

# Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	<a href="#">2002/2011(INI)</a>	Procedure completed
Annual report on human rights in the world in 2002 and European Union's human rights policy		
Subject 6.10.08 Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	<a href="#">AFET</a> Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security, Defense	ELDR <a href="#">VAN DEN BOS Bob</a>	11/09/2002
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	<a href="#">General Affairs</a>	<a href="#">2522</a>	21/07/2003

Key events			
17/01/2002	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
08/07/2003	Vote in committee		Summary
08/07/2003	Committee report tabled for plenary	<a href="#">A5-0274/2003</a>	
21/07/2003	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
04/09/2003	Decision by Parliament	<a href="#">T5-0375/2003</a>	Summary
04/09/2003	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2002/2011(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Annual report
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP P.F.
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/5/15680

Documentation gateway					

Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading	<a href="#">A5-0274/2003</a>	08/07/2003	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading	<a href="#">T5-0375/2003</a> OJ C 076 25.03.2004, p. 0245-0386 E	04/09/2003	EP	Summary

## Annual report on human rights in the world in 2002 and European Union's human rights policy

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Bob van den BOS (ELDR, NL) reviewing human rights around the world in 2002 and the EU's human rights policy. It began by stressing the urgent need for the EU to set an example by conducting a more consistent policy to combat human rights violations. While there was no lack of formally agreed ambitions, in practice national interests often gained the upper hand and prevented the EU acting more forcefully. The committee called for firm application of the human rights clauses included in cooperation and association agreements with non-EU countries. Enforcing these clauses required, above all, political will on the part of the EU Member States, but clear mechanisms were also needed to keep up the pressure to improve human rights in the countries concerned. However, the committee complained that it was not involved in the decision-making process leading to consultations or the suspension of an agreement, and it called on the Council to involve MEPs more in these matters. The report underlined the importance of engaging in genuine political dialogue with non-EU countries and of integrating human rights into the EU's external policies. MEPs called for the EU to play a more vigorous role at the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) but they believed that the standing of this body was suffering from growing politicisation. The UNHRC's debates and resolutions, they said, did not reflect the real human rights situation but the degree of support for countries accused of human rights violations. MEPs expressed disappointment that the EU had not sponsored a resolution on China or Iran at the 59th session of the UNHRC. In addition, in 2002 and 2003 the UNHRC rejected resolutions on Chechnya and Zimbabwe. The report said that "human rights dialogues.... must not be turned into mere talking-shops, or be confined to exchanges of views on cultural and historical differences". It called for special dialogues with Mediterranean countries, Russia, Ukraine, the south Caucasus countries and the Balkan states. It asked the Council to assess the EU's structured dialogues with Iran and China and urged the governments of these two countries to allow in the UN's special rapporteurs on human rights. The committee warmly supported the International Criminal Court (ICC) and urged that its statute be ratified as broadly as possible. The report also called on all states which still have the death penalty to introduce a moratorium on any pending executions. In addition, the United States was urged to drop its policy of discouraging governments from ratifying the Rome Statute by means of "bilateral non-surrender agreements". The report also called for a commission to be set up under the mandate of the UN Secretary-General and/or the Security Council to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity committed under the Iraqi regime. The Council and Commission were urged to emphasise in discussions under political dialogue the importance of protecting the fundamental freedom of religion and belief or non-belief. There was a need to respond effectively in the event of serious and persistent violations of freedom of thought, conscience and religion in third countries, and to avoid double standards. MEPs therefore called for guidelines to be devised for EU policy towards third countries on freedom of religion and freedom of expression. The report condemned totalitarian regimes which suppress and try to control religious belief and simple worship or which discriminate against minorities or non-approved religions. It also drew attention to the contradiction between certain punishments and practices under Islamic law and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The Council and Commission were urged to enter into dialogue with leading Islamic scholars with a view to identifying such punishments and developing alternatives. MEPs also underlined the key role of education in deepening mutual understanding and respect for different religions. They called on the Council and Commission to seek to prevent violent religious extremism through dialogue with the relevant leaders. Lastly, they said that the media should be discouraged from creating stereotyped images of other religions as enemies. Finally, the report also looked at human rights issues relating to children (including the problem of child soldiers), disabled people, prison conditions and indigenous peoples.?

## Annual report on human rights in the world in 2002 and European Union's human rights policy

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report by Bob van den BOS (ELDR, Netherlands) on EU human rights policy. (Please see the summary of 08/07/03.) Human rights are the cornerstone of all internal and external policies of the EU. Parliament asked the Council and the Commission to speak out clearly against violations of human rights wherever they take place. It expressed its strong concern about a possible marginalisation of human rights vis-à-vis security-related, economic and political priorities. Parliament strongly supports the Council's intention to achieve a more effective and visible EU human rights and democratisation policy through increased coherence and consistency between Community action and the CFSP, mainstreaming, greater openness and regular identification and the review of priority action. On the matter of the human rights clause in cooperation agreements, Parliament asked the Commission and the Council to apply the restrictive and suspensive measures on the basis of a less lenient assessment of the seriousness of the situation. The Council and the Commission should effectively implement restrictive measures adopted by the EU, so that they do not remain mere expressions of disapproval. EU sanction policies must be applied in furtherance of human rights. Actions should not be taken which deliberately undermine such policies, as in the case of Zimbabwe where the impact of targeted sanctions has been regularly undermined because of loopholes. Parliament called for a periodic review of sanction policies in order to assess and enhance their effectiveness. On concrete violations of human rights, the House mentioned amongst many others the use of stoning and all forms of degrading and cruel punishment, notably in Iran, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. It noted the de facto moratorium on the imposition of sentences to death by stoning in Iran and urged the Iranian Government definitively to abolish this practice. The EU must continue to work towards the universal abolition of the death penalty. Parliament strongly condemned the attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August 2003, which killed 20 people including the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights and UN Special Representative in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello. It emphasised that this constitutes a war crime and that those responsible must be identified and brought to justice.?