

Beat: Politics

Parliament calls for tougher arms export regime

In 2013, EU exported for EUR 26 billion

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USPA NEWS - The European member states must apply the EU's eight-point code on arms exports more rigorously, particularly with the changed security environment in the EU's neighbourhood, the EP said on Thursday.

It stressed that these trade flows are not in the EU's direct security interests and national political and economic considerations must not override decision-making on export licences. "The security of European citizens is more threatened now than in past years, due to conflicts in our neighbourhood and the increased smuggling and trafficking of arms into the EU," said Bodil Valero. "The EU member states exporting arms must take into account that countries to which they sold arms in the past are no longer stable and must strengthen the current arms exports regimes in the EU," she urged, stressing that "as major global arms exporters, they also have a particular responsibility to make sure the EU remains a credible human rights advocate."

The uncontrolled spread of weapons poses a serious risk to peace and security, human rights and sustainable development, says Parliament, in a resolution passed on Thursday by 249 votes to 164, with 128 abstentions. It notes that despite the situation in Syria and in Iraq, the increased terrorist activities and the conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, no changes have been made to the EU's rules on arms exports.

In 2013, the EU member states exported arms worth a total value of EUR 26 billion to third countries. The real problem, Parliament says, is that the arms export regime is being applied loosely and interpreted inconsistently. It recommends introducing independent checks and penalties if it is infringed. Member states should also include stricter national criteria, it adds.

The transparency and public scrutiny of the export control framework must be boosted, Parliament says. It calls on the member states to provide detailed information, through standardised reporting, on each licence issued. The annual report on EU arms exports should in future be relaunched as a public, interactive and searchable online database, MEPs suggest.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

UPA United Press Agency LTD
483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

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