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News | 25.11.2022

Debriefing of the November II Plenary Session

21-25 November 2022

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Energy Charter Treaty

On Thursday, MEPs voted to adopt the report by Greens/EFA MEP Anna Cavazzini, calling on the European Union to exit the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT). The European Parliament calls on the Commission to withdraw its proposal to modernise the ECT and to immediately present a coordinated exit plan for the EU and its Member States. The treaty has been in force since 1998 and is the most litigated investment protection treaty in the world.

The ECT protects investments in fossil fuels and it has therefore become incompatible with the fight against climate change. Eight Member States have already taken steps to withdraw from the treaty, and earlier this month a proposal from the Commission to reform the treaty did not find a majority in the Council. This vote is a major success for the Green/EFA group that has long called for an exit from the treaty.

Anna Cavazzini, MEP, rapporteur on the Energy Charter Treaty and Greens/EFA Chair of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, comments:

"Today, the European Parliament calls for the defeat of a treaty that has been guaranteeing the anachronistic protection of investments in fossil fuels. This treaty has been a brake on the EU's climate ambition. Via the Energy Charter Treaty, fossil fuel investors are undermining governments' climate actions and suing states for billions of euros in front of private arbitration tribunals."

"There is no majority in the Council nor in the European Parliament to save the Energy Charter Treaty. The Commission must, without delay, propose for the EU to withdraw, and support the coordinated exit of Member States."

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Greens/EFA Press Release](#)
- [Social Media - Twitter: Greens/EFA](#)
- [Social Media - Twitter: Anna Cavazzini](#)
- [Social Media - Twitter: Terry Reintke](#)
- [Social Media - Twitter: Marie Toussaint](#)

Women on boards

On Tuesday, members of the European Parliament debated and adopted the Directive on Gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges (Women on Boards). Since the directive was proposed by the Commission in 2012 it has been blocked by the Council, until earlier this year. While the Greens/EFA Group welcome that there is finally going to be a directive including quotas for women as board members, the fact that the final text has only similar ambitions, to the text first proposed a decade ago is disappointing.

Today, in the EU less than 1 in 10 board presidents/CEOs are women. The directive sets the targets of 40% of non-executive directors to be of the underrepresented sex or 33% of non-executive and executive directors combined. The Directive is to be revised in 2030.

Terry Reintke MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur in the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee on the Women on Boards directive, comments:

"At last, the EU has managed to agree on quotas for women on boards. This directive is long overdue. Setting EU minimum standards for the percentage of women in the top positions in publicly listed companies is more than just symbolic. Women in top positions today will pave the way for girls tomorrow. We know that having role models that children can relate to is crucial for kids' to have big dreams and see that it is actually possible to realise them. But this is not just a gender equality issue. Research also shows that having a diverse makeup of executive and nonexecutive boards makes companies more resilient and profitable."

"However, the final text of the Directive is lacking in ambition. The fact that very little in the text has changed since its first proposal in 2012 is telling. There are too many loopholes for companies to be exempt from the regulation, including a suspension clause for Member States. The Greens/EFA Group will continue to fight for gender equality in companies as well as all other sectors. In particular, we will closely follow the implementation of the directive in the Member States, and if the percentage of women on boards increases in a way that is acceptable, we will continue to push for higher ambitions."

Heidi Hautala MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur in the Legal Affairs of the Women on Boards directive, comments:

"Today we celebrate a major milestone in promoting gender equality in business. The Women on Boards

Directive is the first time that binding targets are set for gender balance among non-executive directors on publicly noted company boards. It has been long in the making, and a change of government in Germany was needed to finally break the deadlock in the Council.”

“However, this is just the beginning. The review clause in the directive, that the Greens/EFA called for, creates possibilities for more ambitious targets, and to extend the scope to cover unlisted companies. The impacts of this legislation need to be carefully monitored to ensure that we effectively tackle structural discrimination in business. Everyone must have an equal opportunity to advance to leadership positions based on their abilities and regardless of gender.”

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Greens/EFA Press Release](#)
- [Social Media - Twitter: Greens/EFA](#)

Biodiversity COP15

On Wednesday, Members of the European Parliament debated the upcoming UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montréal, Canada. The Greens/EFA Group called for swift action to protect species and habitats. For COP15 to be a success, it needs to commit to the effective protection of at least 30% of all land and sea areas in a new UN agreement on biodiversity. This needs to be accompanied by robust funding, support for less developed countries and a mechanism to implement the targets by 2030.

Ville Niinistö MEP, Greens/EFA delegate to COP15, member of the Environment Committee and member of the Industry, Research and Energy Committee, comments:

“While we just came back from the COP27 on the climate crisis, the COP15 on the biodiversity crisis is still ahead of us. Both issues are crucial to our survival. They are interlinked and one cannot be solved without the other. Both the IPCC and the IBPES agree that to stop the biodiversity loss, we need to restore valuable ecosystems, increase sustainable agricultural and forestry practices and cut off environmentally harmful subsidies. This helps both climate and nature but is not a substitute for necessary drastic reduction of global emissions and the phase-out of coal, oil and gas.

“We need the COP15 to set ambitious targets that protect at least 30 percent of all land and sea areas. But ambitious targets means nothing if not all, on all levels - international, EU, national and local, do their part to ensure those targets are also reached.”

- [Greens/EFA Press Release](#)
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Conditionality mechanism Hungary

On Thursday, Members of the European Parliament voted by an overwhelming majority to call on the Commission to continue to stand firm on the Rule of Law Conditionality Mechanism in the case of Hungary.

Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield MEP, Rapporteur for the situation in Hungary and Greens/EFA co-signatory on the resolution, comments:

"The proposed reforms will not solve the dire situation in which the Hungarian government has put their own country in. Much more will be needed to restore democracy and the rule of law. We must continue the Article 7 procedure and the Commission and Council must hold their nerve with the conditionality mechanism until the government proposes real reforms that will deliver on democratic standards.

"The Hungarian government has proposed a new integrity authority only because all the other agencies that would help root out corruption are not functioning properly. But an effective anti-corruption system cannot exist without the independence of the judiciary.

"Even if the 17 measures were effective and implemented properly, they will do nothing to address the lack of fundamental rights, media freedom or attacks against minorities."

Daniel Freund MEP, Greens/EFA co-signatory on the resolution, comments:

"The credibility of the Commission and the EU as a whole rests on its ability to maintain democracy, the rule of law and protection of EU funds. For too long the Hungarian government has systematically undermined democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights. Fidesz and Orban have woven corruption into the fabric of the Hungarian state.

"It will take more than papering over the cracks to restore Hungarian democracy. That is why EU money to Hungary must be frozen until the government rebuilds the structures of a functioning democratic state. Money is the only language Orban understands. We call on the Commission and Council to hold the line in the defence of the rule of law."

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Greens/EFA Press Release](#)
- [Social Media - Twitter: Damian Boeselager](#)

Migration & Asylum

On Wednesday, Members of the European Parliament will debate the need for a European solution on asylum and migration including search and rescue in the Mediterranean sea. Nearly 6,000 people have died in the Med trying to reach Europe since the start of last year and [nearly 30,000 have died](#) since 2014. The Greens/EFA Group are calling on Member States to respect international and human rights law, show solidarity with those Member States faced with a disproportionate number of arrivals, and to take on a stronger role in search and rescue in the Mediterranean.

Tineke Strik MEP, Greens/EFA Member of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee, comments:

"The new figures from the IOM are a grim reminder that the Mediterranean is a particularly deadly route for people fleeing war and persecution. Instead of supporting those in need of help at sea, the EU is funding third countries with poor human rights records to keep refugee boats from reaching our shores. All that results from this approach is more death. We urgently need safe and legal pathways for asylum seekers to reach Europe.

"NGOs are carrying out vital work where governments and the EU are failing and they should not be criminalised for doing what in reality the governments should be doing: Saving lives at sea. It is an international obligation. NGOs vessels carrying out Search and Rescue operations in the Mediterranean are being refused at EU ports for days and sometimes even weeks. Disembarkation must be made possible for all

people rescued at the nearest safe port.

"European coastal states have an international obligation to rescue people at sea and bring them to shore, but they refuse to do so in a cynical attempt to force solidarity from other member states. That's why we need to hold those states accountable for violating this obligation and putting lives at risk. But we also need a permanent and mandatory relocation mechanism for the fair distribution of refugees across Europe.

"The EU should fund a state-led search and rescue mission and the European Commission must take more responsibility in the coordination of search and rescue and force Member States to take their responsibility."

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- [Social Media - Twitter: Tineke Strik](#)
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Budget

On Wednesday, the budget for 2023 was adopted by the European Parliament. Last week, negotiators from the European Parliament, Council and Commission reached an agreement on the EU's budget for 2023. The Greens/EFA Group has secured increased support for measures aimed at dealing with the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis and the climate crisis. Compared to the draft budget, an extra €1 billion was allocated to the Parliament's priorities, including an increase of €280m for Neighbourhood Policy, €30m for the EU's environmental programme 'LIFE', and €7.5m for health policy, as well as top-ups on EU programmes such as rights and values, Erasmus and CEF transport and energy. The plenary will vote on the budget for 2023 on Wednesday.

- [Text adopted](#)

Rainbow families

On Wednesday, MEPs debated the Legal protection for rainbow families exercising free movement, in particular the Baby Sara case. This debate was held ahead of the expected legislative initiative from the Commission to ensure that a parent in one EU country is a parent in all EU countries. This proposal is due on December 7th as part of the Equality Package.

Kim van Sparrentak, Greens/EFA MEP and Co-Chair of the European Parliament Intergroup on LGBTIQ rights, comments:

"Everyone should be able to move freely within the Union with their families. It is unacceptable that some European countries fail to give LGBTIQ+ families basic EU family rights. This puts children at risk. Imagine what it is like to cross a border and suddenly not be able to prove your child is yours. Or worse, being a child and suddenly having no legal parents. Despite some landmark judgements, we still do not have proper EU legislation to ensure administrative hurdles will not harm rainbow families."

“The Greens/EFA Group has long called for the EU to ensure that all parents are recognised as such across the entire EU. The Commission needs to seize the opportunity to ensure the legislative initiative proposed on the 7th of December makes a difference for all LGBTIQ+ parents and children born to them. We call on the Commission to come up with a proposal that does not risk being stalled for years and years by the Council, but that will protect implementation of rights and freedoms of all EU citizens.”

- [Greens/EFA Press Release](#)
 - [Social Media - Twitter: Kim Van Sparrentak](#)
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Situation of Human Rights in the context of the FIFA WC in Qatar

On Thursday, MEPs voted in favour of a resolution on the World Cup in Qatar, denouncing FIFA for corruption and Qatar for Human Rights abuses. The European Parliament urges the introduction of democratic and transparent procedures in the award process of the World Cup, and calls for an investigation into the deaths of thousands of workers in the construction of the country's infrastructure and for a compensation fund for their families.

Pressure must be applied from member states on UEFA and FIFA to undertake a reform to introduce democratic procedures for the awarding of World Cups with strict human rights criteria for candidate host countries. Parliament strongly denounces homophobic statements and policies by Qatari authorities and expresses its solidarity with the LGBTI Community. Parliament has strongly rejected the decision of FIFA to threaten football players for expressing their views in defense of Human Rights.

- [Text adopted](#)
 - [Social Media - Twitter: Greens/EFA](#)
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 - [Social Media - Twitter: Ernest Urtasun](#)
 - [Social Media - Twitter: Hannah Naumann](#)
 - [Social Media - Twitter: Anna Cavazzini](#)
 - [Social Media - Twitter: Teinhard Bütikofer](#)
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Human rights situation in Egypt

On Thursday, MEPs debated the human rights situation in Egypt following COP27. While COP27 might be over, Egypt under President Sisi has been experiencing one of its worst human rights crises in decades. Our group's message is clear: We will continue to keep a close eye on the alarming situation of civil society and human rights in Egypt. For the next COPs, the UN must make room for freedom of expression and civil society.

Bas Eickhout, Greens/EFA MEP, comments during his speech in the plenary:

“There is a shrinking space for civil society there in Sharm el—Sheikh. People were intimidated and harassed. We, with this badge, were harassed at the entrance, where we were only making the claim that political prisoners should be freed. I expect the Commission to speak out on that, and not say that it's all fine, and that indeed we see, as my colleague from Renew said, that some prisoners were freed, because at the same time we know that since then at least 1 953 Egyptians were imprisoned.”

“We have left Sharm el—Sheikh. We can go freely back to Europe, but the civil society of Egypt stays in Egypt, and is now under close scrutiny after COP27. That should be our concern and prime focus.”

“The message we should give to the civil society in Egypt is that maybe COP27 moved on, but we will keep on keeping this issue very close. For the next time, the next COPs, there should be room for freedom of expression and for civil society to make their voices heard in any UN conference that is being organised – and that I also expect to hear from the Commission.”

- [Social Media – Twitter: Greens/EFA](#)
- [Social Media – Twitter: Bas Eickhout](#)

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- [Forced displacement of people as a result of escalating conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo \(DRC\)](#)
- [Situation of Human Rights in Egypt](#)
- [Outcome of the modernisation of the Energy Charter Treaty](#)
- [Situation of human rights in the context of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar](#)

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