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SWIFT data transfers

EU Parliament scores victory for democracy in rejecting EU-US SWIFT agreement

Today the EU Parliament rejected (1) the interim EU agreement to supply SWIFT bank transfer data to the US authorities. German Green MEP **Jan-Philipp Albrecht**, member of the EU Parliament civil liberties committee, commented:

"Today will be remembered as important day for democracy in the EU. The EU Parliament has shown that it is capable of meeting its new responsibilities as co-legislator on domestic affairs and security matters. Parliament's rejection of the EU-US SWIFT agreement has turned the tide back towards democracy and the respect of fundamental rights in the European Union. The Council presidency and the Commission must now cancel the interim agreement and launch a debate with the European Parliament on the minimum legal protection that must be afforded to European citizens on matters of international security cooperation."

"The EU Parliament has taken a stand to strengthen the rights of 500 million people in the EU. Data protection and citizens' rights are not an obstacle to fighting terrorism, but a bastion of the society we are trying to protect. Compromising on the most fundamental of rights devalues democracy instead of defending it. The Greens are ready to help shape a security policy that counters the threat of criminal or terrorist activity, while respecting fundamental rights."

UK Green MEP and EP civil liberties committee member **Jean Lambert** commented:

"Council sidelined the European Parliament for asking difficult questions. National governments must now wake up to the new reality of the Lisbon Treaty: the European Parliament is a co-legislator on this issue and will not tolerate being treated as a junior partner when it comes to defending EU citizens' fundamental privacy and data protection rights."

Notes to editors:

(1) A move to postpone the vote was rejected by 305 votes to 290. The vote to reject the agreement was subsequently passed with 378 in favour, 196 against.

Background:

Council approved the interim agreement on 30 November, one day before the Lisbon Treaty came into force and granted the EU Parliament co-legislative powers on the issue. The interim agreement came into force on 1 February 2010, before any vote by the EU Parliament plenary.

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