

Warsaw, 10 November 2006

Statement by President COELHO

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen,

We are just completing a three-day visit here in Warsaw.

First of all let me start by underlining that with this visit we were merely fulfilling our mandate and that no one should use our presence here in Poland for domestic political purposes, especially on the eve of local and regional elections.

I would like to thank all those whom we had invited to meet our delegation and who indeed appeared before us.

At the same time I have to refer to those who refused to speak with us, those who first accepted and later declined, and those who did not get the compulsory authorisation from their hierarchy. A detailed list is available in this room.

Sometimes I feel that, when dealing with these matters, Members of Parliament and journalists are confronted with the same kind of difficulties: lack of cooperation and withholding of information. This is why, as we are doing ourselves, I would encourage the press to go on with their investigations.

As far as the cooperation with official authorities is concerned, I have to tell you that we regret that we were not able to meet any Parliamentary representatives, like we always did in all our other delegations, and also by the reluctance of the government to offer full cooperation to our investigation and to receive our delegation at an appropriate political level. We are of course grateful to Mr Pasionek for the statements he made before us, on behalf on Minister Wassermann, but he is not a Member of the Government and was therefore unable to answer all the questions we have concerning the allegations we have been asked by our remit to look into.

In this context, I feel obliged to highlight the difference between the openness and readiness to cooperate we were offered when we went to Romania three weeks ago and what we have experienced during our visit to Poland. This is all the more important because, as you know, Poland and Romania are among the two European countries, which have been referred to as allegedly hosting secret detention centres.

Sometimes I feel the need to restate the fact that the European Union is more than simply a common market and that we all share in the same community of values, the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights and that we have a duty to find out the truth.

Let me also just recall in this context the statements made to both our Committee and the plenary assembly by European Commission Vice-President Frattini, who

underlined that any breach of article 6 of the European Union Treaty, that is the respect of fundamental rights and common values, could lead to the implementation of article 7 of the same treaty, which foresees political sanctions such as the suspension of a Member State's voting right in Council.

We will now report to our Committee on the outcome of our meetings here. As you know, we have entered the last phase of our work and our rapporteur Claudio Fava is due to present his draft final report by the end of this month. It will then be up to our Committee to draw all conclusions and to make whatever proposals it deems appropriate in adopting this report in January. The Parliament as a whole should have the last word during the February 2007 plenary session.

I thank you for your attention and I now give the floor to our rapporteur, Claudio Fava.