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3 September 2002

B5-0463/2002 }
B5-0475/2002 }
B5-0476/2002 }
B5-0477/2002 }
B5-0478/2002 }
B5-0483/2002 }

RC1

JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 37(4) of the Rules of Procedure by

- Hans-Gert Poettering, Othmar Karas and Markus Ferber, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group
- Enrique Barón Crespo, Hannes Swoboda and Ralf Walter, on behalf of the PSE Group
- Kyösti Tapio Virrankoski, on behalf of the ELDR Group
- Kathalijne Maria Buitenweg, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group
- Helmuth Markov, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group
- Franz Turchi and Mauro Nobilia, on behalf of the UEN Group

replacing the motions by the following groups:

- UEN (B5-0463/2002),
- ELDR (B5-0475/2002),
- Verts/ALE (B5-0476/2002),
- PPE-DE (B5-0477/2002),
- GUE/NGL (B5-0478/2002),
- PSE (B5-0483/2002),

on the flood disasters in central Europe

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European Parliament resolution on the flood disasters in central Europe

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the violent floods which have caused widespread destruction in Europe and Asia in the course of the last weeks,
 - having regard to the tragic loss of human lives and large damage caused by these floods in the central part of Europe during the middle of August 2002,
 - having regard to the enormous destruction of houses, farms and transport, communications and energy infrastructure,
 - having regard to Article 272 of the EC Treaty, Article 78 of the ECSC Treaty and Article 177 of the Euratom Treaty,
 - having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 6 May 1999 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline and improvement of the budgetary procedure,¹
 - having regard to the Commission communication on the European Community response to the flooding in Austria, Germany and several applicant countries (COM(2002)481,
- A. whereas several Member States and candidate countries in central Europe have been severely affected by floods, most notably Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and whereas there were severe droughts in Italy at the same time,
- B. whereas as a result of the flood disaster people lost their lives, others disappeared or were injured, unspeakable suffering was caused to a large proportion of the population and thousands of homes were totally or partially destroyed,
- C. whereas the damage directly affects families and their property, but also public infrastructure, historic buildings and art treasures, businesses (SMEs, craftsmen, industries), farms and the countryside, with huge economic and social consequences,
- D. whereas the estimates of the damage are very high and call for an immediate and tangible sign of solidarity through special European financial assistance,
- E. whereas these kinds of natural disasters may become more frequent in Europe – and globally – as climate change gains momentum,
- F. whereas the European Parliament has on several occasions called for the establishment of an

¹ OJ C 172, 18.6.1999, p. 1.

appropriate instrument to respond to similar catastrophic situations, notably in its resolution on the 2001 budgetary guidelines (A5-0070/2000) where it requested the Commission ‘to pay special attention to structural problems of an economic or social character caused by natural disasters and to look favourably on measures to help solve these problems’,

- G. whereas certain sensitive areas along rivers and valleys have lost part of their water-absorption capacity because of intensive agriculture and large infrastructure constructions along these valleys and rivers, and whereas ongoing straightening and deepening of rivers for navigation purposes increases the risk of floods,
- 1. Expresses its deepest sympathy and solidarity for the people affected by the recent disastrous floods in Austria, Germany, the Czech Republic and Slovakia and, in particular, conveys its condolences to the families of the victims and those who have lost their homes and property;
- 2. Pays tribute to the courage and dedication of the many rescuers whose hard and continuous work helped limit the human and material damage;

European commitment

- 3. Considers that the consequences of the disaster are not only national in their dimension but also call for European solidarity in the form of an effective European commitment; therefore undertakes to support actions for immediate relief of people hit by the disaster;
- 4. Welcomes the measures and initiatives taken by the Commission and calls on the Commission rapidly to implement an overall rapid-assistance programme based on the principles of solidarity and fair burden-sharing across the EU;

Agriculture

- 5. Welcomes as the first steps the immediate measures to be taken for farmers affected by the floods in the form of anticipating direct aid payments, making available intervention stocks of cereals for farmers in distress at concessionary prices and using set-aside land for feeding purposes; also welcomes the advancement of 50% of arable payments to farmers in southern Italy affected by persistent drought (at an estimated cost of € 300 million);

Structural funds

- 6. Underlines the need for flexibility in the management of the Structural Funds in order to allow re-programming within the national allocations aimed at tackling new local situations caused by catastrophes more effectively;
- 7. Supports and is willing to examine as a matter of urgency the steps necessary for using the performance reserve of the Structural Funds (4% of the 2000-2006 envelope for each Member State) for the emergency measures relating to flood damage and, if necessary, for amending the existing regulation to this end, including a possible reduction of the co-financing requirements;

European Investment Bank

8. Welcomes the announcement made by the European Investment Bank that it is ready to provide significant amounts in long-term loans (30 years/5% interest rate starting after 7 years) on exceptional terms (covering 100% of project costs), to be used to finance the reconstruction of infrastructure and SMEs, which could for the current year amount to € 1 billion for the 4 countries concerned, and to loans of € 3 to 5 billion in total for the victims of the floods;
9. Calls on the Commission to provide additional interest subsidies out of the EU budget on loans granted following the disaster;

Immediate aid and European Disaster Relief Fund

10. Calls on the Commission to present a proposal for the creation of a Natural Disaster Relief Fund for EU Member States in the framework of the EU budget procedure, setting clear criteria and rules for its use, including the definition of what is a natural disaster;
11. Stresses the need to provide immediate aid of € 1 billion from the margin available under the 2002 budget;
12. Points out that a European Relief Fund such as this can only act as a complement to national measures and to the insurance industry;

Candidate countries

13. Welcomes the immediate use of up to € 48 million of unallocated ISPA funds for flood damage in the Czech Republic, and of several million for Slovakia, and the use of € 9.75 million under the PHARE programme for reconstruction projects in the regions concerned; believes that a possible reduction of the co-financing requirements should be considered for these candidate countries also;
14. Emphasises that additional financial assistance must be provided through the emergency aid reserve, so as to demonstrate the EU's solidarity with the flood victims in the candidate countries affected;

Environment

15. Calls on the Member States and the applicant countries to assess and if necessary to update their legislation in a sustainable way as regards rivers and water-basin management, spatial planning, infrastructure installation and house building in vulnerable areas so as to prevent similar disasters in the future; calls in particular for existing flood plains to be maintained in their natural state or for former ones to be reconstructed; calls on the Council and the Commission to take political initiatives for greater EU cooperation in these fields;
16. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to revise their plans for modifying certain

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rivers for large inland navigation infrastructure, including orienting these projects towards flood risk prevention and nature protection;

17. Asks the Member States and the Commission to do everything possible to fulfil the Kyoto Targets and to undertake to work towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions by promoting energy saving and renewable energy sources and, for example, promoting emission-free energy production; underlines that Kyoto is only a first step and that further, more ambitious, targets are necessary;

Accelerating reconstruction

18. Calls on the Commission to guarantee a maximum of administrative facilities in order to accelerate the tender and procurement procedures as well as a flexible attitude towards the deployment of state aid;
19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and regions concerned and the governments and parliaments of the Czech Republic and Slovakia.