

Procedure file

Basic information	
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2003/2121(INI)
Procedure completed	
Afghanistan: challenges and perspectives for the future	
Subject	
6.10.04 Third-country political situation, local and regional conflicts	
6.10.05 Peace preservation, humanitarian and rescue tasks, crisis management	
6.40.04.06 Relations with central Asian countries	
Geographical area	
Afghanistan	

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security, Defense		25/03/2003
		GUE/NGL BRIE André	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	FEMM Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities		14/10/2003
		PPE-DE ZISSENER Sabine	

Key events			
04/09/2003	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
22/01/2004	Vote in committee		Summary
22/01/2004	Committee report tabled for plenary	A5-0035/2004	
12/02/2004	Debate in Parliament		
12/02/2004	Decision by Parliament	T5-0098/2004	Summary
12/02/2004	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2003/2121(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed

Documentation gateway

Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading	A5-0035/2004	22/01/2004	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading	T5-0098/2004 OJ C 097 22.04.2004, p. 0579-0647 E	12/02/2004	EP	Summary

Afghanistan: challenges and perspectives for the future

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by André BRIE (EUL/NGL, D) on Afghanistan. Looking at the challenges facing the country and its future prospects, the report concluded that lack of security and the slow pace of reconstruction in Afghanistan had trapped the country in a "vicious circle". MEPs were primarily concerned about the situation of Afghan women, and believed that a strategy to improve the situation of women must be "a priority for the nation". They welcomed the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA), but called on the ATA to "regularly, publicly and unequivocally" condemn violence against women and girls. The report also urged the Council and the Commission to assist the ATA in setting up a country-wide system of safe shelters and support services to protect women and girls from further oppression. MEPs expressed support for the new Constitution adopted on 4 January 2004 by the Loya Jirga (Grand Tribal Council), which included a specific reference to the equal treatment of men and women. They remained concerned, however, about a number of issues such as limitations on the right of freedom of expression and freedom of religion. They also pointed out that the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) could not bring human rights violations to court. Another cause for concern was the fact that among the constitutional Loya Jirga members were commanders and warlords who might reject anything which they saw as strengthening the central government. The committee also believed that the lower amount foreseen in the EU's 2004 budget for Afghanistan (compared to 2003) was sending the wrong signal to the Afghan government and people. MEPs called for more funds to be allocated to the ATA's recurrent budget and asked the Commission to consider setting up a European Agency for Reconstruction in Afghanistan, on the lines of the agency working in Kosovo.?

Afghanistan: challenges and perspectives for the future

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Andre BRIE (EUL/NGL, D) on Afghanistan. (Please see the summary dated 22/01/04.) Parliament warned against the use of excessive force by the US army against potential 'terrorist' targets, resulting in the deaths of civilians, including children. These operations may lead to the Afghan people rejecting the process of democratization. Parliament moved on to the priorities for support for economic and social reconstruction. These are: -high-quality education for boys and girls, -health care, particularly for women and children, -improvement of the infrastructure (roads, electricity, running water), -creation of irrigation systems in agricultural areas to make it possible to grow crops other than opium; Political reconstruction is a key part of the overall reconstruction effort. Parliament expressed its concern about the continuing delays in the registration of political parties and encouraged President Karzai to pursue his initiative to build a "moderate camp for a reform agenda" to support the peace process. Parliament also voiced its concern about grave flaws in the constitution, such as: -the absence of separation of powers, reflected in the fact that almost all power is vested in the president, the legislature having little power; -the role of Islam, in particular the fact that religious authorities have the right to control education and direct educational resources and the fact that Islam can be invoked to curb speech and political organization; -the rights of women and minority groups, reflected in the fact that there are no positive obligations on the state to preclude discrimination. Parliament drew attention to the fact that ethnic identification is central to contemporary Afghan politics. Ethnic representation and meaningful power sharing are currently insufficiently reflected in political institutions and security bodies. Afghanistan needs a parliamentary system which can ensure that the country's regional, ethnic, and religious pluralism is reflected in its power structures. The constitution also fails to address the future relationship between central government and the provinces. Parliament felt that it is imperative to increase financial support for the electoral registration and education processes if the elections are not to be delayed even further. The Commission is asked to support programmes to promote pluralism in the media and access to information, and citizen participation. The commission needs also to support NGO initiatives aimed at reconciliation and dispute resolution within communities. Parliament went on to stress its concern at the huge recent increase in illicit opium production in Afghanistan which fuels the power and role of warlords in the provinces concerned. The country could turn into an opium economy unless energetic measures are taken by the Afghan Government, affected countries and the international community. Restoration of the irrigation channels is the only way of enabling agricultural crops to thrive as an alternative to poppy-growing. Parliament called for clarity on the future of Afghanistan in regional energy policy, and in particular concerning the laying of oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia through Afghanistan. It concluded that Afghanistan must not be forgotten by the rest of the world once again, both for humanitarian reasons and because of its geo-strategic importance and the lessons that history has taught us. ?