council consider that it would be possible to adopt a common position on the Iraq post-war situation? Can the Council present an assessment of the relevant aspects of its Wider Europe neighbourhood strategy in this context?

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Deadline for reply: 26.03.2004