

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Session document

3 September 2003

B5-0377/2003 }
B5-0390/2003 }
B5-0391/2003 }
B5-0392/2003 }
B5-0393/2003 }

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JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 37(4) of the Rules of Procedure by

- Carlos Coelho, Françoise Grossetête, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Francesco Fiori and Concepció Ferrer, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group
- Enrique Barón Crespo, Hannes Swoboda and Dagmar Roth-Behrendt, on behalf of the PSE Group
- Frédérique Ries, on behalf of the ELDR Group
- Ilda Figueiredo, Sylviane H. Ainardi, Michel-Ange Scarbonchi, Salvador Jové Peres and Maria Luisa Bergaz, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group
- José Ribeiro e Castro and Nello Musumeci, on behalf of the UEN Group

replacing the motions by the following groups:

- UEN (B5-0377/2003),
- PSE (B5-0390/2003),
- PPE-DE (B5-0391/2003),
- ELDR (B5-0392/2003),
- GUE/NGL (B5-0393/2003),

on the effects of the summer heat wave

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European Parliament resolution on the effects of the summer heat wave

The European Parliament,

- A. having regard to the recent exceptional weather conditions and very high temperatures in Europe, especially in Southern Europe,
- B. having regard to the drought and associated forest fires which have occurred in Southern Europe, particularly in Portugal, but also in Spain, France and Italy,
- C. having regard to the losses in terms of human life and the destruction of many farms and homes as well as transport, communication and energy infrastructures,
- D. shocked that due to the heat wave more than 10 000 people more than normal died,
- E. whereas forest fires in Portugal alone have destroyed more than 400 000 hectares of woodland, i.e. a total of around 5% of the country's territory and 11% of forestry resources, inflicting damage with an estimated cost of over €1 billion,
- F. whereas the fires which have occurred during the summer are a problem common to and recurrent in the whole Southern European area and whereas the characteristics of Mediterranean forests and climatic features of Southern Europe mean that it is one of the areas of the European Union most at risk from fires,
- G. whereas it is to be feared that, as a result of an emerging pattern of climate change, natural disasters on this scale are likely to recur,
- H. whereas some Member States are not capable of dealing with natural disasters of this scale and are thus obliged to rely on European solidarity and assistance,
- I. whereas the area devastated by the fires is much greater than the area reforested each year, and whereas this will have serious human, social, economic and environmental repercussions in the long term,
- J. whereas the damage suffered by the farming industry is enormous,
 - 1. Expresses its deepest sympathy for and solidarity with the families of the those who died and with the inhabitants of the devastated areas, which include many elderly persons living in less-favoured rural areas, and salutes the dedication of the full-time and voluntary firemen and members of the public who fought the fires and the heat unstintingly, often at the risk of their lives;
 - 2. Calls on social, medical and emergency services in the various Member States to evaluate

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now the kind of preventative or emergency action that should be taken in any similar climatic situation that may occur in the future;

3. Notes the decision taken by the Commission to propose the mobilisation of the European Union's Solidarity Fund with a view to granting aid of EUR 31 655 million to Portugal to enable it to restore its infrastructures and reimburse the cost of the emergency measures; asks the budget authorities to assess the Portuguese Government's request in order to find a reasonable solution;
4. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the regions affected to set up jointly an infrastructure restoration plan and a rehabilitation plan for the areas affected, seeking to reforest these areas and to prevent fires by reallocating a proportion of the Community's funds, particularly the structural funds, the EAGGF and the cohesion fund;
5. Calls for a reforestation policy for the affected areas based on respect for their bio-climatic and environmental features, and hopes that great store will be set by the rehabilitation of the specific local rural landscape;
6. Insists on the need to reinforce an efficient prevention policy in the field of forest fires, and reiterates its view that both monitoring and prevention measures should be encouraged by the Community, in particular in the scope of the Forest Focus regulation;
7. Strongly condemns the criminal actions of those individuals responsible for starting certain of these fires deliberately, and calls on Member States to make every possible effort to ensure that they are brought to justice;
8. Considers that all Member States affected need urgently to review their systems for providing information to the general public on preventing forest fires;
9. Appreciates the efforts of many Member States which have made available to the Mediterranean countries affected additional resources, both human and material, and calls on the Commission and the Council to address the question of establishing a European Civil Protection Force as a matter of urgency;
10. Calls on the Commission to examine the tragic consequences of this summer's heat wave thoroughly and include the results already in its 'further proposal' on health care and long-term care for the elderly as foreseen by this year's Spring Council for the autumn;
11. Welcomes the decision by the Commission to bring forward the payment of some CAP direct support to farmers in order to ease the burden of the drought on the agricultural sector; calls on the Commission to rapidly apply Article 87(2) of the EC Treaty with a view to granting appropriate financial aid to all sectors affected by the disaster; calls on the Commission and the Member States to support farmers in adapting farming practices that can reduce the risks of yield losses provoked by extreme climatic conditions;
12. Considers it desirable to look closely at the possibility of introducing new methods for

the management of agricultural crises as a result of extreme weather events, such as a Community insurance scheme, while respecting budget discipline;

13. Interprets the recent extreme weather conditions as further evidence of the negative effects of climate change and underlines that these extreme weather conditions are another sign of the need for ambitious world action to halt climate change; considers that the EU should continue to play a leading role in this process and reinforce its efforts in the key fields of environment, energy, transport, etc.;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council and the governments of the Member States affected by the fires.