

Wednesday, 26 September 2007 - Strasbourg

## ESDP operation in eastern Chad and the north of the Central African Republic (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes, on behalf of the PSE Group . - (PT) Security Council Resolution 1778, which was adopted yesterday, determines that the situation in the region of the border between Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

This Parliament's motion for a resolution recognises the urgency of the situation and the European Union's responsibility to provide protection. An overwhelming majority of Members in this House agree with the humanitarian NGOs on the ground, with the refugees in the region who are living in miserable conditions and in a climate of permanent fear, and with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. All cite the urgent need for an international presence in that region, which must include a strong military component. There is no country or multilateral organisation that is better suited than the European Union to effectively fulfil the mandate given by Resolution 1778. The ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy) has come of age and exists for these very emergencies.

In this context, as regards sending an EU military force to the region, the Council and the Portuguese Presidency can count on the support in principle of Parliament. However, the European Parliament must express its concern about certain aspects of this mission. Firstly, we fear that the reluctance of Member States to provide the force with the minimum personnel and military equipment needed will greatly reduce its effectiveness. We would add that the smaller the contributions of the other Member States, the more noticeable the French component of the force will be. However, the perception of this mission's impartiality is fundamental to its success and France is not regarded as a neutral player in the region.

Secondly, Parliament asks that this force be accompanied by a diplomatic offensive in the region in order to move forward the national reconciliation processes within Chad and the Central African Republic. The roots of the instability, although linked to the drama in Darfur, are also domestic and can only be overcome through internal political processes. As stated by Parliament's motion for a resolution, without a genuine political reconciliation process in the region, the European Union operation, planned to last only 12 months, cannot sustainably contribute to peace in the region.

Finally, this Parliament welcomes the mandate of the force which will act under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. It is essential that this mandate is correctly interpreted on the ground and that the European troops are proactive in protecting civilians in danger, creating a humanitarian area for the international organisations and protecting the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT). Recent history is full of tragic examples, from Kigali to Srebrenica, of defenceless civilian populations paying the ultimate price for the timidity and overscrupulousness of international troops.

We hope that one day this operation will be used as a model example of the ESDP and effective multilateralism in action and as due evidence of the European Union's desire to strengthen the United Nations and contribute to conflict resolution in accordance with international law and the responsibility to protect enshrined therein.