



Parliamentary Update (SEDE Subcommittee) July 2009

ISIS Europe regularly provides updates of Committee sittings in the European Parliament. With the new EP 2009-2014, ISIS continues this work to provide stakeholders with an outline of the discussions in the AFET and SEDE committee. This update provides the debate of the first SEDE Subcommittee, Chaired by MEP Arnaud Danjean (EPP). For a listing of SEDE members, please see www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/membersCom.do?language=EN&body=SEDE

Communication from the EU Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation

MEP Arnaud Danjean (EPP), Chair of the Security and Defence Subcommittee, pointed out that there are two opposite trends on the global stage at present: on one hand an intention to reduce nuclear arsenals embraced by the US and Russia and on the other a strong will to pursue nuclear weapons from countries like North Korea and Iran.

Massimo Garribba, Head of Unit at EURATOM, presented the Communication from the EU Commission on nuclear non-proliferation. He underlined the importance for the EU to build common strengths and carry out a united position on these issues. He reaffirmed the EU stance against proliferation in that the pursuit of nuclear fuel is accepted only when this is utilized for energy purposes. In line with this principle, Mr. Garribba added that in the future, the EU should consider how to extend the cooperation with other key international actors that signed the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). It remains to be seen, he explained, how the non-signatory States, as well as the signatories that now intend to ignore the NPT, can be approached.

MEP Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck (ALDE), by raising the example of the ambivalent conduct of President Bush – criticized for being tough with Iran and soft with countries like Pakistan – argued that a coherent and united position is necessary to establish relations with all different countries and to tackle nuclear proliferation. MEP Ivo Vaigl (ALDE) asked for more transparency, especially in dialogue with Israel and Iran. MEP Ana Gomes (S&D) underlined the importance of coherence. She defined the agreement signed by EU and India – a non-signatory to the NPT – as a step-backwards and evidenced the contradictions in the attitude of EU towards the Middle-East, with a special reference to Iran and Israel in regard to their attempts to increase or pursue nuclear power. In her intervention she also called for a greater cooperation between the US and EU, questioning the future of the nuclear material still located on European soil.

MEP Ernst Strasser (EPP) hoped that the EU could take a decisive action and play a more proactive role internationally. In order to do that he saw the support to the strategy of US administration as the direction to take. The commitment of President Obama to reduce nuclear arsenal and combat proliferation was praised by MEP Ulrike Lunacek (Greens/EFA), who nevertheless questioned the raising of possible obstacles against Obama's strategy. MEP Hannes Swoboda (S&D) particularly emphasized the progress made by the new US administration in comparison with the previous one.

In contrast with these optimistic views, MEP Sabine Lösing (GUE) cast doubts on the intention of Western nuclear powers (UK, France, US) to reduce their arsenal in a binding manner. By criticizing the position of Robert Cooper, who was said to consider the abandon of first strike capabilities as an unfeasible option, she argued that, if this were the position of the EU, there would be a discrepancy between the words of Mr. Cooper and the commitment to disarmament declared by the EU institutions. At the end of the panel, Mr Garribba specified that it was a misunderstanding and these words don't represent the will of the EU. MEP Ioan Mircea Pașcu (S&D) expressed his perplexity by the fact that the US and Russia agreement on a relevant

reduction of nuclear arms could set an example for other States. He pointed out that the pursuit of nuclear power is motivated by the international and regional environment. Rather than focusing only on State actions and policies, Mr. Paşcu emphasized the importance of maintaining an effective control against non-state actors.

In her intervention, MEP Zuzana Roithová (EPP) was skeptical on the possibility of the international community to sign a contract with an actor like North Korea. She also wondered whether the budget of the EU Instrument for Stability was too low for the difficult tasks that need to be achieved. MEP Michael Gahler (EPP) also asked for clarification on the use of this funding instrument, thus Mr. Garribba was prompted to explain how this budget has been established for a long-term purpose (2007-2014) and a proper assessment on the Instrument for Stability will take place only in 2010.

MEP Gahler also called into question whether, in the case that the UN Security Council was blocked from a Russian or Chinese veto, that a united Western front (US-EU) would be strong enough to enact effective sanctions against those countries that do not respect the NPT.

Communication from the EU Commission on Strengthening Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Security in the EU

Dick Heimans, Head of Counter Terrorism sector at the Commission, explained how the development of a specific policy that could tackle terrorist access to Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear (CBRN) materials is very important for the EU because of the incalculable damages of a CBRN attack. The commitment to reduce this threat remained strong even if expert opinions say that the probability that terrorists manage to develop these materials is very low. Mr. Heimans illustrated that the Commission is working to strengthen the exchange of information between Member States and outlined three main areas of CBRN security work: prevention, detention and preparedness and response.¹

MEP Johannes Cornelis van Baalen (ALDE) expressed concerns that the assessed risk of terrorist acquisition of non-conventional weapons remains low, entailing that work of prevention is fundamental. MEP Luis Yañez-Barnuevo García (S&D) praised the increasing capability of intelligence and police in maintaining control of terrorist movements after 9/11. He defined the role of EU as a common entity to combat terrorism absolutely indispensable.

Other calls for a united EU response against CBRN security issues and the conduct of regular inspections to verify the effective implementation of the measures taken by the Commission came from MEP Ana Gomes (S&D) and MEP Michael Gahler (EPP). MEP Gomes argued that a stronger EU position is necessary because sometimes the EU is still powerless vis-à-vis national measures. Similarly, MEP Gahler stressed the importance of standardizing the measures and improving the operability of the EU bodies (i.e. Europol). MEP Janusz Władysław Zemke (S&D) asked for cooperation among the intelligence corps of the Member States. MEP Ágnes Hankiss (EPP) argued that the concept of solidarity among Member States is crucial to face regional challenges. She maintained that the EU must deploy united efforts to combat those underground networks that play a primary role in the proliferation of arms in the ex-communist countries.

By Filippo Mauri, ISIS Europe



international security information service, europe

Rue Archimède 50, 1000 Brussels Tel: +32 (0)2 230 7446 Fax: +32 (0)2 230 6113
E-mail: info@isis-europe.org Internet: www.isis-europe.org

¹ See also the article by Lina Grip of SIPRI “The European Union WMD Clause: A Preliminary Assessment” in *European Security Review* no. 45, ISIS Europe, July 2009. http://www.isis-europe.org/pdf/2009_artrel_288_esr45-wmd.pdf