

Wednesday, 12 March 2008 - Strasbourg

The European Union's role in Iraq (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes, rapporteur . – (PT) I should like to thank everyone for their kind words. I must particularly thank my friend, Minister Lenarčič, who I worked with on the Security Council some years ago, dealing precisely with Iraq and the problems caused for Iraq by Saddam Hussein.

As I have said, this report aims to highlight the diversity of the situations existing in Iraq, contrary to the simplistic message of an Iraq of 'fire and sword' that television programmes show us every day. It must be viewed as a plan of action or a roadmap for the EU's involvement in Iraq. I believe that I am speaking on behalf of Parliament when I say that we want the Commission, the Council and the Member States to use our operational proposals as a basis when designing future programmes and projects to support the government and people of Iraq, naturally taking into account the security conditions.

I returned from Iraq impressed with the Iraqi enthusiasm for 'more Europe'. From President Talabani to the primary school teacher in one of the most isolated rural areas in the country, everyone had a thirst for political recognition and institutional support from the European Union. We were bombarded with proposals for projects in the most diverse areas: training of officials at the Interior Ministry, support for local NGOs active in the areas of mine clearance, adult literacy, and sexual and reproductive health education, technical and institutional support for the Iraqi Parliament, and these are only some of the examples.

I feel that we must measure the success of this report, not so much in terms of the number of votes in tomorrow's vote, but primarily by the difference that it will make to our actions on the ground in Iraq from now on. Our parliamentary delegation to Iraq will of course play its part in this process and I am sure that we can count on the Commission, on Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner, whom I congratulate, and on her courageous team in Baghdad, competently led by Ambassador Uusitalo, as fundamental allies in the implementation of this roadmap.