

Thursday 23 October 2008

- D. whereas the Venezuelan authorities have arbitrarily expelled from the country the Director for the Americas of the NGO Human Rights Watch, José Miguel Vivanco, and the organisation's Deputy Director for the Americas, Daniel Wilkinson, for having presented a critical report on the civil liberties and human rights situation during President Hugo Chávez's 10 years in office,
- E. whereas these are only the last in a long series of measures taken by the government with a view to intimidating opposition members, dissidents and international observers in the country,
- F. whereas on 1 October 2008, Julio Soto, the student leader of the COPEI party and President of the Students Union at Zulia State University, was riddled with bullets in his car in the city of Maracaibo — a crime that was committed under strange circumstances and that has yet to be cleared up,
1. Expresses concern about the list of electoral disqualifications issued by the Venezuelan Comptroller-General;
 2. Urges the Venezuelan Government to examine the above administratively imposed political disqualifications with reference to the provisions of Articles 42 and 65 of the Venezuelan Constitution, under which such measures may be taken on a definitive basis by judicial authorities alone, as is customary in all democratic states;
 3. Urges the Venezuelan Government also to comply with the international agreements signed and ratified by Venezuela, including the American Convention on Human Rights, with specific reference to the provisions on political rights set out in Articles 23(1)(b) and (2) thereof, and Articles 2 and 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
 4. Expresses firm opposition to the harassment and arbitrary expulsion of human rights activists; considers that expulsion sets an extremely serious precedent as regards respect for freedom of expression and the right to criticise, that are fundamental to any democratic society;
 5. Vigorously condemns the murder of the student leader, Julio Soto; conveys its condolences to the victim's family and friends and calls on the Venezuelan authorities to make every possible effort to clear up this crime as soon as possible, so that the perpetrators and those responsible are brought to justice and the crime does not go unpunished;
 6. Calls on the Chávez government to put an end to all such practices and to foster a more participative democracy in Venezuela, in full compliance with the principles laid down in the 1999 Constitution;
 7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, and to the Secretary-General of the Organisation of American States, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, the Mercosur Parliament and the government and parliament of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Democratic Republic of Congo: clashes in the eastern border areas

P6_TA(2008)0526

European Parliament resolution of 23 October 2008 on the Democratic Republic of Congo: clashes in the eastern border areas of the DRC

(2010/C 15 E/19)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 21 February 2008 on North Kivu ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2008 on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and rape as a war crime ⁽²⁾, and to its previous resolutions on human rights abuses in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC),

⁽¹⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2008)0072.

⁽²⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2008)0022.

Thursday 23 October 2008

- having regard to the resolution of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly of 22 November 2007 on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in particular in the east, and its impact on the region ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2007 on the EU response to situations of fragility in developing countries ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 25 October 2007 entitled 'Towards an EU response to situations of fragility — engaging in difficult environments for sustainable development, stability and peace' (COM(2007)0643) and the Commission staff working document annexed thereto (SEC(2007)1417),
 - having regard to Resolution 60/1 of the United Nations General Assembly of 24 October 2005 on the 2005 World Summit Outcome, and in particular paragraphs 138 to 140 on the responsibility to protect populations,
 - having regard to the Council declaration of 10 October 2008 on the situation in the eastern part of the DRC,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the fighting between the Congolese Army, the rebel troops of ousted General Laurent Nkunda, the fighters of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and troops of Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been causing the civilian populations of the eastern provinces of the DRC tremendous hardship for many months,
- B. whereas the conflict affecting the DRC has claimed the lives of 5 400 000 people since 1998 and is still causing, either directly or indirectly, approximately 1 500 deaths each day,
- C. whereas when heavy fighting has taken place around the border village of Rumangabo near Goma, and a strategically important military camp was overrun by Nkunda's rebels, allowing them to seize weapons and supplies,
- D. whereas, according to UNHCR reports, the renewed fighting in North Kivu has led to a high number of casualties and more than 100 000 persons being displaced, and whereas there are also reports of hundreds of dead bodies being thrown into the river and 50 000 persons being displaced after heavy fighting involving the LRA in the province of Ituri,
- E. whereas since the Goma peace agreement signed on 23 January 2008 there have been massacres, rapes of young girls, mothers and grandmothers, forced recruitments of civilians and child soldiers and a host of other acts of violence and serious human rights abuses in the eastern parts of the DRC, both by Laurent Nkunda's rebel troops and by FDLR combatants and the Congolese Army itself,
- F. whereas the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC) has a mandate under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter to use all necessary means to deter any attempted use of force by any foreign or Congolese armed group, particularly ex-FAR (ex-Rwandan armed forces) and Interahamwe fighters, that would threaten the political process, and to ensure the protection of civilians under imminent threat of physical violence,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 58, 1.3.2008, p. 40.

⁽²⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2007)0540.

Thursday 23 October 2008

- G. having regard to the undertakings concerning gradual demobilisation and the ceasefire commitment given at the Goma Conference for Peace, Security and Development, including a ceasefire among all warring parties, the disarmament of all non-governmental forces, the return and resettlement of all displaced peoples in the eastern parts of DRC and the establishment of a temporary mechanism for ceasefire monitoring,
- H. whereas the Congolese Army does not have the human, technical and financial resources necessary to carry out its tasks in the eastern provinces of the DRC, a state of affairs which is undermining its role in protecting the population and in re-establishing peace,
- I. whereas it is vital to find a political solution to the conflict in the eastern provinces of the DRC, so as to consolidate peace and democracy and promote stability and development in the region for the well-being of all the peoples of the Great Lakes region,
- J. whereas the civil war in the region, which has been underway for four years, has been marked by the systematic pillaging of the country's wealth by the allies and enemies of the Congolese Government,
- K. whereas several humanitarian organisations have been forced to suspend their activities following the hostilities at the end of 2007, whilst health centres remain without supplies or have been abandoned by their medical staff,
- L. whereas, in order to achieve a significant improvement in health and a reduction in the mortality rate in the DRC as a whole and in its eastern provinces in particular, years of sustained commitment and a substantial financial investment will be required both from the Congolese Government and the international community,
- M. whereas humanitarian aid workers have reported that the local and displaced populations in the eastern provinces of the DRC are growing progressively weaker and that the continuing warfare is preventing aid workers from gaining access to certain areas which are in need of urgent food and medical aid,
- N. whereas malnutrition is a further aspect of the extreme vulnerability of the populations now living in the eastern provinces of the DRC, and whereas the data from 'Médecins sans Frontières' (MSF) medical aid programmes offer an alarming indication of the scale of malnutrition in the eastern provinces of the DRC,
- O. whereas the EU firmly condemns the recent statements by Laurent Nkunda calling for the elected and legitimate government of the DRC to be overthrown,
1. Is extremely concerned about the renewed fighting between the Congolese Army and resurgent militias in North Kivu and the previously pacified region of Ituri;
 2. Expresses its deep outrage at the massacres, crimes against humanity and acts of sexual violence against women and girls which have continued for too many years in the eastern provinces of the DRC and calls on all relevant national and international authorities systematically to bring the perpetrators to justice, whoever they may be, and calls on the UN Security Council, as a matter of urgency, to take all measures capable of genuinely preventing any further attacks on the civilian population of the eastern provinces of the DRC;
 3. Calls on the Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP — National Congress for the People's Defence) to return immediately and unconditionally to the peace process to which it committed itself in Goma in January 2008;

Thursday 23 October 2008

4. Urges all actors to restore the rule of law and fight impunity, specifically in connection with the mass rapes of women and girls and the recruitment of child soldiers;
5. Calls on the Government of the DRC to develop a plan with Rwanda and MONUC to isolate and capture the leaders of the genocide among the FDLR and offer resettlement in the DRC or reintegration in Rwanda to those who were not involved in the genocide and are willing to demobilise;
6. Calls on the international community and the UN Security Council to strengthen MONUC by providing appropriate materials and staff to enable it to fulfil its mandate, as was requested by the head of MONUC, Alan Doss, in New York after briefing the UN Security Council;
7. Welcomes the fact that the President of the DRC and his ministers have publicly expressed their support for MONUC in respect of its contribution to national security;
8. Calls on MONUC to investigate accusations that the Congolese Army is colluding with the FDLR over control of North Kivu's lucrative mineral trade and to put an end to this practice;
9. Reaffirms its support for the Congolese authorities in their efforts to find a political solution to the crisis and calls on all parties to respect the ceasefire;
10. Notes with concern that elements from the LRA have recently launched attacks on 16 localities in the DRC's eastern territories of Dangu, Province Oriental and Ituri, where UNHCR reports of about 80 missing children are confirming fears of new forced recruitment campaigns involving child soldiers;
11. Stresses that the grouping of people along ethnic lines during the displacement process is potentially dangerous in the current circumstances;
12. Calls for zero tolerance of the sexual violence against girls and women which is used as a weapon of war and for severe criminal penalties to be imposed on the perpetrators of these crimes; draws attention to the importance of access to health services in conflict situations and refugee camps;
13. Calls on all the parties to stand by their commitments to protect the civilian population and respect human rights, as outlined in the Goma peace agreement and the Nairobi Communiqué, and to implement them swiftly;
14. Calls on the governments of the DRC and Rwanda to stop the recent verbal hostilities, return to a constructive dialogue and put an end to the conflict;
15. Encourages all the governments of the Great Lakes region to initiate a dialogue with the aim of coordinating their efforts to lower tensions and stop the violence in the eastern parts of the DRC before this conflict spreads to the region as a whole;
16. Calls on the Council and Commission to implement with immediate effect large-scale medical assistance and reintegration programmes for the civilian populations in the eastern parts of the DRC, with particular focus on assistance for women and girls affected by crimes of sexual violence, in order to meet immediate needs and in anticipation of the reconstruction which will be required; notes the key role played by women in rebuilding shattered communities;

Thursday 23 October 2008

17. Calls on the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to investigate atrocity crimes committed in the Kivus and Ituri since June 2003 and prosecute those most clearly responsible, ensuring that this includes the principal militia chiefs who have not been arrested and those responsible for massacres and sexual violence;
18. Calls for the effective establishment of monitoring mechanisms, such as the Kimberley Process for the certification of the origin of natural resources imported into the EU market;
19. Calls on the Council and every Member State to provide special aid to the populations of the eastern parts of DRC;
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative for the CFSP, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the institutions of the African Union, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the United Nations Security Council, the United Nations Human Rights Council and the governments and parliaments of the Great Lakes region.

Burma

P6_TA(2008)0527

European Parliament resolution of 23 October 2008 on Burma

(2010/C 15 E/20)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolutions of 19 June 2008 ⁽¹⁾, 24 April 2008 ⁽²⁾, 27 September 2007 ⁽³⁾, 21 June 2007 ⁽⁴⁾ and 14 December 2006 ⁽⁵⁾ on Burma,
 - having regard to the Council's Conclusions on Burma/Myanmar of 29 April 2008, adopted at the General Affairs and External relations Council in Luxembourg, and the Council Common Position 2006/318/CFSP of 27 April 2006 renewing restrictive measures against Burma/Myanmar ⁽⁶⁾,
 - having regard to the report of 3 September 2008 (A/63/341) by the United Nation's (UN) Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tomás Ojea Quintana,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas 24 October 2008 marks the 13th anniversary of the unjust incarceration as a political prisoner of Aung San Suu Kyi, General Secretary of the National League for Democracy (NLD); whereas an additional 2 120 individuals continue to face imprisonment in atrocious conditions merely for expressing the wish to bring democracy to Burma; and whereas on 3 October 2008 Navanethem Pillay, newly appointed UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, formally appealed to the Burmese military authorities to release all political prisoners,
 - B. whereas, on the anniversary of Aung San Suu Kyi's captivity, leaders of Asian and European countries will convene the Seventh Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in China on 24 and 25 October 2008,
 - C. whereas the Burmese military junta is purposely refusing to take any preventive or protective measures to safeguard against the severe famine threatening Chin state in the West of the country,
 - D. whereas in September 2008 the Burmese authorities staged a five-day crackdown on widespread protests that had begun six weeks earlier,

⁽¹⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2008)0312.

⁽²⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2008)0178.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 219 E, 28.8.2008, p. 311.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 146 E, 12.6.2008, p. 383.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 317 E, 23.12.2006, p. 902.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ L 116, 29.4.2006, p. 77.