

Wednesday, 3 December 2008 - Brussels

## Arms exports (Code of Conduct) (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes, on behalf of the PSE Group . - (PT) Mr President, the resolution that we are debating today demonstrates that there is consensus in this Parliament on what the arms export policy of the Member States of the European Union should be. The six largest political groups are united in the defence of a single list of legally binding criteria for European arms exports: the eight criteria of the Code of Conduct.

Everyone agrees to call on the French Presidency to resolve the impasse that has existed for three years and that only France can resolve. We heard Mr Jouyet say a little while ago that France is now in favour of a legally binding Code of Conduct. We heard yesterday in the Committee on Foreign Affairs, from the French Minister of Defence, that a recent proposal by his country to turn the Code of Conduct into a common position had been undermined by the lack of consensus in the Council. The Minister did not make reference to the fact that the French proposal was linked to the lifting of the arms embargo on China, and it was this that led to the rejection of the French proposal by several Member States. If this strategy is confirmed, it will represent a blemish on a security and defence agenda from the French Presidency that is otherwise distinguished by its Europeanist ambition and dynamism.

In the face of growing European integration in the area of foreign policy, the policy of 'every man for himself' with regard to arms exports is increasingly unjustifiable. It is true that the Code of Conduct is already taken seriously in many capitals, but we must put an end to a situation in which the European countries that systematically use human rights, sustainable development and regional stability criteria to guide their exports are put at a disadvantage by their partners who apply these same criteria selectively.

European presidencies come to an end, but the need remains for Europe to arm itself with common criteria for arms exports; the consensus within this Parliament in favour of a common position also remains.