

Tuesday, 16 November 2004 - Strasbourg

Arms sales

Gomes (PSE) , on behalf of the group. - (PT) Mr President, I should like to join in thanking the Presidency and, in particular, Mr Patten. We are very sorry because the EU could still benefit from 'his way'.

Whilst the proliferation of nuclear arms calls to mind apocalyptic scenarios, the fanning of the flames of conflict by the trade in conventional arms does incalculable harm to the development of many communities, and leads to death and to the violation of the human rights of millions of civilians throughout the world. According to the strategic safety approach adopted by the EU, the main threats that we must address are regional instability, failing states, organised crime and international terrorism, all of which are threats that might be exacerbated by unchecked arms exports to buyers outside the EU.

In recent years, we have seen efforts by EU Member States to improve controls on exports of conventional arms originating in, or passing through, Europe. There remains much to do, however.

As Socialists, we argue that the Code of Conduct on arms exports must become binding, and that national and European legislation must be adopted with a view to increasing transparency in the activity of arms brokering. The scope of the prohibition of exports of certain instruments, such as those used in torture, or anti-personnel mines, must be widened. The sale of arms to governments or groups in conflict zones must be subject to tighter control, in light of information obtained by the control mechanisms set up by the United Nations Security Council to enforce arms embargos. EU governments have a responsibility - one that they must not shirk - to press ahead with internal laws aimed at ensuring that companies and individuals breaking arms embargos declared by the EU or by the UN Security Council are seen to be punished.

As Socialists, we support measures to mitigate the effects of the arms trade, such as the creation of a tax to assist victims of armed conflict and to combat poverty, as recently proposed in the current UN General Assembly.

The EU can and must go further. With measures such as those identified in this Resolution - of which we voted in favour - and extending the binding enforcement of the Code of Conduct, not only to our partners in the enlarged Europe, but also to our new neighbours, so that there can be a common European arms market, in which the recently set up European Arms Agency plays a control and regulation role.

Thursday, 15 June 2006 - Strasbourg

As Socialists, we have tabled practical amendments on this Motion for a Resolution calling on the Council and Member States to maintain the arms embargo on the People's Republic of China and to ensure a coherent approach as regards arms embargos in general. The embargo was imposed following the Tiananmen Square massacre and has been maintained ever since, due to the serious human rights problems that persist in China. This is despite the fact that China has opened up to the outside world and has recorded extraordinary economic growth.

In 2003, Parliament delivered an opinion through a specific resolution on this issue and recommended maintaining the embargo. Parliament's reports, along with those of various human rights non-governmental organisations, have, year after year, highlighted grave concern over human rights violations in China and Tibet. One resolution on the suitability of the arms embargo as a means of bringing about significant change cannot lead to a lifting of the arms embargo, at least for as long as there is no binding Code of Conduct on the export of arms and instruments that may be used for internal repression and torture. The entire scheme must be consistent in this area, yet the recent decision to lift the arms embargo on Libya is inconsistent and leaves the EU open to accusations of double standards.