

Wednesday, 14 February 2007 - Strasbourg

Situation in Darfur (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes (PSE). - (PT) It is certainly significant and worrying that the German Presidency is not here today to represent the Council. This says a great deal about levels of genuine interest and commitment in the new relationship with Africa and in working for development in Africa. Three years ago, I was in Darfur with other MEPs who have spoken or who are about to speak. Since then, the situation has worsened, as Mr Almunia said.

The Al-Bashir Government is toying with the international community, with the Security Council, with the European Union and with the African Union, and the EU makes fine statements and does nothing. The time has come for the EU to take action and to exercise its responsibility to protect people. The time has come to impose a no-fly-zone from Chad. The EU can do this, alongside African countries with which it enjoys good relations, and can have an effect on the ground. The time has come, among other things, to impose smart, phased sanctions, travel bans, visa restrictions, and the freezing of assets in banks and elsewhere, and to stop treating Omar Al-Bashir and the members of his government as responsible, respectable leaders. The time has come to impose an effective arms embargo. The time has come to impose other kinds of trade embargo and in particular an oil embargo and on this issue, Mr President, the EU must speak frankly with China, because China as we know is very much responsible for the Al-Bashir Government's attitude. It is a pity that Europe waits for the United States, as Mr Almunia suggested, albeit in a roundabout way, because the EU should take action independently on this issue.

Let us take a look at what is happening not just in Darfur but throughout Sudan and the Horn of Africa. The EU cannot be dependent on the worldview and disastrous policies of the US in respect of the Horn of Africa, as we have seen in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. The time has come for the EU to take action and I align myself with those MEPs who are calling on the Council and the President of the Commission to ensure that the EU does not wait any longer, and exerts the influence it actually has in Khartoum and in Africa to change the situation and to protect the people dying in Darfur. Otherwise, three years hence I along with other MEPs will be joining Mr Almunia or some other Commissioner in bemoaning the fact that the situation has become worse and worse.