

Wednesday, 12 March 2008 - Strasbourg

European code of conduct on arms exports (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes, on behalf of the PSE Group . - (PT) The motion for a resolution on the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports expresses Parliament's frustration at the current deadlock on this important instrument, as our rapporteur, Mrs Gacek, has just said and whom I must congratulate.

Ten years after its establishment, the Code is still a source of pride to those who believe that the European Union must take the lead in the global debate on controlling arms transfers. We welcome the increasingly harmonised application of the Code, the detail in the annual reports presented by Member States and the outreach initiatives undertaken by the Council. However, all these advances pale into insignificance beside the most important issue: the need to transform the Code into a legally binding instrument.

We know that transforming the Code of Conduct into a common position of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) has been linked with lifting the embargo on arms exports to China. Parliament rejects the blackmail that is at the root of this three-year deadlock. No one can be unaware that the arms sold by Beijing to the Sudanese regime are feeding the conflict in Darfur and are also serving, for example, to oppress and repress the Burmese people at the hands of the illegitimate military regime. This situation frustrates Parliament because we have long known the practical and theoretical reasons which should be sufficient to rid the Council of its hesitations. A European foreign policy without common and binding rules on arms exports will always be incomplete and ineffective. In addition, one of the most significant obstacles to the full harmonisation of the internal market in defence equipment is precisely the large number of export rules in the EU.

Finally, there is a question of principle: the European Union can only present itself as a responsible and coherent international actor in this area and can only lead the work to improve international legislation if it is seen as a model to be followed. We are clearly counting on the Slovenian Presidency and Minister Lenarčič. However, we have already indicated to the next country to hold the presidency, France, a country that has particular responsibility for this continuing deadlock, that the time has come to resolve the issues and recognise the importance of placing the European Union at the forefront of effective and responsible multilateralism.