

Resolution on the situation in the Sea of Azov

2018/2870(RSP) - 25/10/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted the resolution on the situation in the Sea of Azov.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE and Greens/EFA groups.

The situation in the Sea of Azov was addressed by the bilateral agreement of 2003 between Ukraine and Russia, which defines these territories as internal waters of the two states and gives both parties the power to inspect suspicious vessels.

The construction of the Kerch Bridge and a gas pipeline and the laying of underwater cables to the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula without Ukraine's consent constitute another violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Russian Federation.

Parliament deplored the excessive actions of the Russian Federation in the Sea of Azov insofar as they **breach international maritime law** and Russia's own international commitments. It condemned the excessive stopping and inspection of commercial vessels, including both Ukrainian ships and those with flags of third-party states, including ships under flags of various EU Member States.

Russia is urged to immediately end the intensive and discriminatory inspections of vessels and to consider, if necessary, appropriate countermeasures.

Parliament expressed very serious concern about the very **volatile security situation** in the Sea of Azov. It regretted that the Sea of Azov has become a new maritime dimension of belligerent Russian actions against Ukraine.

It reiterated its support for the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine and reconfirmed Ukraine's sovereignty over the Crimean peninsula and its part of the Sea of Azov and Ukraine's absolute right to have full access to the Sea of Azov, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Parliament deplored the illegal extraction of **oil and gas resources** by the Russian Federation from Ukrainian territory and highlighted the possible danger of Russia seizing existing Ukrainian oil and gas fields in the Sea of Azov once it achieves its aim of transforming it into an internal lake within the Russian Federation.

Parliament called on the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to:

- follow more closely the evolving security situation in the Sea of Azov which may have wider security implications affecting the EU and its Member States directly;
- take the necessary steps to propose that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine mandate, which covers the entire territory of Ukraine, including maritime areas, also cover the new area of tensions in the Azov Sea;
- make it clear that the **targeted sanctions** against Russia will be reinforced if the conflict in the Azov Sea escalates further.

Parliament reiterated its concern at the involvement of European companies in the construction of the Kerch Bridge, which, through this involvement, knowingly or unknowingly undermined the EU sanctions regime. The Commission is called on to assess and verify the application of the EU restrictive measures in

force and on the Member States to share information regarding any national customs or criminal investigations into cases of potential violations.

A full assessment of the economic damage caused by the *de facto* blockade should be provided.