

Press release – Opening – 24-25 March plenary session



The Parliament will continue to be a strong defender of human rights in the EU and worldwide, said President Sassoli, referring to Chinese sanctions against five MEPs and the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights.

These retaliatory sanctions are an unacceptable response to Parliament's legitimate concerns about human rights abuses, he added, expressing support for those hit by them.

Chair of the Delegation for relations with the People's Republic of China Reinhard Bütikofer (Greens/EFA, DE) said the sanctions demonstrate that EU values are more important than ever. Describing the sanctions as an attack on the institutions, he affirmed that the EU will continue to stand united in defending freedom of expression.

Maria Arena (S&D, BE) Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, stressed that the EU has a duty to protect human rights. "We will not be silenced", she said, adding that the pro-democracy movement and defenders of human rights must not be abandoned.

During his opening statement, President Sassoli also marked the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the revolution for independence in Greece, which ended with the creation of a Greek, independent state at the heart of

the EU.

However, he continued, 25 March is also a day of mourning and remembrance, marking mass Soviet deportations to Siberia of Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians, of whom very few returned. Remembering the victims with a minute silence, President Sassoli said such human rights violations must never be repeated.

Changes to the agenda

Thursday

Pursuant to Rule 163 on urgent procedure, the following files are added for adoption:

- Digital Green Certificate – European Union citizens, and
- Digital Green Certificate – third country nationals.

These requests will be put to the vote in the first voting session.

Requests for the floor according the Rule 163(3) will be taken on Thursday at 9:00 after the results of votes are announced. Any requests for the floor have to be submitted one hour in advance.

Information on the extraordinary remote participation procedure is available [here](#).