Press release | 28.06.2016

UK referendum

EU response must ensure interest of all European citizens to the fore

The European Parliament today debated the outcome of the UK referendum on EU membership and adopted a resolution setting out its opinion (1) ahead of a summit of EU leaders (28-29 June). Commenting in the context of the debate, Greens/EFA co-president **Rebecca Harms** said:

"The European Union, its parliament, its governments and its institutions have an enormous responsibility to act in the interests of all European citizens in the aftermath of the UK referendum. The negotiations about how to implement the result of the referendum must begin as soon as possible, and must be fair to everyone. It is essential that the interests of all those affected by this decision are taken into account in the process. This applies to the 444 million Europeans who had no vote but will clearly be affected by the outcome, as well as those nations and minorities in the UK that voted to remain in the EU. To this end, it is essential that the European Parliament (as the directly-elected body representing European citizens) is centrally involved in any negotiations with the UK government on the implementation of the referendum outcome and is not just asked to give its consent on a done-deal. For the Greens, this should be done within the existing parliamentary structures and not via some small ad hoc group.

"The European project has always aimed at ensuring lasting peace through the extension of freedom, democracy and shared prosperity. It was created as a response to the destructive forces of nationalism and remains that today. We know what we need to do to improve the EU but we will only be able to change the EU if we are prepared to defend all that it has achieved."

Greens/EFA: co-president **Philippe Lamberts** said:

"While there were clearly various motivations behind those who voted to leave the EU, there can be no doubt the impact of the economic crisis and growing inequality has created disillusionment with political establishment across Europe. Instead of blaming these policy choices on some European bogeyman, it is now time that EU governments started coming clean with their electorates and accepting their responsibility, whilst outlining the positive role the EU can play in responding to these challenges with the right political choices. From the outset, the European project aimed at ensuring lasting peace through the extension of freedom, democracy and shared prosperity. Now, more than ever, we need to work to ensure the EU is to the fore in prioritising this ambition and delivering a socially just and sustainable response to today's global challenges.

"Facing up to the challenges of a globalised world means pooling sovereignty and cooperating; retreating into narrow national narratives and structures will only inhibit our ability to respond to these global challenges

and, as such, lead to a loss of sovereignty. Clearly, there are legitimate concerns about how the EU and its institutions have ensured democratic accountability in doing so. We need to improve how the EU works and, in particular, strengthen democracy and transparency in the EU. This must be done through a broad and inclusive process, which truly involves European citizens, and the Greens are proposing European citizens' conventions to this end."

(1) The Greens/EFA group tabled a number of amendments to the draft resolution.

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