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Human rights: EU position for the next special session of the UN General Assembly on Children

European Parliament resolution on the EU position in the Special Session on Children of the UN General Assembly

The European Parliament,

- noting the reconvened Special Session on Children of the United Nations General Assembly from 8-10 May 2002,
 - recalling its previous resolutions on children's rights, such as its resolution of 17 December 1998 on child soldiers¹, its resolution of 28 January 1999 on the protection of families and children², its resolution of 17 May 2001 on child trafficking in Africa³, and its resolution of 6 September 2001⁴ on the UN Special Session,
 - having regard to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by 191 countries,
 - having regard to the entry into force on 12 February 2002 of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child,
 - having regard to the EU-sponsored resolution on the rights of the child, which was adopted by the UN Commission on the Rights of the Child on 25 April 2001 (UNCHR resolution 2001/75),
 - having regard to the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union, in particular Article 24,
- A. whereas at the World Summit for Children in 1990 world leaders adopted a plan of action on behalf of the children of the world, which contained far-reaching goals to improve the health and development of children, including reduction of mortality rates, malnutrition, and improved access to safe drinking water and sanitation,
- B. whereas new international standards and instruments enhancing child protection have been adopted, such as the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty, the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court, the optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and ILO Convention 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour,

¹ OJ C 98, 9.4.1999, p. 297.

² OJ C 128, 7.5.1999, p. 79.

³ OJ C 34 E, 7.2.2002, p. 383.

⁴ OJ C 72 E, 21.3.2002, p. 360.

- C. whereas although the Convention on the Rights of the Child has almost been universally ratified, its implementation is lacking,
- D. whereas every third second, a child somewhere in the world dies from under-nourishment or lack of water or health care, and millions of children have died from diseases related to HIV/AIDS,
- E. whereas more than 100 million children, particularly girls, are denied basic education,
- F. whereas two million children have been killed in wars over the last ten years,
- G. whereas every year two million girls are victims of female genital mutilation,
- H. whereas the 2002 Special Session is an important opportunity to devise practical and sustainable ways to fully implement the Convention as rapidly as possible,
- I. whereas demographic, sociological, technological and scientific changes are creating problems which affect social and human development, such as poverty, social exclusion and the breakdown of family life, of which children are always the first victims,
- J. whereas the successful implementation of the goals established at the forthcoming Special Session on Children will depend on a meaningful monitoring system,
1. Calls on the EU and its Member States to work actively together in order for the outcome of the Special Session to:
- fully implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child,
 - support universal ratification and implementation of the new treaties developed during the past decade that strengthen the protection of children's rights, specifically the optional protocol on children in armed conflict, and ILO Convention 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour,
 - reflect in its goals the importance of the critical rights of children which protect them from violence, exploitation and abuse, as well as health, education and nutrition,
 - ensure that strong mechanisms are in place to monitor government obligations and commitments, including the meaningful participation of non-governmental organisations and civil society;
2. Supports the view that the 'family is the fundamental unit of society and holds primary responsibility for the protection, upbringing and development of children', as stated in UNICEF's draft outcome document under preparation for the Special Session;
3. Suggests, therefore, that a 'world fit for children' - the title of the Special Session - has to be at the same time a world fit for families, in line with subsidiarity; this implies that government policies have to be devised accordingly in order to achieve the best human

and social environment for children and to provide those that are deprived of natural family protection and support with the best possible family-like social responses;

4. Calls on the Member States to make the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the ratification and implementation of key new treaties developed during the past decade that strengthen the protection of children's rights and the implementation of the commitments agreed upon during the 2002 Special Session a national and European priority in the light of Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights;
5. Calls on the Member States to establish or designate an independent body to monitor the goals of the outcome document of the Special Session and to adopt a comprehensive national plan, with specific, time-bound and measurable objectives;
6. Calls on the Member States to ratify and implement the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Protection of Children in Armed Conflict which came into force on 12 February 2002;
7. Calls on the Council to make the ratification of key new treaties strengthening the protection of children's rights by third countries, which have been developed during the past decade, a priority in its political dialogue with these countries;
8. Welcomes the establishment of the Convention on the Future of Europe and calls on the Convention to recommend the inclusion of a legal basis in the Treaties to promote and protect the best interests of the child in all EU policy, programmes and legislation;
9. Welcomes the recent commitments made by the Commission to integrate a children's rights perspective into the development cooperation instruments of the Community and to issue strategic implementation guidelines; calls on the Commission and the Council to implement these commitments without delay;
10. Notes that girls in developing countries are more likely to be performing unpaid domestic work, denied education, and subjected to early marriage and calls on the Commission to take specific measures to promote the rights of the girl child in development and humanitarian aid policy;
11. Calls on Member States to promote Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to involve children and young people at all appropriate levels of decision-making;
12. Calls on the Commission to ensure that all proposed EU directives, policies and programmes should be subjected to child impact analyses in order to assess their potential implications for children;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the chairs of its inter-parliamentary delegations, the parliaments of the Member States, the UNGASS secretariat, UNICEF and the national delegations at the UN General Assembly's Special Session on Children.