30. Calls on the Commission to reincorporate into its second action plan the initiative SCALE (Science, Children, Awareness, Legal instruments, Evaluation) relating to the reduction of exposure to pollution, as set out in the European Environment and Health Strategy (COM(2003)0338);

31. Urges the Commission to work on and provide instruments that would foster the development and promotion of innovative solutions, as stressed within the Lisbon agenda framework, in order to minimise major health risks from environmental stressors;

32. Urges the Council to take a decision without delay on the proposal for a regulation establishing the Union Solidarity Fund, as Parliament adopted its position as long ago as 18 May 2006 (1); considers that the new regulation, which, together with other measures, will lower thresholds for the entry into force of the Union Solidarity Fund, will make it possible to alleviate more effectively, flexibly and quickly damage caused by natural or man-made disasters; stresses that such a financial instrument is very important, particularly because it is assumed that natural disasters will occur more frequently in future, partly on account of climate change;

33. Recommends, as SMEs are of decisive economic importance in Europe, that the Commission should provide technical support to SMEs to make it possible, and help them, to comply with binding environmental health regulations and encourage them to make other changes which are positive from the point of view of environmental health and affect the operation of enterprises;

34. Advises the Commission to envisage (by 2010 and under the ‘second cycle’ of the health and environment action plan) refocusing its initiatives on vulnerable populations and to devise new methods of risk assessment, taking into account the fundamental fact that children, pregnant women and older people are particularly vulnerable;

35. Urges the Commission and Member States therefore to acknowledge the advantages of the prevention and precautionary principles and to develop and implement tools enabling potential environmental and health threats to be anticipated and countered; recommends that the Commission cost the ‘second cycle’ of this action plan and make provision for appropriate funding covering a larger number of practical measures to reduce environmental impact on health and to implement prevention and precautionary measures;

36. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the WHO.


---

**Coup in Mauritania**

P6_TA(2008)0411

**European Parliament resolution of 4 September 2008 on the coup in Mauritania**

(2009/C 295 E/21)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the statements, following the coup in Mauritania, by the President of the European Parliament, the Presidency of the Council in the name of the European Union, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Commission, the UN Security Council, the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie,

— having regard to the second visit to Mauritania since the coup by the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for West Africa, Saïd Djinnit,
— having regard to the Constitutive Act of the AU, which condemns all attempts to seize power by force,

— having regard to Rule 115(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas a coup took place in Mauritania on 6 August 2008, when President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi was ousted by a group of high-ranking generals whom he had dismissed from office earlier that day,

B. whereas the legislative elections of November and December 2006, the senatorial elections of January 2007 and the election of President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi in March 2007 were found to have been fair and transparent by the international observers, including the EU observers and, in particular, Parliament's observation missions, through which Parliament endorsed the legality of the elections,

C. whereas more than two thirds of the members of Mauritania's parliament have signed a declaration of support for the leader of the coup, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, and his fellow generals; whereas in June 2008, the legislature passed a vote of no confidence, prompting President Abdallahi to reshuffle his cabinet and 49 members withdrew from parliament after President Abdallahi appointed 12 cabinet ministers from among those who had served in the highly unpopular previous regime,

D. whereas all decisions concerning the political, economic and social future of Mauritania are a matter for the people's elected representatives alone and whereas democracy entails a system of checks and balances between the executive and the legislature, both of which derive their legitimacy from the electorate;

E. whereas the coup has occurred in a deteriorating economic and social context, while the success of democracy is best ensured by development,

F. recognising the progress made regarding the return of refugees and the adoption of the law criminalising slavery in Mauritania,

G. whereas the EU's backing of the democratic transition and the 'support programme' of EUR 156 000 000 for the period 2008 to 2013 in the framework of the 10th European Development Fund, complementing the assistance already in place, and the EUR 335 000 000 granted in aid since 1985,

H. whereas the World Bank has suspended USD 175 000 000 in aid to Mauritania; whereas that suspension will affect some 17 national projects in Mauritania as well as the country's participation in World Bank regional projects relating to rural development, health, education and infrastructure (such as road building),

I. whereas a democratic Mauritania represents a pole of stability in a particularly fragile subregion, marked by the presence in the Sahara on the north-eastern border with Algeria and Mali of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, which has become Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, as well as by the Tuareg rebellion,

J. whereas the 'constitutional ordinance' in which the junta defines its powers and which enables it to govern by decree is without any legal basis,

1. Condemns the military coup perpetrated by the generals in Mauritania, the second coup in that country in three years, which has violated both constitutional legality and the results of democratic and internationally validated elections; regrets this setback, given the notable advances made in the development of democracy and the rule of law over the past few years in Mauritania; calls for the current political tensions in Mauritania to be resolved within an institutional framework reflecting the transition to democracy, and for the constitutional order and civilian rule to be restored as soon as possible;
2. Calls for the immediate release of President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmed el-Waghef, and other members of the government, who are still under house arrest in various locations;

3. Calls for full respect for the constitutional legality of the powers of the Mauritanian President and parliament, implying that the mechanisms for cohabitation between President and parliament and for the balance between executive and legislature need to be adjusted on a basis of respect and within the framework of the constitution, which can be amended only in the interests of greater stability if such amendment is effected in line with the provisions of the constitution and following a large-scale debate including all political forces;

4. Believes that the constitutional means and forms required for putting an end to the crisis must be the outcome of an open and frank debate involving the main political forces;

5. Welcomes the return of the refugees, the adoption of a law criminalising slavery, and the draft law liberalising the media; deplores the absence of democratic means of dealing with the legacy of human rights violations and the abuses perpetrated in 1990 against the black Mauritanian community, despite the President’s promises to set up a committee of inquiry;

6. Calls for the restoration of the rights of the refugees who have returned to Mauritania, and demands the return of the property confiscated from them;

7. Insists that the people of Mauritania, who are already severely affected by the economic and food crises, must not be made hostages of that crisis and calls on the Commission to implement the support projects for civil society under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights;

8. Notes the announcement of new presidential elections by the junta, but deplores the failure — contrary to the position of the 2005-2007 junta — of a commitment to neutrality; calls on the military in power to commit themselves forthwith to a timetable for the restoration of the democratic institutions in cooperation with the political forces;

9. Supports the AU’s efforts to seek a rational solution to the crisis;

10. Calls on the Commission to engage in a political dialogue, pursuant to Article 8 of the Partnership Agreement between the Members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the one part and the European Community and its Member States of the other part, signed at Cotonou on 23 June 2000 (\(^\text{1}\)), as amended in Luxembourg on 24 June 2005 (the Cotonou Agreement), with a view to restoring constitutional legality, and to inform Parliament of the outcome of that dialogue; should it not succeed, calls for the reactivation of Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, which could lead to the freezing of aid, excluding food and humanitarian assistance;

11. Urges the Council Presidency to continue to monitor the political situation in Mauritania in close collaboration with the AU, and to ensure the safety of citizens of the European Union;

12. Calls for a parliamentary delegation to be sent as soon as possible, with a view to its members meeting their counterparts and proposing forms of aid to end the crisis;

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the governments of the Member States, the institutions of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, and the UN Security Council.

\(^{1}\) OJ L 317, 15.12.2000, p. 3.