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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on statements by the Council and Commission

pursuant to Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Cecilia Malmström and Henrik Lax

on behalf of the ALDE Group

on the outcome of the 17th EU-Russia summit, held in Sochi on 25 May 2006

European Parliament resolution on the outcome of the 17th EU-Russia summit, held in Sochi on 25 May 2006

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on EU-Russia relations,
 - having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Russia, which entered into force on 1 December 1997,
 - having regard to its report on EU-Russia relations adopted on 26 May 2005,
 - having regards to its resolutions on Russia and on the situation in Chechnya adopted in April 2002, January 2003, July 2003, December 2005 and January 2006,
 - having regard to the outcome of the 17th EU-Russia summit, held in Sochi on 25 May 2006,
 - having regard to the current international and European responsibilities of Russia, in its capacity as President-in-office of the G8 and Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe,
 - having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the EU and Russia define their relationship as a strategic partnership based on common values and shared interests, Russia having become an even more important neighbour following the enlargement of the European Union in 2004,
- B. whereas the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement of 1997 remains the legal framework for EU-Russia relations but will expire in 2007; whereas in the autumn Russia is likely to be formally recognised as a partner in the Northern Dimension policy,
- C. whereas the EU-Russia summit in St Petersburg in May 2003 decided to set up four ‘Common Policy Positions’, adding a ‘space of freedom, security and justice’, a ‘space of external security’ and a ‘space of research, education and culture’ to the ‘Common Economic Space’ that had been agreed on two years earlier,
- D. whereas a strengthened dialogue is needed in order to overcome concern over the weakening of democracy in Russia, the increased State control of the media, the worsening climate for NGOs, the increased political control of the judiciary, and other measures which have considerably strengthened the power of the Kremlin, as well as the Russian attitude and reaction to the failed presidential elections in Belarus in March 2006 and Russian attempts to use energy pricing and import restrictions as political instruments,
- E. whereas EU-Russia relations have suffered in the past from a lack of coherence, and further efforts must be made to secure greater objectivity and coherence in the EU

approach towards Russia,

1. Deplores the lack of concrete progress at the summit, which reflects the considerable difficulties facing the further development of EU-Russia relations at this stage, despite the long-term common interest in developing close cooperation and cultural, economic and social contacts extending from people-to-people contacts to State level;
2. Calls therefore on the Council and Commission to proceed urgently with new proposals on how to develop EU-Russia relations, as part of the ongoing work within the Commission to draw up its negotiating mandate for a successor to the soon-to-expire Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, and to involve the European Parliament fully in this process;
3. Regrets that the visa facilitation agreement concluded at the summit between the European Union and Russia;
 - restricts visa facilitation to a number of pre-set small categories of people;
 - fails to remove the excessive practice of requiring invitations and compulsory registration for tourists travelling on an individual basis, which in practice severely hinders the possibility of free movement of EU citizens in Russia, and in some cases vice versa;
 - does not link the agreement to ratification of the Hague Convention on International Child Abduction;
4. Points out that effective visa facilitation is urgently needed in order to allow the establishment of a modern knowledge-based economy, mobility being as important today as access to modern communications technology and the internet;
5. Recalls the commitment of the European Union to developing a strategic partnership with Russia and reconfirms its support for the development of the four 'Common Policy Spaces' and to the objective of developing a free trade area with Russia as part of this process;
6. Reiterates its firm view that there must be parallel progress in all the four areas, and that progress in the economic field must be accompanied by progress in justice and home affairs and, in particular, in the EU-Russia Human Rights Dialogue, which so far has utterly failed to produce any tangible results, as human rights and fundamental values must remain part of the process, also as regards the fight against terrorism, organised crime and illegal immigration; condemns in this context the decision of the Russian authorities to ban the first gay pride parade in Moscow on 27 May, as well as their failure to ensure the safety and security of peaceful demonstrators and human rights activists;
7. Underlines that respect for and implementation of international obligations and strict adherence to the rule of law remain a fundamental part of developing a truly mature democracy; calls on Russia to play a constructive role worldwide, in particular as regards its close neighbours Iran and the Middle East;

8. Notes that some progress was made at the summit on issues such as energy cooperation, but calls on Russia to ratify the Energy Charter Treaty without delay and to make further progress on issues related to Russia's accession to the WTO in 2007;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Russian State Duma and the Russian Government.