

Wednesday, 16 November 2005 - Strasbourg

Informal meeting of the European Council

Ana Maria Gomes (PSE). - Mr President, the Hampton Court Summit was to discuss how Europe could do better in the world. People in Ethiopia voted in their masses in May under EU eyes, but the first results did not please the ruling party. Suddenly, the observers were obstructed, media openness was suppressed and demonstrations were banned. People were brutally repressed in June: over 40 were killed and 5 000 arrested.

Despite that, a few weeks later, Prime Minister Meles attended the Gleneagles Summit hosted by the British Presidency. In September, several governments and the President of the Commission sent him messages of congratulation. On 1 November, another bloodbath took place: 58 elected leaders, journalists and NGO members are in jail and, according to the Prime Minister, face the death penalty; dozens more were killed, hundreds wounded and thousands were arrested. Yet, a few days later Mr Meles was officially wined and dined in Germany.

President-in-Office, why does the Council send contradictory signals instilling a sense of impunity in rulers who violate human rights and democratic principles, rulers who may then choose to go to war with neighbours to divert attention? Did you consider this at Hampton Court? Can the President-in-Office say that Europe is doing enough and doing its best for human rights, democracy and development in Ethiopia, the second most populous country in Africa?