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Press release | 13.07.2017

Development policy being militarised through the back door

Legal Affairs committee approves dubious interpretation of EU Treaties

The European Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee has today given its opinion on the legal basis for the European Commission's proposed Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). The committee voted in favour of the position of the rapporteur for the legal opinion, despite apparent contradictions with the view of the Parliament's own legal services.

Greens/EFA MEP **Heidi Hautala**, who produced a dissenting note on the legal basis, comments:

"It is deeply concerning that development policy risks being militarised through the back door. The view supported by the majority of the Legal Affairs committee is quite at odds with the arguments put forward by the Parliament's own legal services, seriously calling into question its legal soundness.

"The aim of this instrument is clearly to build the capacity of military actors in EU partner countries. Regardless of the merit or otherwise of such proposals, they are clearly not in the scope of development policy, but rather of Common Foreign and Security Policy. It is frustrating that debate on the issue was refused before the vote. Clearly this is an issue to which some do not want public attention to be drawn.

"Development funding should not be sacrificed to meet security policy requirements. The Member States should opt for a new, dedicated instrument for security and military cooperation and capacity building with third countries, with proper commitment to finance."

Background

The Commission proposal aims to build military capacity building in third countries, mainly in Africa. The IcSP is the EU's only instrument for civilian conflict prevention. Legally, the IcSP is based on the development policy article 209 TFEU which stipulates that all measures need to pursue development objectives. Legal services of all three institutions (European Parliament, Council, and Commission) have produced opinions ruling out the use of IcSP for military capacity building. Heidi Hautala's dissenting opinion can be viewed on the Greens/EFA website. Parliament's position on amending the instrument will be voted on in the September plenary session.

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