

The Council would draw attention to the fact that the Member State in which nuclear installations are situated is responsible for the safety of the design, construction and operation of those installations. The choice of fuel cycle is also a matter for each Member State.

(<sup>1</sup>) OJ L 159, 29.6.1996, p. 1.

(1999/C 96/015)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-1840/98**

**by James Moorhouse (ELDR) to the Commission**

(12 June 1998)

*Subject:* The human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo

What measures have been taken, or are planned, by the Commission to encourage the Democratic Republic of Congo to respect human rights, release political prisoners and commit itself firmly to democratization?

**Answer given by Mr Pinheiro on behalf of the Commission**

(9 July 1998)

Direct cooperation between the European Union and the former Zaire was suspended in early 1992 owing to the regime's obstruction of the democratic process. Since then the Union has maintained a cautious, step-by-step approach designed to encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo in developing democracy. This approach was confirmed by the General Affairs Council's conclusions of 15 September 1997, which stated that cooperation would be re-established according to the progress made in human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The Commission, in coordination with the Member States, is following the situation in Kinshasa closely and with concern. A critical, constructive dialogue based on the step-by-step approach referred to is being maintained with the Government. Accordingly, the Commission is taking part in overtures to the Congolese Government through European troika missions and representations by its delegation in Kinshasa.

Against this background, the measures being taken or planned by the Commission in coordination with the Member States in the field referred to by the Honourable Member — respect for human rights, support for justice and assistance in the democratic process — are as follows:

- A financial commitment of ECU 30 million is available for a programme to assist the preparation of elections. The aims of the programme are to conduct a census of and register the electorate and take other steps to facilitate the holding of elections and a possible constitutional referendum.
- ECU 4 million is to be allocated towards setting up a European Electoral Unit to supervise the elections. This measure has not yet been implemented, although some ad-hoc missions have been organised pending the launch of a proper electoral process.
- In April and May a mission visited Kinshasa to identify a programme to support human rights and the overhaul of the judicial system. The possibility of implementing such a programme is currently being studied by the Commission.

(1999/C 96/016)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-1841/98**

**by James Moorhouse (ELDR) to the Commission**

(12 June 1998)

*Subject:* Lebanese prisoners in Syria

What forms of pressure was the Commission able to exert during the negotiations on the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement with Syria in order to encourage the Syrian Government to release the 250 Lebanese prisoners still being held in its jails?