

Thursday 17 December 2015

P8_TA(2015)0470

Annual report on human rights and democracy in the world 2014 and the EU policy on the matter**European Parliament resolution of 17 December 2015 on the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2014 and the European Union's policy on the matter (2015/2229(INI))**

(2017/C 399/19)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other United Nations (UN) human rights treaties and instruments, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted in New York on 16 December 1966,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to the European Parliament resolution of 27 November 2014 on the 25th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights,
- having regard to Articles 2, 3, 8, 21 and 23 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),
- having regard to the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy as adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council on 25 June 2012 ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the European Union's Human Rights Guidelines,
- having regard to the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline, adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council on 12 May 2014 ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the Guidelines for EP Interparliamentary Delegations on promoting human rights and democracy in their visits outside the European Union ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to the EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World in 2014, adopted by the Council on 22 June 2015 ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019, adopted by the Council on 20 July 2015 ⁽⁷⁾,

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2014)0070.

⁽²⁾ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11855-2012-INIT/en/pdf>

⁽³⁾ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/142549.pdf

⁽⁴⁾ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137585.pdf

⁽⁵⁾ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201203/20120329ATT42170/20120329ATT42170EN.pdf>

⁽⁶⁾ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/pdf/st10152-en15_pdf/

⁽⁷⁾ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10897-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

Thursday 17 December 2015

- having regard to the Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020 (GAPII), adopted by the Council on 26 October 2015 ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 14 May 2012 on 'Increasing the impact of EU development policy: an agenda for change' ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 5 December 2014 on the promotion and protection of children's rights ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to Council Decision (CFSP) 2015/260 of 17 February 2015 extending the mandate of the European Union Special Representative for Human Rights ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 26 May 2015 on Gender in Development ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to UN Security Council resolution 1325 of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to its urgency resolutions on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 June 2010 on EU policies in favour of human rights defenders ⁽⁷⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 7 July 2011 on EU external policies in favour of democratisation ⁽⁸⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 December 2012 on a Digital Freedom Strategy in EU Foreign Policy ⁽⁹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 June 2013 on the freedom of press and media in the world ⁽¹⁰⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 October 2013 on corruption in the public and private sectors: the impact on human rights in third countries ⁽¹¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 October 2013 on caste-based discrimination ⁽¹²⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2014 on EU priorities for the 25th session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) ⁽¹³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 March 2015 on the EU's priorities for the UNHRC in 2015 ⁽¹⁴⁾,
- having regard to its recommendation to the Council of 2 April 2014 on the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) ⁽¹⁵⁾,

⁽¹⁾ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2015/10/st13201-en15_pdf

⁽²⁾ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/130243.pdf

⁽³⁾ <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2015559%202014%20INIT>

⁽⁴⁾ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32015D0260>

⁽⁵⁾ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9242-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

⁽⁶⁾ [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325\(2000\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325(2000))

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 236 E, 12.8.2011, p. 69.

⁽⁸⁾ OJ C 33 E, 5.2.2013, p. 165.

⁽⁹⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0470.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0274.

⁽¹¹⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0394.

⁽¹²⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0420.

⁽¹³⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0252.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0079.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0259.

Thursday 17 December 2015

- having regard to its resolution of 11 March 2014 on the eradication of torture in the world ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 March 2015 on the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2013 and the European Union's policy on the matter ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 July 2015 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 September 2015 on human rights and technology: the impact of intrusion and surveillance systems on human rights in third countries ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 September 2015 on migration and refugees in Europe ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 October 2015 on the renewal of the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 October 2015 on the death penalty ⁽⁷⁾,
- having regard to the communication of 8 October 2014 from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions on the enlargement strategy and main challenges 2014-2015 ⁽⁸⁾,
- having regard to the Joint Communication of 8 March 2011 of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commission to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean ⁽⁹⁾,
- having regard to the Joint Communication of 25 May 2011 of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a new response to a changing Neighbourhood ⁽¹⁰⁾,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 30 April 2014 on a rights-based approach, encompassing all human rights for EU development cooperation (SWD(2014)0152),
- having regard to the UN Human Rights Council Resolution of 26 June 2014 calling for the establishment of an open-ended intergovernmental working group with the aim of drawing up an international legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights ⁽¹¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 July 2015 on the EU's new approach to human rights and democracy — evaluating the activities of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) since its establishment ⁽¹²⁾,
- having regard to the 2014 annual report of UNFPA-UNICEF on the Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation ⁽¹³⁾,
- having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Development and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A8-0344/2015),

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0206.

⁽²⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0076.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0272.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0288.

⁽⁵⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0317.

⁽⁶⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0350.

⁽⁷⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0348.

⁽⁸⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-strategy-paper_en.pdf

⁽⁹⁾ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0200>

⁽¹⁰⁾ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0303:FIN:en:PDF>

⁽¹¹⁾ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/082/52/PDF/G1408252.pdf?OpenElement>

⁽¹²⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0274.

⁽¹³⁾ <http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/joint%20Programme%20on%20FGMC%20Summary%20Report.pdf>

Thursday 17 December 2015

- A. whereas Article 21 TEU commits the EU to developing a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) guided by the principles of democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principle of equality and solidarity and compliance with the UN Charter, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and international law;
- B. whereas under Article 6 TEU the European Union is to accede to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms;
- C. whereas respect for, and the promotion, indivisibility and safeguarding of, the universality of human rights must be cornerstones of the EU's external action;
- D. whereas increased coherence between EU internal and external policies, as well as between the EU's external policies stands as an indispensable requirement for a successful and effective EU human rights policy; whereas improved consistency should enable the EU to respond more rapidly in the early stages of human rights violations;
- E. whereas the EU's commitment to effective multilateralism, with the UN at its core, is an integral part of the Union's external policy and is rooted in the conviction that a multilateral system founded on universal rules and values is best suited to addressing global crises, challenges and threats;
- F. whereas respect for human rights is being challenged and is under threat worldwide; whereas the universality of human rights is being seriously challenged by a number of authoritarian regimes, notably in multilateral forums;
- G. whereas more than half the world's population is still living under non-democratic and repressive regimes and global freedom has continuously declined over the past few years; whereas non-respect of human rights has a cost for society and for the individual;
- H. whereas there are numerous attempts worldwide to shrink the space of civil society, including in the UN Human Rights Council;
- I. whereas, in addition to the holding of free elections, features of democratic regimes include transparent governance, respect for the rule of law, freedom of expression, respect for human rights, the existence of an independent judicial system, and respect for international law and international agreements and guidelines on respecting human rights;
- J. whereas the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) stated, when the New Joint Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy was proposed, that human rights would be one of the overarching priorities of her mandate, a compass in all relations with EU institutions as well as with third countries, international organisations and civil society; whereas in 2017 a mid-term review of the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy is to be performed which will coincide with the mid-term review of external financing instruments, which should contribute to greater coherence of the EU's external action;
- K. whereas the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Commission, the Council and the Member States are responsible for implementing the new Action Plan; whereas the EU missions and EU representations in third countries can play a significant supplementary role in the success of the Action Plan;
- L. whereas appropriate resources need to be ensured, and those resources need to be deployed in the most efficient manner, in order to enhance the promotion of human rights and democracy in third countries;
- M. whereas more should be done by the EU to measure the human rights impact of its own policies, maximise the positive impacts and prevent and mitigate the negative impacts, and reinforce access to remedies for affected populations;

Thursday 17 December 2015

- N. whereas engaging with third countries' leaders and authorities, in all bilateral and multilateral forums, is one of the most effective tools for addressing human rights issues in third countries; whereas civil society organisations in third countries are key interlocutors in shaping and implementing the EU's human rights policy;
- O. whereas the EU considers close cooperation with civil society and human rights defenders in third countries to be one of its main priorities in tackling human rights abuses;
- P. whereas international cooperation should play an increased role in reinforcing respect for fundamental rights and effective parliamentary oversight of intelligence services using digital surveillance technology;
- Q. whereas the EU and its Member States have been close allies of the International Criminal Court since its inception, providing it with financial, political, diplomatic and logistical support while promoting the universality of the Rome Statute and defending its integrity with the purpose of strengthening the Court's independence;
- R. whereas human rights and democracy support policy should be mainstreamed across all other EU policies with an external dimension, such as development, migration, security, counter-terrorism, enlargement and trade, in order to continue the promotion of respect for human rights;
- S. whereas Article 207 TFEU stipulates that the EU's commercial policy is to be based on the principles and objectives of the European Union's external action;
- T. whereas the various forms of migration represent an important EU external policy challenge requiring immediate, effective and sustainable solutions in order to ensure that the human rights of people in need, such as those fleeing war and violence, are respected in line with European values and international human rights standards;
- U. whereas the world economy has been going through a crisis which could have an impact on economic and social rights, on people's living conditions (increases in unemployment and poverty, inequality and insecure employment, and lower quality of and restricted access to services), and therefore also on people's wellbeing;
- V. whereas on the basis of universal and indivisible values, freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief should become one of the priorities of the EU and must be unconditionally supported; whereas these rights remain widely under threat, as the number of related violations has significantly risen;
- W. whereas the universal abolition of the death penalty remains one of the EU's priorities in its external human rights policy; whereas in June 2016 the 6th World Congress against the Death Penalty is to take place in Oslo, Norway;
- X. whereas children, women and persons belonging to minorities face increasing and specific threats, acts of violence and sexual violence, especially in war zones;
- Y. whereas the Sakharov Prize for 2014 was awarded to Dr Denis Mukwege for his unremitting efforts, as a doctor and human rights defender, on behalf of victims of sexual violence and genital mutilation; whereas female genital mutilation is a fundamental violation of the rights of women and children and whereas it is absolutely necessary to assign efforts to combat genital mutilation and sexual violence a central role in the EU's external policy and human rights policy;
- Z. whereas in 2014 230 million children currently living in countries and areas affected by armed conflicts were estimated to be exposed to extreme violence and trauma, being forcibly recruited or deliberately targeted by violent groups;

Thursday 17 December 2015

- AA. whereas Article 25 of the UDHR recognises the right of every person to a 'standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family', in which motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance, and which includes medical care; whereas UNHRC Resolution 26/28 ⁽¹⁾ calls for the next UNHRC Social Forum meeting to focus on access to medicines in the context of the right of everyone to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; whereas the Constitution of the World Health Organisation (WHO) states that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition;
- AB. whereas climate change has an impact on access to water, natural resources and food;
- AC. whereas the deliberate and systematic destruction of valuable archaeological sites which form part of the world heritage by terrorist organisations and warring groups has the aim of destabilising populations and depriving them of their cultural identity, and should be regarded not only as a war crime but also as a crime against humanity;

General considerations

1. Expresses its deep concern that human rights and democratic values, such as freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and freedom of assembly and association, are increasingly under threat in many parts of the world, including under authoritarian regimes; also expresses its deep concern that the public space for civil society is shrinking and a growing number of human rights defenders are under attack worldwide;
2. Calls for the EU and its Member States to enhance their efforts to effectively place human rights and democratic values at the heart of their relations with the wider world, as they committed to so doing in the TEU; notes that the EU should use appropriate measures when dealing with serious human rights breaches in third countries, in particular in the case of authoritarian regimes, including through trade, energy or security relations;
3. Reiterates the crucial importance of ensuring increased coherence between the EU's internal and external policies with regard to respect for human rights and democratic values; emphasises in this context that, while this report deals with the EU's external policies for advancing human rights, Parliament also adopts an annual report on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union, drawn up by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; equally stresses the importance of greater consistency, of coherence, and of avoiding double standards in the EU's external policies and all its instruments;
4. Calls on the EU and its Member States to effectively address internal human rights challenges, such as the situation of Roma, the treatment of refugees and migrants, discrimination against LGBTI persons, racism, violence against women, detention conditions and media freedom in the Member States, in order to maintain credibility and consistency in its external human rights policy;
5. Insists on the importance of ensuring coherence of EU policy towards situations of occupation or annexation of territory; recalls that international humanitarian law should guide EU policy towards all such situations;
6. Expresses its firm opposition to the annexation, occupation and settlement of territories, and insists on the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination;

⁽¹⁾ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/086/06/PDF/G1408606.pdf?OpenElement>

Thursday 17 December 2015

7. Considers that, in order to live up to their commitment to advancing human rights and democracy in the world, the EU and its Member States need to speak with a consistent, single voice and ensure that their message is heard;

8. Emphasises, moreover, the importance of enhanced cooperation between the Commission, the Council, the EEAS, Parliament and the EU Delegations with a view to improving the overall coherence of the EU's policy on human rights and democracy and its centrality among all EU policies with an external dimension, particularly in fields relating to development, security, employment, migration, trade and technology;

9. Calls the EU to improve and systematise the full extent of the human rights impact of its own policies, and ensure these analyses serve to reframe its policies in consequence; calls for the EU to develop more efficient mechanisms to maximise the positive human rights impacts of its policies, prevent and mitigate the negative ones and reinforce access to remedies for affected populations;

10. Draws attention to its long-term commitment to promoting human rights and advancing democratic values, as reflected, inter alia, in the annual award of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, in the work of the Subcommittee on Human Rights and in the monthly plenary debates and resolutions on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law;

11. Expresses its deep concern at the deliberate and systematic destruction and looting of valuable archaeological sites which form part of the world heritage carried out with the aim of destabilising populations and undermining their cultural identity by terrorist organisations and warring groups which finance their violent activities by means of illegal trade in stolen artworks; calls, therefore, on the Commission, in cooperation with the UN and UNESCO, to combat illegal trading in art treasures from war zones and to devise initiatives to protect the cultural heritage in such zones; calls on the Commission to classify the deliberate destruction of the collective human heritage as a crime against humanity and to take legal action against it accordingly;

EU policy instruments for advancing human rights and democracy worldwide

EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World

12. Welcomes the adoption of the EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2014; considers that the Annual Report is an indispensable tool for scrutiny, communication and debate regarding the EU's policy on human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the world; calls on the EEAS and the Commission to ensure comprehensive follow-up to the issues raised in the Annual Report, including specific proposals tailored to resolving these problems, as well as greater coherence of the various reports on the EU's external human rights and democracy policy;

13. Reiterates its invitation to the VP/HR to debate with the Members of the European Parliament in two plenary sessions per year, one at the time the EU Annual Report is presented, and the other in response to Parliament's report; underlines that written answers from the Commission and the EEAS to Parliament's resolution on the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy play an important role in interinstitutional relations, as they allow for a systematic and in-depth follow-up to all the points raised by Parliament;

14. Commends the EEAS and the Commission for their exhaustive reporting on the activities undertaken by the EU in the area of human rights and democracy in 2014; considers nevertheless that the current format of the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy could be improved by offering a better overview of the concrete impact of the EU's actions on human rights and democracy in third countries, and of progress made, as well as a more reader-friendly format; calls, furthermore, for reporting on steps taken in response to resolutions of Parliament on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law;

Thursday 17 December 2015

15. Recommends in this respect that the EEAS adopt a more analytical approach in the drafting of the Annual Report, while continuing to report on the implementation of the EU Strategic Framework and the Action Plan; considers that the Annual Report should not only underline the EU's achievements and best practices in the field, but also indicate what challenges and limitations the EU encounters in its efforts to promote human rights and democracy in third countries, and what lessons can be drawn for concrete action in the years ahead;

16. Maintains its view that the country reports presented in the Annual Report should be less descriptive and less static, and should instead better reflect the implementation of the human rights country strategies and give an overview of the impact of the EU's action on the ground;

EU Strategic Framework and the (new) Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy

17. Reiterates its view that the adoption of the EU Strategic Framework and of the first Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy in 2012 constituted a major milestone for the EU in integrating human rights and democracy without exception in its relations with the wider world;

18. Welcomes the adoption by the Council in July 2015 of a new Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for 2015-2019; commends the EEAS for consulting the Commission, Parliament, the Member States, civil society and regional and international organisations during the evaluation of the first Action Plan and the drafting of the new one;

19. Welcomes the EU's renewed commitment to promoting and protecting human rights and supporting democracy worldwide; notes that the Action Plan aims to allow the EU to take a more focused, systematic and coordinated approach in the area of human rights and democracy, as well as to reinforce the impact of its policies and tools on the ground; supports, in this regard, the prioritisation of five strategic areas of action;

20. Calls on the VP/HR, the EEAS, the Commission, the Council and the Member States to ensure an efficient and coherent implementation of the new Action Plan; draws attention, in particular, to the importance of increasing the effectiveness and maximising the local impact of the tools used by the EU to promote respect for human rights and democracy in the world; highlights the need to ensure a rapid and appropriate response to human rights infringements; reiterates the importance of intensifying efforts to mainstream human rights and democracy in all EU external action, including at a high political level;

21. Stresses that in order to fulfil the ambitious objectives set out in the new Action Plan, the EU must set aside sufficient resources and expertise, both in terms of dedicated human resources in Delegations and in Headquarters and in terms of funds available for projects;

22. Reiterates its view that a solid consensus and enhanced coordination between Member States and the EU institutions is needed in order to coherently and consistently advance the human rights and democracy agenda; recalls that the Action Plan concerns both the EU and the Member States; firmly stresses, therefore, that Member States should, without exception, take on greater ownership of the implementation of the Action Plan and of the EU Strategic Framework and use them as their own blueprint in promoting human rights and democracy bilaterally and multilaterally; takes positive note of the foreseen interim evaluation of the new Action Plan, and highlights the importance of inclusive consultations in order to consistently reflect the results achieved in human rights mainstreaming;

23. Urges the Foreign Affairs Council, in this respect, to regularly discuss democracy and human rights topics; reiterates its call on the Foreign Affairs Council to hold an annual public debate on EU action in the area of human rights and democracy;

24. Commends the EEAS and the Commission on their reporting on the implementation of the first Action Plan, and expects such reporting to continue in the framework of the new Action Plan; recalls, moreover, its determination to be closely associated with and consulted on the implementation of the new Action Plan;

Thursday 17 December 2015

25. Calls on the VP/HR, in coordination with all the other Commissioners, to draft a programme that mainstreams human rights in various EU activities, particularly in the areas of development, migration, environment, employment, internet data protection, trade, investment, technology and business;

Overview of other EU policy instruments

Mandate of the EU Special Representative for Human Rights

26. Recalls the importance of the mandate of the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights in enhancing the EU's visibility and effectiveness in protecting and promoting human rights and democratic principles around the world; commends the current mandate holder for his significant achievements and for engaging in regular exchanges with Parliament and with civil society;

27. Welcomes the extension of the EUSR's mandate until February 2017, and reiterates its request for this mandate to be turned into a permanent one; calls, therefore, for the revision of the mandate, so as to grant the EUSR own-initiative powers, adequate staff and financial resources, and the ability to speak publicly, to report on achievements of visits in third countries and to communicate the EU's position on human rights issues, in order to reinforce the EUSR's role by improving its visibility and effectiveness;

28. Reiterates its call for the Council to stipulate in the mandate of the geographical EUSRs the requirement to collaborate closely with the EUSR on Human Rights;

Human rights country strategies and the role of the EU Delegations

29. Notes that 132 human rights country strategies (HRCs) have been endorsed by the Political and Security Committee, following concerted efforts by the EU Delegations, EU institutions and Member States; reiterates its support for the objective of the HRCs, which is to tailor the EU's action in each country to its specific situation and needs; points to the need to continuously assess the HRCs and adjust them if necessary, and calls for further improvement in cooperation, communication and exchange of information between EU Delegations, Member States' embassies and EU institutions in drawing up and implementing the HRCs;

30. Reiterates its call for the Members of the European Parliament to have access to the content of the strategies in a proper format, so as to fulfil their duties properly and transparently; recommends that the EEAS and the Commission communicate externally the objective of each strategy in order to enhance the transparency of HRCs; insists that the EEAS include clear and measurable progress indicators for each individual strategy;

31. Strongly underlines the importance of taking into account the HRCs at all levels of policymaking vis-à-vis individual third countries, including during the preparation of high-level political dialogues, human rights dialogues, country strategy papers and annual action programmes;

32. Welcomes the designation of human rights and/or gender focal points by all Delegations and by the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions; notes, however, that the information publicly available online is in many instances out of date, and calls, therefore, for its swift revision;

33. Recalls its recommendation to the VP/HR and the EEAS to develop clear operational guidelines as to the role of focal points in Delegations, in order to empower them to act as true human rights advisors and enable them to efficiently carry out their work with coherence and inclusiveness, so as to optimise the work of the Delegations; believes that the work of the human rights focal points should be equally supported by Member States' diplomatic staff; takes the view that the work of the human rights focal points should be fully independent and free of political interference and harassment from national authorities of third countries, especially in their contacts with human rights activists and civil society;

Thursday 17 December 2015

Human rights dialogues and consultations

34. Acknowledges that human rights dialogues with third countries can be an efficient tool for bilateral engagement and cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights, provided they do not constitute an end in itself but a means to secure specific commitments and achievements from the counterparts; welcomes and encourages, therefore, the establishment of human rights dialogues with a growing number of countries, such as Myanmar/Burma; takes positive note in this context, for example, of the sixth round of the EU-Moldova human rights dialogue;

35. Urges the VP/HR and the EEAS to conduct their human rights dialogues and the corresponding civil society seminars with a clear, results-oriented focus mirroring the HRCs; urges the EEAS to consistently include a preparatory dialogue with civil society organisations, which should automatically feed into the dialogue proper; further insists that the VP/HR, the EUSR on Human Rights and the EEAS systematically raise individual cases of human rights defenders at risk or in jail, of political prisoners, and of human rights infringements in an accountable and transparent manner during human rights dialogues; considers it essential that the EEAS systematically ensure that all the commitments made during each of the human rights dialogues are honoured;

36. Reiterates its call on the EEAS to develop a comprehensive mechanism for monitoring and reviewing the functioning of human rights dialogues, in cooperation with civil society and human rights organisations, with a view to improving their impact; believes that if such dialogues persistently fail political conclusions should be drawn and alternative tools for supporting the advancement of human rights in the country concerned should be used; notes, in this respect, that the human rights dialogue with Russia was suspended in 2014, and also notes the lack of results from the human rights dialogues with China and Belarus; urges, therefore, that the EEAS profoundly rethink its human rights strategy vis-à-vis Russia and China;

37. Calls for the EU and its delegations to increase their political dialogue with governments in breach of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, together with civil society, and insists that the political dialogue on human rights between the EU and third countries must include a more inclusive and comprehensive definition of non-discrimination, inter alia with regard to LGBTI people, religion or belief, sex, racial or ethnic origin, age, disability and sexual orientation; underlines that, particularly in countries which have poor records on both development and respect for human rights, development aid should be maintained and even strengthened, but should preferably be channelled through civil society organisations and non-governmental local partners, and should be systematically monitored and accompanied by governmental commitments to improve the human rights situation on the ground;

38. Acknowledges the importance of additional measures against individuals (targeted sanctions such as freezing of assets or travel bans) in dealing with authoritarian regimes should dialogues persistently fail;

EU Human Rights Guidelines

39. Welcomes the Council's adoption in May 2014 of the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline; recalls, however, its request to the EEAS to clarify the selection process for the topics covered by the EU Guidelines and also to consult Parliament and civil society on this matter prior to selecting the topics;

40. Reiterates its call on the VP/HR and the EEAS to effectively and consistently implement the EU Guidelines on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) ⁽¹⁾, including in relation to conflicts and humanitarian crises in countries such as Syria, Iraq, Libya and Ukraine; recommends, in this context, that the EEAS support civil society organisations that promote respect for IHL by state and non-state actors; urges, moreover, that the EU actively use all instruments at its disposal to enhance compliance of state and non-state actors with IHL; calls for the EU and its Member States to contribute to the ongoing Switzerland/International Committee of the Red Cross initiative on strengthening compliance with IHL;

⁽¹⁾ https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/hr/news53.pdf

Thursday 17 December 2015

41. Underlines strongly the importance of systematically assessing the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights, including the implementation of the EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child, by using well-defined benchmarks; considers that, in order to ensure proper implementation of the Guidelines, further measures aimed at raising awareness of their content among EEAS and EU Delegation staff and Member State representations abroad must be taken; reiterates its call for civil society and human rights organisations to be more actively involved in the selection, development, evaluation and review of the Guidelines;

Human rights and democracy in EU external policies and instruments

42. Recalls that the EU has committed itself to placing human rights and democracy at the centre of its relations with third countries; stresses, therefore, that the advancement of human rights and democratic principles needs to be supported through all EU policies and appropriate financial instruments which have an external dimension, such as enlargement and neighbourhood policy, the Common Security and Defence Policy, and development, trade, migration and justice and home affairs policies; highlights in this context the EU's recent efforts to include human rights infringements in its early warning matrix linked to crisis prevention;

43. Underlines the EU's treaty-based obligation to ensure that all its external policies and activities are designed and implemented in a manner which consolidates and supports human rights and the rule of law;

44. Considers the EU's external financial instruments an important tool for promoting and defending the values of democracy and human rights abroad; reiterates its calls for improvements in the coherence of different thematic and geographical instruments;

45. Notes the Commission's efforts to fulfil its commitment to including human rights provisions in its impact assessments for legislative and non-legislative proposals, implementing measures and trade agreements; urges the Commission to improve the quality, comprehensiveness and follow-up of the impact assessments, so as to ensure the systematic incorporation of human rights issues; highlights the role which civil society could play in this process;

Enlargement and neighbourhood policy

46. Recalls that EU enlargement policy is one of the strongest tools for reinforcing respect for human rights and democratic principles; notes that the enlargement process will be pursued despite the fact that no enlargement can take place until 2019 because of the state of negotiations and the situation in the countries concerned, and welcomes the implementation of the new approach in accession negotiations to the chapters covering the judiciary and fundamental rights and justice, freedom, and security, which duly takes into account the time needed for the reforms concerned to be properly implemented;

47. Expresses its concern at the deterioration of freedom of expression and media in certain enlargement countries and in a number of countries of the European neighbourhood; emphasises the urgent need to improve the independence and transparency of ownership of the media in those countries and to address the political and economic pressures on journalists, which often lead to censorship and self-censorship; calls on the Commission to continue monitoring and prioritising respect for freedom of expression and of the media in the accession negotiation process;

48. Deplores the fact that the proper implementation of legal frameworks for the protection of minorities remains a challenge, as stated in the Commission's Enlargement Strategy for 2014-2015 ⁽¹⁾; invites the enlargement countries to step up their efforts to forge a culture of acceptance of minorities by improving their involvement in decision-making processes and their enhanced inclusion in the education system, with a special focus on Roma children; urges the EU to follow closely the implementation of provisions protecting human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities and the fight against all forms of discrimination, including hate crimes on the basis of sexual orientation, throughout the enlargement process;

49. Notes with concern the deterioration of democratic political cultures in some candidate and potential candidate countries and in a number of European neighbourhood countries; recalls that good governance, respect for the rule of law, freedom of opinion and human rights, political dialogue, achievement of compromise and inclusiveness of all stakeholders in the decision-making process are at the heart of democratic regimes; notes with equal concern the weak progress made by enlargement countries in improving the independence of the judiciary and fighting corruption; joins the Commission in urging the enlargement countries to build up credible track records of investigations, prosecutions and final convictions;

⁽¹⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-strategy-paper_en.pdf

Thursday 17 December 2015

50. Recalls, in the context of the ongoing review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, that the TEU stipulates that the EU shall develop a special relationship with neighbouring countries founded on the values of the EU, which include respect for human rights and democracy⁽¹⁾; also recalls that, following the 2011 Arab Spring, the EU has redefined its policy towards the neighbourhood on the basis of the principle of 'more for more', meant to reinforce democratic institutions and the advancement of human rights; underlines the fact that with the significant challenges the EU's neighbourhood has faced in the last few years, such as the spreading of instability and conflict in the Middle East and North Africa, with extremists and jihadist groups exploiting those situations, as well as the human suffering caused by Russia's actions, respect for human rights and democratic principles has been significantly affected;

51. Expresses, therefore, its conviction that the revised European Neighbourhood Policy should continue to have the promotion of human rights and democratic principles at its core; reiterates that the promotion of human rights and democracy are at the same time in the interest of both partner countries and the EU;

52. Stresses that the EU should continue to actively support democratic and effective human rights institutions, civil society and free media in the neighbouring countries; positively notes in this context the continued substantial support under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and the Civil Society Facility; welcomes equally the consistent and efficient engagement of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) in the eastern and southern neighbourhood in favour of the promotion of democracy and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, as stated in Parliament's first evaluation report on the EED⁽²⁾; strongly encourages the EU and the Member States to continue offering strong incentives and know-how from their own transition processes to support democratic reform processes in the EU's neighbourhood;

53. Maintains that it is absolutely essential to end the Russian aggression in Ukraine and ensure stability and respect for human rights;

Human rights through trade

54. Reiterates its support for the systematic introduction of human rights clauses in all international agreements between the EU and third countries, taking into account, inter alia, the European social dialogue and ILO labour standards; calls on the Commission to effectively and systematically monitor and assess the implementation of the human rights clauses and to report regularly to Parliament on partner countries' respect for human rights; welcomes the more systematic use by the Council of restrictive measures towards third countries which are deliberately violating human rights; in this regard recommends that, whenever a gross breach of human rights occurs in a third country with which an agreement has been concluded, the EU take concrete steps in carrying out the appropriate measures as stipulated in the human rights clauses;

55. Welcomes the entry into force of the new Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) (Regulation (EU) No 978/2012) on 1 January 2014; positively notes that 14 countries had been granted GSP+ preferences by the end of 2014, and recalls that countries are required to maintain the ratification of the 27 core international conventions, as well as to monitor their effective implementation, in line with the criteria stipulated by those conventions as well as by the EU; looks forward to the Commission assessing matters in a genuine and transparent manner and reporting back to Parliament and the Council on the status of ratification and the effective implementation of the conventions by the beneficiaries of the GSP+ preferences by the end of 2015; reiterates its recommendation that the Rome Statute be added to a future list of conventions;

Business and human rights

56. Considers that trade and human rights can go hand in hand and that the business community has an important role to play in promoting human rights and democracy; believes that the promotion of human rights should be built on cooperation between government and private sector; reaffirms in this context that European companies should undertake adequate measures to ensure that their operations in third countries respect human rights standards; reaffirms, moreover, the importance for the EU to promote corporate social responsibility and for European enterprises to play a leading role in

⁽¹⁾ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2014:077:0027:0043:EN:PDF>

⁽²⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0274.

Thursday 17 December 2015

promoting international standards on business and human rights; calls, moreover, for the EU to take an active role in the 12th session of the UN Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, and to support efforts to align their policies with the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises; recommends that the EU and its Member States engage in the debate regarding a legally binding international instrument on business and human rights within the UN system;

57. Believes, in view of the above, that the EEAS should require that EU Delegations engage with EU companies operating in third countries in order to ensure respect for human rights in their business-related activities; recalls, furthermore, its request that EU Delegations include respect for human rights in business operations as a priority in local calls for proposals under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), and that EU delegations take all necessary action to protect human rights defenders, in line with the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders;

58. Reiterates its call on the Commission to report on the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights ⁽¹⁾ by the EU Member States, by the end of 2015;

59. Calls for concerted EU action to address the problem of land-grabbing through the promotion of adequate safeguards, in order to prevent this phenomenon in the countries concerned and among EU and other European companies present in those countries;

60. Calls for the EU to develop a pilot project on the indivisibility of human rights, land issues (land-grabbing and forced evictions) and the coherence of EU policies in that regard; calls for the EU to report on its consideration of accession to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in line with the commitment made in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019;

Human rights and development

61. Considers that development cooperation and the promotion of human rights and democratic principles should go hand in hand; recalls in this context that the UN has stated that in the absence of a human rights-based approach development goals cannot be fully achieved; also recalls that the EU has committed itself to supporting partner countries, taking into account their development situation and their progress as regards human rights and democracy; encourages the inclusion of clearly defined results frameworks in all instruments in order to ensure the inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable groups, as well as to mainstream a human rights-based approach;

62. Welcomes the Commission's staff working document on a rights-based approach (RBA), encompassing all human rights, including women's and girls' rights, for EU development cooperation, published in April 2014 and welcomed by the Council; encourages the Commission to monitor the implementation of the RBA and to ensure that human rights and development cooperation are mutually reinforcing on the ground; calls on the Commission to provide transparent and public assessment of the implementation of the RBA EU toolbox; urges that the EU reinforce its role as a strong promoter of human rights in the world, by the effective, consistent and considered use of all available instruments for the promotion and protection of human rights and their defenders and the effectiveness of our development aid policy, in line with the new Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16;

63. Welcomes the adoption of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the special UN summit in New York, as well as the leading role played by the EU in this process, and in particular regarding the inclusion of fundamental EU values such as human rights and good governance; positively notes that the new agenda is clearly anchored in human rights commitments and that its 17 goals and 169 targets seek to realise human rights for all; shares the vision underpinning this document of a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination, as well as of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity and of equal opportunity, permitting the full realisation of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity; stresses the need to ensure that the

⁽¹⁾ http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf

Thursday 17 December 2015

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its monitoring measures and its future implementation by all stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, are underpinned by human rights- and gender equality-based approaches, as well as by the goals of eradication of poverty, reduction of inequalities and social exclusion and democratisation of the economy;

64. Underlines the importance of policy coherence for development (PCD) in achieving the new sustainable development agenda; points out that the human rights-based approach should lead to a deepened understanding of PCD, since without addressing the obstacles to the realisation of rights there can be no progress towards sustainable development and the eradication of poverty;

65. Reaffirms the urgent need to address the global burden of poverty-related and neglected diseases; calls for an ambitious long-term political strategy and plan of action on global health, innovation and access to medicines that includes, inter alia, investment in research and development, so as to safeguard the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of every human being, without discrimination on grounds of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition, gender identity or sexual orientation;

66. Insists that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda means a commitment to deliver a universal social protection floor, universal health coverage and essential public services for all, including health and education;

67. Takes positive note of the counter-terrorism guidance document drafted by the EEAS and the Commission and endorsed by the Council with the aim of ensuring respect for human rights in the planning and implementation of counter-terrorism assistance projects with third countries; calls on the EEAS and the Commission to ensure effective implementation of the document, starting with its wide dissemination; recalls, in this context, that respect for fundamental rights and freedoms is the foundation of successful counter-terrorism policies, including the use of digital surveillance technologies; supports the international efforts to stop the human rights violations being perpetrated by ISIS/Da'esh;

Rights of indigenous peoples

68. Calls on the EEAS, the Commission and the Member States to support the review of the mandate of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in line with the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (UN General Assembly Resolution 69/2⁽¹⁾), with a view to monitoring, evaluating and improving the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; urges the Member States to request that all Special Procedure mandate holders pay special attention to issues affecting indigenous women and girls, and systematically report such issues to the UNHRC; urges the EEAS and the Member States to actively support the development of the system-wide action plan on indigenous peoples, as requested by the UN General Assembly in its September 2014 resolution, especially as regards the organisation of regular consultation of indigenous peoples as part of that process; deeply regrets that in some areas of West Africa individuals affected by mental disorders are chained to trees in the forests or abandoned in the streets, these being widespread practices approved by local communities;

EU action on migration and refugees

69. Expresses its deep concern and solidarity with regard to the large number of refugees and migrants who suffer grave human rights violations as the victims of conflicts, persecution, governance failures, and networks of illegal immigration, trafficking, smuggling, extremist groups and criminal gangs; also expresses its deep regret at the tragic loss of lives among people trying to reach the EU's borders;

70. Stresses the urgent need to tackle the root causes of migration flows and, therefore, to address the external dimension of the refugee crisis, including by finding sustainable solutions to conflicts in our neighbourhood, through building cooperation and partnerships with the third countries concerned and through EU external policies; underlines the need for a comprehensive human rights-based approach to migration, and calls on the EU to reinforce its collaboration with

⁽¹⁾ <http://wqip2014.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/N1446828.pdf>

Thursday 17 December 2015

the UN, including its agencies, as well as with regional organisations, governments and NGOs, in order to address the root causes of migration flows and improve the situation in refugee camps located near conflict areas; reiterates its call on the EU to ensure that all migration cooperation and readmission agreements with non-EU states comply with international law; recalls that a global strategy on migration is closely linked with development and humanitarian policies, including setting up humanitarian corridors and delivering humanitarian visas, as well as other external policies; takes note of the operation of the European Union Naval Force — Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR Med) against smugglers and traffickers in the Mediterranean; also stresses the urgent need to develop stronger policies at Union level in order to deal with the pressing issues related to migrants and refugees and find an effective, fair and sustainable mechanism for burden-sharing among Member States; highlights the measures proposed by the Commission on 9 September 2015 to address the refugee crisis, such as the foreseen revision of the Dublin regulation;

71. Calls on the EU and the Member States to increase their support for the fight against trafficking of human beings through external policies, with a particular focus on the protection of victims and especially minors; strongly considers that the EU should strengthen cooperation with third countries and other relevant actors in order to exchange good practices and contribute to the dismantling of international trafficking networks; reiterates the need for all EU Member States to implement the EU directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims ⁽¹⁾ and the Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016 ⁽²⁾;

72. Points out that 17,5 million people were displaced in 2014 as a result of climate-related disasters; points out that these displacements chiefly affect regions in the South, which are those most exposed to climate change impacts; points out that 85 % of these displacements occur in developing countries, primarily within one country or within parts of countries; points out that under the Millennium Development Goals the EU Member States have committed themselves to earmarking 0,7 % of GDP for development aid financing;

73. Requests the EU to participate actively in the debate on the term 'climate refugee', including its possible legal definition in international law or in any legally binding international agreements;

74. Reiterates its call for an EU common position on the use of armed drones which upholds human rights and international humanitarian law and should address issues such as legal framework, proportionality, accountability, protection of civilians and transparency; urges once again that the EU ban the development, production and use of fully autonomous weapons which enable strikes to be carried out without human intervention; calls for the EU to oppose and ban the practice of extrajudicial and targeted killings and to commit to ensuring appropriate measures, in accordance with domestic and international legal obligations, where there are reasonable grounds for believing that an individual or entity within its jurisdiction may be connected to unlawful targeted killings abroad;

International cultural and sports events and human rights

75. Is seriously concerned that some major sports events are being hosted by authoritarian states where human rights and fundamental freedoms violations occur; emphasises the need for awareness-raising campaigns among the general public concerning the need to ensure human rights provisions in regard to sports events, including the problem of forced prostitution and trafficking in human beings; calls for the EU and its Member States to engage with the UNHCR and other multilateral forums, as well as with national sports federations, corporate actors and civil society organisations to ensure full compliance with human rights in such events, including by being one of the determining awarding criteria for major international sports events; in this regard, pays particular attention to the upcoming FIFA World Cups in Russia in 2018 and Qatar in 2022, and the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2022;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 101, 15.4.2011, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eu_strategy_towards_the_eradication_of_trafficking_in_human_beings_2012-2016_1.pdf

Thursday 17 December 2015

EU action in multilateral organisations

76. Reiterates its full support for the EU's strong engagement in promoting the advancement of human rights and democratic principles through cooperation with the structures of the UN and its specialised agencies, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the OECD, in line with Articles 21 and 220 TEU; welcomes, therefore, the adoption of the SDGs;

77. Reiterates, furthermore, the importance of the EU actively and consistently engaging in all UN human rights mechanisms, in particular the Third Committee of the UNGA and the UNHRC; acknowledges the efforts of the EEAS, the EU Delegations in New York and Geneva and the Member States to increase EU coherence on human rights issues at UN level; encourages the EU to increase its efforts to make its voice heard, including by intensifying the growing practice of cross-regional initiatives and by co-sponsoring and taking the lead on resolutions;

78. Calls for the fundamental rights of the people of Western Sahara, including freedom of association, freedom of expression and the right to assembly, to be respected; demands the release of all Sahrawi political prisoners; demands access to the territories of Western Sahara for members of parliament, independent observers, NGOs and the press; urges the United Nations to provide MINURSO with a human rights mandate, in line with all other UN peacekeeping missions around the world; supports a fair and lasting settlement of the Western Sahara conflict, on the basis of the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

79. Recalls the importance of keeping the institutionalised practice of sending a parliamentary delegation to the UNGA; welcomes the renewal of the practice in 2015, at the 28th session of the UNHRC;

80. Emphasises that in order to strengthen the credibility and legitimacy of the UNHRC, all its members must uphold the highest human rights standards and fulfil their human rights commitments; considers that human rights must be promoted, developed and consolidated in all international forums; calls on the Commission to publicly report on the activities and actions it is carrying out to advance the human rights agenda and to reinforce the human rights accountability and liability of international organisations such as the WTO and the World Bank (BIRD, IFC, MIGA);

81. Reaffirms its strong commitment to ending impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community and to providing justice for the victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, and reiterates therefore its strong support for the International Criminal Court (ICC); considers it regrettable that no state ratified the Rome Statute in 2014; emphasises the responsibility to put an end to impunity and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, including those related to sexual violence; expresses serious concern that several arrest warrants have still not been executed; urges that the EU continue its strong diplomatic and political support for strengthening and expanding the relationship between the ICC and the UN, in particular in the UN Security Council, as well as in its bilateral relations and all other forums; calls for the EU, including its Delegations, as well as the Member States, to increase their efforts in promoting the universality of the Rome Statute and its ratification and effective implementation; calls on the Member States to provide the ICC with the resources needed, and to enhance their support for the international criminal justice system via, inter alia, financial support to civil society actors through, for example, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR); calls for the implementation of the 2013 EU toolkit on complementarity between international and national justice;

82. Calls on the EU and the Member States to actively promote the ICC and the need for the enforcement of its decisions in all type of dialogues with third countries;

Thursday 17 December 2015

Enhancing respect for human rights in the world*Freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief*

83. Recalls that freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief is a fundamental human right, as recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as guaranteed by Article 18 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; equally, recalls its interrelatedness with other human rights and fundamental freedoms encompassing the right to believe or not to believe, the freedom to practise theistic, non-theistic or atheistic belief alike, and the right to adopt, change and abandon or return to a belief of one's choice; expresses its concern that some countries still fail to abide by UN standards and use state repression, which may include physical punishment, prison terms, exorbitant fines and even the death penalty in violation of freedom of religion or belief; is concerned at the increased persecution of religious or belief minorities, including Christian communities, as well as unlawful damage to their places of assembly;

84. Calls on the EU and the Member States to step up their efforts to contribute to the eradication of all form of religious discrimination and to promote inter-religious dialogue when engaging with third countries; requests concrete actions to protect religious minorities, nonbelievers, apostates and atheists who are victims of blasphemy laws, and calls on the EU and its Member States to engage in repealing such laws; welcomes the EU's commitment to promote freedom of religion or belief in international forums, including by supporting the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; fully supports the EU practice of taking the lead on thematic resolutions at the UNHRC and the UNGA on this topic; requests concrete action and measures for the effective implementation and improvement of the EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief; considers that action should be taken both in international and regional forums by maintaining an open, transparent and regular dialogue with religious associations and communities, pursuant to Article 17 TFEU, including through EU Delegations; equally draws attention to the need to ensure systematic and consistent training of EU staff, at headquarters and in delegations;

EU action against the death penalty

85. Welcomes the Joint Declaration by the VP/HR and the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe⁽¹⁾ of October 2014, which reaffirmed their strong and absolute opposition to capital punishment in all cases and under all circumstances; maintains its view that the worldwide abolition of the death penalty should be one of the EU's central objectives as regards human rights; notes that support for third countries for drug enforcement policy should aim at the abolition of the death penalty for drug-related offences; requests the EU and the Member States, in the context of the Sixth World Congress against the Death Penalty to be held in Oslo, Norway, in June 2016, to speak out unambiguously against the death penalty, to intensify commitments for the abolition of the death penalty and to support public awareness campaigns on this topic;

86. Expresses its concern at the growing number of death sentences and executions worldwide; deeply regrets that some third countries still have capital punishment in their legislations; considers it regrettable that Belarus has resumed executions after a two-year pause; reiterates, therefore, its call on Belarus to implement a moratorium on the death penalty, which should ultimately lead to its abolition; notes that eight states legislate the death penalty for homosexuality;

87. Urges the EEAS, the Commission and the Member States to provide guidance for a comprehensive and effective European death penalty policy with regard to dozens of European nationals facing execution in third countries, which should include strong and reinforced mechanisms in terms of identification, delivery of legal assistance and diplomatic representation;

88. Calls for the EU to continue engaging with retentionist countries, making use of all diplomatic and cooperation tools in order to secure the abolition of the death penalty; reiterates, moreover, its call for the EU to continue monitoring the conditions under which executions are carried out in the countries that still use the death penalty;

⁽¹⁾ <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/10-october-against-death-penalty>

Thursday 17 December 2015

Fight against torture and ill-treatment

89. Considers that, following the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention against Torture and given that torture and ill-treatment continue worldwide, the EU should intensify its efforts to eradicate these serious human rights violations; stresses the fact that members of vulnerable groups, such as children and women or ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities, who are exposed to torture or ill-treatment in detention, require special attention; urges, therefore, the EEAS and the VP/HR to engage more strongly in the fight against torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, through increased diplomatic undertakings and a more systematic public positioning, reflecting the values and principles the EU has committed itself to; recommends that the EEAS, the EU Delegations and the Member States make use to their full potential of all existing instruments, such as the EU Guidelines on Torture ⁽¹⁾; recommends in this context the constant improvement of export control mechanisms for drugs that can be used for executions or torture, including a targeted end-use clause that would suspend or halt the transfer of security-related items that clearly have no practical use other than for the purposes of capital punishment or torture;

90. Underlines that there are countries which have failed to take steps to address the urgent need for fully resourced plans to tackle prison conditions; notices that very little progress has been made in ensuring that prison facilities comply with international human rights standards and that prisoners' rights to life, physical integrity and dignity are protected; emphasises the need to improve conditions of detention in order to respect human rights and that incarcerated persons should not be subject to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;

Discrimination

91. Stresses that under no circumstances whatever can discrimination of any kind, violence, punishment by way of reprisal, torture, sexual abuse of women and girls, genital mutilation, child marriage, forced marriage, trafficking in women, discrimination or social exclusion on grounds of social class or origin, or domestic violence be justified on grounds of social, religious or cultural convictions or traditions;

92. Condemns in the strongest terms all forms of discrimination, including those based on race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, culture, religion or belief, social origin, caste, birth, age, disability or any other status; urges that the EU intensify its efforts to eradicate all types of discrimination, racism and xenophobia through human rights and political dialogues, the work of the EU Delegations and public diplomacy; further urges that the EU continue to promote the ratification and full implementation of all UN conventions that support this cause, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination or the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;

LGBTI rights

93. Considers that the EU should continue its efforts to enhance respect for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people, in line with the EU Guidelines on the topic ⁽²⁾; recommends the implementation of the Guidelines, including through training of EU staff in third countries; regrets that 75 countries still criminalise homosexuality, including 8 which provide for the death penalty, and believes that practices and acts of violence against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation should not go unpunished; supports the continuing work of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights to combat these discriminatory laws, as well as the work of other UN bodies; is concerned over restrictions on the fundamental freedoms of LGBTI human rights defenders, and calls for the EU to increase its support for them; notes that the fundamental rights of LGBTI persons are more likely to be respected if they have access to legal institutions, possibly through registered partnership or marriage;

94. Emphasises that minority communities in third countries have specific needs and that their full equality should be promoted in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life;

⁽¹⁾ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/TortureGuidelines.pdf>

⁽²⁾ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/foraff/137584.pdf

Thursday 17 December 2015

Caste-based discrimination

95. Notes with great concern the scale and consequences of caste-based discrimination and the perpetuation of caste-based human rights violations, including the denial of access to the legal system or employment, continued segregation, poverty, and stigmatisation; calls for the adoption of an EU instrument for the prevention and elimination of caste-based discrimination; recommends the mainstreaming of the topic in the EEAS and Commission guidelines and action plans, in particular in the EU fight against all forms of discrimination, and in efforts to combat violence against women and girls and all forms of discrimination against them;

Rights of persons with disabilities

96. Welcomes the ratifications of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; reiterates the importance of efficient implementation by both the Member States and the EU institutions; stresses, in particular, the need to credibly mainstream the principle of universal accessibility and all rights of persons with disabilities throughout all relevant EU policies, including in the area of development cooperation, and underlines the prescriptive and horizontal nature of this issue;

97. Encourages the VP/HR to continue to support the process of ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by those countries which have not ratified or implemented it as yet;

98. Stresses that the international community has identified the situation of women with disabilities as a priority; recalls the conclusions of the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, which stated that policies and programmes to address violence against women and girls with disabilities should be developed in close partnership with those persons who have disabilities, recognising their autonomy, and with disability organisations; underlines the need for regular oversight of institutions and appropriate training for caregivers; calls on the EU to incorporate the fight against disability discrimination into its external action, cooperation and development aid policies, including the EIDHR;

Rights of women and girls

99. Recalls that the 2014 Sakharov Prize was awarded to Dr Denis Mukwege for his strong engagement with victims of sexual violence and continuous promotion of women's rights, which raised awareness of the use of violence and sexual mutilation of women, girls and children as means of war; strongly condemns all forms of abuse and violence against women, girls and children, especially the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, as well as female genital mutilation, child, early and forced marriage, sexual slavery, marital rape, and other forms of harmful traditional practices; stresses the need for women, girls and children abused in conflicts to have access to health and psychological care, in line with international law; takes note in this context of the VP/HR letter regarding humanitarian aid policy, in particular preventing sexual violence and providing women with appropriate support and access to health and psychological care in case of rape in conflict situations; calls on the Council of Europe member states to sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence;

100. Stresses the need for exchange of good practices on the part of the EEAS to combat the lack of access to justice for victims of crimes related to sexual violence; strongly condemns the lack of access to justice for women in third countries, and specifically when they are victims of gender-based violence; asks the Commission to take an active role in the prosecution of these crimes in third countries and, in some instances, by Member States; urges the Commission to work with the EEAS to improve the support available for victims, to incorporate gender-based violence interventions into EU humanitarian actions and to prioritise EU humanitarian actions targeting gender-based violence and sexual violence in conflict; welcomes the EU's commitment to give a follow-up to the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict held in London in June 2014, and therefore urges the Commission to take concrete action;

Thursday 17 December 2015

101. Deplores the lack of prevention policies on gender-based violence, the lack of victim support and the high rate of impunity for offenders in a large number of countries; asks the EEAS to exchange good practices with third countries on law-making procedures and training programmes for police, judicial personnel and civil servants; urges the EU to support civil society organisations working to defend human rights and promote gender equality in third countries, and to cooperate closely with international organisations active in the gender equality field, such as the ILO, the OECD, the UN and the African Union, with a view to creating synergies and promoting women's empowerment;

102. Is deeply concerned about the rise in gender-based violence in many parts of the world and the increasing rates of femicide in Latin America, which takes place in the context of generalised violence and structural discrimination; strongly condemns gender-based violence in all forms and the abhorrent crime of femicide, as well as the prevailing impunity for these crimes, which may encourage yet more violence and killings;

103. Expresses its deep concern about possible human rights violations affecting women and girls in refugee camps in the Middle East and Africa, including reported cases of sexual violence and unequal treatment of women and girls; asks the EEAS to push for stricter rules and good practices in third countries in order to put an end to inequality among refugees independently of gender;

104. Deplores the fact that half the world's population is faced with wage discrimination, and that globally women earn between 60 and 90 % of men's average income;

105. Invites the Commission, the EEAS and the VP/HR to continue promoting the political and economic empowerment of women and girls by mainstreaming gender equality in all their external policies and programmes, including through structured dialogues with third countries, by publicly raising gender-related issues and by ensuring sufficient resources for this purpose; takes positive note of the new framework for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment for 2016-2020 ⁽¹⁾; underlines the need to focus on the horizontal pillar, which aims for the Commission and the EEAS to deliver more effectively on EU commitments to strengthening women and girls' rights through external relations;

106. Deplores the lack of gender equality in the political realm; recalls that women and men are equal and should enjoy the same political rights and civil liberties, and deplores likewise the fact that women are under-represented in economic, social and political decision-making; underlines the need for effective protection mechanisms for women human rights defenders; recommends that a quota system be introduced in order to provide a way of promoting women's participation in political bodies and the democratic process, primarily as candidates;

107. Calls for the EU to continue to support the economic, social and political empowerment of women as a tool for promoting the proper enjoyment of their rights and fundamental freedoms, and to attach the highest importance to access to quality education for girls, including those from the poorest and most marginalised communities; calls for support to be given to vocational education for women, for a greater take-up of vocational training to be ensured in the fields of science and technology, for gender equality training programmes to be devised for education professionals in third countries, and for steps to be taken to prevent stereotypes from being conveyed through educational materials; urges the EU to include this priority in all its diplomatic, trade and development cooperation activities;

108. Stresses the need for continuity of education for girls in refugee camps, in conflict areas and in areas affected by extreme poverty and environmental extremes such as drought and floods;

⁽¹⁾ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5690_en.pdf

Thursday 17 December 2015

109. Encourages the EU to continue mainstreaming support for women and girls within CSDP operations and the UN peacebuilding architecture, and to pursue its efforts for the implementation and strengthening of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325(2000) ⁽¹⁾ and 1820(2008) ⁽²⁾ on women, peace and security; in this regard, calls on the EU to support at international level the recognition of the added value of women's participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as in peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance and post-conflict reconstruction and democratic transition processes leading to lasting and stable political solutions; underlines equally the importance of ensuring the full range of human rights for women and of contributing to their empowerment, including in the framework of the post-2015 agenda and through support for the Beijing Platform for Action and the Istanbul Convention; welcomes the EU's support for UN resolutions on gender issues, especially with regard to the role of freedom of expression and opinion in women's empowerment; takes positive note of the conclusions of the 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women ⁽³⁾;

110. Calls on the Commission to systematically include concrete actions to improve women's participation in electoral processes in all EU election observation missions in line with the EU guidelines in that domain, taking into account the conclusions reached by the senior electoral expert seminar held in Brussels in April 2014 and learning from the experience of past missions;

111. Welcomes the efforts made by the EEAS in third countries to step up the implementation of the obligations and commitments in the area of women's rights arising from CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Cairo Declaration on Population and Development in the post-2015 development agenda;

112. Stresses the importance of not undermining the 'acquis' of the Beijing Platform for Action regarding access to education and health as a basic human right, and the protection of sexual and reproductive rights; emphasises the fact that universal respect for sexual and reproductive health and rights and access to the relevant services contribute to reducing infant and maternal mortality; points out that family planning, maternal health, easy access to contraception and safe abortion are important elements in saving women's lives and helping them rebuild their lives if they have been victims of rape; highlights the need to place these policies at the core of development cooperation with third countries;

113. Regards underage marriages as fundamental human rights violations that affect all aspects of the lives of the girls involved, jeopardising their education and thus limiting their prospects, endangering their health and increasing the risks of them suffering violence and abuse;

114. Notes with grave concern that since the 1980s the mail-order-bride industry has soared at an alarming rate; notes with concern that there are a number of documented cases of women being attacked and/or murdered after marrying a man as a 'mail-order bride'; deplores the fact that a significant number of underage girls appear on 'mail order' websites, and stresses that where children are used for sexual purposes this must be considered child abuse;

115. Condemns the practice of surrogacy, which undermines the human dignity of the woman since her body and its reproductive functions are used as a commodity; considers that the practice of gestational surrogacy which involves reproductive exploitation and use of the human body for financial or other gain, in particular in the case of vulnerable women in developing countries, shall be prohibited and treated as a matter of urgency in human rights instruments;

Children's rights

116. Reaffirms the urgent need for universal ratification and effective implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Child and its Optional Protocols; calls on all states to commit themselves to eliminating the worst forms of child labour as defined by Article 3 of ILO Convention No 182, which include child slavery, trafficking, prostitution, and hazardous work affecting a child's physical and mental health;

⁽¹⁾ [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325\(2000\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325(2000))

⁽²⁾ [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1820\(2008\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1820(2008))

⁽³⁾ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/2015/27

Thursday 17 December 2015

117. Welcomes the Council conclusions on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child⁽¹⁾, adopted in December 2014, and calls for the EU to continue supporting partner countries in combating all forms of violence against children, including sexual exploitation, and reinforcing their capacities to protect children's rights; welcomes the global rollout in 2014 of the EU-UNICEF Child Rights toolkit⁽²⁾; takes note of the statement of May 2014 by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the rights of intersex children;

118. Reiterates its request for the Commission to propose a comprehensive Child Rights Strategy and Action Plan for the next five years, in order to prioritise children's rights within EU external policies, supporting the EU's efforts to promote their rights, in particular by contributing to ensuring children's access to water, sanitation, healthcare and education, by ensuring the rehabilitation and reintegration of children enlisted in armed groups, by eliminating child labour, torture, the issue of child witchcraft, trafficking, child marriage and sexual exploitation, and by assisting children in armed conflicts and ensuring their access to education in conflict zones and refugee camps; calls on the VP/HR to report annually to Parliament on the results achieved with regard to child-focused EU external actions; commends the 'Children No Soldiers' campaign, and calls for the EU and the Member States to step up their support in order to reach the target of ending the recruitment and use of children in conflicts by government armed forces by 2016;

119. Welcomes the EU's cooperation with UNICEF, which has resulted in a toolkit for the mainstreaming of children's rights in development cooperation and in support for key MDGs and child protection programmes for realising children's rights, especially in fragile contexts, as well as with UNRWA;

120. Welcomes the EU's active cooperation with several UN Special Rapporteurs (UNSRs) working on economic, social and cultural rights (ESCRs), including the SR on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, the SR on the right to education, the SR on the right to food, the SR on extreme poverty and human rights, and the SR on adequate housing; positively notes that the promotion of ESCRs has been reinforced in the EIDHR Multiannual Indicative Programme 2014-2017, which aims, inter alia, to contribute to the strengthening of trade unions, increased awareness of wage-related issues, the protection of land heritage, the promotion of social integration through economic empowerment, and a reduction in economic discrimination and workplace violence;

Strengthening democracy worldwide

121. Emphasises the EU's engagement in upholding and promoting respect for human rights and democratic values in its relations with the wider world; recalls that democratic regimes are characterised not only by free and fair electoral processes, but also by freedom of speech, the press and association, the rule of law and accountability, the independence of the judiciary, and impartial administration, among other aspects; stresses that democracy and human rights are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing, as recalled in the Council conclusions of 18 November 2009 on democracy support in the EU's external relations; welcomes the fact that the new Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy pays enhanced attention to democracy support activities;

Defending freedom of expression and strengthening civil society

122. Reiterates the fact that freedom of expression is a vital component of any democratic society, as it nourishes a culture of pluralism that empowers civil society and citizens to hold their governments and decision-makers accountable, and supports respect for the rule of law; urges the EU, therefore, to intensify its efforts to promote freedom of expression through its external policies and instruments;

⁽¹⁾ <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2015559%202014%20INIT>

⁽²⁾ <http://www.unicef.org/eu/crtoolkit/downloads/Child-Rights-Toolkit-Web-Links.pdf>

Thursday 17 December 2015

123. Reiterates its call for the EU and its Member States to enhance their monitoring of all types of restrictions on freedom of expression and the media in third countries, and to rapidly and systematically condemn such limitations even when imposed with legitimate aims such as counter-terrorism, state security or law enforcement; emphasises the importance of ensuring effective implementation of the EU Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline and of regularly monitoring their impact; recalls the EU's goal of ensuring and protecting non-discriminatory access to information and freedom of expression for all individuals, both online and offline;

124. Considers that by making information as accessible as possible information and communication technologies (ICTs) provide opportunities for the enhancement of human rights, democratic practices and for social and economic development; emphasises, moreover, the contribution of ICTs to the efforts of civil society movements, in particular in undemocratic regimes; expresses concern at the uses of ICTs by some authoritarian regimes which increasingly threaten human rights and democracy activists; highlights the need for increased support in the areas of promoting freedom of the media, protecting independent journalists and bloggers, reducing the digital divide and facilitating unrestricted access to information; calls on the Commission to pay particular attention to the human rights aspects of dual-use goods in the framework of the revision of the EU's export control system;

EU support for human rights defenders

125. Deplores the fact that civil society, including human rights defenders, is increasingly under assault all over the world; is deeply concerned that an increasing number of countries, such as Russia and some of the Central Asian countries, are passing harsh laws to stifle NGOs' activities by restricting their access to foreign funding and introducing burdensome reporting requirements and severe penalties for non-compliance; recalls that the right to freedom of association and assembly is an essential characteristic of a democratic, open and tolerant society; calls for renewed efforts to challenge the restrictions and intimidation that people working for civil society organisations face worldwide, and for the EU to set an example in protecting and promoting the rights concerned;

126. Positively notes that in the new Action Plan the VP/HR reiterates the EU's commitment to empowering local actors and civil society organisations, and stresses that, given the significant shrinking of its space, civil society, including in particular human rights defenders, requires increased attention and efforts from the EU; urges that the EU and its Member States therefore elaborate a coherent and comprehensive response to the major challenges that civil society, including human rights defenders, faces worldwide;

127. Calls for the EU and its Member States to constantly monitor and raise, at every level of political dialogue, cases of violations of freedom of assembly and association, including through various forms of bans and limitations on civil society organisations and their activities;

128. Calls, in addition, for the EU and its Member States to use all available means to systematically raise individual cases of human rights defenders and civil society activists at risk, particularly regarding those currently imprisoned; encourages the EU Delegations and the Member States' diplomatic staff to continue to actively support human rights defenders, by systematically monitoring trials, visiting detained activists, and issuing statements on individual cases, as well as addressing human rights violations with their relevant counterparts; insists that senior EU representatives, notably the VP/HR, Commissioners, EU Special Representatives and government officials from the Member States should systematically meet human rights defenders when travelling to countries where civil society is under pressure;

129. Positively notes the EU's assistance to human rights defenders and civil society around the world through EIDHR funding; emphasises the particular importance of using the EIDHR to protect those human rights defenders most at risk; stresses also that support for human rights defenders at risk should primarily take into account the effectiveness criteria and avoid overly prescriptive conditions; calls on the Commission, the EEAS and the EU Delegations to ensure that the funding available for human rights defenders is properly used;

Thursday 17 December 2015

Supporting electoral processes and enhancing the rule of law, independence of the judiciary and impartial administration in third countries

130. Welcomes the eight Election Observation Missions (EOMs) and the eight Electoral Expert Missions (EEMs) deployed around the globe by the EU in 2014; reiterates its positive view of the EU's continued support for electoral processes and its provision of electoral assistance and support for domestic observers;

131. Recalls the importance of a proper follow-up to the reports and recommendations of the EOMs, as a way of enhancing their impact and strengthening the EU's support for democratic standards in the countries concerned;

132. Recommends that the EU step up its efforts to develop a more comprehensive approach to democratisation processes, of which free and fair elections are only one dimension, in order to positively contribute to the strengthening of democratic institutions and public confidence in electoral processes worldwide;

133. Positively notes, in this context, the start of a second generation of pilot projects on democracy support in 12 selected EU Delegations in 2014, following a commitment made in the Council conclusions of November 2009 and in the 2012 Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy; strongly emphasises the importance of these pilot projects for achieving greater coherence in supporting democracy through the EU's external policies and instruments;

134. Welcomes the commitment made by the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States in the new Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy to engage more firmly and consistently with election management bodies, parliamentary institutions, local NGOs, human rights defenders and civil society organisations in third countries, in order to involve them more intensively in monitoring elections and contribute to their empowerment and, therefore, to the strengthening of democratic processes;

135. Recalls that the experience gained by the European Union, politicians, academics, the media, NGOs and civil society, and the lessons learned from transitions to democracy in the framework of the enlargement and neighbourhood policies, could positively contribute to the identification of best practices that could be used to support and consolidate other democratisation processes worldwide;

136. Recalls that corruption is a threat to the equal enjoyment of human rights and undermines democratic processes such as the rule of law and the fair administration of justice; recalls also that the EU has claimed exclusive competence for the signing of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC);

137. Expresses the view that the EU should emphasise, in all platforms for dialogue with third countries, the importance of transparency and accessibility, integrity, accountability and proper management of public affairs, the public budget and public property, as stipulated in the UNCAC; believes that corruption in all its forms undermines democratic principles and negatively affects social and economic development; calls for follow-up on its request for improved monitoring of the UNCAC and, equally, for proper consideration of OECD recommendations; considers that the EU should support third countries more consistently and systematically in tackling corruption, through expertise in setting up and consolidating independent and effective anti-corruption institutions, including through proactive cooperation with the private sector; equally recommends developing innovative financial mechanisms for strengthening the fight against all types of corruption; notes, in this context, the call for improved regulation of financial transactions at international level;

138. Is of the opinion that the EU should strengthen its efforts to promote the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary at multilateral and bilateral levels; encourages the EU to support the fair administration of justice worldwide by assisting processes of legislative and institutional reforms in third countries; also encourages the EU Delegations and Member States' embassies to systematically pursue trial monitoring with a view to promoting the independence of the judiciary;

Thursday 17 December 2015

Enhancing the European Parliament's actions on human rights

139. Welcomes the review of the Guidelines for the European Parliament's Interparliamentary Delegations on promoting human rights and democracy, conducted by the Conference of Delegation Chairs in cooperation with the Subcommittee on Human Rights; recommends, in this context, a more systematic and transparent practice of raising human rights issues, especially the individual cases referred to in Parliament's resolutions, during delegation visits to third countries, and of reporting in writing to the Subcommittee on Human Rights on actions taken and, where politically warranted, through a specific debriefing session;

140. Emphasises the need for continued reflection regarding the most appropriate ways to maximise the credibility, visibility and effectiveness of Parliament's resolutions on breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law;

141. Encourages discussion of the inclusion of the different tools available to Parliament regarding support for and promotion of human rights in a single strategy document, to be adopted by Parliament in plenary;

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142. 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 EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary-General, the President of the 70th UN General Assembly, the President of the UN Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the EU Heads of Delegation.
