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European Parliament resolution on the situation in Chechnya

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Chechnya,
 - having regard to recent reports and statements on Chechnya made by various NGOs, the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Council of Europe, the US Department of State and the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation,
- A. whereas recent reports and statements on Chechnya present conflicting views on the human rights situation in the republic,
- B. whereas at its winter session on 23 January 2002 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) did not consider sanctions against Russia for violating human rights in Chechnya, and the rapporteur of its special commission, Lord Judd, said that although the situation remains difficult, he had witnessed 'tangible improvements' during his recent fact-finding visit to the territory,
- C. whereas the annual report on human rights from the US Department of State, released on 4 March 2002, describes the Russian government's human rights record as 'poor' in Chechnya, where, according to the report, the federal security forces demonstrated 'little respect for basic human rights' and 'there were credible reports of serious violations, including numerous reports of extrajudicial killings by both the Government and Chechen fighters',
- D. whereas the report of Médecins Sans Frontières published on 4 March 2002 accuses the international community on the grounds that in the fight against terrorism following the events of 11 September 2001, 'no international power is prepared to stop the Kremlin and

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protect Chechens' lives or even their most fundamental human rights', stressing that close to 200 000 Chechens are living in increasingly precarious and dangerous conditions and asking the UN agencies and donors to 'do their utmost to bring about concrete improvements in terms of assistance', notably by reinstating the registration of new refugees so that aid supplies match the number of recipients, and taking immediate account of the most urgent needs, i.e. housing and heating,

- E. whereas a statement made on 28 February 2002 by the New York-based Human Rights Watch group says that Russian military brutality in Chechnya has 'fallen off the map' since 11 September 2001, and that 'the carte blanche for violence against civilians' given to Russia as a key partner in the US-led campaign against terrorism 'is shattering whatever trust Chechens have had in Moscow, torpedoing peace efforts and ultimately undermining Russia as a credible partner in the international war on terrorism',
- F. whereas Aslambek Aslakhonov, the State Duma deputy representing Chechnya, declares that he does not believe that the Russian authorities have done anything to restore the quality of life in Chechnya, claiming that close to 80% of the 2001 budget funds allocated for Chechnya disappeared and stressing that 'human rights are not respected at all',
- G. whereas, in her report on Chechnya presented at the ongoing annual session of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson stresses that, despite the fact that some positive changes are taking place in Chechnya, 'the situation regarding the economic, social and cultural rights of the Chechen people remains a serious concern' and that reports continue to come in of kidnapping by the rebels as well as of human rights abuses by Russian government forces, adding that Russia had failed to investigate these abuses in a credible way during the past year and calling upon the Russian authorities to increase their efforts in this field,
- H. whereas the PACE spokesman on Chechnya, Lord Judd, announced on 21 March 2001, in the course of his recent visit to Moscow, his intention to raise, at the forthcoming PACE session, the issue of setting up a special consulting group on Chechnya dealing with the main issues which attract attention as far as Chechnya is concerned: the human rights situation there, and the situation concerning the prosecution of those individuals who have been found guilty of violating human rights on the territory of Chechnya,
 - 1. Reaffirms its position that there is no military way to solve the problems in Chechnya and calls on all parties involved for an immediate ceasefire and a political solution to the conflict;
 - 2. Urges the Russian special representative for Chechnya to step up the commitment to pursue any perpetrators of human rights abuses, be they members of the Russian federal forces or Chechen terrorists, and to bring them to justice;
 - 3. Recognises the fact that Russia has taken some constructive measures in Chechnya in order to investigate human rights abuses, but deplores the fact that a huge gap remains between the number of complaints of human rights violations and the number of criminal proceedings

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into such cases and prosecutions of people found guilty of criminal offences; the same unacceptable gap exists between the number of criminal proceedings started and the number of cases that actually reach the courts;

4. Invites Russia to provide adequate assistance to victims of the conflict, both in Chechnya and in the neighbouring Russian republics;
5. Invites Russia to create conditions conducive to the displaced people's return, including security guarantees and appropriate social and economic conditions;
6. Urges Russia to cooperate fully with EC-funded humanitarian aid agencies and facilitate operating conditions, including a transparent permit system for Chechnya and access for aid organisations to VHF radio communication;
7. Urges its Delegation for relations with Russia to set up, with its Russian counterpart, a Joint Working Group on Chechnya with the aim of monitoring the situation and investigating reported human rights violations and to report back to the European Parliament;
8. Refers to its decision of 16 March 2000 to create an ad hoc delegation of five members to visit the Northern Caucasus region in order to discuss with the Russian authorities and Chechen representatives all issues relating to the current conflict as contained in this and previous resolutions;
9. Invites the ECHO programme to continue its work in the zone and to cooperate with other international organisations in order to give specific assistance to victims of landmines, by providing for physical therapy, prosthetics and psychological counselling;
10. Invites the Commission and the Member States to continue their efforts to convince the Russian authorities to facilitate operating conditions for international aid agencies and especially ECHO and independent Russian and international media in Chechnya;
11. Welcomes, in this respect, the initiative of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and the Duma to organise a forum called the Chechen Consultative Council, which had its first meeting in Moscow in March, with a view to creating a framework for the resumption of direct contacts between the Russian government and the Chechen separatists;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments of the Member States, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the UN Secretary-General, the Russian State Duma and Federal Council, the government of the Russian Federation and the authorities in Chechnya.