



Egypt plays host to EP President Pöttering

Parliament's President Hans-Gert Pöttering used a two-day visit to Egypt to praise Cairo for liberalising its telecommunications industry and for acting to improve the position of women in society. He also stressed the need for peaceful cohabitation between all faiths in this, the European year of intercultural dialogue.

He also defended a resolution passed by MEPs in January on Egypt, which drew unflattering attention to the country's human rights record. President Pöttering said that the resolution was "the result of a thoughtful process of negotiations between various groups...on the basis of accurate and verified information". He later called it a way for both parties to move ahead to a "wider and ongoing dialogue".

During his visit he acknowledged Egypt's role in alleviating the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip when Palestinians broke into Egypt to get food and water.

He also addressed the theme of intercultural dialogue telling Egyptian MPs that "we are determined to guarantee the peaceful cohabitation of Christians, Muslims and Jews, as well as all other religious or secular people".

During the visit on 24-25 February, Mr Pöttering held talks with Dr Fathi Sorour - Speaker of the People's Assembly - and with MPs from the Human Rights, Foreign Affairs and General Affairs Committees. He met members of Egypt's civil society and laid a wreath on the Tomb of assassinated Egyptian leader Anwar Al-Sadat.