

19 January 2011

EU-Libya Framework Agreement

I think this debate highlights the dilemmas we face. From my own visit to Libya, as part of the delegation led by our colleague Mr Panzeri in November 2010, I came to the conclusion that we have to pursue the line of engagement. We recognise that we have to deal with a difficult interlocutor, but it would be unconscionable not to pursue that line because there are humanitarian obligations towards the people who are suffering so much in Libya, in particular the migrants who are going through Libya and enduring the situation there.

I believe that many of the difficulties are due to the fact that this regime is isolated. Despite the difficulties, and despite having no illusions that we will achieve an agreement soon or that all the conditions that we put forward will be met, we need to pursue that line. In my opinion this is clear.

Indeed in that sense having the EU delegation established in Tripoli is extremely important because I think that - as many have said here - what is happening in Tunisia now is bound to have repercussions in Libya, despite the differences. In Libya we are not dealing with a similar situation in many respects because of the total dependency on the people of income from oil.

Nevertheless I think that the message is that, despite our different perceptions at this stage, we are committed to following closely the negotiations by the Commission. I am grateful for the briefings we have had and which have been useful. We will follow them very closely and will be able to make recommendations at any time.

I think that through the very wide consensus achieved with the collaboration of my shadow rapporteurs and everybody, we are conveying a very clear message to the Council and to the Commission, which has the task of negotiation, but also to our Libyan interlocutors, on what points we believe are absolutely essential to be met if we are to achieve the improvements that we want to see in the bilateral relations, and also on the crucial question of respect for human rights in Libya. That message is very clear.