

clarification of certain aspects of the law, but is based substantially on current practice. The proposed directive does, however, include a provision for the Commission to report on any effects the directive may have on innovation, competition and business.

As regards the Community Patent, the objective of this initiative is to create a Community-wide unitary right granted by the European Patent Office and enforced within a single Community jurisdiction. It is however not the intention in this context to modify the substantive conditions for patentability as they are currently expressed in the European Patent Convention and the national patent laws of the Member States.

(2004/C 65 E/105)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1809/03

by Anna Karamanou (PSE) to the Council

(2 June 2003)

Subject: Iraq — serious danger to civilians from unexploded landmines and looting activities

According to Human Rights Watch, following the end of the recent war in Iraq, civilian casualty figures have shot up compared with the number of casualties during the war itself, principally because of the large quantities of unexploded ordnance — landmines, grenades and other explosive devices — left behind in residential areas following the sudden collapse of the Iraqi military command and control structure and the resulting flight of military personnel who abandoned their equipment. Many of the victims are children who suffer serious injury from playing with explosive devices. At the same time looting is continuing, while snipers, conjectured to be Baath Party members, seeking to destabilise the country, are injuring and killing many innocent civilians. In addition, countless documents are being destroyed in Iraq. According to Amnesty International, British troops were involved in the mass destruction of electricity supply company documents in Basra.

At the same time, American armed monitoring forces in Iraq are ignoring appeals for mine clearance and more patrols. Appeals by international human rights organisations for at least some level of policing have also been disregarded.

What measures will the Council take in an effort to ensure that the occupying and monitoring forces in Iraq comply with international agreements and effectively protect the Iraqi civil populace from the above dangers which are threatening not only their individual lives and welfare but also the very structure of the State?

Reply

(17 November 2003)

The Council agrees with the Honourable Parliamentarian that the issue of unexploded landmines and other ammunition is a serious danger to the population. It is well aware of the security situation in Iraq, which causes severe difficulties to both the population of Iraq and to the occupying forces in the country, who have the responsibility at this point of time of securing the country and protecting the population. The European Council in Thessaloniki welcomed the improving humanitarian situation but expressed concerns by the continuing challenge to provide security to the civilian population.

The Council has, however, no reason to doubt that the occupying forces comply with international agreements and obligations relating to the protection of the Iraqi people.
