



*Conference of Delegation Chairs*

**Guidelines for EP Interparliamentary Delegations on promoting human rights and democracy in their visits to non-EU countries**

***Approved by the Conference of Delegation Chairs on 5 April 2011***

- EP Interparliamentary delegations contribute to the development and reinforcement of democracy, the rule of law and the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms in their regular contacts with parliaments and other government institutions and civil society organisations in non-EU countries.
- The EP human rights and democracy policy takes its reference from the AFET annual report and from other resolutions adopted in plenary (urgency resolutions, resolutions winding up plenary debates, etc.); statements by the President are also an important reference.
- The abolition of the Death Penalty is an absolute priority of the EU and should always be raised if the countries visited still apply it.

**Preparatory phase**

- Before travelling the EP Interparliamentary delegation receives a country briefing paper which should always include a section on the human rights situation in the country and raise particular cases (on human rights defenders, on the death penalty, on minorities, etc.), listing UN conventions ratified (or not), cooperation with UN special mechanisms and the related resolutions adopted by the EP.
- The EU has an extensive representation of offices in non-EU countries visited by the PE Interparliamentary delegations. Many of these EU delegations have Human Rights focal points and local human rights strategies, as has the EEAS Headquarters in Brussels. The EP delegation should ensure that its programme includes opportunities informed of and to discuss the resulted human rights strategy.
- The EU has eight guidelines on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law that are regularly updated (Death Penalty; Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; Human Rights dialogues with non-EU countries, Children and armed conflict; Human Rights defenders;

Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child, Violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them; International Humanitarian Law). They can be downloaded from the following link: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showpage.aspx?id=1681&lang=EN>.

- The choices of NGOs and civil society organisations to meet locally should be carefully checked with the EU delegations and with the main human rights NGOs that are represented in Brussels.

### **During the visit**

- Meetings with Heads of EU delegations should include information on the implementation of human rights strategies and on projects funded by the EIDHR; whenever possible, a visit to projects or meeting with those with responsibility for the project should be foreseen.
- The use of death penalty must be raised with authorities of countries where it is still applied and the EP delegation should call for its abolition or, where appropriate, the introduction of a moratorium.
- Whenever an EP Sakharov prize laureate lives in one of the countries to be visited, a meeting should be included in the programme or, at least, a contact with the laureate.
- Cases of human rights defenders should be raised in meetings with the authorities, asking for prison visiting if possible.
- The meetings with civil society organisations should take place at the beginning of the visit in order that messages can subsequently be conveyed to the authorities. The choice of the organisation to be met should not be dictated nor impeached by the country authorities.
- For each rotating Presidency of the Council, Amnesty International asks for a commitment on ten individual cases. These cases could be followed up by the EP Interparliamentary delegation if applying to the country being visited.
- Final statements or joint texts should bring up human rights and democracy issues and should be in line with EP resolutions.

### **After the visit**

- The report of the visit should include a section on the activities relating to human rights.
- When reporting back from the visit, a joint meeting of the EP Interparliamentary delegation and the Subcommittee on human rights should be programmed.