

P5_TA(2003)0320

European Council of 19-20 June 2003 in Thessaloniki

European Parliament resolution on the Thessaloniki European Council of 19-20 June 2003

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolutions on the European Convention and its resolution of 5 June 2003 on the meeting of the Troika with the countries participating in the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe,¹ its resolution of 19 June 2003 on a renewed transatlantic partnership for the third millennium² and its resolution of 19 June 2003³ on an open method of coordination for the Community immigration policy and integrating migration issues in the European Union's relations with third countries,
- having regard to the Presidency conclusions of the European Council meeting held in Thessaloniki on 19 and 20 June 2003,
- having regard to the statements by the Council Presidency and the Commission on the outcome of the Thessaloniki European Council,

European Convention - IGC

1. Welcomes the European Council's conclusions and its decision on the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe and takes the view that the latter must form the sole basis for the work of the Intergovernmental Conference; notes, therefore, that the 'convention method' has proved effective in increasing democracy and transparency;
2. Warns against unpicking the essential elements of the package achieved by the Convention (the majority of whose members were parliamentarians);
3. Insists that the Convention must still reach a consensus on Part III and Part IV; emphasises the importance of the revision of Part III to achieve many procedural and policy reforms in conformity with Part I, especially with a view to extending qualified majority voting in the Council and codecision of the Parliament; underlines the necessity of amending Part IV in order to ensure the coming into force and future revision of the Constitution;
4. Calls on the Italian Presidency to convene the Intergovernmental Conference at a high political level as soon as possible (with the accession states taking a full and equal part), so that it can finish before the end of 2003;

¹ P5_TA(2003)0264.

² P5_TA(2003)0291.

³ P5_TA(2003)0292.

5. Recalls that it has become established practice that the Commission and Parliament participate in Intergovernmental Conferences: Parliament sends MEPs as its representatives to the IGC and the President of Parliament participates in meetings held at the level of Heads of Government;
6. Underlines the importance of carrying forward into the IGC the more open, pluralistic and consensual spirit of the Convention, including the Presidency's keeping the members of the Convention informed; calls for progress reports to be made, firstly at the monthly part-sessions of the European Parliament and secondly before its Committee on Constitutional Affairs, if possible in the presence of the representatives of the national parliaments, on the work of the IGC;

Immigration, frontiers and asylum

7. Notes that the Thessaloniki European Council has confirmed the difficulty and lack of progress in implementing the Seville conclusions, welcomes the European Council's recognition of the need to speed up the implementation of all aspects of the Tampere programme and reaffirms the need to maintain an overall, coherent approach to a common European policy on asylum and migration;
8. Insists that the EU needs to have a coherent common policy on and procedures for legal immigration, and therefore asks the European Council to explore legal means for third-country nationals to enter the Union, taking into account reception capacity and enhanced cooperation with the countries of origin; calls therefore on the Council to adopt the Directive on conditions for entering the EU for employment purposes;
9. Is dismayed at the death of numerous immigrants in shipwrecks in the Mediterranean; condemns the criminal action of all those who profit from trafficking in human beings and believes that more should be done to clamp down on these criminal networks, many of which operate across borders;
10. Notes the willingness of the Council to apply harmonised solutions to documents of third-country nationals, passports of EU citizens and information systems (SIS (Schengen Information System) II and VIS (Schengen Visa Information System));
11. Calls on the Commission to submit to it as soon as possible, with a view to carrying out this harmonisation, proposals establishing legislative instruments enabling European laws to be put in place with regard to passports and visas, in accordance with Article 18(3) of the EC Treaty;
12. Notes that the European Council believes that guidelines should be laid down to develop a computerised visa-recognition system, with harmonised 'biometric' data to be included on visas; demands that the Council and the Commission keep Parliament fully informed on the development of such proposals;
13. Stresses that the effective management of the external borders of EU Member States should be developed with a coherent and structured Community framework and methods while noting the particular needs of the new Member States;

14. Welcomes the fact that the Commission will examine whether it is necessary to create a Community operational structure, including a Community-financed European Border Guard Corps, in order to enhance operational cooperation for the management of the external and maritime borders; insists on the role that the Commission must play and the need to fully involve Parliament in these matters;
15. Intends to consider as soon as possible the Greek proposal aimed at setting up a network of immigration liaison officers (ILOs) in third countries;
16. Notes the willingness expressed by the European Council to consolidate solidarity in the area of freedom, security and justice; welcomes the Council's intention to ensure that the financial perspectives are adapted (as of 2006) to reflect this political priority of the Union; supports the wish of the Council to release in the meantime additional resources with which to meet the most pressing structural needs, namely:
 - management of external borders,
 - implementation of the action programme on returns,
 - development of the visa information system (VIS);affirms that these additional resources may not in any circumstances be generated by reducing current Category 3 expenditure;
17. Calls for a debate on the basis of the proposals made by the Commission in its Green Paper on a Community Return Policy (COM(2002) 175);
18. Notes that at the present there is no Community policy on the return of illegally residing persons and that the overriding priority must be voluntary return, while stressing that any policy development should fully respect the principle of non-refoulement and the right to seek asylum;
19. Believes that the Refugee Fund (heading 3) should not be reduced and should not be used to finance forced return programmes and that voluntary return programmes must be financed from the budget line for Cooperation with third countries on migration (heading 4) as long as there is no proper legal basis for return programmes, and insists that there is at present no basis justifying EU funding for expulsions and that, by virtue of the principle of subsidiarity, the various actions may therefore be financed from national budgets;
20. Regarding the lack of progress, confirmed by the European Council, in establishing a common European asylum system, reminds the Council to adopt, in 2003, the basic legislation already proposed by the Commission, and insists that the adoption of these instruments must give further impetus to the development of a common European asylum policy based on high protection requirements;
21. Notes that the codecision procedure and qualified majority voting should come into force once the Council has adopted these common rules on matters relating to asylum, as provided for by the Treaty of Nice;

22. Shares the Commission's concerns and doubts expressed in its Communication 'Towards more accessible, equitable and managed asylum systems' and awaits its new report in June 2004 on the way to improve the ability to protect refugees;
23. Welcomes, therefore, the European Council decision to establish a comprehensive and multidimensional EU integration policy, which on the one hand can effectively contribute to new demographic and economic challenges and on the other hand can contribute to social cohesion and economic welfare;
24. Stresses that an EU integration policy must strike a balance between rights and corresponding obligations of legally resident third-country nationals and the host societies, and that the responsibility of the latter includes adjusting to newcomers, respecting their identity (within the law) and ensuring equality of treatment and non-discrimination;
25. Calls on the Council to adopt the directives on family reunification and long-term resident status, essential legal instruments for the integration of third-country nationals, as proposed by the Commission and amended by Parliament; insists that third-country nationals should enjoy rights and obligations comparable to those of EU citizens, including the political right to vote in local and European elections;
26. Considers that integrating migration issues in EU relations with third countries is an important part of a balanced approach to improved management of migration flows, but calls on the Council to promote co-development in relations with third countries;
27. Welcomes the European Council's proposal to make the European migration network a permanent structure, but wishes it to be implemented in agreement with Parliament;
28. Welcomes the fact that the Commission will present an annual report on migration and integration in Europe, including EU-wide migration data, and calls on the Commission to highlight best practice in respect of immigration and integration policies as practised by the Member States;

Combating terrorism

29. Welcomes the Presidency's report to the European Council (Annex I to the Presidency Conclusions), particularly its recommendations on fighting funding for terrorism and collaboration with third countries, particularly the United States;
30. Calls for improved 'inter-pillar' cooperation through the coordination of the measures adopted in the framework of Justice and Home Affairs, such as the European Arrest Warrant, and the powers conferred on Europol to fight terrorism, with the measures adopted under ESDP;
31. Recalls the necessity to link the fight against funding for terrorism with the fight against money laundering and drug trafficking;

Enlargement, Cyprus, Western Balkans and Wider Europe

Enlargement

32. Underlines the positive prospects for the membership of Bulgaria and Romania; supports the Turkish Government in its programme of radical reform at home and urges the Commission to properly consult Parliament before finalising its recommendations in preparation of the European Council in December 2004;

Cyprus

33. Expresses the deep conviction that Cyprus's entry into the Union will create a climate favourable to bringing both communities of the island closer together and finding a solution in the UN framework; urges Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership to respond positively to the UN Secretary-General's efforts;

Western Balkans

34. Recognises the irreversibility of the process under which each of the Western Balkan countries is moving towards accession; at the same time insists on the principle that each country should be judged on its own merits and believes that this differentiated approach should take into account the desirability of the regional approach;
35. Calls upon the Council and the Commission to present to Parliament a viable financial framework for further support to the Stabilisation and Association Process under the restructured heading 7;
36. Considers also that the pace of further enlargement must take into account the capacity of the EU institutions to continue to function effectively;

Wider Europe and Mediterranean

37. Views with great interest the opportunity presented by the launching of the initiative on relations between an enlarged Europe and its neighbours to the East and South; is of the opinion that an inclusive process must be developed to create a system of beneficial reciprocal relations promoting a common vision of democracy, respect for human rights and social progress;
38. Welcomes the Presidency conclusions following the mid-term Euro-Mediterranean Conference held on 26-27 May 2003 in Crete, and hopes that the EU and the partner countries will make a more resolute and methodical commitment to give body and substance to the Barcelona process in the spirit of co-development;
39. Recalls the need to achieve all the objectives set out in the Barcelona Declaration;
40. Reiterates its proposal to establish a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, reinvigorating the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona process through a greater degree of institutionalisation and a higher political profile and guaranteeing parliamentary control of and follow-up to the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements; calls for the Ministerial Conference in Naples to define the legal basis to enable the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum to be transformed into a Parliamentary Assembly;

Follow-up to the 2003 Spring European Council

41. Stresses the importance of European Councils going beyond mere repetition and stocktaking and giving much clearer leadership with respect to implementing the Lisbon strategy at both European and national levels, where much still remains to be done; awaits with interest the Commission's initiative, in cooperation with the European Investment Bank, to increase overall investment and private-sector involvement in TENs and major R&D projects;
42. Following the Council's adoption of the Employment Guidelines and of the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines, regrettably without taking due account of the main proposals made by the European Parliament, recalls the need for an EU global approach to sustainable development and therefore deplors the absence of any reference to the Göteborg commitments;
43. Notes the candidacy of Mr Jean-Claude Trichet for the presidency of the European Central Bank, and undertakes to make known its opinion under Article 112 of the Treaty and in accordance with Rule 36 of its Rules of Procedure;

International Criminal Court

44. Regards the establishment of the ICC as a great step forward for the development of international law and stresses that the Rome Statute is an essential element of the values which form the basis of the EU democratic model;
45. Welcomes Council Common Position 2003/444/CFSP of 16 June 2003¹ on the International Criminal Court, whereby the Union and its Member States (...) shall continue, as appropriate, to draw the attention of third States to the Council Conclusions of 30 September 2002 on the International Criminal Court and to the EU Guiding Principles annexed thereto, with regard to proposals for agreements or arrangements concerning conditions for the surrender of persons to the Court, and expects Member States to respect the Common Position;
46. Welcomes furthermore the Presidency's strong support for the ICC and its commitment to work actively for the universality of the Court and to contribute to its effective functioning;
47. Calls upon and encourages the governments and parliaments of Member States, accession states and countries associated with the EU in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, the Mercosur, Andean Pact and San José process countries, the countries involved in the Stability and Association Process, the ACP and the ASEAN countries to refrain from concluding or ratifying any 'Bilateral Impunity Agreement' or other similar arrangements;
48. Regrets, in this regard, the continued opposition of the current US Administration to the ICC and regrets that it is intensifying its political and financial pressure worldwide, trying to persuade State Parties and Signatory States to the Rome Statute as well as non-signatory states to enter into bilateral non-surrender agreements by threatening to suspend military and economic aid as well as other forms of assistance;

¹ OJ L 150, 18.6.2003, p. 67.

49. Welcomes the Declaration by the ten accession states, Bulgaria and Romania, and Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland, that they share the objectives of the abovementioned Common Position and that they will ensure that their national policies conform to this position;
50. Urges the Italian Presidency to adapt and update the Action Plan adopted in May 2002, in accordance with the new Common Position; in particular encourages the Presidency to include in the Action Plan the establishment of a full-time focal point within the Council Secretariat, supporting and facilitating the efforts of the Presidency;
51. Urges the Council and the Commission to engage in a dialogue with the US administration on all matters relating to the ICC; notes with disappointment that the UN Security Council has renewed its resolution 1487 for one year and asks the Council and the Commission to make every effort to avoid any further renewal of this resolution, which extends immunity to the UN's own peacekeepers;

External relations, CFSP, ESDP

CFSP and ESDP

52. Expresses its interest in the recommendations presented by the High Representative for CFSP on a European Strategy on security and requests that it be involved in the formulation and implementation of the EU security strategy; recalls the proposals put forward during the present parliamentary term on all aspects of a genuine European Security and Defence Policy, including those concerning the institutions;
53. Notes with satisfaction that the EU now has operational capability across the full range of Petersberg tasks, which has been reaffirmed through the launching of the first ESDP operations: EUPM in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Concordia in FYROM and Artemis in Bunia in the DRC; regrets however that this operational capability is still limited and constrained by many shortfalls and calls therefore upon the Council to continue to develop the EU's military capabilities including through the establishment of ECAP Project Groups;
54. Recalls the agreement reached during the 2003 budgetary procedure on the provision at an early stage of information to, and consultation of, Parliament on the CFSP and ESDP; deplores the fact that the Council did not respect this agreement in the case of ESDP action in FYROM (the Concordia mission);
55. Welcomes the decision to establish in 2004 a Defence Capabilities Agency with the purpose of enhancing the capacity of the European defence industry to meet strategic requirements;

The Arab world

56. Agrees on the necessity of reinforcing its partnership with the Arab world, through the intensification of political dialogue, promoting pluralism, democratic reforms and economic and social development;

Middle East

57. Reasserts the crucial importance of respecting the Road Map proposals as adopted and of their immediate implementation; calls on all parties to demonstrate their sincere and resolute commitment, and considers that terrorism and violence can only waste this opportunity to resolve the conflict;

Iraq

58. Considers the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1483 as a clear indication of the wish to return to the constructive spirit of cooperation within the UN and looks forward to the contribution of the UN, and in particular its Special Representative, to the formation of a representative Iraqi government;
59. Supports the Council's determination to involve the EU in the humanitarian relief efforts and asks the Commission and the High Representative to submit proposals for the EU contribution without delay;
60. Recalls its commitment to participate in the reconstruction of Iraq within the framework of UNSC Resolution 1483 and recalls that the establishment of an Iraqi government as soon as possible would be a further guarantee that Iraqi natural resources will finally benefit the Iraqi population;

Cuba

61. Firmly condemns the current policy of the Cuban authorities which has brought increased repression of opposition leaders; reaffirms its resolution of 10 April 2003 on human rights in Cuba¹ and urges the Cuban authorities to free those detained and to end the harassment to which defenders of human rights and democracy are being subjected;

Iran

62. Recalls its support for the IAEA mission to examine Iran's nuclear programme and calls on Iran to commit itself to full transparency and cooperation with the IAEA, including the signing of the Additional Protocol;
63. Expresses its strong concern about and deplores the treatment of the opposition, especially students, by the authorities and certain vigilante groups, recalls its demands for improvement of the human rights situation in the country and expects the Commission and the Council to brief Parliament regularly on the political dialogue;

Green diplomacy

64. Welcomes the renewed commitment by the European Council to integrate the environment into external relations by promoting European diplomacy with regard to the environment and sustainable development, which translates into action Parliament's views and is fully in line with Parliament's statements in all international fora;

¹ P5_TA(2003)0191.

65. Underlines that, in the context of globalisation of environmental issues such as climate change, management of water resources and sustainable development in general, it is of particular relevance to integrate the environmental dimension into all policies at global level, as is the case at European level;

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66. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the European Council, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the accession states and the European Convention.