



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2016)0345

EU relations with Tunisia in the current regional context

European Parliament resolution of 14 September 2016 on the EU relations with Tunisia in the current regional context (2015/2273(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 8 of the Treaty on European Union,
- having regard to the final report of the EU Election Observation Mission for the legislative and presidential elections in Tunisia in 2014,
- having regard to the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights entitled ‘Prisons in Tunisia: International Standards versus Reality’ of March 2014 and to the declarations of officials of the Tunisian Justice Ministry,
- having regard to the Single Support Framework for European Union support to Tunisia for the period 2014-2015, extended by modification of Commission Decision C(2014)5160 until the end of 2016,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 July 2015 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy¹,
- having regard to the Joint communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 18 November 2015 on the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (JOIN(2015)0050),
- having regard to the signature by Tunisia on 1 December 2015 of an Association Agreement for research and innovation under the Horizon 2020 programme,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 February 2016 on the opening of negotiations for an EU-Tunisia Free Trade Agreement²,
- having regard to its position of 10 March 2016, on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the introduction of emergency autonomous trade measures for the Republic of Tunisia³,

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0272.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0061.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0086.

- having regard to the entry into force on 19 April 2016 of Regulation (EU) 2016/580 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 April 2016 on the introduction of emergency autonomous trade measures for the Republic of Tunisia¹,
 - having regard to the recommendations of the EU-Tunisia Association Council of 17 March 2015 for the implementation of the EU-Tunisia Action Plan (2013-2017), and to the joint statement of the EU-Tunisia Association Council of 18 April 2016,
 - having regard to Tunisia’s ‘Strategic Development Plan, 2016-2020’,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A8-0249/2016),
- A. whereas Tunisia is one of the EU’s European Neighbourhood Policy priority countries;
 - B. whereas the peaceful democratic transition process in Tunisia represents a successful example in the Arab world and its consolidation is paramount for the stability of the entire region and, as a direct consequence, for the security of Europe;
 - C. whereas the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet in 2015 for ‘its decisive contribution to the building of a pluralistic democracy in Tunisia’;
 - D. whereas Tunisia currently faces a difficult socio-economic situation but also security challenges mostly deriving from the situation in Libya; whereas tourism, which represents a key element of the Tunisian economy, is severely affected by these circumstances and by the terrorist attacks which have targeted the country;
 - E. whereas the Tunisian economy is highly dependent on foreign investment, tourism and exporting products to the EU and whereas the economy can only flourish if democracy can develop further;
 - F. whereas the lack of jobs and opportunities was one of the main reasons for the massive popular demonstrations in 2011, and whereas many of the problems are still felt by people every day, given the high rate of youth unemployment;
 - G. whereas there is a need to develop a genuine partnership through which the interests of communities on both sides of the Mediterranean are taken into account and which is designed to work on Tunisia’s social and regional inequalities in particular;
 - H. whereas, with the end of Ben Ali regime and the consolidation of the democratic process, the EU could improve its political dialogue with Tunisia by taking greater account of the interests and priorities of this important partner as a way to achieve the objective of stability;
 - I. whereas the EU and its Member States must remain committed to working with the people of Tunisia and their government to promote common interests, including in trade, investment, tourism, culture and security;

¹ OJ L 102, 18.4.2016, p. 1.

- J. whereas a tripartite dialogue has been set up, in the context of the organisation of the sub-committees, between the authorities, civil society actors and EU representatives in Tunisia;
 - K. whereas the freedom of the press and the freedom of publication are essential elements of an open, free and democratic society;
 - L. whereas Tunisia played an important role in facilitating the conclusion of an agreement between the conflicting sides in Libya;
 - M. whereas instability in Libya and its spillovers represent a serious threat to the stability of Tunisia and of the whole region; whereas Tunisia currently hosts a significant number of displaced Libyans, who have fled instability and violence in Libya, and whereas this is putting a strain on the internal situation and infrastructures;
 - N. whereas Tunisia has suffered several terrorist attacks in the last few years; whereas Tunisia is an essential partner of the EU in the fight against terrorism;
 - O. whereas an alarmingly high number of Tunisian youths are recruited by IS/Daesh and whereas hopelessness and economic stagnation contribute to young people becoming increasingly vulnerable to the lure of extremist organisations;
1. Renews its commitment to the Tunisian people and the political transition process that began in 2011; emphasises the challenges and threats facing the country while it consolidates its democratic process, implements the reforms needed to achieve social and economic prosperity and guarantees its security; urges the EU and the Member States to mobilise and better coordinate substantial technical and financial resources in order to provide concrete support for Tunisia; underlines that, without measures to strengthen Tunisia's absorption capacity and stability, democracy, good governance, the fight against corruption, economic development and employment in the region, any prospect of reform will be put at risk; calls, therefore, for a genuine deep and comprehensive partnership between the EU and Tunisia;
 2. Calls on participants in the Deauville Partnership to fulfil pledge commitments; considers that the situation in Tunisia justifies the launch of a real 'Marshall Plan' with appropriate funding to support the consolidation of the democratic transition and foster investment and development in all sectors of the economy and society in the country, in particular employment creation and maintaining quality public services that are accessible to everyone; calls also for the consolidation of efforts to support civil society; expresses its concerns about the current socio-economic and budgetary difficulties inherent to the instability of the transition period and the imperative for Tunisia to implement adequate reforms aimed at boosting employment and developing sustainable and inclusive growth; deems it essential, as a result, that the budget authorities agree to a decisive strengthening of the resources of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) earmarked for Tunisia;
 3. Affirms that, despite the dire social and economic situation, Tunisia's historical democratic transition calls for a much more ambitious EU-Tunisia partnership, going beyond conventional measures;
 4. Commends the good cooperation between Tunisia and its neighbours, as illustrated by the signing of a preferential trade agreement and the establishment of local transborder committees with Algeria aimed at fostering local development, by the intertwining of

Tunisia's economy with Libya's and by the solidarity of the Tunisian people with displaced Libyans; welcomes, in this context, the progress made on the reconciliation process in Libya;

5. Stresses the importance of respect for human rights in the implementation of the reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy; calls for the development of monitoring mechanisms on respect for fundamental freedoms, gender equality and other human rights issues, with the full involvement of civil society;
6. Underlines that the relaunch of the political process of integration in the framework of the Arab Maghreb Union could be a particularly appropriate opportunity to ensure security and strengthen cooperation in the whole region;

I – Political reforms and Institutions

7. Expresses its support for the process of democratisation and points to the need for social and economic reforms in Tunisia; emphasises the need to support the People's Representative Assembly (PRA) given the challenge of enhancing stability in a volatile regional context while deepening democracy; expresses concerns at the lack of means of the PRA, which is hampering its legislative role and slowing down the drafting of the urgently needed new legislation and the reform process; supports the PRA in its efforts to enhance its capacity, including by recruiting staff; supports a review of the needs of the PRA; requests that Parliament's services enhance the capacity-building support activities provided to the PRA; recommends that Parliament organise a political meeting at the highest political level, such as a 'Tunisian Week', on its premises, in order to foster parliamentary cooperation;
8. Welcomes the establishment of an EU-Tunisia Joint Parliamentary Committee which will play a key role, enabling Members of the European Parliament and Tunisians to meet regularly and develop a structured political dialogue on democracy, human rights, the rule of law and any topic of mutual interest; stresses that, as part of the opening of trade agreements, the EU-Tunisia Joint Parliamentary Committee has an important role to play in effectively monitoring ongoing negotiations; calls for the launching of specific initiatives of support to the PRA with other European Parliament committees, such as the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (for support regarding justice and home affairs matters, migration law and measures relating to police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, including terrorism);
9. Welcomes the tripartite dialogue in Tunisia; calls for its continuation and extension to all aspects of EU-Tunisia bilateral relations and, in particular, to ensure the involvement of civil society in the implementation of the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the process for negotiating EU-Tunisia priorities;
10. Notes that the reform of public administration is one of the main challenging reforms that Tunisia has to implement; welcomes the Tunisian Government's consideration of new methods to fast-track key priority policies; believes that the twinning between European and Tunisian administrations is a positive contribution to the reform of public administration; supports using IT-based solutions for establishing and developing an e-state and an e-administration;
11. Welcomes Tunisia's compliance with international standards relating to freedom of association, which has given the country a leading role in strengthening an independent

civil society in the Arab world; calls for the strengthening of technical and capacity-building support for civil society organisations, political parties and trade unions, which have a crucial role to play in Tunisia and have proven to be of fundamental importance to the democratic transition and overall development, government accountability and the monitoring of respect for human rights, including the protection of women and children, gender equality and the protection of all victims of persecution and discrimination; welcomes specific EU-financed programmes in this domain such as the project supporting civil society (PASC) and the agreement signed between the European Social and Economic Committee and the Tunisian quartet to strengthen ties between Tunisian and European civil societies; encourages dialogue and cooperation between civil society and public authorities in the identification of local development priorities, including local investment; calls for the promotion of civic education and democratic engagement;

12. Underlines the importance of developing a culture of citizenship and calls for the creation of an enabling environment with the necessary structures for civil-society organisations to be included in the decision-making process;
13. Deems it necessary that the Commission and the EEAS provide the necessary support for local elections (scheduled in October 2016) and an EU and EP monitoring mission and election assistance, should these be requested by the Tunisian Government as was already the case for the legislative and presidential elections in 2014; calls, in this context, for strengthened support for municipalities in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM), and by fostering the development of twinning projects in coordination with the Member States;
14. Calls for support for gender-balanced policies, including by reforming the personal status code in order to abolish discriminatory laws against women such as those related to inheritance and marriage rights, and for an increased participation of women in public life and the private sector, as provided for in Article 46 of the Tunisian Constitution; encourages, furthermore, the development of mentoring programmes for emerging female leaders, with the potential to support their access to decision-making positions; recommends the lifting of Tunisia's general declaration on the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women;
15. Calls for the inclusion of young people in political life, especially regarding the promotion of youth participation in local elections; welcomes in this regard EU-funded projects in the field of youth awareness/civic education; welcomes the legislative provisions regarding youth representation in local and regional elections; considers the municipal elections in 2016 as an opportunity to encourage young people to reengage actively in the political transformation process;
16. Welcomes the transitional justice law; recalls the high hopes of the Tunisian people for the transitional process; regrets the intense polarisation within the Truth and Dignity Commission; notes that national reconciliation and growth should not be contradictory priorities;
17. Calls for the Commission and the EEAS to continue to support Tunisia in the reform of the judicial sector and the rule of law in respect of the values of the Tunisian Constitution, including through technical and financial support for the ongoing establishment of the Supreme Judicial Council and the Constitutional Court; welcomes the EU programme on Justice Reform (PARJI) adopted in 2011 and the PARJ2 programme, adopted in 2014 and funded with only EUR 15 million;

18. Calls on the government to take swift measures to prevent the use of torture; encourages Tunisia to abolish the death penalty; raises concerns regarding repeated cases of torture inflicted by Tunisian authorities on minors suspected of wanting to join terrorist organisations;
19. Calls on Tunisia, as a matter of urgency, to reform its 1978 state of emergency law, currently enforced outside the Constitution's basic provisions;
20. Expresses concern at the overcrowding, lack of food and sanitary conditions in Tunisian prisons and their effects on inmates' basic rights; welcomes the Tunisian-European project for the reform of Tunisian penal institutions, which aims to reinforce the system of alternative penalties instead of imprisonment for less serious offenses;
21. Calls for a reform of the penal code, and in particular for the repeal of Article 230, which penalises homosexuality with imprisonment for three years, and is contrary to the constitutional principles of non-discrimination and the protection of privacy; welcomes the new law replacing and modifying Law 1992-52 on narcotics, which gives priority to prevention instead of dissuasion and establishes alternative penalties that promote the rehabilitation and reintegration of drug users as an appropriate step towards aligning Tunisian legislation with international standards;
22. Calls for a stronger process of decentralisation and the empowerment of the regions by means of further local autonomies; supports partnerships with EU Member States encouraging decentralised approaches (e.g. training and capacity building in that field), together with decentralised cooperation projects led by Member State authorities which contribute to the development of regional and local governance in Tunisia, as well as partnerships and exchanges of best practice with EU cities and local communities; calls for increased EU support for civil society in the regions, building on successful existing initiatives;
23. Is worried that little progress has been made to overhaul the code of criminal procedures and the penal code with a view to upholding freedom of expression; is worried that several citizens have been prosecuted and imprisoned for alleged defamation, insulting state officials in rap songs or harming public morals, including journalists and bloggers, for expressing their opinions; welcomes the fact that Tunisia has joined the Freedom Online Coalition and calls for it to participate more actively;
24. Reaffirms that freedom of the press and media, freedom of expression online, including for bloggers, and offline and freedom of assembly are vital elements and indispensable pillars for democracy and an open and pluralistic society; encourages best practice standards in the media sector to truly reflect investigative and differentiated journalism; recognises the enabling effects of uncensored access to the internet and of digital and social media; welcomes Tunisia's vibrant and open online media landscape but calls on the Tunisian authorities to further invest in basic technological infrastructures and to promote digital connectivity and literacy, especially in the poorest areas of the country; welcomes the adoption of the new information law in March 2016 to effectively protect the right to freedom of information in Tunisia, including the rights of whistle blowers; welcomes the fact that the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAICA) and its successor, the Audio-Visual Communication Authority (ACA), will benefit from EU support in the context of the ongoing EUR 10 million programme supporting media reform;

25. Calls on the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to grant Tunisia the status of partner for democracy as a significant step towards consolidating parliamentary democracy and the rule of law in Tunisia;

II – Economic and social development

26. Welcomes the Commission's proposal for macro-financial assistance of EUR 500 million and its adoption by the Council and Parliament;

27. Notes the launch of negotiations on an ambitious free trade agreement (DCFTA) between the EU and Tunisia; recalls the need for the EU to conduct these negotiations along with technical and financial tailored assistance; emphasises that this agreement, while seeking to improve market access and the investment climate, has more than simply a trade dimension and must contribute to extending European standards in the fields of environment, consumer protection and workers' rights to Tunisia, fostering its stability, consolidating its democratic system and reinvigorating its economy; calls on the Commission to take a progressive approach during the negotiations and ensure that this agreement will be mutually beneficial while taking proper account of the significant economic disparities between the two parties; recalls its recommendations to the Commission and the Tunisian Government to implement a clear and detailed process for involving Tunisian and European civil society throughout the DCFTA negotiations; calls for the consultation process to be open and transparent and to take greater account of the diversity of Tunisian civil society, drawing on the best practices employed in similar negotiations;

28. Notes the adoption of the emergency autonomous trade measures for Tunisia as a concrete step to support the Tunisian economy and as an incentive for reforms; calls for an increase in EU aid to Tunisia through the ENI and for the coordination of international aid to Tunisia in order to allow the country to benefit fully from the EU support and enable job creation, particularly for young graduates; encourages partnerships with other interested global and regional donor countries and organisations and, in particular, measures reducing regional disparities and promoting training and investment in agriculture, taking into account the specificities of local agriculture, IT, the social economy, the manufacturing sector and SMEs which would boost employment; notes that the tourism sector has been dramatically impacted by the terrorist attacks and, in view of the measures implemented since then by the Tunisian authorities, calls on the Member States which have not yet done so to reassess the security situation as quickly as possible so that the Tunisian tourist sector may recover;

29. Calls for the EU to include civil society, local authorities and other important actors in the process of identification of priorities for funding in the mid-term review of the ENI;

30. Underlines the need to address unemployment, especially for young university graduates, to launch deep reforms with a view to promoting growth, quality education and employment (e.g. by easing currency restrictions, facilitating access to microcredit, reforming labour laws, developing training schemes suited to the needs of the labour market and simplifying administrative processes) and to diversify the Tunisian economy; calls on all parties to maintain a spirit of good cooperation in order to focus on reforms with a view to inclusive economic development for all territories of the country, including the less advanced and impoverished inland regions, which need a long-term development plan; calls on the Tunisian authorities to welcome initiatives in which citizens show

commitment to improving political dialogue or technological innovations; emphasises that international support for these civic initiatives is needed;

31. Welcomes the Tunisian Strategic Plan for Development 2016-2020 initiative and calls for its swift implementation with the adoption of regulatory frameworks aimed at facilitating the absorption of European support and of all international financial institutions; welcomes the adoption of the new investment code, which should create regulatory stability and facilitate investments, and the tax reforms; calls for the modernisation of the public administration, which should operate in an efficient and transparent way, thus greatly facilitating the implementation of projects and the better use of funds;
32. Supports the efforts of the Tunisian Government to modernise and liberalise the economy in order to meet new domestic, regional and global demands and believes that a strong and diverse Tunisian economy will create jobs, opportunities and prosperity, and allow the country to achieve its wider political and social ambitions;
33. Recalls the strategic importance of the agricultural sector in Tunisia and welcomes in this regard the measures foreseen in the 2016 Tunisian budget, including the cancellation of debts for farmers, and the launch of a national consultation on the agricultural sector; considers it essential for this national consultation to involve civil society and the broadest possible number of actors, including small farmers from the south of the country as well as young farmers; believes that the agricultural sector requires a deep reform and a series of urgent practical measures, such as developing the capacities of desalination plants to tackle the water deficit issue and other emerging problems owing to climate change; calls on the Tunisian authorities to ban the use of any pesticide that is already banned in the EU;
34. Calls on the EU to step up its efforts against desertification in Tunisia; notes that Tunisians are experiencing a serious shortage of water; calls on Tunisia to foster sustainable agriculture and eating habits; recommends a land reform to incite farmers to preserve forests and rivers; recalls that sustainable development of Tunisia's coastal tourism requires a strong reduction in hotel density in order to rationalise investments and manage the water front;
35. Welcomes the launch of the project entitled 'Youth mobility, food security and rural poverty reduction' by the APIA (Agence de promotion des investissements agricoles), in order to combat youth unemployment by offering alternatives in rural areas; calls on the Member States to support the EU actions by engaging, in partnership with Tunisian authorities, civil society organisations and the private sector, in sectoral or thematic projects that could have a direct and beneficial impact on Tunisian society;
36. Welcomes programmes developed by the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean, such as Med4jobs, to address the employability of young people in the Mediterranean; calls on the member states of the Union for the Mediterranean to task its Secretariat to focus on the economic and social development of Tunisia in support of the consolidation of its transition process;
37. Calls for a stronger fight against corruption, particularly in the context of the growing underground economy, with a view to achieving a more efficient and transparent decision-making process and to establishing a better environment for investment and business; welcomes the creation of the Tunisian Anti-Corruption Agency but regrets its limited budget; urges the Tunisian authorities to strengthen its capacity and effectivity and to

provide it with all the necessary financial and logistical support to ensure the proper functioning of public administration and the regularity of public procurement; calls on the Tunisian authorities to ensure that the steps they take against corruption are highly visible;

38. Calls for the acceleration of the establishment of the National Social Dialogue Council decided on in 2013;
39. Expresses concern at Tunisia's lack of asset recovery, owing notably to the lengthy and cumbersome processes involved in confiscating and repatriating assets; calls for specific technical capacity support to be provided to Tunisia in order to undertake investigations and collect the intelligence and evidence needed to build cases of asset recovery;
40. Calls on the Member States to demonstrate support and political will in order to speed up the recovery of frozen Tunisian assets; welcomes the Council decision of 28 January 2016 to extend the freeze on the assets of 48 people by one year;
41. Calls for the promotion of faster and safer transfers of remittances and of the investment potential, especially with regard to local and regional development, of Tunisians and North Africans already residing in the EU;
42. Express concerns regarding the sustainability of the Tunisian debt, and calls for an assessment of possible ways to make it more sustainable, especially in light of the country's economic situation; calls for the conversion of Tunisian debt into investment projects, especially for building strategic infrastructures and reducing regional disparities, and welcomes the initiatives in this regard; encourages the Commission and the Member States to increase the number of these types of projects; calls on the Member States to explore ways of securing a preferential rescheduling of Tunisia's debt and a diversification of debt components;
43. Welcomes EU projects in the area of job creation and vocational training, such as IRADA; recommends the use of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) funds to further assist SMEs; points out that SMEs are crucial to Tunisian growth and should therefore benefit from EU support; encourages the development of business start-up programmes targeting women and young people specifically, with a view to developing business management training and access to financial support in order to enhance the SME sector; recommends that Tunisia take the appropriate measures to be able to benefit fully from the EU's COSME (Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises) programme as soon as possible; encourages private lending to SMEs, including by enhancing the capability of the credit guarantee sector and by reforming the undercapitalised banking sector; welcomes the recent twinning programme for the Tunisian Central Bank aimed at supporting the modernisation of the banking sector;
44. Recommends that EU expertise in the field of regional funds and the reduction of regional disparities be used to address regional development in Tunisia and reduce disparities; calls for the support of international partners and funding institutions to improve and expand national infrastructure (e.g. motorways, railways, ports, airports, and telecommunication networks) to better integrate rural and inland centres;
45. Encourages the integration of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) with pan-EU initiatives such as the Energy Union; encourages, at the same time, more North African regional cooperation on specific issues such as afforestation and water management, as well as greater socioeconomic integration, with increased trade, across

North Africa; points out that the Union for the Mediterranean supports the development of specific projects in the region and should, in that regard, be involved in projects led by the EU in Tunisia;

46. Calls for EU cooperation to focus more on the green economy and sustainable development and to increase the use of renewable energies, as well as better water and waste treatment, especially considering Tunisia's high potential in the renewable energy sector; welcomes projects such as the depollution of the Lake of Bizerte endorsed by the Union for the Mediterranean, the plant roofs of Ghar el Melh and organic waste used for consumption in Beja;
47. Welcomes the integration of the Euro-Mediterranean electricity markets as an important element of energy cooperation with the southern neighbours; considers that the Elmed project would enable two-way electricity trade between the North and South of the Mediterranean, generating benefits for all partners in terms of security, stability and affordability of electricity supply;

III – Security and defence

48. Is deeply concerned about the immediate security spillover in Tunisia originating, among other reasons, from instability in Libya; notes the building of a wall at a part of the border with Libya; expresses concerns at the high number of Tunisian foreign fighters joining Daesh and other terrorist groups; underlines that the fight against weapon smuggling is an important part of counter-terrorism; underlines the need to reform the country's intelligence services while respecting the rule of law and human rights conventions;
49. Is worried about the terrorist attack in the border city of Ben Guerdane immediately after the bombing in Sabratha, which shows that the Tunisian-Libyan border remains highly permeable; expresses concerns about the situation in Libya and calls on all parties in Libya to engage constructively with the Government of National Accord (GNA); underlines that the EU stands ready to offer security support at the GNA's request and that security coordination between Tunisia and Libya needs to be re-established; suggests that an assessment should be made, in partnership with Tunisian authorities, of the possibility of establishing an EU Border Assistance Mission in Tunisia;
50. Recognises that poverty and social exclusion are among the major causes of radicalisation; calls for more effective social inclusion of young people to enable them to find stable employment and prevent them from becoming targets for recruitment as fighters for terrorist organisations; recommends using the expertise gathered through the initiative of international organisations such as Hedayah to develop local and regional strategies for countering violent extremism; calls for awareness raising about these existing networks or similar initiatives in Tunisia;
51. Calls on the Tunisian Government to set up a strategy to deal with returning foreign fighters, for example by coupling punitive and precautionary measures with de-radicalisation and rehabilitation programmes in order to give them the possibility to reintegrate into society, thereby reducing future risks; calls for a more comprehensive strategy to prevent radicalisation in prisons and detention centres; calls for a focus on improved education and on countering the radicalisation of young people;
52. Recognises that terrorism is a shared challenge which requires a joint response and that cooperation between the EU and Tunisia in the field of security and the fight against

terrorism has been stepped up recently, in particular with the launch of an ambitious programme to support security sector reform;

53. Supports the UN-led process of peace and political reconciliation in Libya as an essential vehicle towards stabilising the wider region and strengthening Tunisia's security and reform process;
54. Welcomes the security assistance coordination process launched by Tunisia, in which the EU plays an active role; stresses that the EU should support Tunisia in building state structures to deal with security issues; welcomes the results achieved by the G7+3 on security cooperation; calls for the swift implementation of the programmes currently in place and for the reinforcement of security assistance to Tunisia, with a focus on border security, protecting tourism infrastructures and combating the shared terrorist threat; encourages the Tunisian authorities, however, to respond proportionately to such threats in order to safeguard democratic freedoms and fundamental rights; calls for the full backing of the Tunisian competent authorities, the establishment of a national security adviser and for the Member States to share best practices in the security field with Tunisia, focusing on the training of security personnel and respect for human rights; calls for systematic human rights assessment of EU support to Tunisia in the security field;
55. Expresses its deepest concern about Law 22/2015 on counter-terrorism, adopted in July 2015 by Tunisia's Assembly of Representatives, which imposes the death penalty as a possible sentence for a range of 'terror' offences; expresses concerns regarding several provisions of the counterterrorism law; stresses that this bill could seriously infringe civil liberties and undermine respect for human rights in Tunisia; calls on the Tunisian authorities to continue to observe the moratorium on the death penalty; recalls that the death penalty already exists under Tunisian law for crimes such as murder and rape, even though no executions have occurred since 1991; underlines that, although Tunisia is one of the countries that are most vulnerable to the terrorism threat, states are obliged to fully respect human rights when fighting terrorism; emphasises that the ENP is strongly linked with respect for human rights and international law and recalls the strong EU position against the death penalty;
56. Welcomes the fact that provision is now made, under Law 22/2015 on counter-terrorism, for the legal protection of journalists' sources and for the criminalisation of unauthorised government surveillance;
57. Welcomes the launch, in November 2015, of the EU programme of support for security sector reform in Tunisia – with particular focus on restructuring security services, border controls and intelligence services – and the commitment made by both parties at the EU-Tunisia Association Council of 18 April 2016 to implement the programme efficiently and swiftly;
58. Calls for the promotion of a logic of objectives, rather than mere support by policy instruments, within a clear strategic vision focusing on prevention, support for the PRA's drafting of legislation, and the establishment of a counter-terrorism prosecutor's office;
59. Welcomes the enhanced political dialogue between the EU and Tunisia in the fight against terrorism; emphasises the importance of protecting human rights in the context of counter-terrorism measures;

60. Calls for increased cooperation with EU agencies such as EUROPOL, while observing that Tunisia was not among the list of third states with which Europol will conclude agreements; calls on the Council to consider the inclusion of Tunisia on this list of third states; requests that an impact study on this cooperation be conducted and presented at a joint meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) before the agreement is approved; welcomes the fact that EUROJUST has established a contact point with Tunisia and EUROJUST's invitation to the authorities to step up their cooperation and appoint a second contact point specifically in charge of terrorism; invites the Tunisian Government to provide the appropriate follow-up to these proposals as soon as possible;

IV – Mobility, research, education and culture

61. Welcomes the EU and the Tunisia Mobility Partnership signed in March 2014 and calls for its rapid implementation; calls for a new visa policy towards Tunisia and for the conclusion of a readmission agreement; notes that, although mobility partnerships rely on national competences, they are included in the EU proposal within the ENP; recommends that Member States show their solidarity with Tunisia by facilitating the issuing of visas for entrepreneurs, teachers, students, researchers, artists, etc.;

62. Encourages the EU to sign mobility partnerships with the partner countries in its southern neighbourhood in order to relax visa procedures in conjunction with readmission agreements; calls on the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to develop possibilities for circular migration schemes which would open up safe and legal routes for migrants; condemns trafficking in human beings, most of the victims of which are women, and stresses the importance of reinforcing cooperation with partner countries in order to combat it; notes that the issuing of long-term visas with several entries, instead of short-term visas, is the best way to decrease irregular migration, including through smuggling and human trafficking; recommends that Tunisia amend the 2004 law on the criminalisation of individuals who have left its territory without authorisation, in accordance with international law;

63. Calls on the Tunisian authorities to cooperate closely with Member States in order to tackle organised forms of illegal immigration;

64. Stresses that missions such as EUNAVFOR MED are a positive and effective way to tackle human trafficking; calls on the EU to continue to intensify operations of this type and to involve partner countries such as Tunisia;

65. Welcomes EU-Tunisian partnership in the field of research and innovation, and Tunisia's participation in the Horizon 2020 framework programme; emphasises that a consistent scientific research and technological development policy would be an incentive to R&D investments, the transfer of research and innovation to the private sector and the creation of new businesses; underlines that Tunisia should become a full participant in the Erasmus + programme in order to develop further the exchange of university students; is concerned about the growing difficulties faced by Tunisian students wanting to study in Europe; calls for a 'positive discrimination policy' to be implemented, particularly for young students coming from less developed regions, with incentives for them to be allowed to participate in such programmes; calls on Tunisia to readjust and prioritise partnerships for developing skills in foreign languages, engineering, renewable energies, sciences and computer science, which have the highest employment rates;

66. Calls on the Commission to encourage the development of partnerships among schools, universities and research centres and to strengthen shared lifelong learning projects, especially in the fields of language learning, new technologies, promotion of women's education promotion and entrepreneurship;
67. Calls for a strengthened partnership in the creative, cultural, sports, popular education, community life and audiovisual sectors through the strengthening of networks and of initiatives for increased intercultural dialogue, the highlighting of the common historical and archaeological heritage from the Roman era, player mobility, and the promotion and circulation of cultural and audiovisual content, including through festivals and exhibitions; encourages Tunisia to participate in the Creative Europe Programme;
68. Recommends the use of Arabic by the EU institutions, and especially the EU Delegation in Tunis, when publishing calls for tenders and for expressions of interest and when communicating with the public; underlines the importance of the Tunisian Government informing its citizens about its actions;
69. Considers that the use of Arabic is necessary to ensure the involvement of civil society in EU-Tunisia relations, in particular in the context of the free trade agreement negotiations;

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70. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Government of the Republic of Tunisia and the President of the Tunisian People's Representative Assembly.