

Tuesday, 14 February 2006 - Strasbourg

The Human Rights and Democracy Clause (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes (PSE). - (PT) I support all of the recommendations made by Mr Agnoletto in this report. I especially welcome the inclusion of a reciprocity clause in all agreements with third countries. It is regrettable that the implementation of the human rights clause has until now been contingent on geo-political and geo-economic considerations which have nothing to do with the Union as a whole, but which often depend on the narrow strategies of some Member States and some Commission services.

The most glaring example of the lack of substantive implementation of this clause is Ethiopia, despite the fact that Parliament has repeatedly asked the Commission and the Council to open consultations, under the terms of Article 96, following the massacres and serious violations of human rights that took place in the wake of the elections.

I am appalled by the Council's silence and inaction on this matter. Only the Commission and one Member State - the United Kingdom - have suspended direct aid to the budget of the Ethiopian Government, the minimum they could do in the circumstances. Given, however, that they did not clarify the terms and conditions, this had no impact whatsoever on the Ethiopian Government, and sent out a disastrous message not only to the Ethiopian people as a whole, but also to all Africans - the headquarters of the Organisation for African Unity is in the Ethiopian capital - as well as to the EU Member States and to all countries with which the EU maintains relations.