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22. Expects of Russia concrete and quick action on the EU proposal to accelerate the phasing-out of single-hull tankers;
23. Calls on the Duma to abide by its commitments and ratify as soon as possible the Kyoto Protocol as a key element for the enhancement of multilateralism;
24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution the Council, the Commission, the parliaments of the Member States and accession countries and the President, the State Duma and the Government of the Russian Federation.

P5_TA(2003)0520

Relations with our neighbours to the east and south

European Parliament resolution on 'Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours' (COM(2003) 104 – 2003/2018(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on 'Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours' (COM(2003) 104),
- having regard to the communication from the Commission on 'Paving the way for a New Neighbourhood Instrument' (COM(2003) 393),
- having regard to the communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on 'Reinvigorating EU actions on Human Rights and democratisation with Mediterranean partners – Strategic guidelines' (COM(2003) 294),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council regulation on local border traffic at the EU external land borders (COM(2003) 502),
- having regard to the document entitled 'A Secure Europe in a Better World' by the High Representative for the CFSP, endorsed by the European Council at Thessaloniki in June 2003,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 16 June 2003 on Wider Europe – Neighbourhood,
- having regard to the Second Action Plan for the Northern Dimension, endorsed by the European Council at Brussels in October 2003,
- having regard to the Arab Human Development Report for the year 2002 published by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme),
- having regard to its resolution of 11 June 2002 on relations between the European Union and the Arab Maghreb Union: a privileged partnership ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2003 on the Northern Dimension – New Action Plan 2004-2006 ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 June 2003 on the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament on an open method of coordination for the Community immigration policy and on the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament on integrating migration issues in the European Union's relations with third countries ⁽³⁾,

⁽¹⁾ P5_TA(2002)0296.

⁽²⁾ P5_TA(2003)0020.

⁽³⁾ P5_TA(2003)0292.

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- having regard to its previous resolutions on the countries and regions neighbouring the enlarging EU,
 - having regard to Rules 47(2) and 163 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy and the opinion of the Committee on Budgets (A5-0378/2003),
- A. whereas it is essential for the enlarged EU not to have closed external borders and to define a strategy for the relations with its neighbours to the east and south, by means of which to share and develop peace, stability, security, respect for human rights, democracy and prosperity in a large shared area, thus making a positive contribution to the construction of a new international order based on multi-lateralism,
- B. whereas it is very much in the EU's interest, following the successful experience in the central and eastern acceding countries, that new impetus be given to efforts to construct a society in eastern European countries which is democratic, is based securely on the rule of law, respects human rights and is moving towards efficient and sustainable market economic and social systems and environmental protection; whereas the EU should therefore provide incentives and support at all appropriate levels, taking into account the needs resulting from the emergence of new Schengen borders in eastern Europe,
- C. whereas all the countries on the EU's new eastern external frontier are having to tackle similar structural problems, but a specific analysis for each country seems unavoidable to do justice, for instance, to conflict management in Chechnya, the democratic deficits of Belarus, the regional conflicts surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh or Abkhazia or South Ossetia and the problems of Moldova arising from the situation in Transnistria, which are making general political and economic progress more difficult,
- D. whereas one of the challenges of the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood strategy will be to give fresh momentum in the countries concerned to moves to bring them into line with the EU's values – security, democracy and a stable market economy – and whereas the prospect of an association agreement as a possible future framework for relations with the EU could here serve as a significant incentive for countries with which the EU does not currently have any such agreement,
- E. whereas the initiated Wider Europe – Neighbourhood strategy certainly reflects the EU's most important task of contributing to peace, security, democracy and economic stability wherever this is at all possible; whereas the strategy should therefore avoid allowing a new dividing line to emerge with our eastern neighbours in Europe,
- F. whereas in this regard the signal given by the joint declaration by Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan in late September 2003 on the formation of a Common Economic Space should be included in the considerations on the shape of the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood initiative,
- G. whereas good neighbourly relations between the two sides of the Mediterranean sea border are of even greater importance for an enlarged Europe; whereas, in parallel to its current enlargement in the eastern part of the European continent, the EU must also revive and reaffirm its links with its Mediterranean neighbours and the Middle East,
- H. whereas differing circumstances in our eastern and southern neighbour countries must initially result in evenly-weighted but different approaches, in order to make possible, in due course, the creation of an area of common prosperity and common values on the basis of enhanced economic integration, more intensive political and cultural relations and closer transfrontier cooperation,
- I. whereas conflict prevention, the peaceful resolution of existing conflicts and the fight against organised crime must form the starting-point of the European security strategy, on the basis of the initial guidelines which appeared in the document submitted to the Thessaloniki European Council by the High Representative for the CFSP,

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- J. whereas it is also necessary to develop means of dealing more effectively with 'soft security' challenges such as nuclear hazards, serious pollution, arms smuggling and activities of international criminal and organised crime networks, including the serious crimes of drug trafficking, trafficking in illegal immigrants and trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation,
- K. whereas the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy will have to evaluate existing EU policies and agreements in order to represent a step forward irrespective of, and not in contradiction with, the present and future aspiration of some of the countries concerned to join the EU in the long term or to establish special contractual relations,
- L. whereas the Commission communication on Wider Europe – Neighbourhood considers the relations with Russia, the western NIS and the Mediterranean neighbours and whereas, therefore, any budgetary implications would currently fall under heading 4 of the EU Budget (External Actions),
- M. whereas the suggested new framework is not yet fully articulated into concrete actions or does not yet contain sufficiently firm elements to allow the budgetary authority to evaluate its final budgetary implications, and whereas the Commission states that these are to be reflected in the budget proposals for coming years,
1. Declares that the new frontier of the enlarged Union should be regarded as a positive opportunity for the countries and regions directly affected, aiming at building up a network of deepened relations; therefore considers that it should be the task of the European Union to develop with these countries and regions a comprehensive and effective neighbourhood concept, capable of furthering the search for more effective solutions to the problems posed by interdependence and globalisation;
 2. Believes, in this connection, that it is necessary to define a coherent system for relations between the 25 Member States of the enlarged Union, those countries whose future accession to the Union has, in whatever terms, been agreed, those whose potential for accession is not yet decided, and all the Union's other neighbours, to be based on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, dialogue between cultures and religions and co-development by means of convergent policies giving special attention to the differing subregional realities;
 3. Considers that the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy and the New Neighbourhood Instrument must be implemented in our relations with all our neighbours and that the geographical dimension of 'neighbourhood' must take account of all the areas that are essential to ensure real territorial continuity and political sustainability for the Union's strategy, while at the same time clearly differentiating between the regions and countries covered, in particular on the basis of the types of challenges involved, their level of respect for democracy, human rights and individual freedoms, and their interest in, and capacity for, engaging in closer cooperation;
 4. Points out, first, that for this purpose the existing agreements, economic contacts and cultural relations offer suitable starting points for consolidating structures that have proved their worth, but, second, that the essentially different circumstances of our eastern and southern neighbours need to be taken into account;
 5. Draws emphatic attention to the existing instruments (association agreements, the Community initiative Interreg, and the programmes PHARE, TACIS, CARDS and MEDA, partnership and cooperation agreements and free trade agreements), and stresses that no third country may be hampered in its own individual progress as a result of the failings of other third countries in the area concerned;
 6. Stresses that the analysis of the new threats to global security arising from terrorism, regional and ethnic-religious conflicts, extremist fundamentalism and from those who use violence in the name of religion, calls for an enhanced capacity to develop inclusive policies based on an effective and democratic multilateralism;
 7. Supports the use of the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy as one of the instruments for further developing the EU-Russia partnership, but believes that, for reasons linked to Russia's size and resources and its own ambitions, EU-Russia relations outside this policy framework will continue to be very important; stresses, however, that there must be no difference as regards the attention given to respect for human

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rights and expects from Russia concrete steps in this field; reaffirms that the current situation in Chechnya and the state of democracy are currently obstacles to full development of the EU-Russia partnership;

8. Calls on the Commission and the Council to develop a special policy within the framework of the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy for the countries of the southern Caucasus, attaching particular importance to conflict prevention;

9. Calls, similarly, for relations with the Mediterranean region to take account not only of those countries which are already members of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership but also of Libya and Mauritania, which have observer status and which are also, above all, members of the embryonic Arab Maghreb Union;

10. Calls for particular attention to be paid to the EFTA countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland and those European countries which, by reason of size and choice, have not participated in the Union's enlargement process (Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, Vatican City State but are already integrated in different ways into European structures and can therefore contribute actively to the development of this process;

11. Emphasises that the launch of the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy must have absolutely no effect on the candidate status of Bulgaria and Romania (with the aim of accession in 2007) and Turkey (the European Council is to decide, in December 2004, whether to open accession negotiations and, if so, on what date), the potential candidate status of the western Balkan countries (the ultimate objective of EU accession having been confirmed by the European Council in March and June 2003), or the criteria governing eligibility for EU membership;

12. Takes the view that irrespective of the question of possible future membership, Turkey should also be included in the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy;

13. Believes that the involvement of the western Balkan countries in a new, overarching Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy could entail their participation in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, and that in any case maximum priority should be given to subregional integration in the area as an essential step towards further integration into the European structures; emphasises that full cooperation by the countries concerned with the ICTY remains an important factor in this participation, since it presents a basis for reconciliation and the development of mutual trust between peoples;

14. Considers that the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy is in no way incompatible with certain European neighbouring countries' aspirations to EU membership or different contractual relations, and may in fact, despite being separate from enlargement policy, constitute an important instrument enabling those countries to move towards the stage at which they are in a position to apply for accession under Article 49 of the EU Treaty on the basis of the progress made so far; nor should the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy exclude forms of association at a later stage;

15. Stresses, in the meantime, that under Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union any European State which respects the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law may apply to become a member of the Union, and clear recognition of the right of countries, such as Ukraine and Moldova, that explicitly express their European aspirations to obtain EU membership when they fulfil all the requisite political and economic criteria should be a strong incentive for their cooperation in the framework of the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood initiative;

16. Considers that, for those countries which aspire to eventually become members of the EU, the screening instrument used by the Commission to assess approximation to EU rules, as developed for the candidate countries, should be made available;

17. Considers that in order to have maximum effect, the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy should encompass a vast pan-European and Mediterranean region, structured bilaterally, subregionally and regionally (including the Northern Dimension and cooperation in the Black Sea and Mediterranean regions); points to the geopolitical differences between the eastern and southern neighbourhoods, and believes that, while there should be significant scope for developing subregional and regional cooperation in the south, a bilateral approach is more promising as regards States bordering the east as regional cooperation scarcely seems possible in view of these differences;

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18. In this context, with regard to the new neighbours in eastern Europe:
- recognises that a resolution of the Transnistria conflict would greatly improve the conditions for economic and social progress in Moldova and relieve Europe of a source of instability; notes with interest that ideas on sending an EU civilian or military mission are being considered in the Council,
 - notes that the European Union provides Moldova with balance of payment loans and that these loans are made necessary not least by the barriers which the European Union maintains against Moldovan export products; regrets this inconsistency between EU policies affecting Moldova and calls on the Commission to address this issue,
 - welcomes the joint initiative of all parliamentary parties to call for support for Moldova's desire for EU integration, which is increasingly becoming the binding element in the country,
 - notes that the political conditions in Belarus, the only country with a dictatorial government left in Europe, continue to make it inappropriate to engage in any comprehensive cooperation with that country; calls, however, for intensified EU support to civil society and to the democratic opposition and for the exploitation of all existing possibilities in this regard; stresses the importance of preparing an action plan for this purpose, so as to create the preconditions for the European Union to have relations with that country,
 - considers that Ukraine, by virtue of its size, geographical location, profound historical, cultural, economic and other links with central and western Europe, as well as with Russia, and its potential to become an ever more valuable partner of the EU in essential areas, must be given a particularly important role in the context of the EU's Wider Europe — Neighbourhood policy; supports Ukraine's desire for EU integration and the Council's and the Commission's current focusing on preparing an action plan for Ukraine,
 - notes that the projected establishment of a Common Economic Space together with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan could hamper further cooperation between Ukraine and the EU; is of the opinion that only a fully democratic and independent Ukraine which has developed an open society comparable to those of the new EU Member States can decide on the country's final orientation; calls for close monitoring of the state of democracy in the run up to the presidential elections in 2004; takes the view that in order to support those who seek to advance the reform process, the EU should leave its door open to membership;
19. With regard to the Mediterranean area and the Middle East:
- considers that there should be a relaunch of the current Euro-Mediterranean partnership through bilateral and multilateral sectoral initiatives, including the establishment of a Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures, repositioning that partnership with the wider framework of the Wider Europe — Neighbourhood policy; reaffirms the priority of enhancing sub-regional relations in the Maghreb and the Mashreq, that being, moreover, the ultimate goal of the association agreements which are bilateral but which should promote, and contribute to, greater regional integration; reaffirms the need for the European Union to implement high-profile programmes in these regions, taking care to ensure that civil society in the countries concerned is fully involved,
 - points out that a multilateral, coherent and effective Euro-Mediterranean partnership, in addition to encompassing the socio-economic dimension, must also fully embrace respect for, and the promotion of, human rights, as well as education and the fight against exclusion and poverty; demands that these fundamental principles be applied firmly and consistently in the European Union's relations with its Mediterranean partners, and in particular in connection with the MEDA programmes and current and future association agreements,
 - hopes that bilateral association agreements will develop into multilateral agreements with all the Barcelona Process partner countries;

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20. Believes that the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy could offer cooperation in three areas:

- first area: political, human, civil and cultural,
- second area: security (internal and external),
- third area: sustainable economic and social co-development,

also believes that a certain number of common policies could be developed in each of these areas;

21. Believes that the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood concept should include a common policy on human rights, citizenship, democracy and the rule of law, as well as a common policy for the development of civil society, the latter paying special attention to credible media and respect for pluralism, education, research, culture and health care; strongly endorses, in this connection, the Commission's recent communication on the measures undertaken by the EU with its Mediterranean partners in this field; stresses that the recommendations set out therein must be implemented in a systematic, decisive and consistent fashion, especially in terms of clear and publicly-stated objectives and reference criteria for the different action plans, by incorporating into them, in particular, compliance with international human rights instruments; reaffirms the need to include in these actions, on a mainstreamed basis, the promotion and protection of women's rights; considers it important to strengthen all the opportunities for inter-cultural dialogue, so as to enable the peoples of the European Mediterranean to consolidate their mutual respect, understanding and tolerance; recalls the active and crucial role played by the EP in these areas, and reiterates that if democratic legitimacy is to be ensured there must be greater parliamentary control of these processes;

22. Believes that the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy should include common efforts in the field of illegal migration, the fight against terrorism, illegal trade, concern for international legal order, combating corruption and a policy on conflict prevention and settlement; in all these fields, the EU's principles concerning the rule of law must be guaranteed;

23. Considers that, taking into account the aim of developing a climate of trust and enhanced collaboration with neighbouring countries as well as regional cross-border cooperation, securing the European Union's external frontiers with regard to drug smuggling, subsidy fraud, illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings, fighting terrorism, and veterinary and food inspections should be pursued in close cooperation with the new neighbour countries; in the surveillance of the external frontiers the Galileo navigation system and the Global Monitoring of Environment and Security (GMES) satellite monitoring system must also be involved; in addition, the technological equipment used by customs authorities should be standardised;

24. Supports, in particular, the proposal to set up an agency for the management and operational coordination of frontiers which would, above all, be responsible for appropriate monitoring of migratory flows from the east and south, partly with the aim of developing the requisite climate of trust and collaboration with neighbouring countries;

25. Believes that the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy should include: a policy to facilitate the free movement of people, goods, services and capital; a macroeconomic and monetary policy which also safeguards social cohesion; a microeconomic and employment policy accompanied by the introduction of special programmes for technical and financial assistance and an infrastructure and networks policy; considers, in this connection, that particular stress should be laid on energy, and recommends the development of convergent policies between the EU and its neighbours possessing energy resources; considers it necessary to develop environmental and social policies that are closely linked to the above-mentioned economic policies;

26. Draws the Commission's attention to the health and environmental situation affecting Belarus and Ukraine as a result of the Chernobyl catastrophe; calls for the development of a programme of medical aid and supplies of hospital equipment, bearing in mind these countries' fragile resources and means;

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27. Stresses that each of the above areas and the associated common policies will need to receive adequate funding; considers that the EBRD should play a major part here, and that the EIB should be given a mandate and appropriate resources to extend loans to all of eastern Europe, including Moldova and Ukraine, while the existing EIB section for the Mediterranean and the Middle East must be developed into a branch thereof, which will be able to fulfill the future requirements of the new strategy, also with financial contributions from other Mediterranean countries;
28. Considers that the development of the three areas should, above all, create the general conditions for progressive sharing of common values and principles with all the countries concerned; believes that, at the same time, it will be essential to develop, especially for policy in the economic and social area, the various regional and subregional dimensions in order to take account of the specific characteristics of the different areas and countries;
29. Envisages, in that respect, the opportunity to take into account, as a new option, the setting up of a free trade area which could encompass aspects of the internal market as well as internal and external security ('European Economic Area Plus') between the EU and its European neighbours, without ruling out future membership;
30. Recalls further that one of the eventual aims of the Barcelona Process is the setting-up of an equitable free trade zone within the Mediterranean and stresses that the Neighbourhood policy is aimed not least at reducing poverty and creating an area of shared prosperity;
31. Draws the Commission's attention to the existence of environmental Euro-regions straddling new Member States and new neighbours, such as the Bialowieska (Poland/Belarus), Neman (Poland/Lithuania/Belarus) and Polesye (Ukraine/ Belarus/Poland) reserves, which are of prime importance for the continent of Europe;
32. Welcomes the general thrust of the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood initiative but points out, at the same time, that the regions concerned by it are already covered by major EU geographical cooperation programmes and notes that the communication does not give any clear indication how these will be streamlined and made more effective and how they will finally play a part in the attainment of the ambitious goals of the new initiative;
33. Notes that the communication expressly mentions '... increased financial assistance ...'; takes the view, whilst fully accepting the importance of the relations with the Union's neighbours, that the margins left under the current financial perspectives do not permit the financing of new needs without affecting other areas negatively; underlines that the financial amounts should be an important element in the negotiations on a new financial perspective for 2007 and beyond;
34. Takes the view that the new enhanced relationship with the Union's neighbours goes beyond what has traditionally been seen as 'external actions' for third countries and creates a new dimension to the partnership; believes, therefore, that the possibility of opening up heading 7 of the financial perspective (pre-accession strategy), or some other adjustment of the current headings, with appropriate financing after 2006, could be considered;
35. Takes the view that at least the CARDS part of funding under a Neighbourhood Instrument could be financed under heading 7 (pre-accession strategy), in line with the suggestion that the EU's relations with the Balkan region be transferred to this heading from heading 4 (external action);
36. Welcomes the Council's call, included in its conclusions of 16 June 2003 and the 7 October 2003 EU-Ukraine Summit, for the Commission to pave the way for a deepening of bilateral relations with Ukraine, Moldova and the southern Mediterranean partners through the preparation of action plans; considers, however, that the entire Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy will require coherent action plans;
37. Insists that the proposed functioning of these action plans must fully respect Parliament's legislative and budgetary prerogatives, and rejects any proposal that would give the Council predominance on policy issues; emphasises that issues of policy must be dealt with in the framework of the established procedures and must guarantee the rights of both arms of the legislative and budgetary authorities;

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38. Stresses that the action plans should be integrated into the common fields of cooperation; prefers, therefore, that cooperation measures and measures for integration levels should as far as possible be adjusted to one another, as this will also increase transparency and help to limit the management burden on the Commission; calls, in particular, for the definition of a clear mechanism for implementation of the measures concerning democracy and human rights which will be included in the action plans so as to prevent the ineffectiveness of the current human rights clauses;

39. Stresses that it is particularly important to take as the starting point of the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy the evaluation of the currently existing agreements and financial instruments which concern the new EU neighbours, and to take this evaluation into account by drafting national and regional action plans; asks that it be closely associated in the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy by taking part, through an annual report, in the evaluation of the implementation of the action plans;

40. Considers that the EU should in the first instance support the applications to join the WTO made by its neighbouring countries that are not yet members, involving several important steps towards adapting their legislation to that of the EU;

41. Supports the Commission's proposal, in its communication on a New Neighbourhood Instrument, for Neighbourhood Programmes as provisional solutions to the long-standing bureaucratic problems which greatly complicate EU support for crossborder cooperation; calls for these programmes to be put in place with all speed; regrets that Parliament's call for action in this field was not properly acted on much earlier, and that the rigidity of the financial perspective will delay the launch of the New Neighbourhood Instrument until 2007; calls for the proposed instrument, in addition to the crossborder dimension, to be implemented as a pilot project in some parts of the border and to be targeted as of now on transnational cooperation, on the lines of the Interreg III B mechanisms; emphasises that crossborder cooperation should involve countries and regions which have maritime borders in common;

42. Stresses that cross-border cooperation and interregional cooperation constitute a key element in the enhancement of relations with the neighbour states, and calls for the application of an instrument with the mechanisms of Interreg III A and C that includes the participation of regional and local authorities;

43. Welcomes the proposal, within the overall Wider Europe – Neighbourhood initiative, to create a New Neighbourhood Instrument to promote cross-border actions and improve the current unsatisfactory situation arising from the different character of the financing instruments now used (Interreg for Member States' share of projects and TACIS and PHARE for neighbouring countries' shares); also notes that MEDA and CARDS should be covered by the initiative;

44. Considers that the New Neighbourhood instrument for the enlarged Union's external borders must be linked to external policy programmes and processes, while taking into account the various existing regional priorities; considers that this instrument should combine objectives associated with both external policy and social and economic cohesion; stresses that this instrument must be based on the lessons learned from previous experiences in implementing cross-border cooperation;

45. Draws attention, in the definition of New Neighbourhood programmes and of future New Neighbourhood instruments, to the different problems concerning countries with a land border with the enlarged EU and those with which the EU shares sea borders; is convinced, in this regard, that the Schengen Agreement should allow small and local border movement for populations, thus preserving and developing traditional cross-border relations;

46. Points out that New Neighbourhood programmes and New Neighbourhood instruments must be easily accessible to regional and local communities, which must be directly involved in their management; calls, in this regard, on the Commission to start establishing in border regions an EU consular infrastructure so as to deal with the necessary simplification of visa procedures and facilitate decentralised implementation of the programmes;

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47. Welcomes the Commission's proposal for a regulation on local border traffic at the external land borders of the Member States, and regards this proposal as an important step towards ensuring that the new Schengen borders will not be a barrier to trade, social and cultural interchange or regional cooperation; notes, however, that such risks persist in relation to regions of the relevant neighbouring countries other than the border regions, and that further measures should therefore be taken where possible;

48. Draws emphatic attention once again to the important role of the new Member States in stepping up, at their frontiers, efforts to promote political dialogue and the gradual establishment of a free trade area by means of national action plans and to consolidate cross-frontier cooperation;

49. Is convinced that the existence of several diverse bodies involving the countries concerned by this resolution constitutes a favourable point of departure for ensuring a multilateral institutional dimension for the Union's strategy and the management of common policies; stresses that the political dialogue and the institutions concerned must take account of the different levels involved, be they governments, parliaments, regional or local government bodies or civil society organisations;

50. Advocates, in connection with the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood initiative,

- that the EU's joint action in existing international institutions (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Council of Europe) be stepped up,
- that there be closer cooperation with the Council of Europe, with particular reference to its experience in the consolidation of democracy and the establishment of the rule of law,
- that consideration be given to the possibility of extending the OSCE to the countries of the Mediterranean and the Middle East, or, at least, developing cooperation processes with those countries,
- that the European Conference be re-launched as an instrument for cooperation within the framework of the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy, with the countries of the southern Caucasus possibly also taking part as full members,
- that, during the Italian Council Presidency, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly be established, with a view to conferring a solid parliamentary dimension on the Barcelona process and ensuring its future extension to the other countries of the Mediterranean region and the Middle East;

51. Calls on the countries included in the Wider Europe – Neighbourhood policy that have not yet done so to sign, ratify and strictly apply all the current international treaties on anti-terrorist measures with full respect to the UN Charter; calls for the introduction of a network of contacts to allow the exchange of information and cooperation in the fight against terrorism;

52. Favours, in order to strengthen respect for human rights in the Mediterranean area, the creation of independent institutions in the countries concerned which could guarantee effective implementation of the rights that follow from signed bilateral and multilateral agreements; invites all countries concerned that have not yet done so to support the proposal for a moratorium on the death penalty and to ratify the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court;

53. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Governments and Parliaments of the Member States and the candidate countries, the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the Governments of the countries referred to in this resolution.
