



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2016)0121

Implementation and review of the EU-Central Asia Strategy

European Parliament resolution of 13 April 2016 on implementation and review of the EU-Central Asia Strategy (2015/2220(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the fourth progress report of 13 January 2015 on the implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia adopted in 2007,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on the EU Strategy for Central Asia as adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council on 22 June 2015,
- having regard to the commitments announced at the EU-Central Asian ministerial meeting held in Brussels on 20 November 2013,
- having regard to the Joint Communiqué of the Fifth EU-Central Asia High-level Conference on Energy and Water Cooperation held in Milan on 12 and 13 October 2015,
- having regard to the results of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting held in Warsaw from 21 September to 2 October 2015,
- having regard to the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan launched in Turkey in 2011, and the ‘Heart of Asia’ ministerial conference held in Kabul on 14 June 2012 aiming at its enforcement,
- having regard to the Committee on Foreign Affairs’ support and positive evaluation in respect of the newly appointed EU Special Representative for Central Asia, Peter Burian, at its hearing on 1 June 2015,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on the region, in particular those of 20 February 2008 on an EU Strategy for Central Asia¹ and 15 December 2011 on the state of implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia²,
- having regard to its resolution of 29 April 2015 on the Court of Auditors’ special reports

¹ OJ C 184 E, 6.8.2009, p. 49.

² OJ C 168 E, 14.6.2013, p. 91.

in the context of the 2013 Commission discharge¹, and in particular part II of the Special Report No 13/2013 of the Court of Auditors entitled ‘EU Development Assistance to Central Asia’,

- having regard to its resolution of 29 April 2015 with observations forming an integral part of the decisions on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013, Section III – Commission and executive agencies², and in particular to paragraph 240 thereof,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 June 2012 on ‘Engaging in energy policy cooperation with partners beyond our borders: A strategic approach to secure, sustainable and competitive energy supply’³,
- having regard to its resolution of 22 November 2012 on the role of the Common Security and Defence Policy in case of climate-driven crises and natural disasters⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2014 on EU priorities for the 25th session of the UN Human Rights Council⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2012 on the review of the EU’s human rights strategy⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2012 on the annual report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2011 and the European Union’s policy on the matter⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 June 2010 on EU policies in favour of human rights defenders⁸,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 September 2015 on human rights and technology: the impact of intrusion and surveillance systems on human rights in third countries⁹,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 December 2012 on a Digital Freedom Strategy in EU Foreign Policy¹⁰,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 November 2010 on ‘Strengthening the OSCE – a role of the EU’¹¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 22 November 2012 containing its recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service on the

¹ OJ L 255, 30.9.2015, p. 68.

² OJ L 255, 30.9.2015, p. 27.

³ OJ C 332 E, 15.11.2013, p. 28.

⁴ OJ C 419, 16.12.2015, p. 153.

⁵ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0252.

⁶ OJ C 434, 23.12.2015, p. 111.

⁷ OJ C 434, 23.12.2015, p. 87.

⁸ OJ C 236 E, 12.8.2011, p. 69.

⁹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0288.

¹⁰ OJ C 434, 23.12.2015, p. 24.

¹¹ OJ C 74 E, 13.3.2012, p. 12.

- negotiations for an EU-Kazakhstan enhanced partnership and cooperation agreement¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 March 2012 on Kazakhstan²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 18 April 2013 on the human rights situation in Kazakhstan³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2015 on ‘Kyrgyzstan, homosexual propaganda bill’⁴,
 - having regard to its position of 22 October 2013 on the Council position at first reading with a view to the adoption of a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council providing macrofinancial assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic⁵,
 - having regard to its resolution of 8 July 2010 on the situation in Kyrgyzstan⁶,
 - having regard to its resolution of 6 May 2010 on the situation in Kyrgyzstan⁷,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 September 2009 on the conclusion of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Tajikistan, of the other part⁸,
 - having regard to its resolution of 23 October 2014 on human rights in Uzbekistan⁹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2011 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of a Protocol to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Uzbekistan, of the other part, amending the Agreement in order to extend the provisions of the Agreement to bilateral trade in textiles, taking account of the expiry of the bilateral textiles Agreement¹⁰,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2013 on EU-China relations¹¹,
 - having regard to the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019, adopted by the Council on 20 July 2015,
 - having regard to the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline, adopted by the Council (Foreign Affairs) on 12 May 2014,
 - having regard to United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/53/144, ‘Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and

¹ OJ C 419, 16.12.2015, p. 159.

² OJ C 251 E, 31.8.2013, p. 93.

³ OJ C 45, 5.2.2016, p. 85.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0008.

⁵ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0426.

⁶ OJ C 351 E, 2.12.2011, p. 92.

⁷ OJ C 81 E, 15.3.2011, p. 80.

⁸ OJ C 224 E, 19.8.2010, p. 12.

⁹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2014)0040.

¹⁰ OJ C 168 E, 14.6.2013, p. 195.

¹¹ OJ C 36, 29.1.2016, p. 126.

Fundamental Freedoms’, better known as ‘The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders’,

- having regard to the ongoing reviews of the EU Global Strategy for foreign and security policy and of the European Neighbourhood Policy,
 - having regard to Article 21 of the TEU,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Development, the Committee on International Trade and the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A8-0051/2016),
- A. whereas the EU-Central Asia Strategy was adopted in a context of growing importance of the region and increased EU engagement in neighbouring Afghanistan, the extension of the European Neighbourhood Policy to the Caspian region, ongoing EU support for reform and modernisation of post-Soviet societies, and EU energy security interests; whereas it also recognised the security threats and challenges that require greater cooperation between Central Asia and the EU as well as its Member States; whereas the Strategy has been implemented for almost 8 years;
- B. whereas despite its common past Central Asia is a heterogeneous region with a multiethnic and multi-denominational character; whereas the lack of mutual trust and persisting tension over the use and sharing of natural resources have so far undermined the development of a genuine regional cooperation;
- C. whereas respect for democracy, the rule of law and human rights is a basic condition for deeper cooperation between the EU and the five countries of Central Asia in areas of mutual interest, under the very meaning of the term ‘partnership’ as vested in the Partnership Cooperation Agreements; whereas the overall situation of democracy and human rights in the region remains to various degrees poor and worrying;
- D. whereas serious failings in the rule of law and in respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms hamper the Central Asian countries’ chances of sustainable development and good governance, to the detriment of their societies;
- E. whereas trade and energy links enhance EU-Central Asia relations and promote common values such as the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights; whereas the GSP system aims at the diversification of the Central Asian economies;
- F. whereas some Member States have developed and deepened bilateral relations with some of the countries of Central Asia; whereas the EU needs a coherent and consistent approach towards the region in order to avoid any overlapping or sending out mixed and confusing signals;
- G. whereas EU development aid to Central Asia, mainly under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), has been increased to EUR 1 billion in 2014-2020, i.e. by 56 % compared to the programming period 2007- 2013;
- H. whereas the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) represents an important financing tool aiming to support civil society organisations and democratisation;

- I. whereas the region is increasingly affected by religious fanaticism, reflected in the support for IS/Da'esh, Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Hizb-ut-Tahrir, and a large number of people have left to join IS/Da'esh in Syria and Iraq;
- J. whereas the region is an important transit route for drugs between Afghanistan and Russia and certain local clans are involved in this lucrative trade, which allows them to exert significant political influence owing to corruption and a mingling of interests;
- K. whereas education has a crucial role to play in fostering the stable, secure and sustainable development of the region;
- L. whereas in June 2015 the Foreign Affairs Council reiterated its commitment to promoting the rights of women and concluded that the empowerment of women in the region is an essential element for longer-term stability and good governance;
- M. whereas the Central Asian countries must improve the legal and administrative provisions of their asylum policy, and whereas regional consultative processes, such as the Almaty Process coordinated by the UNHCR and the IOM, may contribute to this;
- N. whereas the effects of global warming on Central Asia are still largely unknown, but it is already clear that the problems of water supply in the low-lying countries will become even worse;
- O. whereas Russia and China have strong ties with and influence in the region, but there is still great scope for the EU to enhance its action and cooperation with Central Asian countries;
- P. recalling that various regional partnerships, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), include several Central Asian countries among their members while being dominated by Russia and/or China;
- Q. whereas the region has been integrated in the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative, and in particular the 'New Silk Road Economic Belt', enhancing its strategic importance;
- R. whereas the Central Asia region, while consisting of the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, is also significantly influenced by Russia, China, Mongolia, Iran and Afghanistan;

General provisions on EU commitments

1. Stresses the strong strategic, political and economic interest of the EU in strengthening its bilateral and multilateral relations with all the Central Asian countries, on the basis of common shared values as stated in the existing Partnership and Cooperation Agreements between the EU and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and in the agreement – albeit not yet in force – with Turkmenistan;
2. Reiterates the EU's strong interest in a prosperous, peaceful, democratic, stable, and inclusive Central Asia that functions as an economically and environmentally sustainable region, as stated in the strategy of 2007;
3. Points out that the strategic approach adopted to date to shaping relations with Central Asian countries has demonstrated only limited viability and success; recognises that

economic relations between the EU and the Central Asia Strategy's target countries have seen no relevant expansion, that the aim of promoting regional cooperation and integration between Central Asian countries by means of exchange of experience and transfer of standards on the part of the EU has stalled;

4. Believes that any considerable progress in the areas referred to in this resolution is yet to be achieved, but expresses the hope that the parties involved, namely both the EU and its Member States and the five Central Asian countries, will make serious efforts to achieve the aims and goals laid down in the official documents and treaties which form the legal basis for the Union's bilateral and multilateral relations with, respectively, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan;
5. Welcomes the review of the EU-Central Asia Strategy conducted by the EEAS, the Commission and the Council in 2015; takes the view, nevertheless, that the priorities, objectives and targets should be aligned more specifically to the interests, requirements and framework conditions of the Central Asian partner states, taking account of the differences between the countries of the region and of the uniqueness of each, and should therefore be more precisely defined through individual, tailor-made country action plans, and accompanied by benchmarks and indicators with a reasonable timeframe for completion, in order to adapt these action plans more flexibly to the framework conditions in the region, as quickly as possible;
6. Agrees that the strategy adopted in 2007 and the long-term priority areas defined therein (respect for human rights and the rule of law, good governance and democratisation; youth and education; economic development, trade and investment; energy and transport; environmental sustainability and water; common security threats and challenges; and intercultural dialogue) remain relevant and necessary for a concrete European engagement in the region, in line with the objectives set in the EU strategy; welcomes, however, the more focused approach of the strategy review;
7. Takes positive note of the rather ambitious strategy review; and concurs with the Council's designation of the region as strategically important, and accordingly agrees to strengthen effective cooperation regarding political, diplomatic and trade relations and to support a genuine democratic transition; in this context, welcomes the 56 % increase in and more specific focusing of EU development assistance to the region for the period 2014-2020 as compared with the previous period;
8. Welcomes the fact that the review was discussed at the EU-Central Asia ministerial meeting held on 21 December 2015 in Astana; supports holding an EU-Central Asia summit, to promote the EU's objectives in the region and address matters of concern and cooperation;
9. Shares the view that a differentiated, conditional and incentive-based approach should be applied in order to achieve better results both bilaterally and regionally; believes that regional programmes, such as those for border management, for fighting drugs and trafficking, and for transport and energy, should be tailored so as to target interested parties, including countries of the wider region such as Afghanistan, Iran, Mongolia or Azerbaijan;
10. Calls for the EU to cooperate more intensively on an ad hoc basis with those Central Asian countries that wish to go beyond the EU Strategy for Central Asia;

11. Stresses that enhanced regional cooperation would improve the economic and security situation in the region; given the fact that Central Asia has weak interregional links, invites the EEAS and the Commission to develop projects that would foster such cooperation for those countries interested in enhancing those links;
12. Underlines that the disbursement of EU funds should be clearly incentive- and performance-based, taking account of achievements in regard to a number of benchmarks to be established for each country, and depending on measurable progress with regard, in particular, to the fields of democratisation, preventing and fighting corruption, free and fair elections, human rights, ending drug trafficking, respect for labour rules, good governance, the rule of law, development, human security and good neighbourly relations;
13. Agrees that concrete and constructive engagement and adoption of democratic reforms and governmental programmes can be taken as contributing indicators of achievement in numerous fields; nonetheless urges the Commission and the EEAS to base their assessments on facts established on the ground;
14. Reiterates the need for higher political visibility for the EU in the Central Asia region; urges the EU and its Member States to speak with one voice, without bilateral negotiations that often weaken human rights requirements and fostering foreign policy coherence and coordination in the region, and together to introduce joint programming of aid and projects with Member States in order to achieve a full impact and synergy; urges the Council/EEAS/Commission to adopt a concrete action plan with measureable benchmarks enabling proper evaluation of progress made in the future; welcomes closer involvement and ownership on the part of Member States in terms of implementing the strategy;
15. Welcomes the re-establishment of the post of EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Central Asia after a year-long gap, and expects that the newly appointed EUSR will make an important contribution to the implementation of the strategy for and to shaping relations with the Central Asian countries, by ensuring consistency of the external actions of the Union in the region and communicating the EU's positions to political leaders and societies in Central Asia;
16. Requests the EUSR to focus on strengthening democracy, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, promoting regional cooperation and facilitating dialogue and the peaceful resolution of outstanding contentious issues, developing contacts not only with governments and parliaments but also with civil society and the media, contributing to conflict prevention and promoting regional security, and promoting sound environmental and climate change management, particularly in relation to water and hydrocarbon resources; asks the EUSR to report orally and in writing to Parliament on the major challenges, pursuant to Article 36 of the Treaty on European Union and to the Representative's mandate;
17. Requests the EEAS, the Commission and the EUSR to make the EU's presence more prominent in Central Asia, ensuring greater visibility for the EU among the population, civil society, local media, and the business and university communities; urges the EEAS to balance quiet diplomacy with increased public diplomacy;
18. Requests the EEAS to provide regular analysis on Central Asia, taking account of the region's diverse neighbourhood and including issues touching on integrating

Afghanistan and Iran and offering a comprehensive approach to the Caspian Sea;

19. Calls on the Commission to ensure synergies, coherence and consistency between the measures taken by international organisations such as the OSCE, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), as well as between the various EU external financing instruments deployed in the region, such as the DCI, the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (ISP), the EIDHR and the Partnership Instrument (PI), as well as to step up coordination with the EBRD and the EIB;
20. Calls on the EU to cooperate with the aid and development projects of the US in the fields of environment, education and climate policy, in order to improve effectiveness and to jointly reach a wider public;
21. Calls for closer cooperation between the EU and the OSCE on Central Asia, especially in the fields of human rights, democratisation and security, with the aim of joining and complementing, where appropriate, their efforts in the region;
22. Encourages the EU delegations in Central Asia to use their potential to maximal effect in contributing to implementation of the EU Strategy, in particular with regard to support for and engagement with civil society;
23. Supports continued interparliamentary cooperation, and highlights the role of its standing delegation for relations with the region in monitoring the implementation of PCAs with the countries of the region;

Democratisation, human rights and the rule of law

24. Urges the Council, the EEAS and the Commission to attach great importance to and engage proactively with the promotion and reinforcement of democracy, the enforcement of civil, political and human rights, including those social rights codified in the UN's Social Covenant, the establishment of the rule of law, and good governance and administrative action in the Central Asian countries, thereby laying the foundations for security and stability, for establishing open societies in the countries in question, and, as a result, for providing best practices for facing external and internal political, security and economic pressures and challenges;
25. Stresses that respect for human rights and democracy must be at the core of the EU strategy vis-a-vis the scope of cooperation envisaged in the PCAs, entailing the application of the human rights and democracy clause; regrets that the legal obligations vested in the PCAs for upholding democracy and the rule of law have not been properly implemented, with the exception of some progress made in Kyrgyzstan;
26. Regrets that overall respect for democratic standards, human rights and fundamental freedoms has not yet reached an acceptable level; regrets that the human rights situation overall remains worrying, but stresses that there have nevertheless been limited positive developments in some countries of the region, including legislative reforms, increased efforts to prevent torture, and steps towards eliminating child labour and forced labour;
27. Highlights the added value and further potential of the Rule of Law Platform, coordinated by Germany and France with active support from Finland and Latvia, in organising several events related to constitutional and administrative law and the training of judges; encourages other Member States to take a more proactive role in this

- respect; insists, however, that the platform be enhanced to cover actual democratisation and human rights issues; calls for the full involvement of and closer cooperation with civil society in relation to this platform; calls on the EU and Member States' embassies to support genuinely independent non-governmental partners;
28. Draws attention to the discrepancies existing between the adoption of laws and their implementation in practice, resulting in incorrect assessment of progress; urges the EEAS/Commission to evaluate progress on the basis of real practical results, rather than assessments based on legislation and declarations;
 29. Recommends that the EU tailors its human rights policy and external financing instruments better, keeping a consistent long-term democratic reform as the guiding light;
 30. Strongly condemns the continued persecution of human rights defenders, opposition political figures and journalists in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, and calls on the EEAS to use all means at its disposal to act swiftly in their defence;
 31. Condemns the targeting of exiled opposition representatives by some of the Central Asian regimes, including murders and abuse of extradition procedures through Interpol; urges Member States to provide better protection and to avoid deporting them in line with the principle of non-refoulement, which forbids the rendering of genuine victims of persecution to their persecutor;
 32. Urges the EEAS, in this regard, to make forthright declarations condemning repressive steps taken by Central Asian regimes in the name of preserving public security, whilst recognising legitimate security concerns;
 33. Calls on the Council, the EEAS and the Commission, in the course of the further development of relations, to urge the Central Asian partners to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as soon as possible, and to approve and implement the ILO's essential core standards and other ILO rules that remain outstanding;
 34. Understands the risk to security posed by returning foreign fighters who have been fighting alongside Da'esh, but expresses its deep concern at the growing trend towards clampdown on civil society and opposition parties on the pretext of security and stability, which it does not consider in any case to be a suitable response to this threat, including through doubtful charges of terrorist activity or vague accusations of inciting social hatred, the adoption of so-called 'foreign agents laws' which stigmatise and limit the activities of legitimate NGOs that receive foreign funding, and the increased use of monitoring, surveillance, censoring and filtering technologies; reminds the partner countries that a fully functioning democracy must observe freedom of expression and media plurality; stresses in this context that the suppression of free expression of opinion is in no way contributing to sustained internal stability; stresses that the relevant EU tools, such as the conducting of regular seminars with the general public and increased exchanges, should contribute to strengthening the position of the public, and that many of the communities concerned are more inclined at present to rely on relationships between groups and clans or networks controlled by the ruling elite;
 35. Calls on the countries of the region to consider the presence of international NGOs not as a threat but as a benefit to society, and to grant them full access to prison facilities in

order to improve the transparency of the enforcement of penalties, particularly in relation to cooperation with all UN agencies and the International Red Cross;

36. Is concerned at the increasing number of laws in the countries of the region restricting freedom of the media, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly and association, and targeted on civil society funding (the ‘foreign agents laws’), and the LGBTI community (the ‘LGBTI propaganda laws’); considers that in this context, in addition to promoting the freedoms mentioned, the EU must also make it a priority to promote freedom of religion and belief and the rights of women, minors and minorities;
37. Calls on the authorities to make further efforts to protect ethnic and religious minorities and LGBTI persons in Central Asian societies, to end discrimination against them, and to enforce the rights of vulnerable people, in particular of persons with disabilities;
38. Recalls that the protection and promotion of children’s rights is among the key objectives of the EU, and calls on the authorities to support its implementation in compliance with international law and standards, in particular the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
39. Welcomes the establishment of Human Rights Dialogues with all five countries of Central Asia; points out, however, the lack of transparency of the process, and calls on the VP/HR to review the role, mandate, objectives and follow-up of the Human Rights Dialogues with the countries of the region, and in particular to involve all stakeholders, including Islamic reformist political movements which are opposed to extremism, and to introduce systematic human rights monitoring mechanisms, as well as contingency plans to improve those mechanisms’ effectiveness should they reveal serious shortcomings; notes that the Human Rights Dialogues are important tools of engagement on the part of the EU with the Central Asian countries, enabling the implementation of smart strategies, and therefore should be used adequately; calls for these dialogues to be part of a comprehensive human rights engagement in the region; calls, in this regard, for human rights concerns to be raised and conveyed at all levels, including that of heads of state and government; urges the EU to raise individual concrete cases coherently and publicly;
40. Stresses the importance of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council in effectively implementing protection for human rights, the democratisation process and the rule of law in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan;
41. Reminds the Central Asian governments of their commitments within the human dimension of the OSCE;
42. Welcomes UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s statements warning against a shrinking democratic space during his visit to the region in June 2015;
43. Notes that there is practically no coordination between EU and US actions in Central Asia; encourages establishing more practical cooperation links; believes that joint action can be beneficial, especially in such fields as human security and human rights promotion;

Women’s rights and gender equality

44. Recognises that, while Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and

Turkmenistan face separate challenges in advancing human rights, the region faces common challenges as regards addressing and promoting women's rights and gender equality;

45. Notes that, despite all five Central Asian countries having ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), their culture remains patriarchal and male-dominated, that significant inequalities still exist between men and women in many areas, including as regards access to higher education, parts of the labour market and legal protection and rights, and that violence against women is still widespread in many parts of Central Asia and takes many forms, including domestic violence, bride-kidnapping, trafficking, early marriage and physical abuse; calls on the five countries to fully implement the CEDAW; reiterates that the support given by the EU must include specific measures to eradicate discrimination against women;
46. Notes that women play a full and crucial role in agricultural production and farming across all the Central Asian countries, with the average share of women employed in the agricultural sector standing at 58 %¹; calls on all the Central Asian countries to encourage the employment of women and female entrepreneurship, particularly in rural areas; calls for the economic and social rights and empowerment of girls and women to be promoted and monitored, as a key objective of the EU's relations with the region;
47. Recognises the steps taken by individual Central Asian countries to improve gender equality, such as the amendments to Articles 154 and 155 of Kyrgyzstan's Criminal Code, which came into force in February 2014 and toughened the penalty for the widely practiced custom of bride-kidnapping; notes, however, that the protection of women's rights and the promotion of gender equality across the region still remain a challenge; asks the Commission to further support the Central Asian countries in developing their women's rights agendas with a view to developing and achieving gender equality and ensuring that everyone, including the most vulnerable members of society, can fully enjoy their human rights;
48. Welcomes Kazakhstan's Gender Equality Strategy and the 45 political, social and economic measures contained therein; asks the Commission to further support the Central Asian countries in developing their women's rights agendas, and calls for more effective implementation of this strategy; regrets the lack of female representation in Kazakh public decision-making bodies, despite a 30 % quota being legally required in political institutions;
49. Asks the EEAS, within the review of its Central Asia Strategy and in line with its priorities for 2016-2020 and the progress already made by Central Asian countries, to establish a comprehensive Gender Equality Action Plan, with concrete actions to improve women's rights and women's living conditions; considers that every Central Asian country should be encouraged to enact legislation which explicitly prohibits all forms of violence and discrimination against women, including sexual, physical, physiological and economic abuse, that prevent them from working or from accessing bank accounts, credit cards or transportation, among other isolating tactics; points out that financial security is the number one predictor of whether or not a victim of domestic violence will break free and remain free from further abuse; calls on the Central Asian countries to treat violence against women as a criminal offence, to

¹ World Bank statistics 2012.

properly investigate all reported cases and to implement measures to guarantee protection, assistance and access to justice for victims, together with mechanisms to ensure the enforcement of the law; notes that the marriage agency industry is relatively significant in Central Asia and asks that countries in the region consider regulating these agencies so as to best protect vulnerable women from exploitation; calls on the Central Asian countries to organise education campaigns about the right to live free from violence and awareness-raising initiatives for society as a whole, and especially religious leaders, about the absolute requirement to obtain the consent of both parties to marriage ceremonies;

50. Notes that there is a gap between the law and reality and that, while some countries have a legal code guaranteeing equal rights with regard to the distribution of property, discrimination still persists in favour of male heirs; is concerned that the lack of legal registration of marriages in Tajikistan leaves women in a particularly vulnerable position after a divorce, given that OSCE research has shown that, because of this, 80 % of women in divorce cases are denied property rights and child support;
51. Urges the EU to support civil society organisations working to defend human rights and promote gender equality in Central Asian countries, and to cooperate actively with international organisations involved in the field of gender equality, for example the ILO, the OECD, and the UN, with a view to creating synergies serving to empower women;
52. Notes that women are poorly represented in ministerial posts, accounting in 2015 for 15 % and 5,7 % of such posts respectively in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan¹; encourages the Central Asian countries and the Commission to focus also on women's involvement in decision-making, in particular in the political sphere, and recommends that a quota system be introduced to promote women's participation, above all as candidates for office;
53. Calls on the Central Asian countries to promote equal access to information and communication technologies in order to ensure women's potential for stimulating growth in local and global economies;
54. Recommends that judicial personnel be made aware of and trained in gender issues, and points to the need to punish persons who commit gender-based violence;
55. Stresses the need to organise training courses on violence against women and trafficking for law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judicial personnel, and to establish accessible centres and shelters offering psychological and legal support for victims;
56. Emphasises the importance of properly funding institutions and bodies responsible for implementing gender equality policies and of ensuring autonomy and funding for civil society organisations working for women's rights;

Education and youth – people-to-people exchanges

57. Stresses that education is one of the key areas for the EU to deploy its long-term action in Central Asia; considers education to be a crucial pillar of integration and a

¹ World Bank statistics for the five-year period 2011-2015.

democratic economic and social development enabler for all the countries of Central Asia; supports the work carried out by the Central Asia Education Platform by means of educational and institutional programmes providing technical support and dialogue through seminars (such as Bishkek 2014); in this regard, welcomes Latvia's initiative to organise the 1st EU-Central Asia ministerial meeting on education and the commitment of Latvia and Poland to lead the regional programme on education, following a disappointing long-term unwillingness of some Member States to do so; calls on the EU and its Member States to actively contribute to the implementation of the respective goals brought forward during the Latvian presidency in the first half of 2015; regards investment in inclusive and quality education as the best way to gradually improve the socio-economic situation of the region;

58. Encourages the Commission to address the identified shortcomings of the EU-Central Asia Education Platform, such as fair access to education, problems related to 'brain drain', and the training of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, such as girls, children with disabilities and children belonging to minorities;
59. Urges the EU to devote more attention to the promotion of quality education among young people in the Central Asian countries, given the positive effects in terms of social inclusion, social cohesion and stability, and building sustainable democratic societies, and as the best form of prevention against violent extremism and radicalisation among youth in the region; regards this as a priority, given the demographic challenge of a 'youth bulge', with those aged 14 or under making up 25-35 % of the population; asks for more attention to be paid to cross-border projects for intercultural reconciliation and development in the Ferghana Valley;
60. Welcomes the increase in school enrolments at both primary and secondary level, noting the importance of continuing on this path; welcomes the fact that there is near-parity in the numbers of females and males completing primary and secondary school; underlines the importance of women having access to vocational training and university education, particularly in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, where a significant gap still exists between the numbers of females and males enrolled in tertiary education;
61. Points to the importance of women's access to vocational training and university education, including a greater take-up rate in the fields of science and technology, and urges the EUSR to encourage incentives in this area; considers that the EU should intensify its action in this field, for instance by organising teacher training courses and supplying educational materials; calls for steps to be taken to modernise the public education sector, promote international academic exchanges and enable women to participate on equal terms; considers that gender equality training courses should be devised for education professionals;
62. Considers that the EU's positive role in the region should be advanced via education and people-to-people contacts; recalls the importance of the EU's international exchange programmes, such as Erasmus +, Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus Tempus, in promoting positive mobility and intercultural dialogue between the EU and Central Asia and in providing opportunities for empowerment for students benefiting from the programmes, thus bringing the two cultures closer together; commends the fact that the EU has budgeted EUR 115 million for the Erasmus+ educational cooperation programme in the region; calls on all relevant stakeholders, at Union level as well as in the Member States, to evaluate and reinforce the existing mechanisms of the study/scholarships programs and young professionals' exchanges between the EU and

the Central Asia region, especially in technology and applied sciences;

63. Welcomes the fact that all five Central Asian countries have been closely following the Bologna process, driving numerous national reforms in recent years;
64. Invites the Commission to promote the participation of Central Asian scientists, institutes and businesses in collaborative research and innovation projects financed under the Horizon 2020 programme;

Economic integration, trade and sustainable development

65. Notes the common characteristics resulting from older history, including that of the Silk Routes, colonisation by Turkic tribes and the reception of Islam; notes also that the five countries in the region are at differing stages in their development, i.e.: Kazakhstan is emerging as a key player in the region, with which the EU's relations are progressing steadily; Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are much poorer, but relatively open, with a degree of civil society involvement; the EU's relationship with Uzbekistan is also developing; but Turkmenistan remains the most closed country in the region, with no effective independent civil society;
66. Points to the fact that there is also considerable diversity in the region, not least in endowments of natural resources such as fossil fuels and arable land, and – partly as a consequence of this – in the countries' current levels of human and economic development; stresses the importance of taking into account, on the one hand, the cultural differences within the region, and, on the other hand, the interdependency among the countries;
67. Recognises the possible positive impact of a new impulse in economic cooperation between the EU and Central Asia on modernisation and democratisation in the region;
68. Believes that economic diversification in the region provides added value in terms of regional development, stability and security, taking into account social, economic and environmental balance; considers it essential to modernise and develop sustainable domestic transport and energy infrastructure, especially in rural areas, improve access to high-speed internet, and facilitate the development of interregional connectivity; takes the view that environmental rehabilitation and sustainable development should have equal priority in the context of the development of the region, and stresses the importance of trade in promoting both; favours an increase in EU support for resource management in the Central Asian countries and encouraging cross-border cooperation among them;
69. Is concerned at the lack of socio-economic development, which is stalled and uneven, the lack of state transparency and the consequent corruption, poor governance, weak institutional framework, lack of respect for the rule of law and low participation of civil society, encouraging clientelism and exacerbating the problems of corruption and lack of state efficiency;
70. Underlines the growing importance of trade relations between the EU and Central Asia, with the EU now the first trading partner in the region; stresses the need for the EU to further step up trade and investment relations with the Central Asian countries; points out, in this regard, the need for the Central Asian countries to strengthen their efforts in tackling corruption and in promoting a stable environment in order to attract foreign

investment;

71. Is of the opinion that economic and trade relations with the countries of Central Asia must advance hand in hand with, and never at the expense, of the rule of law, democracy, and human rights and fundamental freedoms; recalls, to this end, the importance of activating the provisions laid down in the relevant clauses of the trade agreements signed with the EU should the other contracting party violate human rights;
72. Points out that inclusive and sustainable economic development is among the key priorities of the Strategy; stresses the need for the Central Asian countries to promote active policies aimed at poverty reduction and fighting social exclusion; notes the deep negative impact on the region of the economic slowdown in Russia and China, as well as of the ongoing geopolitical tensions and the conflict in Ukraine; underlines, in this regard, that the deteriorating economic trends arising from falling commodity prices, the devaluation of the rouble and the fall in remittances from migrants in Russia, many of whom are now returning home unemployed, pose serious socio-economic challenges for the region; notes that, against this backdrop, the region's growth rate post-2014 is expected to be roughly half the average rate for the previous ten years;
73. Urges the Commission to develop programmes facilitating the social reintegration and employment of returnees from abroad and a stronger dialogue on migration and mobility;
74. Underlines the need for a EU-Central Asia strategy that is not based on geostrategic interests but is designed to develop a participative and democratic society, characterised by freedom of association for trade unions and an active civil society, and to boost gender equality and the empowerment of women, especially in rural areas;
75. Stresses that, despite rapid economic growth in recent years, the region faces high poverty rates, high income inequality and declining life expectancy, especially in rural areas, where 80-90 % of the population live; stresses that the process of privatisation during the economic transition has, to a large extent, left mountain regions behind; emphasises that women in those regions are particularly affected, as many men migrate to cities in search of employment, leaving women with the entire burden of farm work and family responsibilities;
76. Highlights the importance of making the Strategy consistent with global commitments, in particular with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as adopted on 25 September 2015 at the UN Sustainable Development Summit;
77. Encourages the mainstreaming of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the EU's development agenda in the region; reiterates that including the SDGs will result in more comprehensive sustainable development in the Central Asia region;
78. Stresses the importance of the EU seizing the opportunity of development cooperation in order to promote respect for human rights and achieve the SDGs, so as to raise levels of trade and investment in all countries in the region and strengthen the role and involvement of the social partners in civil society;
79. Is of the opinion that development aid should be disbursed only in countries with a genuine commitment to the alleviation of poverty, equal and sustainable socio-economic progress and respect for human rights, and that those countries must

demonstrate that they have effective anti-corruption policies and allow the EU to monitor implementation of the corresponding efforts; questions, in this respect, the rationale for and cost-effectiveness of the aid granted to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; requests that the policy be reviewed should improvements occur; encourages the VP/HR to help foster progress in this field; regrets that due to the high levels of corruption and ineffective bureaucracy the absorption capacity of aid is very low and its positive implications are very limited;

80. Notes that the current review was deliberately decoupled from the 2014-2020 programming exercise of the Development Cooperation Instrument for Central Asia concluded in 2014, in order to avoid any confusion or duplication while preserving the coherence of EU action in the region;
81. Urges that development assistance be focused on rural development and sustainable farming, in particular to wean farming away from monocultures such as cotton-growing;
82. Calls for the EU to monitor the effectiveness of its technical and financial assistance to public-sector reform in the countries of Central Asia;
83. Calls for the coordination of EU development policies with Member States' activities in the region; calls for close development policy cooperation with the US within the framework of our sustainable development partnership; also calls for cooperation with China and Russia in developing the Central Asia region;
84. Takes into account China's assertiveness in the region and the shift in its role from external commercial partner to regional economic governance mediator, including the regional provision of collective goods;
85. Believes that synergies between the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and China's 'One Belt One Road' initiative will constitute an important tool for bringing about economic and social development in the region;
86. Notes also that two countries, namely Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, have joined the new Eurasian Economic Union initiated by Russia;
87. Calls for close cooperation by the EU with UN funds and agencies and with the World Bank;
88. Takes note of the continued sectorial budget support in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and calls on the Commission and the EEAS to define and apply robust and objectively verifiable conditions, for any continuing budget support programmes in particular; emphasises, however, that this must be accompanied by more stringent criteria, including a strong reform agenda and effective anti-corruption measures; points out that EU budget support should not be used for direct financing of the basic public services (such as primary and secondary education, basic healthcare and basic infrastructure), which is a primary responsibility of the authorities; considers, rather, that EU aid should be tied to the performance of the authorities in this regard, and that EU budget support should encourage the development of advanced public services such as research, innovations, university education, innovative infrastructure, etc.;
89. Welcomes the increase in macrofinancial assistance, and calls for the instrument concerned to be employed on the basis of stringent cost-benefit criteria and detailed

impact assessments which focus on spillover effects; taking into consideration the highlights of the Strategy progress reports, emphasises the importance of Member States' involvement in the implementation of EU assistance in order to achieve greater impact and improve results;

90. Welcomes Kyrgyzstan's request for application of the GSP+ arrangements, and hopes that Tajikistan and Uzbekistan will follow its example;
91. Considers it important that all of the countries of Central Asia respect the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and join the WTO;
92. Recognises, in line with the OECD's findings, the particular importance of FDI-SME business linkage programmes (BLPs) as a tool for diversification and for maximising the spillover effect of investments, enabling the Central Asian countries to tie FDI more closely to their domestic economies and enhancing their competitiveness while enabling them to gain access to international markets, finance, technology and management skills; in this regard, calls on the governments of the Central Asian states to initiate these programmes and to increase the involvement of stakeholders in already existing BLPs; points out that to ensure that local production meets international quality standards, complementary measures need to be put in place, such as offering training programmes that help SMEs upgrade the skills of their staff or aiding SMEs in embracing internationally-recognised quality standards;
93. Emphasises that it is vital for sustainable economic development in the region to deepen regional integration, increase intra-regional trade, focus on transport networks and logistical services, and improve the business climate and the legislative and regulatory framework, especially for SMEs;
94. Recalls the many cases of infectious tuberculosis in the Central Asia region; underlines the importance of continuity in the roll-out of tuberculosis treatment in emerging countries that no longer receive bilateral EU aid, in view of the development of drug resistance in some strains of tuberculosis;

Energy, environment, water, and transport

95. Stress the need for more intensive dialogue on infrastructure development, including energy and transport networks as well as high-capacity internet connections;
96. Recognises that energy cooperation is a key issue in relations between the EU and Central Asia; regards the region as an additional potential source of energy security for the EU, with particular reference to the potential for increased cooperation with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan; recalls the importance of the EU having a secure, stable and affordable energy supply, in line with its Energy Union and also in light of the relevance this has for the overall security of the Union; consequently, underlines the need for energy supply and diversification to be a key element of the EU-Central Asia strategy, and calls for the EU to increase efforts towards integration of the energy market, which is in the interest of all parties as it will help create energy diversification; calls, in this regard, for a redoubling of efforts to achieve the objective of expanding the Southern Corridor to Central Asia and the trans-Caspian pipeline; emphasises, however, that energy agreements and dialogues must be coupled with strong human rights elements;

97. Takes note of the EU's support for energy projects which could expand the Southern Gas Corridor, including through the trans-Caspian and, possibly, Iran routes; calls, nevertheless, on the EU to conduct full feasibility studies for such projects, including environmental and social impact assessments;
98. Supports the promotion by the EU of renewable energy, energy efficiency and the integration of energy markets in Central Asia with those of neighbouring countries, as well as of the EU;
99. Reiterates its opinion that reinvestment of revenues from natural resources is crucial for sustainable socio-economic development;
100. Encourages better coordination and reinvigorated efforts under the crucial water and environment regional platform, led by Italy and Romania;
101. Advocates an enhanced proactive role for the EU in terms of environmentally sustainable development; emphasises, in this context, the importance of the principles of environmental sustainability in the course of extraction or processing of natural resources in the region promoted by the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI); notes that only Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan comply with the EITI in the region, whilst Tajikistan's candidate status was temporarily suspended in 2015;
102. Notes with concern that in addition to increasing climate change impacts, multiple alarming environmental challenges inherited from the Soviet period persist, such as those relating to unmonitored and ongoing nuclear contamination over the past decades and to urgent action to clean up nuclear testing sites, industrial and mining activities, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, land and ecosystem degradation, air pollution, desertification, and, above all, continued catastrophic water mismanagement; urges the Commission, in this respect, to step up technical assistance, assist with resource mobilisation and provide European know-how and best practice as to how to deal with these problems;
103. Urges the EU to continue providing financial and technical assistance addressing the health, humanitarian, environmental, and economic and awareness issues related to the consequences of nuclear testing by the USSR at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site (SNTS) in north-eastern Kazakhstan, near the city of Semey (previously known as Semipalatinsk);
104. Welcomes and encourages further efforts in terms of adaptation and resilience to climate change, and urges the Central Asian countries to contribute constructively to the success of the 2015 Paris Climate Conference;
105. Calls on the EU to further intensify its Disaster Risk Reduction and resilience-building programmes in Central Asia as a region especially prone to natural disasters, with serious threats related to environmental disasters and climate change;
106. Expresses its deep concern at the massive die-off of Kazakhstan saiga antelope herds in May 2015; urges the EU to contribute with research and environmental measures to the prevention of possible future cases;
107. Calls on the EU to further its efforts in fostering cooperation among Central Asian countries on water management;

108. Encourages the EU to prioritise and deploy its ‘water diplomacy’ further in order to facilitate improved cross-border water management and mediate dispute settlement, including the promotion of an open and effective framework, in particular in the case of the Rogun dam; in this context, urges the EU to stimulate and accelerate further adherence to international conventions and legal principles relating to shared water resources;
109. Calls on the countries of the region to sign and ratify the UN’s Espoo and Aarhus Conventions relating to water conflicts, if they have not already done so, and to involve civil society in the implementation of these conventions;
110. Calls for renewed efforts to cope with and tackle the dramatic consequences of the environmental disaster of the drying-up of the Aral Sea; urges the Commission to increase its support for the International Fund for the Aral Sea, and calls on the EEAS to include this question as a priority in its regular dealings with Uzbekistan;
111. Points out that building a strategic, modern and interoperable road and rail infrastructure system along the Silk Road route is a key interest for China, the EU and Russia, and that the successful integration of the region through modern and reliable infrastructure would offer a major opportunity, not only for greater regional economic integration but also to promote mobility of persons and multicultural exchange, in turn producing a better environment for advancing the rule of law and democracy;
112. Reiterates the EU’s readiness to offer its experience and know-how to promote the adoption and enforcement of safety, security and environmental standards in all transport modes and to facilitate links along the Europe –Caucasus-Central Asia transport corridor; in particular, supports continued efforts on the EU’s part for the development of safe and secure air and maritime transport in Central Asia;
113. Encourages further coordination by the EU with China’s transport policy in the region;

Regional cooperation, security challenges and border management

114. Encourages the EU to increase its dialogue on Central Asia with relevant regional and international organisations, as well as with the neighbours of the Central Asian countries and other active states in the region;
115. Encourages the EU to enhance connectivity by identifying, together with the countries of Central Asia, fields for intensified cooperation, especially with regard to transport and energy; stresses that priority should be given to the integration of Central Asian countries among and between each other, as well as into international markets and corridors;
116. Believes that the EU, working with the Member States, should continue to promote specific regional integration and confidence-building policies, while also rewarding positive steps taken by individual Central Asian countries or groups of countries through increased cooperation; takes the view that EU measures should be geared to the needs and specific characteristics of each country; emphasises the need to deepen political dialogue and foster confidence-building measures among the countries of the region;
117. Regards the deepening of regional economic integration as an important element for regional stability and peace-building;

118. Underlines the importance of cooperation with the OSCE and the UN in all policy fields;
119. Calls on the EU also to involve Mongolia on an ad hoc basis in certain aspects of the European Strategy for Central Asia;
120. Recognises that the main threats and challenges identified in the Strategy for Central Asia remain relevant;
121. Believes that the EU should encourage regional cooperation, in particular with regard to common issues and common challenges, and that the common interest should prevail over the heterogeneity of the countries concerned;
122. Notes that unresolved ethnic issues, lack of prospects for an orderly transfer of power, and non-inclusive governance in the countries of Central Asia are sources of potential instability and extremism, and that as a consequence the successful implementation of core EU interests following on from the Central Asia Strategy is being seriously called into question;
123. Supports the EU's long-term goal of transforming the nascent EU-Central Asia High-Level Security Dialogue into a genuine forum for cooperation in addressing common security challenges in the region and beyond its borders, such as the spillover effects of the war in Afghanistan, including the threat of Islamic State, drug trafficking, trafficking of human beings, violent extremism and terrorism, and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risks; highlights the importance and positive impact of regional cooperation programmes, including those strengthening cross-border cooperation and border security, such as the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) and the Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP); believes that a focus on human security rather than purely state security must be integrated in the Dialogue; reiterates the EU's determination to further develop both regional and bilateral security dialogues with Central Asian countries, ensuring the stronger involvement of Afghanistan in cooperation with the regional partners concerned, with particular regard to the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA);
124. Takes note of the adoption of the CADAP for 2014-20; is alarmed, however, by the record levels of opium cultivation and of the related trafficking from Afghanistan through Central Asia; requests the EEAS/Commission to address the issue of involvement of organised crime as well as elites in trafficking, and the negative public health effects in the region;
125. Recommends, once again, that BOMCA and CADAP be brought under the auspices of the ISP rather than the DCI;
126. Urges the EU to continue with the regional support programmes aimed at conflict prevention and peace-building, including the promotion of intercommunal and interethnic reconciliation, as well as at border demarcation in Central Asia, financed from the ISP;
127. Welcomes the project 'Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Peace and Development', sponsored by Switzerland and the UNDP and aiming to create an environment more conducive to sustainable peace and development in cross-border

areas between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan;

128. Highlights the role of the UNRCCA, which has been based in Ashgabat since 2007, as well as that of the OSCE, in conflict prevention in the region;
129. Asks the EU to lend its support to the initiatives of the UNRCCA and, under its supervision, to focus on the water issue and initiate a dialogue between the five countries in order to deal with cross-border pollution;
130. Asks the Commission to consider the unfavourable consequences that issues of access to water resources could have for stability and security in Central Asia, and to closely monitor all developments;
131. Notes with concern that the 2015 US Annual Report on Human Trafficking¹ has placed Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on the 'Watch List', meaning that the number of victims of human trafficking is increasing; calls on the EU's Anti-Trafficking Coordinator to support Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in combating human trafficking, which is an affront to human dignity, often involving psychological terror and physical violence, and must therefore be eradicated; asks that Member States highlight this important issue in their dealings with these countries;
132. Highlights the importance of cooperation between the EU and the countries of Central Asia in preventing and combating terrorism; is deeply concerned about the activities of the extremist organisation Islamic State (IS) in recruiting growing numbers of Central Asian citizens to travel to the Middle East to fight or otherwise support IS, Al-Nusra and other terrorist and extremist organisations, prompted in part by political marginalisation and bleak economic prospects; recognises that should a significant portion of radicalised Central Asian citizens return to their home countries, they risk challenging security and stability throughout Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, Russia, China and India;
133. Encourages the EU to address, together with the Central Asian governments, the mutual challenges of recruitment of fighters and supporters by IS, by focusing on political and administrative failures, such as promoting religious freedom while safeguarding secular constitutions and revising discriminatory laws and policies, implementing outreach programmes for both men and women, focusing on employment for disadvantaged young people, prioritising policing reform, and ensuring better coordination of security services, as well as learning from European or Asian experiences in rehabilitating and reintegrating Islamist radicals;
134. Considers that international cooperation, including with Russia and China, is essential in addressing the growing threat of Islamist radicalisation in Central Asia; calls on all international parties with influence in the region to encourage Central Asian states to make a concerted effort to better coordinate cooperation between their security services, including with respect to intelligence-sharing; stresses that such cooperation should be consistent with their international human rights commitments;
135. Expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating security situation in northern Afghanistan and the risks of repercussions for military and political stability in the region; welcomes the improvements in coherence between the EU Strategies for

¹ Compiled by the US State Department.

Afghanistan and Central Asia respectively; highlights, however, the need to closer interlink the EU's approach to Central Asia with Afghanistan and adapt existing policies to the post-2014 strategy for Afghanistan; encourages the involvement of Afghanistan in programmes aimed at stability and security in the region; encourages Central Asian states' governments to take a more proactive role and engage in a broader cooperation in the interests of stability in Afghanistan; emphasises the need to regionally coordinate human security, anti-terrorism, immigration and anti-drug trafficking strategies;

136. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the EEAS to prioritise in their relations with the Central Asian states the reform of the security sector, including better funding and training, promoting religious freedom in the framework of the secular constitutions, preventive aspects of countering terrorism and efforts at rehabilitating former jihadists, as components of an overall strategy for dealing with the challenge of Islamist extremism; regrets that despite the urgent need for Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Central Asian countries, the EU has not been able to integrate it into its strategy; welcomes, in this context, the progress that has been made in Kazakhstan as a starting-point for reform on a regional scale; calls on the EU to develop specific SSR programmes for Kyrgyzstan, and possibly Tajikistan, focusing on the rule of law and human rights standards in criminal justice and on civilian policing;
137. Recognises the continued implementation of the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone by the five Central Asian countries;
138. Calls on the Member States for a more uniform interpretation and implementation of and strict respect for the eight criteria laid down in the 2008 EU common position on arms export controls; in this respect, raises concern over the circumvention of this common position by some European companies following bilateral agreements by some Member States;
139. Asks Member States to stop the export of ready-made intrusive surveillance systems to the countries of the region if there are sufficient reasons to believe that these systems would be used against journalists, political figures or human rights defenders; calls on the Commission to revise the European export control system in order to prevent such intrusive systems from falling into the wrong hands;

Country-specific issues

140. Underlines that the following country-specific paragraphs address only priority issues and are therefore not all-encompassing;

Kazakhstan

141. Emphasises that deeper political and economic relations should be based on shared values; notes that Kazakhstan is the first Central Asian partner with which the EU has negotiated and signed an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA); expects, with its finalisation, an active and concrete engagement by Kazakhstan on political and democratic reforms, stemming from its international obligations and commitments; recognises the '100-step programme' as an attempt to address urgent reforms in the country;
142. Emphasises, in this regard, the recommendations of Parliament on the negotiations for

an EU-Kazakhstan EPCA of 22 November 2012, which are crucial for Parliament's consent to the conclusion of the new EPCA and for future EU-Kazakhstan cooperation;

143. Is deeply concerned at the increasing deterioration in the fields of freedom of the media, freedom of expression, and freedom of association and assembly; reiterates and stresses that concrete and tangible progress in political reforms has been linked to progress in the negotiation of the new EPCA; calls on Kazakhstan to make every effort to ensure that its legislation is in line with Council of Europe standards and that it guarantees the full implementation of the fundamental freedoms without self-imposed restrictions; calls on the Kazakh authorities to take concrete and effective measures to implement the recommendations made by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in the outcome report on his mission to Kazakhstan in January 2015; encourages Kazakhstan, in this respect, to review and amend its new criminal codes with regard to the criminalisation of libel, as this undermines fundamental freedoms; expresses its deep concern at the law on not-for-profit organisations, as it undermines the independence and even challenges the very existence of NGOs in Kazakhstan, and calls for its revision;
144. Reminds Kazakhstan of its OSCE commitments to democratic reforms, and urges the country to match its foreign policy ambitions – as a member of the UN Human Rights Council for 2013-2015, host of the 2017 International EXPO, and a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in 2017-2018 – with significant domestic political reforms;
145. Underlines that according to the preliminary conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR international observation mission to the 20 March 2016 elections, Kazakhstan still has a considerable way to go in meeting its OSCE commitments for democratic elections, although some progress was noted; encourages the Kazakh authorities to adopt the necessary measures in order to implement all the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations in full;
146. Call for the release of all political prisoners, including the leader of the Alga! opposition party, Vladimir Kozlov;
147. Recognises the positive role played by Kazakhstan in hosting and facilitating the 2013 E3+3 – Iran negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme, the country's contribution to global nuclear security and safety initiatives, including the hosting of the new international nuclear fuel bank, operated by the IAEA, which will commence operations in 2017, its tentative mediating role with regard to the crisis between Russia and Ukraine, and the good offices provided to consultations among the Syrian opposition;
148. Welcomes the fact that as of 2015 Kazakhstan has reached the final stage of its WTO accession process;

Kyrgyzstan

149. Regrets the backsliding of Kyrgyzstan, the country of the region in which the EU had placed most expectations in the pursuit of democratic ambitions;
150. Commends Kyrgyzstan on the progress which was demonstrated by the recent parliamentary elections; recognises their peaceful conduct and the significantly better transparency; welcomes the findings of the OSCE Election Monitoring Mission on

Parliamentary Elections in Kyrgyzstan on 4 October 2015, which highlighted a wide range of choices for voters and a competitive electoral campaign; expresses its concern, however, at the mandatory registration of biometric data as a prerequisite for voting, resulting in significant problems with the inclusiveness of the voter list; stresses that further efforts are needed to develop a fully functioning parliamentary democracy, despite the initial encouraging signs shown by Kyrgyzstan regarding pursuing democratic reforms and shifting towards a genuine multi-party system, as one of the pilot countries for EU democracy support;

151. Welcomes the fact that Kyrgyzstan has withdrawn the restrictive draft legislation on 'foreign agents' and LGBTI persons, and asks it to reject all legislation discriminating against LGBTI persons and targeting civil society;
152. Welcomes Kyrgyzstan's successful election on to the UN Human Rights Council during 2016-2018, and invites the country to constructively use its upcoming membership to address human rights issues;
153. Urges the Commission/EEAS to assist Kyrgyzstan in delivering justice to the victims of the 2010 ethnic clashes;

Tajikistan

154. Urges Tajikistan to comply with its international human rights commitments and to protect freedom of assembly and the independence of the legal profession; draws attention to the problematic situation of the media following the signing by the President of a new regulation according to which all information about official events will be channelled through the state information agency, thus restricting access by other media; calls on Tajikistan to refrain from undue interference in the work of NGOs and not to implement the recently passed legislation on NGO funding;
155. Expresses its concern at the decision to ban the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, following a worrying trend aimed at suppressing legitimate political forces and silencing critical voices for the sake of security concerns; calls on the Tajik authorities to comply with the commitments of the 1997 peace agreement and to adopt the necessary measures to guarantee freedom of expression, pluralism and a free and open political environment;
156. Takes note of the conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission to the parliamentary elections of 1 March 2015 in Tajikistan that those elections 'took place in a restricted political space and failed to provide a level playing field for candidates';
157. Continues to express concern over the inefficiency of EU development aid in the country; urges the EEAS/Commission to prioritise programmes aimed at prevention of torture in detention centres and media freedom in Tajikistan;
158. Welcomes Tajikistan's accession to the WTO in March 2013;

Turkmenistan

159. Stresses that Turkmenistan is a party to most major international agreements and is therefore under the obligation to respect and protect human rights under all circumstances; expresses its readiness to increase EU support in the field of democratic principles and human rights, in particular by making full use of the EIDHR and other

means to support the reform process in the country;

160. Regrets, that in the reporting period the situation in the field of the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms remained practically unchanged, despite some legislative efforts in the political, judicial, economic, social and educational fields; believes that the new legislation should be subject to review by international experts in the light of international human rights obligations;
161. Asks the VP/HR and the Commission to engage with the Turkmen authorities requiring concrete steps aimed at improving the human rights situation and the rule of law, pursuant to Article 21 TEU; further calls for the continued raising of human rights concerns at all levels, in addition to the ongoing human rights dialogue; reiterates its call on the EEAS to upgrade the Liaison Office in Ashgabat into a fully-fledged EU Delegation in Turkmenistan as quickly as possible, inter alia so as to interact with civil society and monitor the human rights situation;
162. Underlines the importance of a continued human rights dialogue, especially with regard to continuing the pressure for the release of individuals detained on politically motivated grounds and to disclosure of the fate of the disappeared prisoners;
163. Recognises that the entry into force of the PCA with Turkmenistan would help develop the full potential of the established relationship;
164. Calls on the VP/HR to honour the agreement reached with her predecessor regarding a monitoring mechanism, allowing Parliament to be properly informed by the EEAS on the implementation of the PCA once it has entered into force;
165. Welcomes the recently strengthened engagement of Turkmenistan with the EU in areas of mutual concern; notes the country's presence at the 2015 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and the high-level presence on the Turkmen side at the 15th annual Joint Committee meeting under the Interim Trade Agreement in October 2015;
166. Calls on Turkmenistan to stop its ongoing campaign of removing satellite dishes and blocking access to some websites, and to put an end to the intimidation and harassment of independent journalists and civil society activists;

Uzbekistan

167. Regrets the EU's lack of effective pursuit of democratisation in Uzbekistan, and reiterates its expectation that the EU will actively pursue this objective in the country; notes the Uzbek Government's refusal to undertake significant reforms; encourages the VP/HR to develop a policy of critical, constructive, conditional and coherent European engagement with Uzbekistan;
168. Deplores the systematic and routine violation of fundamental rights and freedoms despite the adoption of improved laws on the matter and the ratification of international human rights instruments; urges the Uzbek authorities to take meaningful steps to fully address the concerns and effectively implement all the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, the Committee Against Torture and the Human Rights Committee;
169. Insists that the Uzbek authorities release all those who have been imprisoned in retaliation for their peaceful exercise of freedom of expression, association and

assembly, and highlights the need for prevention and investigation of cases of torture in prison; expresses its concern at the arbitrary extensions of prison terms; calls on the Uzbek authorities to allow independent human rights NGOs to work without hindrance;

170. Welcomes the fact that the country has made some progress in eliminating child labour and, in particular, the Government's ban in this sense; recalls the importance of independent and objective monitoring of the implementation of the ban; reiterates the need to eliminate the use of forced labour during the annual cotton harvest, while encouraging further commitment by the government to continue with concrete efforts, such as an action plan, to eradicate forced labour in line with the recommendations of the ILO and the World Bank;
171. Recalls that Parliament has decided not to consider granting its consent to the Protocol to the EU-Uzbekistan PCA extending the provisions of the Agreement to bilateral trade in textiles, until it is confirmed that concrete reforms have been implemented and have yielded substantial results, also ensuring that the practice of forced labour, additionally to child labour, is effectively in course of being eradicated in Uzbekistan;
172. Takes the view, in this regard, that some of the past EU development aid to Uzbekistan, including that for capacity-building by its parliament, was misdirected and that aid should be redirected to more meaningful areas such as rural development or environmental and water management;
173. Expresses its deep concern at the activities of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which pledged allegiance to Islamic State in August 2015 and has recruited thousands of jihadists in Central Asia;

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174. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the EEAS, the EU Special Representative for Central Asia, and the governments and parliaments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.