

# EU – GEORGIA PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE

## SIXTEENTH MEETING

25-26 March 2014

Tbilisi

Co-Chairs: Ms Tinatin KHIDASHELI and Mr Milan CABRNOCH

### Final Statement and Recommendations

pursuant to Article 89 of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

Under the co-chairmanship of Ms Tinatin KHIDASHELI and Mr Milan CABRNOCH, the sixteenth meeting of the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee was held in Tbilisi on 25-26 March 2014. The Committee heard Mr PETRIASHVILI on behalf of the Government of Georgia and Ambassador Philip DIMITROV, Head of the Delegation of the European Union.

### *The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (PCC)*

#### Relations between the European Union and Georgia

1. reiterates its recognition of the European aspirations and choice of Georgia and of its commitment to build a deep and sustainable democracy; welcomes Georgia's efforts in modernising and reforming its society, institutions and fighting for justice and against corruption;
2. warmly welcomes the initialling of the EU/Georgia AA/DCFTA which took place in Vilnius on 29 November 2013, following the July 2013 successful completion of technical negotiations on its DCFTA part;
3. sees in this development, which sets a clear European Agenda for the country, the proof of the substantial progress Georgia and the EU have already made towards political association and economic integration;
4. is looking forward to the signature of the AA/DCFTA as soon as possible<sup>1</sup>, and recalls the stated European Commission view this ought to take place by June 2014; trusts that this would allow its provisional application already in the course of this year;
5. stresses furthermore that Article 49 TEU refers to all European States, which may apply to become Members the Union, provided that they adhere to the principles of

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<sup>1</sup> EP Plenary resolution on the *Outcome of the Vilnius Summit and the future of the Eastern Partnership*, adopted 12/12/2013, §1

democracy, respect fundamental freedoms and human and minority rights, and ensure the rule of law<sup>2</sup>;

6. recalls the position of the European Parliament that the European Commission should facilitate the implementation of the AA/DCFTA and assist Georgian authorities so that tangible positive effects and benefits covered by these agreements can be delivered to Georgia's citizens in the short term;
7. acknowledges the progress demonstrated by Georgia in the implementation of the first phase Visa Liberalisation Action Plan benchmarks, aiming at a visa-free regime in a secure and well managed environment in due course;
8. stresses that a National Human Rights Action Plan is one of the requirements for the VLAP and, thus, notes the importance of seeing the introduction and implementation of strong anti-discrimination legislation, protecting the rights of all Georgians, such legislation being a crucial requirement under the aforementioned Visa Liberalisation Action Plan;

#### Modernisation and sustainable democratic reforms in Georgia

9. underlines the precious work undertaken by EU Special Adviser Thomas Hammarberg in the field of Constitutional and Legal Reform and Human Rights and fully endorses his recommendations, as enshrined in the landmark "*Georgia in Transition*" September 2013 report;
10. reminds that a key advice provided therein is that all political forces and state institutions should close their review of the past in a spirit of strict adherence to principles of justice, fairness and proportionality, in order to help overcoming the sequels of political polarisation; in this respect, underlines that the value of a parliamentary involvement in any "lessons learned" exercise would lie in its truly bipartisan spirit;
11. recalls, as well, the report's forward-looking focus on the need to strengthen Rule of Law and effective systems and mechanisms of checks and balances, in order to separate the State from the governing political bloc of the day, by further developing strong democratic institutions and accountable law enforcement agencies;
12. calls upon all Georgian political forces to avoid any suspicion of political retribution or politically motivated selective justice and take a forward looking approach, working with all democratic political forces in Georgia;
13. recognises, nonetheless, the progresses achieved in the modernisation of the country and in meeting the requirements of the Association Agreement that have taken place in recent years, and welcomes the exemplary peaceful transfer of power following the democratic parliamentary and presidential elections;
14. in this respect, further recalls the importance of the recommendations included in the recent OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Missions, to which the EP participated,

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<sup>2</sup> EP Plenary resolution 2014/2595, adopted 27.02.2014, paragraph 24

following the October 2012 general elections and the October 2013 Presidential elections; calls for the relevant recommendations to be taken into account in the run-up to the June local elections and takes note that the recent reforms which allow for the direct elections of mayors or governors with a 50% threshold corresponded to demands of civil society organisations such as ISFED or Transparency International, in view of increasing their democratic legitimacy;

15. highlights the importance of the work undertaken by Georgia's Public Defender/Ombudsman in defending Human Rights, helping to enhance a more effective handling of individual complaints, and increase the awareness of human rights among state institutions and Georgian citizens.

#### The situation of the refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Georgia

16. calls on all sides to allow the safe and dignified return of all IDPs to the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/ South Ossetia and reiterates that forced demographic change remains an unacceptable violation of international law;
17. acknowledges the efforts and the progress made so far by Georgia in implementing the strategy for IDPs, particularly in building and refurbishing houses and setting standards to guide the implementation process with the international community;
18. deplores the fact that, despite these efforts, IDPs continue to be seriously affected by long-term unemployment, which hampers their integration into the rest of the Georgian society and their access to medical care and education;
19. acknowledges that Georgia remains heavily dependent on external funding for improving the situation of refugees and IDPs; welcomes the steps taken by the authorities and calls on Georgia to further step-up its efforts to improve the living conditions and enhance efforts to provide livelihood options to all IDPs;
20. welcomes the European Commission plans to remain actively engaged in providing the Georgian authorities and IDPs with assistance;

#### The peaceful settlement of the conflict in Georgia

21. repeats its firm support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, within its internationally recognised borders, and reiterates its concern at the continuing occupation of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region / South Ossetia by the Russian forces;
22. strongly condemns the acceleration of the Russian-driven process of so-called borderisation around Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region / South Ossetia;
23. welcomes, nonetheless, the fact that Georgia is endeavouring to adopt a flexible and pragmatic approach towards engagement with its occupied territories;
24. calls on the Russian Federation to fulfil its obligations under the Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008 and the Implementing Measures of 8 September 2008, and to allow

full access to the EUMM to the occupied territories;

25. moreover, calls on the EU to continue promoting projects of freedom of movement alongside the administrative border lines and contacts between the affected populations, in coordination with Georgian authorities;
26. highlights in this respect the added value provided by such initiatives as the Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM), administered by the UNDP and benefitting from EU funding, in order to support measures seeking to have a demonstrable impact on confidence building within and across conflict divided communities ;
27. welcomes the strong commitment of the EU to remain engaged in the stabilisation and conflict resolution efforts in Georgia, including through its co-chairmanship of the Geneva International Talks, the efforts of the EUSR for South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia and the continued presence of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia;
28. believes that while Georgia and Russia could engage in direct talks without preconditions on a range of subjects, with mediation, if needed, by a mutually acceptable third party, these should complement, but not replace, the existing Geneva process;
29. welcomes the signing of a framework agreement with Georgia on participation in EU crisis management operations, providing a permanent legal basis for the involvement of Georgia in on-going and future EU crisis management efforts around the world;

*unanimously adopted on 26 March 2014*