

ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

ACP-EU 100.440/08/fin

RESOLUTION¹

on the situation in Mauritania

The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,

- meeting in Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea) from 25 to 28 November 2008,
 - having regard to Article 17(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the provisions of the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU), the Lomé Declaration of July 2000 and the Protocol relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union on unconstitutional changes of government,
 - having regard to the decisions taken by the PSC at its 144th and 151st meetings,
 - having regard to the United Nations Security Council statement of 20 August 2008,
 - having regard to the statements and resolutions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union (EU) and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF),
 - having regard to the consultations opened under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement,
 - having regard to the communiqué at the consultative meeting on the situation in Mauritania attended by the League of Arab States, the United Nations, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the OIF, the EU and the AU on 21 November 2008 in Addis Abeba,
 - having regard to the report of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors' fact-finding mission to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania from 7 to 11 October 2008,
 - having regard to the Mauritanian National Assembly resolution of 14 September 2008,
- A. whereas on 6 August 2008 a military junta led by General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz ousted the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi,
- B. whereas the economic and social situation in the country is catastrophic, and whereas the success of democracy is best ensured by development,
- C. whereas President Abdallahi was democratically elected in April 2007 at the end of a democratic transition process hailed as exemplary by the international community and

¹ Adopted by the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly on 28 November 2008 in Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea).

validated by the European Union election observation mission and the European Parliament delegation,

- D. having regard to the EU's backing of the democratic transition and the EUR 156 million 'support programme' for the period 2008 to 2013 under the 10th European Development Fund, complementing the assistance already in place and the EUR 335 million granted in aid since 1985,
- E. whereas Mauritania is a member of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, otherwise known as the Barcelona Process, and took part in the Summit for the Mediterranean held in Paris on 13 July 2008,
- F. whereas, although the change of government was effected without bloodshed, President Abdallahi and several other political figures were arrested, and whereas President Abdallahi remains deprived of his liberty,
- G. whereas a 'High State Council' has been established by the junta, and whereas the chairman of that council, General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, has been appointed head of state by means of a 'constitutional ordinance',
- H. whereas the 'constitutional ordinance' in which the junta defines its powers and which enables it to govern by decree is without any legal basis,
- I. whereas the 'High State Council' has appointed a prime minister,
- J. whereas the difficulties Mauritania was experiencing at the time of the coup were political in nature and could thus have been resolved by peaceful, political means and dialogue,
- K. whereas, despite those difficulties, Mauritania had made remarkable progress with extremely sensitive domestic policy issues such as the return of refugees, the eradication of slavery and media liberalisation, and whereas this augured well for the eventual development of a firmly rooted democracy,
- L. whereas an open debate between all political forces is required in order to establish the means of restoring constitutional order and the mechanisms governing the balance between executive and legislature, with a view to securing, within the framework of the constitution, a proper balance between president and parliament and the necessary political stability, without interference by the armed forces,
- M. having regard to the various means of ending the crisis and restoring constitutional order put forward by political forces and by 'civil society', in particular the proposal from the democratic opposition and the 'transition roadmap' put forward by the National Assembly,
- N. having regard to the security problems in the Sahelo-Saharan strip, which are giving lifeblood to terrorism, cross-border crime and arms and drugs trafficking and are having a destabilising effect on the countries of the subregion,
- O. having regard to the role played by Mauritania in combating those scourges,
- P. noting the condemnation of the coup voiced by the international community, in particular the ACP Group, ECOWAS, the AU, the EU, the Arab League and the United Nations, and the decision by the AU and the OIF to suspend Mauritania until such time as democracy has been restored,

- Q. whereas on 22 September 2008 the African Union gave the junta an ultimatum to restore constitutional order and unconditionally reinstate Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi by 6 October 2008,
- R. whereas the military junta rejected that ultimatum, and whereas on Tuesday, 7 October 2008, the AU Commission called on the AU member states not to recognise the putschists in Mauritania,
- S. having regard to the opening of the consultation procedure between the European Union and Mauritania, in accordance with Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, which provides for such consultations where 'a Party considers that the other Party has failed to fulfil an obligation stemming from respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law',
- T. whereas the World Bank has suspended USD 175 million in aid to Mauritania; whereas that suspension will affect some 17 national projects in Mauritania as well as the country's participation in World Bank regional projects relating to, among other things, rural development, health, education and infrastructure (such as road building),
- U. whereas the police have used violence to break up unauthorised demonstrations organised by a coalition of political parties calling for the reinstatement of President Abdallahi,
1. Condemns the overthrow of the president and government by the armed forces in Mauritania, and stresses that the democratically established institutions must be respected; regrets this setback, given the notable advances made in the development of democracy and the rule of law over the past few years in Mauritania;
 2. Notes the transfer of deposed President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi to his home village, where he is being kept under house arrest, but continues to call for his immediate and unconditional release;
 3. Calls on the Mauritanian authorities to uphold human rights, including freedom of expression, association and assembly;
 4. Maintains that broad-based consultations are the only means of ending the crisis and enabling all democratic institutions to perform their proper function once again, including full exercise by the parliament of all of its prerogatives;
 5. Calls on the ruling military authorities to commit themselves forthwith to a timetable for a return to constitutional order and the restoration of the democratic institutions, and to making the military ineligible to stand in the elections;
 6. Calls, accordingly, on all political players in Mauritania to establish an appropriate framework for such consultations without delay;
 7. Welcomes the commencement of consultations between the European Union and the ruling authorities in Mauritania, and calls on the European Commission to give the JPA regular progress reports on the consultations conducted under Article 96 and on the establishment of a timetable for the restoration of constitutional order, but regrets that, to date, there has been no significant progress in this respect;
 8. Welcomes the AU's announcement that it will submit 'concrete proposals' following the rejection of its ultimatum by the Mauritanian 'High State Council';

9. Calls on the AU and the EU to look at all the targeted sanctions that might be taken against the military putschists (travel ban, freezing of assets, etc.) should no commitment be made in the near future to a relevant and credible plan for ending the crisis and restoring constitutional order, but not to take any steps that might jeopardise the development of Mauritania and an improvement in the living conditions of its people;
10. Insists that the people of Mauritania, who are already severely affected by the economic and food crises, must not be made hostages of the current political crisis, and calls on the European Commission to implement the support projects for civil society under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights;
11. Urges the junta to consider the multiple benefits for the Mauritanian people of taking part in the political process for peace, democracy, prosperity and human, social and cultural understanding outlined at the Summit for the Mediterranean of 13 July 2008, which was attended by Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania;
12. Welcomes the sending of an ACP Committee of Ambassadors' delegation and notes the adoption of the Mauritanian National Assembly resolution of 14 September 2008;
13. Decides to send an ACP-EU parliamentary delegation to Mauritania, to assist the Mauritanian Parliament in rediscovering its unity and seeking a way out of the crisis that is honourable for all concerned;
14. Instructs its Co-Presidents to forward this resolution to the ACP-EU Council, the European Commission, the Pan-African Parliament, the Commission of the African Union, the Arab Maghreb Union, the United Nations Security Council and the National Assembly and other authorities of Mauritania.