

Wednesday, 15 March 2006 - Strasbourg

62nd session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNHCR, Geneva) (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes (PSE). - (PT) The news from New York brings us relief and satisfaction. The compromise proposed by the President of the General Assembly, Mr Eliasson, will not be perfect, but it is a good one. This is for the reasons expressed by a number of speakers and, in an article, by various Nobel Peace prize winners, including ex-President Jimmy Carter.

We are disappointed that the United States has voted against, although we are not surprised, given that the US - a country that has traditionally done so much for human rights and for international law on human rights and the UN - is currently at the mercy of an administration that lacks any credibility or consistency on this matter. It is an administration that will go down in history as that of the ignominy of the Iraq invasion, of Guantánamo, of Abu Ghraib and of the extraordinary rendition act.

Eleanor Roosevelt and other honourable defenders of human rights must be turning in their graves. Where the Bush Administration went wrong was in attempting to hold the creation of the new Council to ransom in last minute negotiations. We must make sure that, if it attempts to boycott the proceedings of the new Council, it does not succeed. It is the EU's responsibility to continue to pursue a sound and clear-sighted working relationship with Mr Eliasson, via the Austrian Presidency and future presidencies, and via Mr Solana and Mr Barroso, whose voices we should like to hear louder and clearer on this issue. Europe needs to use all of its considerable influence to ensure that the Human Rights Council is up and running at the earliest opportunity.