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VOLLEDIG VERSLAG VAN DE VERGADERINGEN VAN 19 DECEMBER 2019

(C/2024/4050)

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VOLLEDIG VERSLAG VAN DE VERGADERINGEN VAN 19 DECEMBER 2019

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Αντιπρόεδρος

1. Opening van de vergadering

(Η συνεδρίαση αρχίζει στις 10.03)

2. Debatten over gevallen van schending van de mensenrechten, de democratie en de rechtsstaat (debat)

2.1. Schendingen van mensenrechten, waaronder godsdienstvrijheid, in Burkina Faso

Πρόεδρος. – Το πρώτο σημείο στην ημερήσια διάταξη είναι η συζήτηση επί επτά προτάσεων ψηφίσματος σχετικά με τις παραβιάσεις ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων, συμπεριλαμβανομένων των θρησκευτικών ελευθεριών, στην Μπουρκίνα Φάσο (2019/2980(RSP)) (*)

Assita Kanko, Auteur. – Voorzitter, mijn hart bloedt want mijn vaderland Burkina Faso, ooit seculier, kreunt onder de terreur van islamitische radicalisering en geweld door jihadistische terroristen. Ze zaaiden eerst dood en verderf in Syrië en bedreigen nu de hele Sahel met hun gruwelijke ideologie van de dood. Door kerken en moskeeën aan te vallen hebben ze maar één doel: de gemeenschap vernietigen. Ze richten zich op die plekken waar mensen samenkomen, bidden, lachen, zingen en elkaar liefhebben.

Regionale terreur heeft wereldwijde gevolgen. De geopolitieke implicaties kunnen enorm zijn, zeker voor Europa, in de eerste plaats op het gebied van migratie. Maar laten we ook de aanslagen in het hart van onze Unie niet vergeten. Mede daarom moet de EU de landen van de Sahel blijven ondersteunen om de veiligheid in de regio te garanderen. Maar ook duurzame ontwikkeling en een sterk handelsbeleid in het kader van de EU-Afrika-strategie zijn essentieel. Welvaart is vaak een dam tegen terreurregimes. Wij mogen Burkina Faso en de Sahel niet achterlaten. Anders dreigt een brandhaard en de vonken zullen snel overslaan naar Europa. Vergeet niet: Burkina was seculier.

Ellie Chowns, author. – Mr President, no one should be subjected to violence because of their religion or any other aspect of their identity, ethnicity, sexuality, political beliefs. No one, never. Sadly in Burkina Faso such targeted violence has been increasing, with over 750 people killed this year and hundreds of thousands displaced, resulting in an unprecedented humanitarian emergency.

But Burkina Faso has a long history of religious tolerance, something to be celebrated and supported to the utmost, and I'd like to pay tribute to all of those brave people in every community who are drawing on that tradition, working to resist any attempt to provoke inter-religious conflict, because human security is not bought with weapons. Indeed, we've seen in Burkina Faso that the government strategy of executing suspects simply causes further radicalisation. The forces of law and order in Burkina Faso must always respect human rights if they want to create security rather than fear.

But beyond this, human security means guaranteeing people's right to a decent livelihood and basic services. Extremism doesn't grow in a vacuum, it grows where there is little hope. Multiple pressures, including climate change, are contributing to the erosion of livelihoods in Burkina Faso and indeed EU agricultural policy is part of the problem, with subsidised milk powder eroding the foundations of the local dairy industry.

So we must ensure that the European response to human rights abuses in Burkina Faso is coherent and rooted in a broad concept of human security and we must support all those working to resist extremism and help them to build peace through dialogue.

Maria Arena, auteur. – Monsieur le Président, le Burkina Faso est un pays laïque, qui a été le premier pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest à créer l'Union fraternelle des croyants, présidée et coprésidée depuis 1972 par les chrétiens et par les musulmans. Le Burkina Faso a donc une grande tradition de dialogue interreligieux.

Malheureusement, depuis 2015, le Burkina Faso, comme tous les pays du Sahel, est confronté à des violences graves, exercées sur des populations civiles par des djihadistes et des groupes armés, qui ciblent toutes les communautés religieuses modérées, attaquant ainsi la base fondamentale de ce pays qui repose sur le dialogue et l'ouverture, et cherchant à créer des zones de non-droit au Sahel.

Les causes profondes de pauvreté dans cette zone doivent être traitées, des causes qui sont la faiblesse de l'État, mais aussi la corruption qui sévit dans ces régions. La sécurité doit être garantie et nous demandons que le G5 Sahel puisse continuer et être renforcé dans ses actions pour la sécurité.

Enfin, nous demandons que l'aide humanitaire urgente puisse être débloquée dans cette région car il y a plus d'un million et demi de personnes qui, aujourd'hui, souffrent de la faim dans cette région. Ce n'est pas en justifiant uniquement la question sécuritaire que nous y arriverons. La question de la faim et de l'aide humanitaire est primordiale.

Idoia Villanueva Ruiz, autora. – Señor presidente, la región del Sahel está inmersa en una crisis humanitaria de derechos humanos muy grave. Aumentan los atentados terroristas y, a la vez, el cambio climático está provocando fuertes sequías y hambruna crónica.

En Burkina Faso, hasta diciembre habían muerto cuatro veces más civiles que en todo 2018. La mirada de la Unión Europea hasta ahora al Sahel ha tenido dos componentes: el primero, la securización, entendiendo la seguridad simplemente como un asunto defensivo, seguridad que no está mejorando, y, el segundo componente, la contención de la migración africana que utiliza el Sahel como ruta para llegar a nuestras costas.

Estamos dejando de implementar una verdadera política de seguridad y de derechos humanos. La seguridad no depende de los soldados que enviamos, depende, fundamentalmente, de la justicia que promovamos.

Necesitamos para eso cambiar las políticas comerciales y económicas, ancladas en un modelo poscolonial; necesitamos políticas globales de deuda y de fiscalidad; necesitamos cambiar un modelo agroalimentario global que impide a los campesinos ahora mismo vivir en el campo; necesitamos enfoque de género en las políticas de construcción de paz y de seguridad, y apostar de verdad por la democracia apoyando y fortaleciendo a la sociedad civil y sus demandas frente a los intereses económicos, muchos de ellos europeos, que están sosteniendo esta situación.

Jan-Christoph Oetjen, Verfasser. – Herr Präsident, verehrte Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Die humanitäre Situation in den Sahel-Staaten ist derzeit bedrückend: Burkina Faso ist hier genannt, und ich glaube, dass wir die Sahel-Staaten als Ganzes sehen müssen, gemeinsam mit den Nachbarstaaten: mit Mali, mit Niger, mit den anderen Nachbarstaaten.

Es ist schon gesagt worden: Burkina Faso war mal ein Land, wo die Religionen friedlich miteinander gelebt haben, und das ist heute nicht mehr so. Früher hat Religion keine Rolle gespielt – ehrlicherweise –, heute spielt sie eine Rolle. Es geht dabei nicht nur darum, dass Christen von Dschihadisten verfolgt werden, sondern auch moderate Muslime sind Ziel von Anschlägen. Das zeigt, dass es eine Kultur, eine Situation gibt, wo die Menschen sich nicht mehr vertrauen, wo wir große Probleme im interreligiösen Dialog haben.

Daher, meine sehr verehrten Damen und Herren, glaube ich, dass wir uns auf den Weg machen müssen, diese Region stärker zu unterstützen. Das hat etwas mit Perspektiven für die Menschen zu tun, damit sie sich nicht radikalisierten. Aber das hat auch etwas damit zu tun, dass wir militärische Unterstützung geben.

Die Kollegin hat gerade gesagt: Sicherheit hängt nicht von Soldaten ab. Doch, Sicherheit hängt auch von Soldaten ab. Insofern müssen wir als Europäer uns hier noch stärker in dieser Region engagieren.

György Hölvényi, *szervő*. – Tisztelt Képviselőtársaim! Örülök, hogy a mai határozattal sikerült közösen áttörnünk a szenvedő emberekkel, köztük a keresztényekkel szembeni közöny falát itt, a Parlamentben. A mai határozat egyik kezdeményezőjeként közös sikerként élem meg, hogy a politikai pártok feletti ügyé tettük a Burkina Fasó-i szükséglet szenvedő emberek megsegítését. Hónapok óta kapjuk, olvassuk az egyre mélyülő terror miatti segélykiáltásokat az országról. Nemzetközi dzsihádisták szervezetek hajtóvadászatot indítottak a keresztények és a hagyományosan mérsékelt muszlim népesség ellen. Egyértelmű a céljuk. A vallásközi béke szétzilálása, a társadalom és az ország káoszba döntése. Saját országom, Magyarország ezúttal is helyszínen keresi a megoldás lehetőségét. Az elmúlt napokban Azbej Tristan, a Hungary Helps programért felelős államtitkár az életveszélyes biztonsági helyzet ellenére a menekültválság enyhítéséről tárgyalt Burkina Fasóban. Az államtitkár beszámolt arról, hogy a helyi keresztény egyházak terrorfenyegetés árnyékában oroszlánrészt vállalnak a mindenkit érintő csaknem hatszázezer belső menekült ellátásában. A mai határozat különösen értékes eleme, hogy elismeri a vallási háttérű segélyszervezetek önfeláldozó munkáját. Az Európai Unió Burkina Faso legnagyobb fejlesztési támogatója. Ez azonban önmagában nem elég a megoldáshoz.

Peter van Dalen, *namens de PPE-Fractie*. – Voorzitter, in steeds meer landen slaan islamitische extremisten dodelijk toe om zoveel mogelijk mensen te onderwerpen aan een reeks buitensporige wetten en regels. Zo ook in Burkina Faso. Daar hebben moslims en christenen lange tijd betrekkelijk vreedzaam naast elkaar kunnen leven totdat enkele jaren geleden dodelijke aanslagen en vervolgingen begonnen door groepen gelieerd aan Al Qaida en Nusrat al-Islam. Daarbij worden met name christenen en gematigde moslims geviséerd. Bijna elk weekend wordt er wel een kerk in de noordelijke regio's van Burkina Faso aangevallen. Ook scholen zijn het doelwit. Dominees en voorgangers worden verjaagd. Veel christenen slaan op de vlucht. De nood is er groot door deze aanslagen en door de droogte. Omvangrijke stromen vluchtelingen zijn het gevolg. De EU moet aan dit land en aan de hele regio hulp blijven geven en die hulp intensiveren. De aanvallen van extremisten moeten krachtig worden veroordeeld en waar mogelijk worden tegengegaan.

Neena Gill, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, the situation in Burkina Faso has continued to deteriorate throughout this year and it is important that we look at this situation in a more holistic way rather than just focus on one group or one country. What should really concern us most is that the Sahel region has become, as we've already heard, a new home for Isis, which is benefiting from the insecurity of one of the poorest, least governed parts of the world. Therefore, I ask the High Representative for a strategy to be developed that addresses West Africa.

We need to support these countries, whose armed forces are under-resourced and their counter-insurgency strategies are lacking, to say the least. Their conduct of executing suspects without trial only serves to inflame the conflict and drive more people into the hands of the militants.

So my question is, what is being done by the European Union to add our voice to the UN's calls for full investigation of abuses by the G5 Joint Forces and that we continue to address the challenges in human rights compliances by all the armies in that region.

María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, *en nombre del Grupo Renew*. – Señor presidente, señor alto representante, Burkina Faso está entre los diez países más pobres del mundo y desde 2015 vive una situación de violencia sin precedentes. En la primera mitad de 2019 ha habido más de 300 ataques terroristas y los grupos terroristas yihadistas armados han convertido esta zona en una zona de reclutamiento de jóvenes y han centrado sus ataques este año en escuelas, mezquitas e iglesias.

Esta situación ha generado más de medio millón de desplazados que se unen, también, a los desplazados por la situación de Mali. Significa que, en un país donde más de cuatro personas de cada cinco necesitan la agricultura para sobrevivir, el umbral de desnutrición está por debajo del umbral de emergencia. Por eso necesita esta región, necesita el Sahel, una estrategia de lucha antiterrorista, una estrategia de paz y seguridad; pero Burkina Faso, hoy también, necesita ayuda alimentaria de emergencia y ayuda al desarrollo.

Mounir Satouri, *au nom du groupe Verts/ALE*. – Monsieur le Président, cette résolution dresse le portrait difficile du Burkina Faso d'aujourd'hui. Permettez-moi cependant un rappel: le dialogue est et reste un pilier au Burkina. Entre les populations, les ethnies, les religions, la cohésion nationale existe encore. En réalité, nous sommes ici face à une crise politique et de territoire. Ces crises se cumulent aux conséquences du réchauffement climatique. Le Burkina Faso se bat pour que l'extrême pauvreté ne soit pas le terreau fertile du djihadisme.

Nos pays et l'Europe ont là une responsabilité majeure et notre action est incomprise par la population. Nous ressortons à nouveau d'un G5 qui est un échec. Une addition de faiblesses ne fera jamais une force, et il est urgent pour la France, l'Europe et le reste de la communauté internationale de repenser la stratégie sahélienne. Il serait temps de faire un bilan sincère et franc et de tirer les leçons de notre longue histoire d'échecs. C'est avec les populations qu'il faut reconstruire la stabilité.

Alessandro Panza, *a nome del gruppo ID*. – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, ormai da tempo in Burkina Faso è in atto una vera e propria caccia ai cristiani e non solo.

Nel paese si contano più di 12 gruppi jihadisti legati all'Isis ed Al Qaeda, che dal 2015 ad oggi si sono resi responsabili di oltre 650 morti e di oltre mezzo milione di sfollati, anche a causa dell'inadeguatezza delle Forze armate.

Nel solo 2019 che ancora non si è concluso, sono già 74 i cristiani uccisi, di cui 3 sono sacerdoti. Durante l'ultimo attacco avvenuto la prima domenica dell'Avvento, un gruppo di terroristi islamici ha assaltato una chiesa durante una messa, uccidendo 14 tra uomini, donne, bambini e giustiziando il sacerdote sull'altare dal quale stava officiando.

Il Burkina Faso è ormai diventato terra di martirio per le minoranze. È tempo che questo Parlamento si impegni a considerare non solo questo Stato per le sue ricchezze, ma soprattutto per le sue fragilità, agendo concretamente. Vorrei chiudere questo intervento augurando a tutti, e in particolare a quei cristiani che rischiano la vita per la loro fede, un sereno Natale e ricordando a quest'Aula che nascondere le nostre radici giudaico-cristiane per non urtare le sensibilità altrui non fa altro che indebolire quelle comunità di cristiani che rischiano la vita per professare la loro fede. Buon Natale a tutti.

Bert-Jan Ruissen, *namens de ECR-Fractie*. – Voorzitter, radicaalislamitisch geweld heeft Burkina Faso veranderd van een eens zo vreedzaam land, gekenmerkt door religieuze tolerantie, in een broeinest van extremisme. De christelijke minderheid in het land wordt zwaar getroffen. Alleen al in 2019 zijn meer dan 60 christenen omgekomen door doelgerichte aanvallen. Kerken zijn gesloten en christenen worden verdreven uit hun dorpen. Ik maak me grote zorgen. Temeer omdat het geweld zich niet beperkt tot Burkina Faso maar ook toeneemt in de hele Sahelregio. Internationale actie is daarom dringend geboden. Ik roep de Europese Unie ertoe op om de situatie van christenen in de regio nadrukkelijk mee te nemen in haar gemeenschappelijk veiligheidsbeleid en ook in de nieuwe EU-Afrika-strategie. Dit om eliminatie van de christelijke aanwezigheid in Burkina Faso en in de regio te voorkomen.

Isabel Benjumea Benjumea (PPE). – Señor presidente, lamentablemente, el caso que hoy condenamos, el ataque acontecido contra una iglesia cristiana en Burkina Faso, no es un caso aislado.

Estamos viviendo en los últimos años una verdadera persecución religiosa contra los cristianos; persecución religiosa que se está dando no solo en Burkina Faso, también en Nigeria, en Afganistán, en Somalia, en Sri Lanka y en otros tantos países. Es una persecución religiosa —tengámoslo claro— de terroristas islamistas contra cristianos. Se les está asesinando a sangre fría por el mero hecho de profesar una fe.

Los datos hablan por sí mismos y son escalofriantes. Según un informe de la organización Open Doors, en 2018 más de 4 000 cristianos fueron asesinados por el mero hecho de profesar su fe, 3 125 fueron detenidos y más de 1 800 iglesias fueron atacadas.

Señorías, no nos llevemos a engaño, en especial aquellos que defienden con tanto ahínco el multiculturalismo. Estos ataques son ataques a todo lo que Occidente y la Unión Europea representan, son ataques a nuestros valores, a nuestro estilo de vida; en definitiva, ataques contra nuestra libertad. No podemos permanecer impasibles.

Jackie Jones (S&D). – Mr President, other colleagues have spoken about the situation in Burkina Faso and that it is known for its religious and cultural tolerance. I want to congratulate those colleagues and the country for that.

These attacks are absolutely terrible, but we have to think about it in the context of a much broader agenda. First of all, I want to give my condolences for everyone who has died, to their families and friends and for the suffering that they have endured because of attacks. It doesn't matter where in the world. I'm not just talking about Burkina Faso.

As far as I am concerned, suffering violence is a virus that reaches dark and deep into our countries, into our democracies and into our very hearts, and that's something that we have to try and stop at all cost. So what do I mean by that? I think no country is immune from attacks and we have to think very carefully about what we do in the Africa-EU strategy that is coming up and how we address the situation. My view is that we need to show solidarity, cooperation and friendship, and of course funding, but positive rather than negative steps to make sure that we are one world and one human race, not divided.

Nathalie Loiseau (Renew). – Monsieur le Président, la litanie des attaques terroristes au Burkina Faso est accablante, et cela dure depuis plusieurs années. Elle cible les militaires comme les civils; elle frappe des restaurants, des marchés, des églises, des écoles. La réalité est que la situation ne fait qu'empirer.

Il est temps pour l'Union européenne de mieux cibler son aide pour construire des forces de sécurité républicaines dignes de ce nom. Il nous faut continuer à investir à long terme dans des écoles de formation pour la police, pour la gendarmerie, pour l'armée. Il faut aussi que les États membres surmontent leurs réticences et que nous soyons davantage présents sur le terrain pour accompagner ceux que nous formons. Mais il faut également que les autorités burkinabées nous disent comment elles veulent reconquérir leur territoire et avec quel soutien de notre part. Un soutien notamment militaire, mais aussi pour les forces de sécurité intérieure, pour la justice, pour les douanes.

Le temps presse; il nous faut une stratégie européenne pour le Sahel, construite avec les Sahéliens. Nous avons tous les instruments pour agir et nous agissons plus que n'importe qui, mais nous devons mieux nous coordonner pour relever ce défi considérable de la sécurité au Sahel, un défi qui est d'abord africain, mais qui est aussi le nôtre.

Dominique Bilde (ID). – Monsieur le Président, un demi-million de déplacés, près de 2 000 écoles fermées et parfois prises pour cible au seul motif qu'on y enseigne en français. Et en filigrane, une persécution grandissante des chrétiens dans le silence gêné et coupable de l'Occident – en témoigne la nouvelle attaque au début du mois d'une église protestante, dans l'est du pays, avec à la clé quatorze victimes. Ainsi s'effrite peu à peu l'État burkinabé, gage de stabilité en Afrique de l'Ouest et rempart face au terrorisme islamiste. Ainsi également se parachève l'embrasement du Sahel à partir d'un conflit limité initialement au nord du Mali.

Nous aurions du mal à nous en étonner sincèrement lorsque nous savons que seuls, ou presque, 4 500 soldats français balaient l'immensité sahélienne, tandis que la mission de l'ONU au Mali est réduite à l'impuissance. J'entends tous mes collègues intervenants, M^{me} Loiseau, tout le monde est tout à fait d'accord. Pourtant, les débats entre les murs feutrés du Parlement européen ne changeront rien tant que l'Union ne prendra pas la mesure des enjeux dans cette région dont le devenir est crucial, aussi bien pour le christianisme que pour l'Europe. Prenez-en acte en ce jour, en cette période de Noël.

Tomasz Piotr Poręba (ECR). – Panie Przewodniczący! Ja się bardzo cieszę z tej dzisiejszej debaty, bo to jest taki dobry moment, żeby po pierwsze potępić ostatnie ataki, które miały miejsce w Burkina Faso, wyrazić solidarność z rządem, ze zwykłymi ludźmi. Ale też myślę, że to jest taki dobry moment, abyśmy się tutaj wszyscy zastanowili nad tym, co możemy zrobić jako Unia Europejska, aby przywrócić stabilność w tym kraju i uspokoić sytuację w całym regionie.

Te ataki, które miały miejsce w ostatnich tygodniach, szczególnie na społeczność chrześcijańską, ataki, które były prowadzone przez radykalne grupy islamskie powiązane z ISIS, doprowadziły do wielu tragedii. Podczas ostatnich ataków na kościoły zginęło kilkadziesiąt osób, nawet małe dzieci, do których strzelano z karabinów maszynowych. To jest moment na to, żeby rozpocząć realne działania na rzecz przywrócenia stabilności w tym kraju. Tutaj jest duża rola wysokiego przedstawiciela Unii Europejskiej, jeżeli chodzi o kwestie zagraniczne. Potrzebujemy strategii, potrzebujemy na pewno odblokować pomoc humanitarną, potrzebujemy realnego działania, i o to działanie apeluję i proszę.

Krzysztof Hetman (PPE). – Panie Przewodniczący! Nie dalej jak pierwszego grudnia miał miejsce zbrojny atak na kościół w Burkina Faso. Zginęło w nim 14 osób, a wiele innych zostało rannych. W samym 2019 r. w Burkina Faso z rąk dżihadystów życie straciło 40 chrześcijan. W trakcie ostatnich lat wzrasta się agresja. Zmusiła ona setki tysięcy obywateli do opuszczenia swoich domów i ucieczki. Setki osób straciło życie. Łamane są podstawowe prawa człowieka, zamykane szkoły i regularnie naruszana jest wolność wyznania.

Wzywamy dziś rząd Burkina Faso do podjęcia bardziej intensywnych działań na rzecz ochrony mniejszości religijnych, w tym chrześcijan, i przeciwdziałania radykalizacji w tym kraju. Jednocześnie musimy pamiętać, że Burkina Faso boryka się z wieloma problemami. To jeden z dziesięciu najbardziej zagrożonych krajów świata, trapiiony wewnętrznymi konfliktami. Mam świadomość, że rząd może nie być w stanie samodzielnie sprostać temu wyzwaniu. Dlatego Unia Europejska powinna współpracować z rządem Burkina Faso i Grupą Pięciu na rzecz Sahelu i wspierać w działaniach na rzecz zapewnienia bezpieczeństwa. Konieczna jest także moim zdaniem kontynuacja pomocy humanitarnej przez Unię Europejską dla Burkina Faso.

Joachim Kuhs (ID). – Herr Präsident! Auch wir werden der Entschließung zustimmen. Wir sollten uns allerdings darüber im Klaren sein, dass die politischen Maßnahmen nicht das eigentliche Problem der Menschenrechtsverletzungen und der Christenverfolgung beseitigen. Die Zahl alleine der verfolgten Christen stieg inzwischen auf über 200 Millionen, und erst am Wochenende wurden mindestens 33 Menschen im Kongo von Islamisten ermordet.

Was ist nun unsere Antwort auf diesen tödlichen Hass? Für Christen, die Jesu Beispiel folgen wollen, kann es nur eine Antwort geben: Liebet eure Feinde. Jesus selbst sagte seinen Jüngern: Wenn sie mich verfolgt haben, werden sie auch euch verfolgen. Nun, kann Liebe wirklich die Antwort sein? Ja, denn Gott selbst hat die Welt so sehr geliebt, dass er seinen eigenen Sohn dahingab. Und das ist die wahre Botschaft von Weihnachten. Nur sie kann uns in der aktuellen prekären Situation helfen. Deshalb wünsche ich uns allen eine fröhliche, selige und gnadenbringende Weihnachtszeit.

Διαδικασία «Catch-the-Eye»

Jiří Pospíšil (PPE). – Pane předsedající, já jsem se zájmem poslouchal celou rozpravu. Souhlasím s autory této rezoluce a je na zástupci Evropské komise, aby řekl, jak se bude formovat naše nová politika, politika Evropské komise vůči této nešťastné zemi.

Popis rostoucího násilí v této zemi, která dosud byla nábožensky tolerantní, je velmi dobře vystižen v samotném návrhu usnesení a byl také popsán předřečníky v této debatě. Ta fakta jsou velmi smutná a není třeba je opakovat.

Bavme se o tom, jak této zemi můžeme pomoci, jakou pomoc můžeme poskytnout tamní vládě, které se bohužel nedaří potírat násilné útoky islamistů proti civilnímu obyvatelstvu. Nejhorší na celé věci je, že toto násilí má vzestupnou tendenci, že za poslední půlrok šlo o desítky útoků proti civilnímu obyvatelstvu a že vláda této země to zcela nezvládá. Bavme se tedy o tom, jak může Evropská komise, potažmo Evropská unie pomoci tamní vládě při ochraně civilního obyvatelstva.

Maria Grapini (S&D). – Domnule președinte, da, așa cum spuneam un coleg de-al nostru, suntem în pragul sărbătorilor de iarnă, de Crăciun, și iată, asistăm, din nou, la o situație așa cum este cea din Burkina Faso, cu violență, cu oameni uciși. Sunt de acord cu rezoluția și cred că, nu numai faptul că, de șapte ani, noi ajutăm, Uniunea Europeană, cu fonduri, această comunitate, cred că este important ca în Strategia UE-Africa, noul Înalt Reprezentant, împreună cu ONU, să aducă măsuri concrete pentru sporirea siguranței și securității. Pentru că nimic nu este mai de preț decât viața oamenilor și aici avem două situații.

Pe de o parte, situația gravă, sărăcia de acolo, moartea oamenilor datorită sărăciei, dar și violența și cazurile de atentate și terorism. Cred că avem aici mult de lucru împreună și cu ONU pentru că da, există o strategie și a ONU, și a noastră, a Uniunii Europene, însă trebuie să ne uităm la măsuri și dacă efectele măsurilor noastre duc la îmbunătățirea situației. Suntem oameni și cred că prin credință și iubire putem să rezolvăm mult mai mult decât prin vorbe.

Mick Wallace (GUE/NGL). – Mr President, Burkina Faso and Sahel are incredibly challenging areas now, and if we were wondering what the European community can do in a positive way, we've got to take a different approach to this region. We are not tackling the causes of the instability, climate change, illicit tax flows through our corrupt financial institutions in the global north, exploitation by our corrupt extractive industries and western support for corrupt administrations. We don't have clean hands. We're robbing the place blind. We steal their minerals. These countries are unstable because they're so poor, and we are helping to keep them poor. We have to stop robbing them. And all our money and expansion into the military in the area has failed – it's got worse since we put troops in there. We need to help the governments to recover. We need to stop robbing these people and help them to have normal countries.

Stanislav Polčák (PPE). – Pane předsedající, já bych chtěl také vyzvat pana vysokého představitele k akci, k podpoře této země Burkina Faso, která se pod vlivem několikaletého násilí džihádistů de facto zhroutila z relativně fungujícího státu. Musíme samozřejmě odsoudit – a já se plně připojuji k odsudku svých kolegů – to neuvěřitelné násilí, které je páčáno na křesťanech a nevyhýbá se ani dětem, samozřejmě dokonce ani umírněným muslimům. My musíme podpořit demokratické struktury této země, podpořit jejich ozbrojené složky, to je, myslím si, naším prvořadým úkolem, zároveň podpořit tu zemi, která je stížena několikaletým suchem, odkud opravdu odcházejí statisíce uprchlíků.

Já jsem spokojený s návrhem rezoluce, já ji podpořím, ale chtěl bych zároveň vyzvat Evropskou unii, pana vysokého představitele, abychom zaměřili naši pozornost a strategii na celý západní Sahel. Je to oblast, která potřebuje naši pomoc a pokud ji nedostane, tak je možné, že se opět zvrtné směrem k džihádistům.

(Λήξη της διαδικασίας «Catch-the-Eye»)

Josep Borrell Fontelles, Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. – Mr President, honourable Members, all of you are right. In recent months, we have seen a continued and dramatic deterioration of the security situation in Burkina Faso. I was reading more figures than what has been mentioned. 700 victims in this year, 500 just since the summer; multiple attacks of various kinds against armed forces, security forces, civilian villages, schools, health.

It makes almost 700 000 people displaced. This situation puts the level of food crisis very high. These people need assistance and basic social services. More than one million people are in need of emergency food assistance.

This summer the country recorded more than 2 000 schools closed. It means more than 300 000 children are out of school. Almost 10 000 teachers affected; several of them have been killed during this year. The situation is weakening the central authorities while the next presidential election is already approaching and considering that the authorities have started to be criticised by the opponents for their crisis management.

Burkina Faso as a strong partner for us, and despite the fact that some difficulties appeared recently concerning the crisis assessment, I think we have to be more present and more engaged in this area.

In fact, Christians represent 25% of the population. It is often seen as an example of peaceful religious coexistence, but it is clear that the terrorist groups want to undermine this inter-faith coexistence as part of a broader strategy of fomenting inter-ethnic and religious conflict and generate a continued displacement of the population. They attack communities that they consider as enemies, but also those Muslims that are considered by Jihadist groups as too moderate, as shown by the attack on a mosque in October.

This situation doesn't call for a retreat but for urgent and strong action. As signatories of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Burkina Faso and the international community share the obligation to save life, to protect the dignity of the population and to defend effective freedom of belief. That's why we are following the situation and acting on the areas where security is under strain. We are indeed strongly committed to reinforce our support to the fight against radicalisation. Setting up a humanitarian and human rights law compliance framework require resources. We are funding the G5 Sahel force with 10 million and peaceful co-existence between communities with almost the same amount of money, and supporting the civil society in the field of democracy with another 7 million.

This is an example, some illustrations of what do we do in this specific purpose. Preserving social cohesion and religious coexistence is key for the stabilisation of the country.

I would like to reassure you that the EU will continue supporting Burkina Faso in facing this critical challenge, because the situation in Burkina and in general in Sahel affects very much the security and peaceful prospects, also for us Europeans. Thank you for this debate and for bringing the attention of the European Parliament to this sad situation.

(Applause)

Πρόεδρος. – Η συζήτηση έληξε.

Η ψηφοφορία θα διεξαχθεί μετά τη λήξη των συζητήσεων.

Γραπτές δηλώσεις (άρθρο 171 του Κανονισμού)

Thierry Mariani (ID), par écrit. – Les affrontements à l'œuvre dans l'ancienne Haute Volta doivent générer notre profonde inquiétude. Ce pays est directement victime de la radicalisation islamiste dans la bande sahélienne et souffre des intrusions régulières d'officines djihadistes, notamment de l'ethnie Peul, ou d'affrontements séculaires entre ethnies opposées. Contrairement à ce que beaucoup avancent actuellement, la situation de toute la région empirerait sans le courageux investissement des armées françaises. Je tiens à ajouter que la situation actuelle prouve l'absence de coopération nationale entre États membres de l'Union européenne dans la région, abandonnant l'armée française à l'isolement.

Je vais évidemment soutenir ce texte malgré deux dispositions douteuses: la première tient au refus de nommer l'ennemi, masquant sous les affrontements religieux, la perpétuation de razzias islamistes sur les populations animistes et chrétiennes, la seconde tient à la remarque faite sur l'usage de la force par l'armée burkinabè qui fait face à des défis bien plus dangereux que les confortables leçons de morale de nos résolutions. Je me tiens aux côtés des chrétiens persécutés du Burkina Faso.

(*) Βλ. Συνοπτικά Πρακτικά

2.2. Afghanistan, met name het vermeende seksuele misbruik van jongens in de provincie Logar

Πρόεδρος. – Το επόμενο σημείο στην ημερήσια διάταξη είναι η συζήτηση επί έξι προτάσεων ψηφίσματος σχετικά με το Αφγανιστάν και συγκεκριμένα τις καταγγελίες για σεξουαλική κακοποίηση αγοριών στην επαρχία Logar (2019/2981(RSP)) (*).

Ryszard Czarnecki, autor. – Panie Przewodniczący! Panie Komisarzy! Cieszę się, że ponad podziałami politycznymi zabieramy głos w tej ważnej sprawie, sprawie bolesnej, bo zawsze wykorzystywanie seksualne młodzieży to coś, co jest rzeczą okropną. I w moim przekonaniu głos Parlamentu Europejskiego w kontekście bardzo licznych przypadków w Afganistanie w prowincji Logar musi wybrzmieć bardzo mocno.

Chciałbym, żebyśmy wywierali presję na władze tego kraju, który otrzymuje od nas olbrzymią pomoc humanitarną i ekonomiczną, aby zrobił wszystko, aby tego typu sytuacje nie miały miejsca w przyszłości, aby ograniczyć możliwości wykorzystywania seksualnego młodych ludzi, to bowiem oznacza dla nich piętno na całe życie.

W tej sprawie powinniśmy działać solidarnie. Cieszę się, że jest to wspólne stanowisko przedstawicieli różnych grup politycznych, i cieszę się, że pan komisarz Borrell też będzie mógł w tej sprawie zająć stanowisko jako komisarz o największym doświadczeniu w Komisji Europejskiej i były przewodniczący Parlamentu Europejskiego.

Erik Marquardt, *Verfasser*. – Herr Präsident! Ich habe immer so ein bisschen das Problem, dass wir, wenn wir im Europäischen Parlament über Afghanistan sprechen, dann eigentlich nur über die Schattenseiten sprechen.

Ich weiß, dass Afghanistan Schattenseiten hat. Aber es ist eben auch so, dass man vielleicht ab und zu über die glücklichen Seiten sprechen sollte: über glückliche Familien, über das tolle Essen, über schöne Sonnenuntergänge in Kabul. Ich weiß, dass das heute nicht das Thema ist. Aber ich finde es so ein bisschen traurig, dass dieses Land – das eben zwei Seiten hat – oft nicht mit beiden Seiten dargestellt wird.

Ich war 2016 und 2017 als Fotojournalist in Afghanistan, und natürlich blieb mir die Schattenseite dort nicht verborgen. Aber ich habe dort auch viele tolle Menschen kennengelernt: viele Menschen, die sich auch für Menschenrechte und Demokratie eingesetzt haben. Man muss sagen, dass es Menschen wie Mohammad Musa Mahmudi und auch Ehsanullah Hamidi sind, die sich unermüdlich dort für Menschenrechte einsetzen, denen unser Dank gebührt. Umso schlimmer ist es, dass diese Menschenrechtsverteidiger vielleicht teilweise schlechter geschützt werden als die Verbrecher, die dort Verbrechen gegen Kinder verüben.

Die beiden Menschenrechtsverteidiger wollten Kinder vor sexuellem Missbrauch schützen, und auf dem Weg zu einem Treffen mit dem EU-Botschafter sind sie verhaftet worden. Es ist wichtig, dass wir deswegen dieses Thema hier auf die Tagesordnung rufen, dass wir in der Entschließung zwar anerkennen, dass die Behörden dort jetzt Schritte einleiten wollen, um Menschenrechtsverteidigerinnen und -verteidiger besser zu schützen, auch um diese Vorwürfe unabhängig zu untersuchen. Aber es ist eben wichtig, dass wir dort dranbleiben, dass wir dort genau hingucken, dass diese Verbrechen nicht ungestraft bleiben, dass die Sicherheit von Menschenrechtsverteidigern geschützt wird und dass wir auch sagen: Wer von uns Finanzhilfen bekommen will, der muss sich für Menschenrechtsverteidiger einsetzen, und der darf nicht unbestraft lassen, wenn Kinder missbraucht werden.

Wir sprechen verschiedene Punkte in der Entschließung an, und ich bin sehr dankbar, dass es möglich war, auch so eine breit geeinte Entschließung hier im Parlament zu finden, um ein starkes Signal zu setzen. Vielen Dank auch die an die Kollegen dafür.

Kati Piri, *author*. – Mr President, this is the brutal picture that shocked us all. Local Afghani elites buy or kidnap boys from poor families. They dress them up as women, make them dance and then abuse them sexually. This is 'bacha bazi', but we should not mince words: this is sex slavery and it is absolutely reprehensible.

Last month's report showed just how bad the situation is. In Logar, at least 136 boys, and probably thousands more, were systematically abused, by their teachers and local authorities – by the people to whom they look up the most – and it did not end there. Several boys were killed, of which five by their families because of the shame they supposedly brought to their communities.

The Afghan authorities must therefore immediately suspend all alleged perpetrators of 'bacha bazi'. They need to conduct an independent investigation into all allegations and hold perpetrators to account. This abhorrent practice must be rooted out once and for all.

Marisa Matias, *Autora*. – Senhor Presidente, nós subscrevemos e apoiamos totalmente esta resolução. Os casos de abuso sexual de menores são uma das realidades mais atrozes e, no caso do Afeganistão, uma guerra que devia ter sido evitada e não foi trouxe consequências avassaladoras não só para o país, mas também para a região.

O caso dos 136 jovens é, infelizmente, apenas um dos exemplos, já que entre 2015 e 2018 mais de 14 mil crianças foram abusadas no Afeganistão.

Esta fotografia é, no entanto, mais ampla e, por isso, queríamos apelar aos colegas para apoiarem as alterações que apresentámos à resolução. Como disse, apoiamos totalmente esta resolução, mas, no quadro de uma fotografia mais ampla, não podemos ignorar que o relatório do inspetor-geral especial dos Estados Unidos afirmou e demonstrou que as tropas estrangeiras, sobre a alçada dos Estados Unidos, tinham explicitamente sido aconselhadas a não intervir nestes casos de violações e de abusos contra menores.

Sabemos também hoje que as tropas americanas estavam a par dos abusos das forças de segurança afegãs. Sabemos também hoje, por via da *Human Rights Watch*, que houve violações cometidas por grupos paramilitares apoiados pelos Estados Unidos.

Agora que toda a gente sabe e que sabemos isso, nós gostávamos de incluir nesta resolução a necessidade de uma investigação independente para que não permaneça a impunidade. Gostaríamos também de incluir nesta resolução um apelo aos Estados-Membros para que parem de deportar menores afegãos que, quando regressam ao país, o que enfrentam é riscos de tortura e de violação dos direitos humanos, como aliás esta resolução demonstra.

Petras Auštrevičius, *author*. – Mr President, crimes against children are the worst possible form of crime. It destroys and takes away childhood from Afghan kids. Moreover, it affects their life and their future. And their future is the future of Afghanistan, which we work hard to create.

Over the past days, we observed President Ghani's commitment to investigate dreadful events in the schools of Logar province. We express our appreciation to this reaction and look forward to the concrete results.

All perpetrators must be brought to justice and schools return to being a safe place for kids. One of the main tasks of our common efforts in reconstructing Afghanistan is about a secure future for the country's young generation.

We will continue our support for eradicating the practice of *bacha bazi* and promoting and protecting the rights of children in Afghanistan.

Željana Zovko, *author*. – Mr President, a couple of weeks ago we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and with this debate we can conclude that there is still a lot of work to be done to protect children around the world.

I would like to express my grave concerns regarding the allegation of sexual abuse in several schools in Logar Province. The protection of the lives and welfare of children should be central to every society, especially during times of armed conflict. In addition, I also strongly regret the arbitrary detention of the human rights defenders who reported the alleged exploitation and violation.

The Afghan authorities should ensure in all circumstances that human rights defenders are able to carry out their human rights work. Following up on these cases, I call upon the Attorney General's Office to launch an independent and impartial investigation into the allegation of abuse, as well as the arbitrary detention of the human rights defenders.

The EU delegation and EU Member States with diplomatic missions in Kabul should continue following developments in these cases and fully implement the EU guidelines for the promotion and protection of the rights of children in armed conflicts. Furthermore, it is paramount for the European Union to increase the scrutiny and monitoring of EU financial assistance to Afghanistan. This way, we can ensure that the budget provided will support the conducive environment for the protection of children and human rights defenders.

Isabel Santos, *em nome do Grupo S&D*. – Senhor Presidente, a situação aqui discutida do aviltante costume *bacha bazi* na província de Logar, no Afeganistão, só merece o mais vivo repúdio. Sob a capa de uma pretensa tradição fechou-se os olhos durante demasiado tempo a uma gritante violação dos direitos das crianças e das mais básicas regras dos direitos humanos.

Os passos, finalmente dados, pelo governo afegão para a erradicação deste costume mostram-se insuficientes e continuam a chegar relatos de crianças abusadas e de defensores dos direitos humanos atacados e arbitrariamente detidos.

É tempo de exigir que sejam libertados e protegidos todos quantos lutam pelos direitos das crianças e que se garanta a total erradicação desta prática de abusos. Que seja colocado um fim à impunidade e se garanta o acesso das crianças à justiça e à sua não extradição quando se refugiam noutros países.

Sabemos que as mentalidades demoram a mudar e, por isso, exige-se a mobilização da sociedade afegã, dos ativistas, das autoridades, dos líderes religiosos. Todos são necessários no combate a este flagelo e exige-se uma mudança legislativa, mas também uma intervenção por via da educação de modo a proteger as gerações futuras.

Christine Anderson, im Namen der ID-Fraktion. – Herr Präsident! Der Missbrauch von Kindern in Afghanistan ist entsetzlich, der sexuelle Missbrauch eines jeden Kindes ist entsetzlich. Leider ist diese Form des Missbrauchs nicht ungewöhnlich in islamischen Ländern und letztlich nichts anderes als Ausdruck der dort vorherrschenden Kultur.

Das Problem hier allerdings ist, dass das Europäische Parlament es sich wieder einmal anmaßt, mit erhobenem Zeigefinger die Missstände anderer Länder anzuprangern. Wir hören wieder Sonntagsreden und leere Sprechblasen von Betroffenheitsbekundungen. Da kann man sich dann auch wieder richtig gut fühlen und seine moralische Überlegenheit beweisen. Aber an der Lebensrealität dieser Kinder ändern sie rein gar nichts.

Allein die Benennung des höchst problematischen Umgangs mit der Sexualität im Islam ist ja hierzulande bereits ein Hinweis auf Rassismus. Wenn aber die kausale Ursache eines Problems nicht einmal mehr benannt werden darf, dann tun Sie hier bitte nicht so, als sei Ihnen am Schicksal dieser Kinder gelegen. Ihre öffentlich zelebrierte moralische Überlegenheit, die Sie wie einen Popanz vor sich hertragen, ist nichts anderes als der Heiligenschein der Scheinheiligen.

Clare Daly, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group. – Mr President, I very much welcome the resolution from the point of view of reopening the debate on the appalling practices of *bacha bazi*, the systemic child abuse and slavery which has long been well known in parts of Afghanistan. And isn't the saddest thing about this discussion the fact that it isn't a revelation, it isn't new? We've all known about this for a very long time. In fact, we know that even attempts to have the situation exposed and dealt with have been interfered with. American soldiers even, who tried to stop the process, were themselves disciplined for that, while such behaviour was engaged upon in military compounds where the US was present.

So for me, this exposes the nonsense that we're constantly exposed to: that the US intervention in Afghanistan was all about bringing human rights, women's rights, education, when the knowledge of this practice took place under their eyes and they did nothing. This makes them complicit in that practice. And of course the cases should be investigated. Of course the victims must be supported and protected. But, you know, I do think we need to draw the conclusions from that. It's a sad irony, I find, that we are condemning – appropriately so – the physical rape and enslavement of children when the country itself has been raped and pillaged by foreign intervention and its population enslaved.

Afghanistan was recently ranked as the most violent country in the world, yet we send hundreds of young people back there every year. Parliament deems it too unsafe for us to visit, but we're quite happy to send children back there every year. Shame on us. But more than that, we should be supporting their right to live in dignity and respect in their own country, free from interference. So I support the initiatives to bring peace to that country. But we should start by supporting the human rights defenders and civil rights defenders who are active in that state, and not the official echelons of power.

Robert Biedroń (S&D). – Mr President, imagine a young boy, about 13 years old. He goes to school to get an education that every child deserves. Imagine that the teacher, whom the boy trusts, lures the boy into a dark room and rapes him. The boy is very brave and speaks out about his story, but when he goes to a police station, he is raped again. The boy's family is so ashamed that they threw him out of their house. But at least, they did not kill him.

This is not an isolated incident. It is a reality for hundreds of confirmed cases in the Afghani province of Logar, where teachers and local authority officials have been implicated in the sexual abuse ring. And now, imagine that we would not do anything about it.

Evin Incir (S&D). – Herr talman! Den här debatten och den här resolutionen handlar om det absolut värsta man kan tänka sig – det är bottenlöst. Just därför tycker jag att det är viktigt att vi har den här debatten och resolutionen och att vi lyfter detta till den högsta möjliga nivån.

Sexuella övergrepp, våldtäkt, sexuell exploatering, slavhandel och mord av barn, av unga. Det är sjukt. De utbredda och pågående övergreppen av pojkar i Logarprovinsen i Afghanistan är en skam, och jag vill uttrycka mitt fulla stöd och min solidaritet med offren. Vi måste göra upp med den tystnadsplikt och det stigma som råder kring detta fenomen, och den avskyvärda så kallade leken med pojkar måste få ett slut.

De ansvariga måste ställas till svars i alla led, rättssystemet måste fungera, de utsatta offren, alltså barnen, måste få det stöd och den hjälp som de är i behov av och har rätt till. Barn måste få vara barn och växa upp i trygghet och frihet. Ingen människa är en annan persons ägodel. Övergreppen måste få ett slut.

Διαδικασία «Catch-the-Eye»

Jiří Pospíšil (PPE). – Pane předsedající, ta situace v Logaru je opravdu šílená. My bohužel můžeme tragédii mladých lidí v Logaru popsat, vyjádřit solidaritu, ale bohužel nebudeme schopni toto vyřešit. Je ale na nás a je to i dotaz na pana vysokého představitele, jaké tlaky, i ekonomické, můžeme vyvinout na afghánskou vládu, aby se alespoň pokusila seriózně tento problém řešit. Zatím jsou tu určité přísliby od ústavních činitelů Afghánistánu, ale to je málo. My se s tím nemůžeme takto smířit, je třeba, aby naše zahraniční politika vůči Afghánistánu toto téma jasně obsahovala, abychom chtěli po Afghánistánu, aby trestní právo, které už upravuje v Afghánistánu otázku násilí na dětech, bylo reálně vymáháno a vedle této trestněprávní linie, aby Afghánistán rozjel státní osvětovou kampaň, která na tento šílený fenomén bude upozorňovat a bude před ním varovat.

To jsou možnosti, jak aspoň nepřímo můžeme pomoci, aby obětí tohoto šíleného násilí do budoucna ubývalo. Ale bez našeho tlaku a tlaku celosvětové veřejnosti, obávám se, se situace v Afghánistánu nezlepší.

Maria Grapini (S&D). – Domnule președinte, stimați colegi, recentul raport al Secretariatului ONU arată că peste 12 000 de copii au fost uciși sau mutilați, că violul și că agresiunea asupra copiilor în Afganistan există și, din păcate, măsurile care au fost luate, chiar prin schimbarea Codului Penal, printr-o nouă lege din 2019 privind protecția drepturilor copilului, nu am reușit, nu s-a reușit a se proteja copiii.

Cred că este important să votăm această rezoluție, dar aș ruga colegii să voteze amendamentul 1 în care, în mod în special, acuzăm trupele străine din Afganistan, sub controlul, sub conducerea SUA, care nu au intervenit în cazurile de abuzuri asupra copiilor și vreau să atrag atenția că abuzuri asupra copiilor avem și în statele membre. Avem minori agresați; recent, în țara mea, un cetățean olandez a agresat două fete. Sigur, s-a sinucis după ce a fost descoperit, dar trebuie să fim atenți cu copiii noștri, viitorul, generațiile care vor fi în lume și în Europa.

(*) Βλ. Συνοπτικά Πρακτικά

ELNÖKÖL: KLÁRA DOBREV

alelnök

Elnök asszony. – Sok szeretettel üdvözlöm Önöket és Önökön keresztül 500 millió európai polgárt, akiket képviselnek.

Mick Wallace (GUE/NGL). – Madam President, the notion of children being sexually abused has to be one of the most horrific things that we can imagine. We come from Ireland, where the sexual abuse of a lot of young people by some members of the Catholic Church has left an incredible trail of destruction. The fact is that, back in Ireland, it was known. People knew it was happening, but people were pressured into silence.

It's not credible in Afghanistan that the powers that be, the government of the day, didn't know. The EU does want to help to restructure Afghanistan after the destruction by the Americans and others, and the Russians before them. But, if we are going to play a positive role, we have got to be very straight with the authorities there and let them know that the likes of this cannot be acceptable because, if we too stay silent, things will be slower to change. You have a positive role to play in Afghanistan and you should use your influence and potential to actually drive this home and shout loud that this is too much and too bad.

„A catch the eye” eljárás vége.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. – Madam President, for sure, there are, in our developed and affluent societies, cases of child abuse, and we could also discuss about the war in Afghanistan, and why we Western people have been there for almost 20 years. What were the causes? The consequences? We can talk about all that, we know. But today, what brings us here, in this specific case, is the part of the iceberg which is out of the water, because the data about child abuses in Afghanistan are, unhappily, much, much, much, much bigger than one could compare with our societies. The data we have shows very clearly that the Logar case is the part that you see from the iceberg.

Between 2015 and 2018, the United Nation's Task Force verified 40 000 grave violations against children throughout the country. 40 000! Many of them were of serious concern. This represents 80% of the civilian casualties. 80% of the civilian casualties are children, and notwithstanding monitoring and verification constraints, the recruitment and use of 274 children and the perpetration of sexual violence against many others, the abduction of 2013, 800 attacks on schools and hospitals – well, I will not continue. It's clear that it's not exactly the same problem as here.

In Afghanistan, in 2017 they wanted to revise the penal code, which entered into force in 2018, explicitly criminalising the so-called *bacha bazi*. But it's very difficult to change the habits, the influence of powerful people. Impunity is very widespread, and victims face stigma and exclusion from society. We have to do new fighting, because this Child Protection Act had to be approved by a presidential decree, and later the lower house of the parliament refused it, arguing that they did not have a quorum to approve one article. And in December 2019, yesterday, there were still discussing it.

The Law on Protection of Child Rights was rejected four times by the parliament in the last four years. It shows how strong the resistance is to change laws, and mainly habits, in a society which, unhappily, presents such kind of behaviour that we have to fight and we have to help to fight. We have to help to fight, trying to improve the rights of children in Afghanistan. We are doing as much as we can and we will continue doing so, knowing that, at the end, to change a society is much more difficult – a longer-standing endeavour than just publishing a law in a paper.

We have organised recently a public debate entitled 'Children of Afghanistan – They Deserve a Better future' that drew wide interest from officials and the general public. In addition, our annual rights dialogue between the European Union and the Afghan Government systematically includes a chapter on the specific situation of children, where such matters as children in armed conflict, child marriage and violence against children are addressed.

For sure, there are also cases of abuses inside the armed forces, and the EU addresses this matter in a systematic manner, paying attention to the minors recruited by the army and security forces and the behaviour of soldiers and policemen towards the civilian population. We have a police advisory project which includes a gender segment, which is also meant to benefit the young people.

As you can see, this is a great problem. We are trying to help the Afghan authorities and society to fight against it, and I think it's very important that the European Parliament echoes these events in order to fight against them.

Elnök asszony. – A vitát lezárom.

A szavazásra a viták végén kerül sor.

2.3. De Russische wet inzake “buitenlandse agenten”

Elnök asszony. – A következő pont vita hat, a „külföldi ügynökökről” szóló orosz törvénnyel kapcsolatos állásfoglalásra irányuló indítványról (2019/2982(RSP)) (”).

Anna Fotyga, author. – Madam President, the Soviet Union was particularly oppressive and cruel towards independent journalists, many of them perishing. Unfortunately, in Putin’s Russian Federation we see that some steps taken by the state unfortunately resemble the old past. We still remember a fantastic person like Anna Politkovskaya, and very brave journalists willing to give independent, reliable information to Russian society. Unfortunately the ‘foreign agent’ act in its recent shape signed by Vladimir Putin on 2 December is a further step to intimidate individual and independent bloggers and journalists. We call in our resolution to repeal this law.

Viola Von Cramon-Taubadel, Verfasserin. – Frau Vorsitzende, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Und wieder: Putin möchte mit diesem Gesetz zu den ausländischen Agenten noch mehr Kontrolle über seine Gesellschaft erlangen.

Der Raum für unabhängige Organisationen, Medien und sogar Gedankenfreiheit wird immer kleiner. Schritt für Schritt nimmt der Kreml der russischen Gesellschaft jegliche Freiheit. Aber es geht nicht nur um Russland. NGOs und Kritiker mundtot zu machen und den Medienpluralismus abzuschaffen, ist der erfolgreichste Exportartikel Russlands.

Putin als Vorbild für autoritäre Herrscher. Sie bringen ihre Gegner nicht immer in Gefängnisse, aber sie haben erkannt, dass administrative Hürden oder die bloße Androhung von Sanktionen zur Selbstzensur führen. Sie haben subtile und raffiniertere Methoden entwickelt, um Druck auszuüben, die tägliche Arbeit zu erschweren und Kritiker dann endgültig zum Schweigen zu bringen.

Einschüchterung von NGOs ist eine gängige Praxis in unserer Nachbarschaft. Verleumdungskampagnen gegen Bürgerrechtler sind nicht nur außerhalb der EU, sondern auch in Rumänien, Tschechien oder Malta an der Tagesordnung. Der Musterschüler Putins ist Viktor Orbán. In Ungarn sind die NGOs bereits verpflichtet, sich zu registrieren und vom Ausland finanzierte Organisationen so zu bezeichnen, wenn sie Geld aus dem Ausland bekommen. Wir müssen diesen Entwicklungen jetzt schnellstens einen Riegel vorschieben.

Tonino Picula, autor. – Poštovana predsjedavajuća, zahvaljujem kolegama na odličnoj suradnji i konstruktivnim pregovorima. Imamo dobar zajednički tekst, fokusiran na problematičan zakon o tzv. stranim agentima. Poruke Parlamenta o ovom slučaju su jasne.

Zakon je usvojen još 2012. godine, ali prošlog mjeseca su dodani novi amandmani. Njima se opseg zakona širi na sve one koji objave sadržaj ili podijele sadržaj stranih medija, a ujedno primaju sredstva koja dolaze izvan Rusije. Neovisno radi li se o ruskim državljanima. Prostor za slobodan rad i neovisno financiranje medija dodatno je ograničen.

Oštro osuđujemo ovaj zakon jer ograničava slobodu govora i djelovanja civilnog društva i medija – temeljnih sloboda ruskog ustava. Zato tražimo njegovo povlačenje.

Rusija je potpisnica Europske konvencije o ljudskim pravima i Opće deklaracije o ljudskim pravima. Očekujemo da promovira vrijednosti čiji je potpisnik. Osim toga, smatram da budući odnosi i suradnja Europske unije s Rusijom trebaju biti dio sveobuhvatne strategije, zasnovane prije svega na poštivanju međunarodnog prava.

Antony Hook, author. – Madam President, there’s nothing more integral to democracy than free speech, and nothing more important to Europe’s security than democracy in Europe and around Europe.

Our largest neighbour has taken another step that causes concern. Russia will require journalists, bloggers and others who share news to label themselves ‘foreign agents’ on pain of criminal punishment. The term is clearly pejorative and intended to make people say, ‘don’t believe me’, and will be used against those who criticise the government. This law must go.

We wish for friendship, not hostility, with Russia, but we see in Russia a regime that stifles criticism and without the frequent change of who is in power that characterises democracy. We have learned that states that suppress free speech become a danger to their own people and to their neighbours. We wish sincerely to cut back the jungle of mutual suspicion. On behalf of the Renew Group, I say please let us have more free speech, not less.

Michael Gahler, *Verfasser*. – Frau Präsidentin! Es ist bedauerlich, dass wir uns erneut über eine Verschärfung der Gesetzeslage in Russland unterhalten müssen. Nicht nur NGOs, die finanzielle Unterstützung aus dem Ausland bekommen, werden künftig von diesem Gesetz erfasst, sondern auch Einzelpersonen wie Blogger, die sich diesen zweifelhaften Titel eines ausländischen Agenten anheften müssen. Wer über Menschenrechtsverletzungen berichtet, über Umweltverbrechen, über Korruption, wird als ausländischer Agent denunziert.

Ich finde, die russischen Bürger haben Besseres verdient. Wer diese unliebsamen Wahrheiten ausspricht, der ist kein ausländischer Agent, sondern nimmt die wahren Interessen der Bürger gegenüber einer kleinen politischen und wirtschaftlichen Kaste an der Spitze wahr, die nach außen versucht, Stärke und Nationalismus zu propagieren, die sich aber wie keine Dynastie zuvor in der russischen Geschichte bereichert hinter einer potemkinschen Staatsfassade, hinter der alles möglich ist.

Da der russische Staat versucht, seine Bürger zu bevormunden wie Untertanen in der Zarenzeit oder wie in der Sowjetunion, sollten wir unsere Solidarität mit den russischen Bürgern so zum Ausdruck bringen, dass wir die unmittelbare Abschaffung dieses Gesetzes verlangen.

Andrius Kubilius, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Madam President, first of all, we need to answer a very simple question: what does this Russian ‘foreign agent’ law mean? It means that authorities in Russia are afraid of their people. That is why I would like to make an appeal. Mr Putin, don’t be afraid of ordinary Russian people.

When authorities are becoming afraid of their people, they are starting to fight their people. That is when basic human rights are drastically becoming violated. That is where we need to use all our power, not only the power of the EU itself but also of the Council of Europe, where Russia again got all its rights back.

We need to use the Council of Europe, we need to use the Venice Commission, we need to use our governments, which are part of the Council of Europe, really to urge all of them to defend the human rights of ordinary Russian people against the authorities, which are afraid of those people.

Raphaël Glucksmann, *au nom du groupe S&D*. – Madame la Présidente, le comité pour la prévention de la torture: agent de l’étranger! Le groupe Maximum, qui défend les droits des LGBTI: agent de l’étranger! L’ONG des défenseurs des droits humains Memorial: agent de l’étranger! Les écolos de Bellona: agents de l’étranger! Et maintenant, les individus aussi, les blogueurs, les journalistes, les intellectuels, les simples citoyens: tous agents de l’étranger! Voilà le modèle de société que propose Vladimir Poutine. Et ce modèle, ne nous trompons pas, inspire tous les mouvements autoritaires au sein même de l’Union européenne. Alors, ce n’est pas qu’une question diplomatique, c’est aussi l’affrontement de deux visions du monde.

Il est temps que nous soyons, chers collègues, aussi cohérents dans notre défense de la démocratie que Vladimir Poutine est cohérent dans ses attaques répétées contre la démocratie en Russie et au sein même de l’Union européenne.

Petras Auštrevičius, *on behalf of the Renew Group*. – Madam President, for a long time, the Russian Government has been deliberately shrinking the independent media space, with few credible resources and sources remaining. Now it is targeting individuals, particularly independent journalists, political opposition and activists who might have different ideas and vision for Russia than those provided by the Kremlin.

We imposed sanctions – rightly so – against Russia in reaction to its aggression in eastern Ukraine and Crimea. That was five years ago and no signs of improvement have been observed. On the contrary, Russia is becoming even more authoritarian domestically.

The 'foreign agent' law only proves that Russia is not advancing but regressing when it comes to respect for fundamental liberties. This law affects not only Russian citizens but is also a direct attack on us, Europeans. The part that is 'foreign' in this law, and presumably damaging to Russian society, is us. In addition to civil society activists, our diplomats are also being stigmatised in Russia. We should not be late and should do our job on time and approve the Global Magnitsky Act without delay.

Heidi Hautala, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Madam President, this was a very good week for freedom of expression in the European Union, and in this Parliament on Monday the decision was taken to establish the Daphne Prize to honour investigative journalism. On Tuesday the Whistleblower Act took force in the EU, and on Wednesday we honoured freedom of expression by giving the Sakharov Prize to a famous dissident, defender of Uyghurs Ilham Tohti, in the name of the most famous academic and dissident, Andrei Sakharov from Russia. But the contrast to what is happening in Russia could not be more sharp, and we have to be aware that the recent decision by the Russian regime to extend the law on foreign agents to individuals will seriously damage the work of independent journalists in Russia. I'm particularly wanting to mention the excellent news service of Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, who have hundreds of correspondents throughout the Russian Federation, and their work will now be very much more difficult.

(Applause)

Thierry Mariani, *au nom du groupe ID*. – Madame la Présidente, j'espère que vous avez conscience que cette résolution condamne pratiquement dans le même temps les États-Unis. Puis-je vous rappeler qu'en 1938, la loi FARA, qui ressemble sur de nombreux points à ce qui est voté à l'heure actuelle en Russie, condamnait déjà, aux États-Unis, les agents de l'étranger.

Le moins que l'on puisse dire, c'est que la Russie fait face à un certain nombre d'adversités internationales qui défient parfois le bon sens. À titre personnel, je suis consterné de voir dans la résolution une volonté limpide, réaffirmée de maintenir toutes les sanctions à l'encontre de la Russie, sanctions qui sont si néfastes à notre économie et qui n'aboutissent à rien.

Alors, au Parlement, on voit des agents russes partout. Le Brexit: les Russes; Trump: les Russes; les gilets jaunes: les Russes; les grèves dans les trains français: certainement aussi les Russes. En mesure de rétorsion, nous interdisons des territoires, nous gelons les avoirs, nous condamnons. D'ailleurs, jusqu'en 1981, la France, elle aussi, avait une loi qui limitait, pour les étrangers, la possibilité de former des associations.

Le Conseil de l'Europe vient de réintégrer la Russie. Je pense que c'est plutôt cette voie qu'il nous faut suivre, celle du rétablissement d'un dialogue. Nous prenons la voie inverse; nous allons dans une impasse.

Zdzisław Krasnodębski, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Pani Przewodnicząca! Zaostrzenie przepisów dotyczących tzw. obcych agentów to kolejny przejaw podejmowanych przez Kreml prób izolowania rosyjskiego społeczeństwa od świata zewnętrznego i informacji. Jest to reakcja reżimu Putina, wspieranego niestety przez niektóre państwa europejskie miliardami euro (patrz Nord Stream 2), na wzrastające niezadowolenie rosyjskiego społeczeństwa z polityki władz i na rosnącą liczbę lokalnych protestów na tle społeczno-ekonomicznym i politycznym. Słabnąca legitymizacja władzy na tle stagnacji ekonomicznej i problemów społecznych ludności ma być zrekompensowana retoryką oblężonej twierdzy. Ale jest też druga strona tej sprawy. Jest również faktem, że niektóre organizacje, fundacje, agencje informacyjne mają nadmierne ambicje demokratyzowania Rosji i zapominają, że to sami Rosjanie muszą zdecydować, w jakim kierunku ma rozwijać się ich kraj.

Nikolaj Villumsen, *for GUE/NGL-Gruppen*. – Fru formand! Ytringsfrihed, retten til at organisere sig, forsamlingsfrihed, det er hjørnesten i den europæiske menneskerettighedskonvention, som ikke alene EU-landene men også Rusland har underskrevet. Vi ser i disse år, at helt grundlæggende demokratiske rettigheder, som vi ellers tog for givet, er kommet under pres. Autoritære regimer arbejder aktivt for at ødelægge civilsamfundet. Vi ser det inden for EU i Ungarn under Orbán, vi ser det i Israel under Netanyahu, og vi ser det ikke mindst i Rusland under Putin. Lad os i dag sende et helt klart signal. Vi accepterer ikke, at grundlæggende menneskerettigheder bliver krænket. Vi accepterer ikke angreb på civilsamfundet. Vi accepterer ikke, at den russiske regering løber fra sin forpligtelse til at sikre de russiske borgere ytringsfrihed, forsamlingsfrihed og organisationsfrihed.

Miroslav Radačovský (NI). – Vážená pani predsedajúca, vážení kolegovia, pokiaľ Európska únia chce existovať v takej podobe, ako existuje, a chce sa hrať na sudcu sveta a na ochrancu, svetového ochrancu práv a slobôd od Antarktídy po Arktídu, tak predovšetkým musí byť objektívna, aby nestratila tvár. Tento tu návrh uznesenia týkajúci sa ruskej, ruského zákona je v skutočnosti, poviem to úprimne, neobjektívny fejk. Neobjektívny fejk, ktorý nevychádza zo základných skutočností. Rozprávate teda všetci o tom, že je ohrozená opozícia Ruska. Avšak ja som si zobral tú námahu, vzal som si tú námahu a prešiel som všetky hlasovania ruského parlamentu od roku 2012, 2017 a roku 2019. O týchto zákonoch, o prvom, druhom, ako aj poslednom hlasovalo 60 % ruskej dумы a proti tomu nehlasovali ani opozičné ruské strany, čiže je to rozhodnutie 250 miliónov ruských teda občanov. Je to záležitosť Ruska. Je to odpoveď na americké reštrikcie, a preto objektívne, objektívne posudzujeme vec, nebuďme rusofóbmí, a rozmyšľajme aj nad tým, že svet už nestojí na jednej nohe, svet už stojí na najmenej dvoch alebo troch nohách a budúcnosť Európy a budúcnosť všetkých ostatných krajín závisí od spolupráce, stavania mostov, ekonomickej spolupráce a nie od zasahovania do vnútorných záležitostí iných krajín.

David Lega (PPE). – Madam President, at the core of Christian democracy is civil society, and to me, as a Christian Democrat, a free, diverse and strong civil society is a precondition for a democratic state. To others like Vladimir Putin, the mere existence of some sort of civil society is nothing but a threat to everlasting authoritarian rule. And Putin ticks quite a few anti-civil society boxes. I mean systematic efforts to intimidate the media: check. Rigging elections: check. And the 'foreign agent' law: check. In fact, this law is just another poorly-disguised attempt to thwart a political opposition that in Putin's view should not exist. But it does, and it must – not least in Russia. And I do understand that it must be hard for former KGB agent Putin to grasp that there isn't a potential spy hiding around each new corner. But until he does, Russia's brave civil society members will have my unconditional Christian Democratic support.

Attila Ara-Kovács (S&D). – Kedves Képviselőtársaim! Tegnap itt, ebben a teremben felállva és nagy tapsal fejeztük ki szolidaritásukat a kínai hatóságok által fogvatartott ujjur szellemi vezető mellett. Egy ilyen kiállásnak akkor van hitele, ha minden egyéb, hasonló esetben szintén szolidaritásunkat fejezzük ki. És most itt van ez az új orosz törvény, ami abszolút mértékben tönkre akarja tenni gyakorlatilag részben a szabad gondolkodást, részben pedig a szabad szellemet Oroszországban. Nem térek ki ennek elemzésére, hisz ezt itt többen megtették ma, viszont arra szeretnék utalni, hogy ez a rendszer, a putyini rendszer nemcsak otthon akarja kiépíteni ezt a módszert, ezeket a módszereket, hanem exportálja is, pont úgy, ahogy jogi elődje, a Szovjetunió tette. Sajnálom, hogy saját hazám az első áldozata ennek az exportnak. Ott természetesen hullottak ezek a putyini elvek, ennek a putyini gyakorlatnak az elvei.

Sajnos ma már a magyar civil társadalom bénult állapotban van, ugyanakkor azokat az intézményeket tönkre akarják tenni, amelyek ennek szövetségesei voltak, például a Közép-Európai Egyetem. Fölténnék egyetlen kérdést Önöknek. Tudják, milyen pénzből finanszírozzák ezt? Abból a pénzből, amit Önök adnak, amit az Önök mögött álló választók adtak. Kérem, gondoljanak erre, amikor megnyomják majd a gombot ma.

Anna Júlia Donáth (Renew). – Az orosz ügynöktörvénnyel nemcsak azért kell foglalkoznunk, mert az oroszországi civileket és az oroszországi változást akarókat akarják ezzel az eszközzel elhallgattatni. Azért sem szabad csendben maradunk a törvény kapcsán, mert a maffiaként működő orosz állam hatalomgyakorlási eszközei nem állnak meg az orosz határnál, ahogy erre már többen is utaltak. A nyugatellenes dezinformáció már belülről fenyegeti az Európai Uniót. Az eredetileg az ellenséges államok ellen létrehozott törvény ma már a civil szervezeteken és az ellenzéki politikusokon alkalmazza Oroszország mellett Magyarországon is. Magyarország ma Vlagyimir Putyin európai laboratóriuma. Itt próbálja ki, hogy az orosz megoldások hogyan működnek egy uniós tagállamban is. Például ezért telepíti Magyarországra kémbankját, amit Nemzetközi Beruházási Bank álneven akar eladni, és ezért ömlik a magyar köztévéből az orosz propaganda és a propagandát gyártó orosz hírügynökség így szivárogoz be.

Az Európai Uniónak mindent meg kell tenni annak érdekében, hogy biztosítsa a civil szervezetek független működését és ne engedje a tagállamainak, hogy jogszerűen működő jogvédő civil szervezeteket büntessenek és szankcionáljanak.

Catherine Rowett (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, yesterday this House awarded the Sakharov Prize to Ilham Tohti and welcomed two distinguished runners-up for that prize. Today, we register concern about Russia's new 'foreign agent' law, which threatens journalists and NGOs. These neatly illustrate two complementary halves of a commitment to defending those who fight for freedom of thought in countries not fortunate enough to belong to this alliance of free nations.

I have been honoured to play a small part in this work, at a time when freedom of thought and expression grows more precious the more intensely it is threatened. Yesterday, I also noted the unanimous absence of the Brexit plc members from the Sakharov ceremony. Colleagues will also be aware that Boris Johnson has found new ways to delay releasing the report on Russian interference in UK elections. I say no more.

(Applause)

Hermann Tertsch (ECR). – Señora presidente, las nuevas medidas del Kremlin del 2 de diciembre restringen aún más las libertades de los ciudadanos rusos y de todas las organizaciones independientes. Las leyes contra los «agentes extranjeros» de 2012 y de 2015 ya permitían perseguir a toda organización extranjera u organización rusa con relaciones en el extranjero cuyas actividades no gustaran al poder. Con las nuevas ampliaciones ya, en realidad, nadie puede tener en Rusia unos contactos en el exterior que no puedan ser utilizados administrativa o penalmente en su contra. Es decir, la represión en este campo es ya muy pareja a la vigente en la Unión Soviética, en la dictadura comunista antes de 1985, cuando llegaron la perestroika y Gorbachov. Resulta trágica esta involución antidemocrática que, además, viola todos los compromisos de Rusia en el campo internacional y sus tratados. Pedimos por eso al presidente Putin que no condene a Rusia más a este retraso que el aislamiento le impone.

Claire Fox (NI). – Madam President, it's right to condemn Russia's law dubbing independent bloggers and journalists as foreign agents. It's a scary and dangerous threat to media freedom and whips up xenophobia in Russia. However, I've listened to so many debates in this Chamber that also cheaply blames foreign interference for everything, and there's a danger of the pot calling the kettle black. If the EU wants the moral authority to criticise Russia, then it better clean up your own house first. How many times in this Chamber have MEPs, Commissioners and motions labelled people who don't conform to the EU's agenda as foreign agents of Putin or insinuate that it was Russian bots that controlled the voting habits of the public, for example in the UK's referendum. And what's your answer? Always censorship and bans. And all those fashionable accusations of foreign collusion can amount to whipping up anti-foreign xenophobia in our own nation states. It also strips our own voters of their agency, as though they can't make their own mind up unless it was the Russians what did it. It prevents self-reflection on the reasons for popular discontent, instead lazily blaming foreign subversion.

We should be relentless in criticising Putin's iron grip over the Russian people and these attacks on democracy and freedom. But sadly, the EU itself shows too little regard for press freedom and popular democracy, instead scapegoating your own failures on foreigners. Beware, look to your own house.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Madam President, recent amendments to Russia's law on foreign agents is an extremely concerning blow to civil society and freedom of the press in Russia. The Russian Parliament is continuing to create a hostile environment for journalists with excessive use of fines against the media and civil society. NGOs and journalists face troubling levels of repression as a result of efforts to encourage their self-censorship, deny their right to freedom of expression and stigmatise journalists and activists.

The role of NGOs and media is vital to any democratic society, and this role is being diminished by the authorities in the context of an already shrinking space for civic engagement in Russia. This legislation is a fearmongering tool, seeking to silence human rights defenders and journalists. I would like to call on the Russian authorities to bring their legislation in line with European and international human rights standards immediately.

Pierfrancesco Majorino (S&D). – Signora Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, la libertà di stampa e la presenza di un'informazione libera sono elementi essenziali per la democrazia e lo Stato di diritto, ma Vladimir Putin finge di non saperlo e sarà sufficiente attraverso la nuova legge ricevere finanziamenti dall'estero, diffondere materiale pubblicato dai media di organizzazioni non gradite per essere marchiatosi come agenti stranieri, finendo così in una lista di registrati sorvegliati, che prima riguardava le ONG e diverse delle testate straniere e oggi perfino i blog.

È evidente che siamo di fronte alla necessità ossessiva di controllare i mezzi di informazione e restringere qualsiasi spazio di dissenso. E questo è giusto condannarlo da qui, come stiamo facendo, ma su questo ci dovrebbero pensare e riflettere, anche qui, gli amici di Putin che siedono tra noi e ragionarci rispetto a quello che è un progetto di società che non possiamo tollerare perché confligge con i nostri valori e la nostra democrazia.

Phil Bennion (Renew). – Madam President, this revision to the law will allow the Russian Government to name independent journalists and bloggers who receive funding from any foreign source as foreign agents: a Soviet-era term for political opponents. Targeted individuals will have to label their work and register with the authorities or face fines or even imprisonment of up to two years. Such a law can be used as a tool to silence critics of the Government, further undermining a free and independent media and damaging freedom of expression.

I call on the Russian Government to reverse its decision, bring its legislation into line with its obligations to international human rights law, and end its continued efforts to restrict civil-society groups and independent journalism. It is regrettable that we see this approach from Russia even alongside its re-admittance to the Council of Europe.

Bronis Ropė (Verts/ALE). – Gerbiama Pirmininke, gerbiamas Komisare, kolegos, didžiausia grėsmė Kremlui yra būtent demokratija. Dabar atėjo eilė nevyriausybiniams organizacijoms ir dar atsilaikiusiai, negausiai, nepriklausomai žiniasklaidai, kuri dažnai yra vienintelis patikimos informacijos šaltinis.

Norima užčiaupti ir nuteikti visuomenę prieš tuos, kurie neleidžia užgesti vilčiai, kovoja už žmogaus teises, aplinkos apsaugą Rusijoje, stengiasi apginti pamatines demokratijos vertybes.

Išstatymas dėl „užsienio agentų“ rodo, kad Kremlius bijo. Putinas ir jo valdoma propagandos mašina neveikia taip, kaip norėtųsi. Todėl kyla grėsmė režimo egzistencijai. Dirbti dviem frontais – ir šalies viduje, ir išorėje – kišantis į kitų valstybių rinkimus, referendumus, tampa vis sudėtingiau. Todėl gindami paprastų Rusijos gyventojų teises, pirmiausia mes giname demokratiją ir galimybę jai išlikti.

Michaela Šojdrová (PPE). – Paní předsedající, já si ještě velmi dobře pamatuji, co znamenalo slovo zahraniční agent v bývalém socialistickém Československu a v celém středním a východním evropském bloku, který byl pod sovětskou diktaturou. Bylo to prostě označení pro disidenty, pro ty, kteří bojovali za lidská práva, za svobodu a demokracii v zemích, jako bylo Československo, Polsko, Maďarsko a další země. Dnes tedy ruské ministerstvo spravedlnosti tímto označením chce perzekuovat nežádoucí organizace i jednotlivce, například novináře.

Na seznam těchto organizací se dostala také česká organizace Člověk v tísni. Tato organizace je největší neziskovou organizací v České republice i ve střední Evropě, která pomáhá v oblasti lidských práv, rozvojové pomoci a ve vzdělávání ve více než třiceti zemích světa. V Rusku organizace Člověk v tísni podporovala nezávislé novináře, občanskou společnost a poskytovala pomoc i politickým disidentům. Je tedy naprosto nepřijatelné, aby respektovaná nezávislá organizace z členského státu Evropské unie byla považována za nežádoucího zahraničního agenta v Ruské federaci.

Proto se plně ztotožňuji s návrhem na zrušení tohoto zákona v Rusku.

Ramona Strugariu (Renew). – Doamnă președintă, Radio Europa Liberă, care a avut un rol decisiv în revoluțiile din estul Europei și care beneficiază de finanțare europeană pe anumite proiecte se află pe lista neagră a lui Putin, alături de alte structuri media care primesc finanțare din vest. Legea agenților străini a fost adoptată în 2012 și impunea tuturor ONG-urilor finanțate extern să fie trecute într-un registru. Această lege a fost profund criticată de Parlamentul European.

Luna trecută, Putin a promulgat o lege ce extinde aplicarea și către persoane fizice, mai exact jurnaliști sau lideri ai opoziției politice, adică ne sfidează. Libertatea presei nu este negociabilă. Așa cum am spus și în luna iulie, Rusia trebuie să abroge urgent legile care încalcă flagrant libertatea de expresie și care contravin standardelor internaționale. Nu poate exista o normalizare a relației cu Rusia atât timp cât drepturile omului nu există pentru Putin. Cadoul de Crăciun al Uniunii Europene pentru Putin ar trebui să fie legislație Magnițki.

„Catch the eye” eljárás.

Eugen Tomac (PPE). – Doamnă președintă, pentru cine avea îndoieli că Putin este un dictator, are răspunsul în această lege. Cui îi este dedicată această lege și de ce a fost adoptată acum? Răspunsul este simplu: celor care promovează, în Federația Rusă, același set de valori pe care Uniunea noastră este clădită. De cine se teme Putin în Federația Rusă atunci când discută despre democrație, despre libertatea de exprimare, despre drepturi fundamentale?

Ceea ce se întâmplă acum trebuie să ne îngrijoreze și reprezintă un semnal de alarmă pentru noi, pentru europeni, pentru că profesorii vizați, jurnaliștii vizați, liderii de opinie din Federația Rusă care nu gândesc ca Putin reprezintă o amenințare pentru Statul său. Domnule Înalt Reprezentant, vă cerem să acționați pentru a-i apăra pe milioanele de cetățeni ruși care nu gândesc ca Putin și se uită cu speranță spre Uniunea Europeană.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – Señora presidenta, alto representante Borrell, la Resolución que hoy vota el Parlamento Europeo sobre la Ley rusa de «agentes extranjeros» condensa dos prioridades.

La primera, la libertad de expresión y el acceso a la libre información: Daphne Caruana, el Premio Sáyarov. Pero la segunda, Rusia y su injerencia en el ciberespacio, en Rusia y también en Europa. Rusia, nuestra frontera, nuestro vecino gigante.

La Unión Europea se precia de ser un espacio de paz. También se presiona al Consejo de Europa hasta el ingreso de Rusia, a partir del cual ha habido acciones bélicas de Rusia contra Ucrania, de Rusia contra Georgia y entre Armenia y Azerbaiyán por las fronteras heredadas de la extinta Unión Soviética.

Tenemos razones para estar preocupados por las injerencias de Rusia en el ciberespacio y, por tanto, esta Resolución hace lo correcto, mandando un mensaje rotundo de exigencia de respeto a los blogueros, a los periodistas y a todos los que sirven a un libre proceso de formación de la opinión pública en un país el que todo está controlado por el régimen de Putin.

Clare Daly (GUE/NGL). – Madam President, in 2017, when the panic about Russian interference was at its height, the US Government forced Russia Today and Sputnik to register as foreign agents under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. The most predictable outcome of this is, obviously, that Russia would reciprocate. This is one of the most basic principles of international relations. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction, and here we have Russia doing exactly that. And sadly, it is likely to be enforced arbitrarily. It's a tragedy for independent journalists and citizen reporters in Russia. We only need to look at what the US have done with its 'foreign agent' law to see where this could lead to: Russian Maria Butina, prosecuted as a scapegoat, imprisoned as a Russian spy just for being Russian. This isn't about Russian values being different than ours; in actual fact the Russians are copying what they've seen others in the West doing. And the sooner we stop this Russian scaremongering, seeing Russian agents everywhere, the better our societies will be. We need to engage in dialogue to move forward.

Jiří Pospíšil (PPE). – Paní předsedající, tento zákon jasně ukazuje, že ruský režim je čím dále více autoritativní. My v České republice o tom víme své, protože bohužel nemalá část české politické reprezentace v čele s prezidentem Zemanem podporují režim Putina.

Je třeba říci, že my musíme proti tomuto jednoznačně protestovat, a já jsem velmi rád, že toto usnesení drží linii předchozího Evropského parlamentu, kdy si uvědomujeme, jak je ruský režim nedemokratický a odsuzujeme jeho porušování lidských práv v samotném Rusku, jeho zahraniční anexe a také jeho snahu vměšovat se do vnitrostátních politických situací v jiných zemích a ovlivňovat například průběh volebních kampaní. Rusko musí být naším partnerem, ale naším partnerem není Putinův režim. Takto musí, pane vysoký představiteli, znít jasný hlas Evropské komise. Moc vás prosím, držte linii, kterou držela předchozí Evropská komise, nepodléhejme ruské propagandě putinovského režimu a buďme v tomto konzistentní.

Maria Grapini (S&D). – Doamnă președintă, s-a spus aici deja: fosta URSS a fost opresivă și crudă. Cei care am trăit în statele din est și am simțit bocancii URSS pe viețile noastre înțelegem poate mai mult decât alți colegi. De aceea, condamn noua lege pe care a dat-o recent domnul Putin și sunt de acord și voi vota această rezoluție.

Îngrădirea libertății presei nu ne ajută nici pe noi, nu vom ști niciodată adevărul pentru că și acolo sunt oameni, și acolo sunt cetățeni care poate doresc libertate, poate care doresc să circule liber și suportă consecințele acestei legi. De aceea, sigur voi vota legea și trebuie să avem grijă. Este vecinul nostru, al Uniunii Europene, dar trebuie să punem condițiile de respectare a regulilor democratice. Doar așa putem fi buni parteneri.

Silvia Modig (GUE/NGL). – Arvoisa puhemies, suomalaisena olen asunut Venäjän naapurissa koko elämäni. Tuon naapuruuden ansiosta sekä ystävyys että yhteistyö kansalaisyhteiskuntiemme välillä on aina ylittänyt rajan. Nyt monet ystävämmme ovat tämän lain ansiosta erittäin tukalassa tilanteessa. Monet järjestöt eivät enää pysty toimimaan. Erityisen vaikeaa se on ihmisoikeusjärjestöille ja järjestöille, jotka puolustavat vähemmistöjen oikeuksia, koska näiden on kaikkein vaikeinta saada rahoitusta Venäjän sisältä.

Nyt kun lakia on laajennettu, on tilanne vain pahentunut. Kansalaisyhteiskunnan tila kapenee entisestään. Ja kun vapaata yhteiskunnallista keskustelua ei sallita, vaiennetaan myös oppositio ja silloin lähestytään diktatuuria. Tutkiva journalismi ja kriittinen media on vaimennettu jo. Uskomaton määrä journalisteja on Venäjällä murhattu, Anna Politkovskaja heidän surullisena symbolinaan. Kannatan tätä päätöslauselmaa ja toivon, että jatkamme työtä tämän lain kumoamiseksi ja venäläisen kansalaisyhteiskunnan tukemiseksi.

„A catch the eye” eljárs vége.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. – Madam President, the European Union has a long-standing and clear position on Russia's 'foreign agent' law, and the newest amendment to this law, signed by President Putin on 2 December, widens the scope of the 'foreign agent media' law to include individuals. Many of you have expressed your strong concern about that – and, I think, rightly, because this has the potential to affect independent journalists and bloggers and is another step towards restricting media freedom and freedom of expression in Russia.

Since 2012, when the 'foreign agent' law was first introduced in Russia, enabling non-government organisations to be branded as foreign agents, about 150 NGOs had this label imposed on them. They have been subject to fines, inspections and stigmatisation. The impact has been to restrict fundamental freedom in Russia, consume the scarce resources of NGOs, and inhibit independent civil society in the country.

In 2017, foreign agent legislation expanded, so that any media organisation receiving foreign funding, either directly or indirectly, could be labelled as a foreign agent. It has again reduced the space for free and independent media, as well as independent voices.

'Foreign agent' legislation goes against Russia's human rights obligations and commitments. The EU has repeatedly condemned this legislation, most recently in a statement by the External Action Service – the spokesperson on 23 November: the extension of the law to include private individuals is yet another move to curb freedom of expression.

We will continue to call on the Russian authorities to respect their international obligations on freedom of association and freedom of speech. It is essential that Russian citizens are able to exercise freedom of association, including the right to join and participate in non-governmental organisations which promote the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The European Union will continue to support Russian human rights activists and civil society as we do worldwide, because this is a fundamental principle of the European Union. Our support is important, be it public statements, attending trials, supporting meetings with them. We will keep monitoring developments in Russia, calling the authorities to account when they do not respect fundamental rights enshrined in their Constitution. We will insist on the need to respect the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and, in general, the Council of Europe conventions.

That's democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

(Applause)

Elnök asszony. – A vitát lezárom.

A szavazásra a viták végén kerül sor.

(Az ülést 11.57-kor felfüggesztik.)

(⁽¹⁾) Lásd a jegyzőkönyvet.

PRESIDENZA DELL'ON. DAVID MARIA SASSOLI

Presidente

3. Hervatting van de vergadering

(La seduta è ripresa alle 12.24)

4. Mededeling van de Voorzitter

Presidente. – Onorevoli colleghe e colleghi, oggi la Corte di giustizia dell'Unione europea ha emesso una sentenza nella causa C-502/19, *Junqueras Vies*.

È una sentenza molto importante che interessa direttamente la composizione di questa istituzione.

Non siamo stati a perdere tempo o a farvi aspettare per il gusto di farvi aspettare.

La Corte si è pronunciata nel senso che l'assunzione del mandato parlamentare risulta dal voto degli elettori.

La Corte ha dichiarato che una persona la cui elezione al Parlamento europeo è stata ufficialmente proclamata dall'autorità competente dello Stato membro in cui suddetta elezione ha avuto luogo acquisisce a partire da tale momento la qualità di membro del Parlamento e gode della protezione dell'immunità parlamentare ai sensi dell'articolo 9 del protocollo sui privilegi e sulle immunità dell'Unione europea a partire dal momento della proclamazione ufficiale dei risultati. Di conseguenza, la qualità di membro del Parlamento deve reputarsi acquisita per il solo fatto e dal momento di suddetta proclamazione.

La Corte ha altresì statuito che l'immunità comporta che la misura di custodia cautelare a cui il deputato eletto è stato sottoposto dev'essere revocata, al fine di consentire al deputato di recarsi al Parlamento europeo e di completare le formalità necessarie.

Ciò detto, nel caso in cui l'autorità nazionale competente consideri che detta misura debba essere mantenuta dopo che la persona in questione ha assunto la qualità di deputato del Parlamento europeo, essa deve richiedere il prima possibile al Parlamento europeo la revoca di tale immunità, conformemente all'articolo 9 del suddetto protocollo.

Faccio appello alle autorità spagnole competenti per esortarle a conformarsi al tenore della sentenza e ho dato mandato ai servizi del Parlamento di valutare nei tempi più brevi possibili l'applicazione degli effetti della sentenza sulla composizione del nostro Parlamento.

Vi informo che non accetterò richiami al regolamento su questo tema.

Puhetta johti HEIDI HAUTALA

varapuhemies

5. Welkomstwoord

President. – Colleagues, after this very clear statement by the President, there is no need for further points of order or the like on the matter.

I would like to welcome the Delegation of the Ukrainian Parliamentarians who participated in the Tenth meeting of the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee yesterday and today.

(Applause)

This was an important meeting, being the first one held since the start of the new legislative period, both for our European Parliament and for the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, and therefore a good moment to look with ambition and vision at what we strive to achieve together. So, dear Ukrainian friends, the multi-faceted and very intense cooperation between our parliaments is the symbol of our commitment towards the European path chosen by Ukraine and the concretisation of our support for your country. Let me thank you for coming this week to Parliament and wish you all the very best for your work as parliamentarians at the forefront of the strengthening and deepening of your democracy.

(Applause)

6. Stemmingen

President. – The next item is the vote.

(For the results and other details of the vote: See Minutes)

6.1. Schendingen van mensenrechten, waaronder godsdienstvrijheid, in Burkina Faso (RC-B9-0261/2019, B9-0261/2019, B9-0264/2019, B9-0265/2019, B9-0266/2019, B9-0268/2019, B9-0269/2019, B9-0270/2019) (stemming)

6.2. Afghanistan, met name het vermeende seksuele misbruik van jongens in de provincie Logar (RC-B9-0242/2019, B9-0242/2019, B9-0243/2019, B9-0244/2019, B9-0245/2019, B9-0256/2019, B9-0257/2019) (stemming)

6.3. De Russische wet inzake “buitenlandse agenten” (RC-B9-0258/2019, B9-0258/2019, B9-0259/2019, B9-0260/2019, B9-0262/2019, B9-0263/2019, B9-0267/2019) (stemming)

6.4. Herdenking van de Roemeense revolutie die dertig jaar geleden plaatsvond, in december 1989 (B9-0241/2019) (stemming)

6.5. Situatie van de Oeigoeren in China ("China Cables") (RC-B9-0246/2019, B9-0246/2019, B9-0247/2019, B9-0248/2019, B9-0249/2019, B9-0250/2019) (stemming)

6.6. De situatie van de mensenrechten en de democratie in Nicaragua (RC-B9-0251/2019, B9-0251/2019, B9-0252/2019, B9-0253/2019, B9-0254/2019, B9-0255/2019) (stemming)

6.7. Gewelddadige onderdrukking van de recente protesten in Iran (RC-B9-0271/2019, B9-0271/2019, B9-0272/2019, B9-0273/2019, B9-0274/2019, B9-0275/2019, B9-0276/2019) (stemming)

President. – That concludes the vote.

7. Stemverklaringen

7.1. Herdenking van de Roemeense revolutie die dertig jaar geleden plaatsvond, in december 1989 (B9-0241/2019)

Oral explanations of vote

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Madam President. I had the privilege of watching a lot of the Romanian revolution in Bucharest. I was 18 years old. It was my gap year. I saw most of it through the windows of a pub called Hanul lui Manuc, because it was the only place in that city where you could get beer. It was a pub that brewed its own beer. The only things you could buy in Bucharest at that time were Italian vermouth and plum jam. It is an extraordinary thing to see the strides made by Romania since then.

But it's worth remembering that the revolution, not only in Romania but in the other Soviet satellites, was primarily about the end of foreign occupation and the restoration of national sovereignty. Yes, of course, it was about democracy, the rule of law and personal freedom, but the peoples of those countries understood that those things are meaningless unless you have mechanisms to hold your rulers to account, and that is why, as Charles de Gaulle observed many years ago, national sovereignty and democracy are the same thing.

Ангел Джамбазки (ECR). – Г-жо Председател, и аз като колегата Ханан гледах тази революция по телевизора. Тя се случваше само на няколко километра от моя дом в София и за пръв път виждахме събитията, които се случват по улиците на Букурещ, на Тимишоара и на други румънски градове. Тогава Румъния беше затворена, както и България, и беше под комунистическа диктатура, която се опита да унищожи паметта на нашите народи, диктатура, която се опита да унищожи нашето национално самосъзнание, да измисли някакъв друг човек – гражданин на Съветския блок, съветски гражданин.

За щастие това не се случи, за щастие тази диктатура рухна. Рухването на диктатурата в Румъния, събитията, които наблюдавахме по телевизията, сраженията по улиците на Букурещ, вдъхновиха и много българи за промяната, която успя да сваля и комунистическата диктатура в България и даде възможност на нашите народи да вземат отново съдбата си в ръце.

Поздравления за всички, които участваха в тези събития и горещи поздравления за братския румънски народ!

Jan Zahradil (ECR). – Paní předsedající, je velmi dobře, že jsme si připomněli 30. výročí pádu komunistického režimu v Rumunsku. Byl to poslední sovětský satelit, poslední součást bývalého komunistického impéria, kde komunistická moc padla. Jak se správně konstatuje v tomto usnesení, byla to bohužel také nejnásilnější a nejkrvavější epizoda celého pádu komunistického režimu ve střední a východní Evropě. V mé původní vlasti, v bývalém Československu, jsme měli to štěstí, že u nás proběhla sametová revoluce, že nebyl ztracen ani jeden jediný život a že to předání moci a pád komunistického režimu proběhly v poměrném klidu. My jsme samozřejmě šokovaně sledovali na televizních obrazovkách to, co se odehrávalo v Rumunsku, včetně popravy bývalého diktátora Ceaușesca. V té době už v Československu vládla prozatímní vláda, která měla za úkol dovést zemi k prvním svobodným volbám, a komunistický režim už byl minulostí, ale domníváme se, že jako součást celého toho procesu je nezbytné ty věci si stále připomínat, a proto je velmi dobře, že jsme dnes toto usnesení přijali.

Vlad-Marius Botoș (Renew). – Doamnă președintă, stimați colegi, vă mulțumesc foarte mult pentru votarea acestei rezoluții. Vă mulțumesc foarte mult tuturor celor care ați susținut această rezoluție.

Este un moment important pentru poporul meu. Este un moment important pentru istoria noastră și mă bucur foarte mult că am ajuns să dăm importanța necesară aici, din acest templu al democrației europene, evenimentelor majore din 1989 care au schimbat mersul continentului nostru.

Vă mulțumesc mult și trebuie să arătăm aprecierea potrivită pentru toți oamenii care și-au dat viața în Revoluția română din 1989, pentru a fi consecvenți cu mesajul de susținere a luptei pentru drepturile omului pe care Parlamentul European îl transmite. Vă mulțumesc încă o dată.

7.2. Situație van de Oeigoeren in China (“China Cables”) (RC-B9-0246/2019, B9-0246/2019, B9-0247/2019, B9-0248/2019, B9-0249/2019, B9-0250/2019)

Oral explanations of vote

Dominique Bilde (ID). – (*début de l'intervention hors micro*) ...des Ouïgours appelle la même mesure que celle des Rohingyas en Birmanie. En effet, le soutien naturel aux droits de l'homme ne saurait occulter l'infiltration avérée de l'islam radical au sein de cette minorité musulmane de Chine, ni la question de l'intégrité territoriale de cette dernière face à un islamo-nationalisme militant. Cela n'enlève rien à l'intransigeance qui doit être la nôtre face aux violations des libertés fondamentales, notamment de la liberté de conscience. Mais force est de constater que les lacunes de la Chine en la matière ne datent pas d'hier. Que dire, par exemple, des restrictions croissantes à l'exercice du culte chrétien, depuis 2017, dans l'indifférence de la communauté internationale? Selon certaines sources, les églises chrétiennes non officielles seraient confrontées à des fermetures administratives, tandis que les autres subissent une avalanche de vexations, comme la censure des homélies. Ne feignons donc pas de découvrir l'autoritarisme qui a toujours été la marque de fabrique du régime chinois, et face auquel une attitude de fermeté doit, de notre côté, enfin prévaloir.

7.3. De situatie van de mensenrechten en de democratie in Nicaragua (RC-B9-0251/2019, B9-0251/2019, B9-0252/2019, B9-0253/2019, B9-0254/2019, B9-0255/2019)

Oral explanations of vote

Jan Zahradil (ECR). – Paní předsedající, já si opět myslím, že je velmi dobře, že jsme se tady tím tématem zabývali a že jsme k němu přijali rezoluci. Tady totiž, v Evropském parlamentu, jsme někdy, pokud jde o Střední Ameriku a Latinskou Ameriku, svědky určitého dvojího standardu. Naši kolegové z levé poloviny politického spektra velice rádi kritizují ty režimy, které jsou jim ideologicky nepohodlné nebo nepříjemné, velice rádi kritizují například brazilského prezidenta, chilského prezidenta, rádi kritizují situaci v Kolumbii, ale pokud jde o jiné státy, pokud jde o Venezuelu nebo Kubu nebo konec konců Bolívii, kde prezident musel přímo utéci ze země, anebo i Nikaraguu, tak jsou daleko zdrženlivější. Ale i na porušování lidských práv v těchto zemích je zapotřebí upozorňovat a nemít dvojí metr.

Patrick Breyer (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, the Pirate Delegation is in favour of holding the powerful accountable for grave violations of human rights, including by way of effective sanctions.

However, this should be done in line with international law, and this includes the principle of Head-of-State immunity, and furthermore, sanctions should primarily be imposed by the United Nations.

Now, this Parliament resolution on Nicaragua doesn't really take these measures into account, and especially its calls for sanctions, inter alia, on the president of Nicaragua, the acting Head of State, and therefore, we decided to abstain on that specific split vote.

7.4. Gewelddadige onderdrukking van de recente protesten in Iran (RC-B9-0271/2019, B9-0271/2019, B9-0272/2019, B9-0273/2019, B9-0274/2019, B9-0275/2019, B9-0276/2019)

Oral explanations of vote

Matthew Patten (NI). – Madam President, I voted for the resolution condemning the violent crackdown in Iran. I think I join with my MEP colleagues in absolutely deploring the deaths that have been created there and also the imprisonment of political prisoners like Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who should be freed immediately. But I would say this: gestures like this resolution will only go so far. There's nothing better that my MEP colleagues really like than virtue-signalling about the US and particularly President Trump. But America is the only nation that has the power, the resource and the relationships to help us achieve what we want to achieve through this resolution. So going forwards, I would respectfully ask my colleagues to respect what has been Europe's greatest protector and ally for many, many years, and if we want to make a difference in Tehran, we need to start in Washington.

8. Rectificaties stemgedrag/Voorgenomen stemgedrag: zie notulen

(The sitting was suspended at 12.50)

VORSITZ: RAINER WIELAND

Vizepräsident

9. Hervatting van de vergadering

(Die Sitzung wird um 15.00 Uhr wieder aufgenommen.)

10. Goedkeuring van de notulen van de vorige vergadering: zie notulen

11. Ingekomen stukken: zie notulen

12. Besluiten tot het opstellen van initiatiefverslagen: zie notulen

13. Wijzigingen aanwijzing commissies (artikel 56 van het Reglement): zie notulen

14. Medeverantwoordelijke commissies (artikel 57 van het Reglement): zie notulen

15. Aankondiging van de USTR (handelsgezant van de Verenigde Staten) over een sectie 301-onderzoek naar de digitaaldienstenbelasting (debat)

Der Präsident. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Aussprache über die Erklärung der Kommission zur Ankündigung des US-Handelsbeauftragten: Untersuchung nach Section 301 zur Digitalsteuer (2019/2979(RSP)).

Ich möchte Sie auch vor dieser Aussprache daran erinnern, dass Sie sowohl in üblicher Weise wie auch mithilfe des elektronischen Systems um die Möglichkeit zur spontanen Wortmeldung sowie zur Verwendung der blauen Karte ersuchen können. Gebrauchsanleitungen liegen am Eingang zum Plenarsaal aus.

Phil Hogan, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, in 2018 the Commission made two proposals to ensure that digital companies pay their fair share of taxes. These are a short-term target, a solution on digital services taxation and a long-term comprehensive solution that adjusts the definition of permanent establishment in order to include digital presence as a basis of taxing rights for corporation tax.

The European Parliament supported the digital services tax proposals in its report, exactly a year ago, on 13 December 2018 and this proposal for an EU digital service tax was presented pending a comprehensive solution. It aims to address the increasing pressures that are faced by Member States to act, given the risk that their corporate tax base is being eroded significantly over time and the perceived unfairness of the situation.

The proposal can also accelerate discussions at the OECD level to find a global solution on taxation issues, including a global digital service tax. Unfortunately, the Council did not find agreement on the Commission proposals at the beginning of 2019 and France and some other Member States then proceeded to adopt or prepare national digital service taxes. The United States started a so-called Section 301 investigation into the French digital service tax in July 2019. This is the first US investigation into a digital service tax, despite France being neither the first nor the only country that has adopted it.

Following this, President Macron and President Trump agreed on the margins of a G7 meeting in Biarritz that France would continue levying the tax and would reimburse companies if subsequently there was a difference between the French tax and the OECD global solution. Despite this agreement, the United States continued with its investigation with a negative determination on 2 December 2019, claiming that France's digital service tax is unreasonable, discriminatory and burdens or restricts US commerce.

This determination opens the route for unilateral measures under US law. The same rules have previously been used only in response to unfair trading practices in China's non-market economy in order to justify US tariffs against China. The only acceptable route to address trade disputes is through the World Trade Organisation adjudication process and the United States committed itself internationally and domestically to using that route in the past.

The Commission therefore calls upon the US not to break its obligations under international law or under the multilateral trading system. President von der Leyen made clear that the European Union will act and react as one against any unilateral measures outside the multilateral trading system. The European Union will collectively defend a Member State if a trading partner takes unilateral trade measures against it. A fast conclusion of the update of the enforcement regulation by the Council and Parliament would send a strong signal that the European Union is ready to protect itself and the multilateral trading system.

So let me conclude by saying that it would be a matter of significant concern to the Commission if the United States should decide to introduce tariffs against the European Union, based on a unilateral determination of Section 301B of the Trade Agreements Act of 1974. It would be the first time that the United States has used this instrument against the European Union since the World Trade Organisation was founded in 1995 and the United States statute envisages further discussions as an option instead of trade restrictive measures. So we in the Commission will keep on pushing for these discussions.

Marie-Pierre Vedrenne, *au nom du groupe Renew*. – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire, nous sommes réunis pour le dernier débat en séance plénière de l'année 2019. Ce débat reflète la situation à laquelle nous sommes confrontés depuis plusieurs années en matière de commerce international.

Le commerce international, nous le savons tous, traverse une période de fortes turbulences. Le monde a changé, avec la place de la Chine, celle du numérique, mais les règles du commerce international ont-elles su s'adapter? Je ne le pense pas. Toutefois, je défendrai toujours, tout comme vous, un commerce international équilibré et basé sur des règles.

Aujourd'hui, nous, Européens, sommes sous pression et Donald Trump nous vise encore une fois. Souvenons-nous, ce dernier a d'abord choisi de taxer l'acier et l'aluminium européens, depuis maintenant bientôt deux ans, et cela de manière illégale. L'Union européenne a riposté, mais avec quelle efficacité? Depuis la mi-octobre, nos producteurs et agriculteurs européens sont sous le joug de droits de douane supplémentaires, à hauteur de 25 %, imposés par les États-Unis dans le cadre de l'affaire Airbus/Boeing. Là encore, Donald Trump a décidé de frapper fort, avec 6,8 milliards d'euros de sanctions. Vous l'avez rappelé, le 2 décembre dernier, et c'est l'objet de notre échange, l'administration Trump a annoncé son intention de surtaxer jusqu'à 100 %, pour l'équivalent de 2,4 milliards de dollars, des produits français, en réponse à l'instauration d'une taxe sur les services numériques. Cette annonce est extrêmement préoccupante.

À l'initiative du groupe Renew et de la délégation Renaissance, ce débat a pu être ajouté à l'ordre du jour de cette session, avant l'échéance de janvier fixée par les Américains. Il est important de prendre la mesure des enjeux et je sais, Monsieur le Commissaire, que vous partagez ce souci.

Que nous reproche Donald Trump? Il estime que la taxe sur les services numériques serait discriminatoire. Je m'inscris en faux: cette taxe représente une juste contribution à payer pour les entreprises du numérique. L'Union européenne cherche à favoriser l'émergence d'une solution internationale dans le cadre de l'OCDE. Les discussions doivent se poursuivre afin d'aboutir à une juste taxation des entreprises du numérique, garantie d'une concurrence loyale. Dans cette offensive contre la taxe sur les services numériques, Donald Trump a ciblé des fleurons de l'économie française: champagne, roquefort, beurre, cosmétiques, sacs à main. Il frappe là où le bât blesse, car les États-Unis – ce n'est qu'un exemple parmi d'autres – demeurent le premier marché en valeur pour le champagne français.

Plus inquiétant encore: si quelques grands groupes français et européens seront concernés, ce sont surtout toutes nos PME, TPE et agriculteurs qui seront les plus durement touchés. Ces nouvelles taxes pourraient leur être fatales. Les agriculteurs et producteurs paient à nouveau le prix fort de tensions commerciales et politiques. En cas de sanctions, des mesures de soutien devront être prises.

Je souhaite insister aujourd'hui sur plusieurs points.

Tout d'abord, la nécessité du dialogue: entre deux partenaires d'importance majeure, le dialogue doit primer et nous devons mettre fin à ce bras de fer. L'Union européenne s'est toujours montrée ouverte à la discussion et nous espérons que les États-Unis nous entendront. Cette escalade dans les tensions commerciales ne fera, au final, que des perdants. Une solution gagnant-gagnant doit être trouvée, car ce seront bien les producteurs, mais aussi les consommateurs, des deux côtés de l'Atlantique, qui subiront les effets néfastes de l'absence de solution.

Autre point, la nécessité d'unité: préserver la solidarité entre États membres fait partie de nos valeurs. C'est dans l'unité que l'Union européenne a été créée; c'est notre ADN. Et je vous remercie, Monsieur le Commissaire Hogan, d'avoir affirmé, encore une fois aujourd'hui, que l'unité est notre force.

Enfin, ce débat rappelle l'urgence à laquelle nous sommes confrontés, la nécessité de muscler notre politique commerciale. C'est notre économie qui pâtit de notre manque de réactivité. L'Union européenne est la première puissance commerciale mondiale au monde; il est temps de l'affirmer davantage et d'être plus offensifs.

Pour conclure et pour revenir sur cette nouvelle annonce des États-Unis, le message que je porte aujourd'hui est clair: l'escalade qui se poursuit n'est pas une solution viable ni raisonnable; il faut y mettre un terme.

Ангел Джамбазки, от илето на групата ECR. – Уважаеми комисар Хоган, уважаема колега Мари-Пиер Вепрен, уважаеми други двама колеги, за мен е чест да бъда част от толкова епичен и напрегнат дебат, толкова ожесточен дебат в тази зала. Показваме отношението на европейските представители към такива теми. Цели четирима представители сме в залата, от 751. Вярно е, че предстоят празници, но все пак това е доста показателно. Затова Ви поздравявам, г-н Председател, че сте много стриктен с времето и спазвате правилата. Дето се казва, може да стане разгорещен дебат между нас четиримата, можем да поспорим. Точно хора сме да направим една игра белот на карти, не знам дали Ви е известна, но се играе от четирима човека. Имаме достатъчно време да направим една такава тема.

Показателно е, че хората в галерията, които ни гледат, са десетина пъти повече от нас, а тези хора са най-засегнати от дебатирания въпрос, защото данъкът върху цифровите услуги ще засегне всяко едно приложение, което те ползват, всеки един телефон, който използват, и всяка една услуга, която използват. Но виждате какво е отношението на колегите. Това е много показателно, даваме урок по политика, в момента ги учим на политика.

Но да минем към същината на въпроса. На 10 юли 2019 година Офисът на търговския представител на САЩ започва разследване относно данъка върху цифровите услуги, предложен от правителството на Франция. Този френски закон би наложил 3% данък върху общите годишни приходи, генерирани от някои компании от предоставяне на определени цифрови услуги на френския пазар. Според проектозакона данъкът се прилага само за компании с общи приходи от покритие от услуги най-малко 750 милиона евро в световен мащаб и 25 милиона във Франция.

Обхватът а тези услуги съвсем естествено е в сферата, в която американските компании са световни лидери. Структурата на предложени нов данък, както и изявленията на някои длъжностни лица във Франция показват, че той е насочен непропорционално към тези американски компании. За мен е ясно, че балансът между справедливото данъчно облагане и запазването на добрите отношения с нашите най-близки съюзници е много деликатен.

Реципрочни действия от американска страна не са в наш интерес. Всички знаем и помним какво се случи, когато администрацията на САЩ започна търговска война с Китай. Проблемите там не са решени и тепърва ще се задълбочават. Не мисля, че Европейският съюз трябва да изпадна в подобна позиция, особено когато става въпрос за търговия с един от най-близките ни съюзници.

Моята група в Европейския парламент ще продължава да защитава правото на свободна търговия и свободен пазар. Това е начинът, по който можем да осигурим просперитет на нашите граждани. Ето защо трябва да се работи за разрешаване на този въпрос. Франция не представлява цяла Европа. Надявам се нейният пример да не бъде последван от други държави.

Искам да обърна вниманието на тази мощна група от четирима човека и върху нещо друго. В тази зала чуваме често призови за уеднаквяване а данъчната тежест в различните държави на Европейския съюз. Обикновено те идват от левицарите-комунисти в Европейския парламент. Държа да отбележа, че ние сме твърдо против подобни вредни предложения. Данъчната политика на една държава е нейно суверенно право.

Der Präsident. – Herr Dzhambazki, ich will Sie in einem korrigieren: Es sind nicht vier, sondern fünf. Sie haben mich vergessen, und mit mir müssen Sie immer rechnen.

Spontane Wortmeldungen

Maria Walsh (PPE). – Mr President, I'm going to carry suit from my ECR colleague and say it is disappointing that – at the time this is being held – we don't have more MEPs sitting in the Hemicycle.

Commissioner Hogan, directly to you: I applaud you and your teams' work to date, even though it's just been a few short weeks since you've taken up your role as Commissioner. As a representative of Ireland, in particular as a representative of Midlands-North West, I urge you to continue on your message of EU solidarity, particularly under the guidance of tax – and you're looking at digitalisation or product or what not – when in conversation with the United States of America at this turbulent time.

And with that I say any support, from an Irish front, we can give, we are here to do so.

(Ende der spontanen Wortmeldungen)

Phil Hogan, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, I want to thank the speakers for their engagement on this issue to assure the speakers as well that we will continue our efforts to engage with the United States in relation to all trade matters, including the issues before the House this evening on the digital tax and to assure you that in January I will be visiting the United States, and make every effort to work on a solution to this very important matter.

And can I take the opportunity, Mr President, to thank you and your team for your kindness and cooperation with the Commission in 2019 and to wish you and all of your team for 2019 and indeed 2020 the compliments of the season.

Der Präsident. – Meine Damen und Herren! Wir sind am Ende der Sitzungsfolge von 2019 angelangt.

Wir kennen alle das Geschäft, wie das donnerstagsnachmittags aussieht. Die Besucher kennen das Geschäft nicht.

Die letzte Sitzung – etliche sind schon losgefahren, mussten losfahren.

Ich wäre für das neue Jahr sehr verbunden, wenn ich einen Wunsch äußern darf, dass die Redner, die am Donnerstagsnachmittag sprechen, das nicht nur beklagen würden. Denn bedenken Sie: Ihre Reden werden aufgenommen, Ihre Reden können abgerufen werden, und wenn irgendwann zu diesem Thema mal eine Rede von Ihnen herangezogen wird, dann weiß man nicht, ob das an einem Donnerstag war oder an einem Dienstagnachmittag, und dann denken die Menschen draußen noch viel Schlimmeres. Dann denken sie nämlich, dass das jeden Tag so ist, und das ist nicht so, heute Mittag war das Plenum voll.

Ich darf Ihnen auch allen eine geruhsame Zeit zwischen den Jahren wünschen. Ein gesegnetes Christfest und einen guten Beginn im neuen Jahr.

Ich wünsche Ihnen allen – wie ich das jedes Jahr sage – viel Erfolg, viel Erfolg jedenfalls in dem Maße, in dem es meiner politischen Heimat nicht schadet. Ich freue mich über ein weiteres ordentliches Miteinander und hoffe, Sie nicht in alter, sondern in neuer Frische dann wiederzusehen.

Ich danke nicht nur den Abgeordneten, der Kommission, sondern auch all den Diensten da links und rechts und hinter mir und hinter den Glasscheiben – unsere Dolmetscher, die sozusagen unsere parlamentarische Luft zum Atmen sind. Denn ohne diese Dolmetscher würde man die meisten von uns nicht verstehen und mich noch weniger, weil ich einen schweren Akzent habe, für den ich mich zusätzlich bei den Dolmetschern entschuldige. Ich freue mich auch auf die Zusammenarbeit mit diesen im nächsten Jahr.

Außer der Reihe: Herr Dzhambazki, Sie haben gesagt, ich sei immer sehr streng. Das stimmt. Normalerweise würden Sie auf die blaue Karte das Wort jetzt nicht bekommen. Aber ich will es Ihnen gerne geben.

Ангел Джамбазки (ЕКР). – Току що ме опровергали, за което Ви благодаря. Поздравявам Ви, винаги сте бил строг в следването на времето и така трябва да бъде. По отношение на бележката Ви за това кога се правят заседанията, може би трябва да се помисли дали трябва да има в четвъртък заседания, за да не бъде така празна залата. Това е въпрос на организация, което трябва да направим като членове на парламента.

Сега позволете ми да се присъединя към Вашите поздравления и благодарности и към Вас, и към комисаря и екипа му, към Вашите сътрудници, към преводачите, и да им пожелаем весели Рождествени празници и догодина с нови сили пак тук.

Der Präsident. – Die Aussprache ist geschlossen.

16. Verzoekschriften: zie notulen

17. Goedkeuring van de notulen van deze vergadering en verzending van de aangenomen teksten: zie notulen

18. Rooster van de volgende vergaderingen: zie notulen

19. Sluiting van de vergadering

(Die Sitzung wird um 15.19 Uhr geschlossen.)

20. Onderbreking van de zitting

Der Präsident. – Ich erkläre die Sitzungsperiode des Europäischen Parlaments für unterbrochen.

Verklaring van de gebruikte tekens

*	Raadplegingsprocedure
***	Goedkeuringsprocedure
***I	Gewone wetgevingsprocedure (eerste lezing)
***II	Gewone wetgevingsprocedure (tweede lezing)
***III	Gewone wetgevingsprocedure (derde lezing)

(De aangeduide procedure is gebaseerd op de in de ontwerptekst voorgestelde rechtsgrond.)

Afkortingen van de commissies

AFET	Commissie buitenlandse zaken
DEVE	Commissie ontwikkelingssamenwerking
INTA	Commissie internationale handel
BUDG	Begrotingscommissie
CONT	Commissie begrotingscontrole
ECON	Commissie economische en monetaire zaken
EMPL	Commissie werkgelegenheid en sociale zaken
ENVI	Commissie milieubeheer, volksgezondheid en voedselveiligheid
ITRE	Commissie industrie, onderzoek en energie
IMCO	Commissie interne markt en consumentenbescherming
TRAN	Commissie vervoer en toerisme
REGI	Commissie regionale ontwikkeling
AGRI	Commissie landbouw en plattelandsontwikkeling
PECH	Commissie visserij
CULT	Commissie cultuur en onderwijs
JURI	Commissie juridische zaken
LIBE	Commissie burgerlijke vrijheden, justitie en binnenlandse zaken
AFCO	Commissie constitutionele zaken
FEMM	Commissie rechten van de vrouw en gendergelijkheid
PETI	Commissie verzoekschriften
DROI	Subcommissie mensenrechten
SEDE	Subcommissie veiligheid en defensie

Afkortingen van de diverse fracties

PPE	Fractie van de Europese Volkspartij (Christen-Democraten)	Parlement
S&D	Fractie van de Progressieve Alliantie van Socialisten en Democraten in het Europees	
Renew	Fractie Renew Europe	
Verts/ALE	Fractie De Groenen/Vrije Europese Alliantie	
ID	Fractie Identiteit en Democratie	
ECR	Fractie Europese Conservatieven en Hervormers	
GUE/NGL	Fractie Europees Unitair Links/Noords Groen Links	
NI	Niet-fractiegebonden leden	