

(98/C 158/08)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2357/97**by Leonie van Bladel (UPE) to the Council***(18 July 1997)*

Subject: Desirability of an EU ambassador to China and the ASEAN states

Can the Council confirm that it regards respect for human rights as an important instrument of foreign policy and in general as a means of promoting stability in the world?

Does the Council feel that there is a need to encourage respect for human rights simultaneously in Africa, Latin America and Asia?

Does the Council regard the enormous profits which EU countries are deriving from the rapid economic development of the markets in China and the ASEAN countries as a reason for attaching less importance to respect for human rights in that region?

Does the Council agree that neither the opinions of the Council nor Parliament's monthly resolutions concerning respect for human rights in those areas has resulted in a change in policy on the part of the governments in question?

On the basis of pragmatic considerations to promote stability in the region, will the Council give thought to whether a special EU ambassador to China and to the ASEAN countries might lead to an improvement in relations between the EU and the European Parliament and those countries and hence, indirectly, to more respect for human rights?

Answer*(16 February 1998)*

The Honourable Member of Parliament is correct in her analysis that the development and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is one of the essential elements of the European Union's common foreign and security policy, based on article J.1 of the Treaty on European Union.

This principle is being applied by the Union worldwide. Thus, the European Union speaks out against violations of human rights wherever they may occur.

In order to further the promotion and protection of human rights in China and the ASEAN countries, the European Union is engaged in an ongoing human rights dialogue in many fora. With the Chinese authorities in particular, the European Union is engaged in a human rights dialogue at expert level since 1995. The latest such meeting took place on 1 and 2 December 1997 in Beijing. The EU tries to achieve tangible improvements in the human rights situation in China through a constructive dialogue and active cooperation in this field.

Finally, the Council would draw the Honourable Member's attention to the very positive initiatives being taken by a number of Member States to increase international awareness of human rights issues (seminars, congresses, exchanges of experts, etc).

(98/C 158/09)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2424/97**by Marjo Matikainen-Kallström (PPE) to the Commission***(11 July 1997)*

Subject: Health risk posed by edible salt

Over-use of salt is the greatest cause of increased blood pressure and hypertension. Increased blood pressure and hypertension are in turn the greatest and most important factors increasing the risk of a stroke. High blood pressure also increases the risk of heart attacks. Reducing the use of salt would principally mean improving the health of citizens and thus also reducing health care costs. In Finland salt has been classified as an additive since before EU membership. Accordingly the use of salt is already subject to precise regulations. No such regulations as yet exist at EU level.