

Committee on Foreign Affairs
The Chair

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Luis Yáñez-Barnuevo García
Chair
Conference of Delegation Chairs

Dear Colleague,

With reference to your letter of 27 November last, in which you submit for the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs the draft annual programme of inter-parliamentary meetings for 2010, I would like to share with you the following remarks.

First of all this committee is fully committed to implementing the recommendations made by the Working Group on Internal Reform regarding the cooperation between committees and inter-parliamentary delegations. In this respect, we should continue to promote the involvement of our rapporteurs on the specific countries/regions in the activities of the relevant delegations and ensure that the findings of your delegations are duly reported in committee. For these findings to be relevant, however, one should seek maximum coordination in the planning of our activities. One should therefore consider consultation, at staff level, on the scheduling and agendas of interparliamentary meetings.

It is in this spirit that we have examined closely the draft programme and would like to make a number of suggestions, in order to maximise the impact of the work of interparliamentary delegations on the deliberations of this committee and ensure that their activities enjoy the necessary political guidance.

Before doing so, allow me to point out that a considerable number of scheduled meetings coincide with the ordinary meetings of the Foreign Affairs Committee. I would ask you and your colleagues to avoid as much as possible such overlaps, since they make it difficult for interested Members of AFET to contribute to your debates and vice versa.

As a general point I would also emphasise the importance of delegations contributing to the task of scrutinising the way in which EU assistance funds are put to use in our partner countries.

.../...

And now to the specific comments:

Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey

As a general rule JPC meetings should be scheduled in such a way as to allow our Members to use the information exchanged with their counterparts in candidate countries for the resolutions which this committee draws up every year. In this respect it is somewhat regrettable that the JPC with Croatia takes place after the plenary vote on the relevant resolution. Should the activities of the JPC carry on also during the second half of the year, it would be useful to schedule its meeting shortly after the publication by the Commission of the relevant progress report.

The same applies for the JPC with FYROM – the scheduled meeting in week 38, before the publication of the progress report by the Commission, could be reconsidered.

Russia, the Eastern Partnership States, Central Asia and Mongolia

In this case I would like to emphasise the need to ensure that our rapporteurs on the negotiations for new agreements with Russia and Ukraine are adequately involved in discussions held by the respective delegations on both issues. The committee would also welcome more information about the two seminars on "the political situation in Ukraine" which are planned in Brussels and would welcome being closely associated in their organisation.

With regard to the South Caucasus, and Russia, the recent exchange of views with Ambassador Tagliavini has confirmed the need to debate publicly and with all concerned partners the conclusions of the report of the Independent Fact Finding Mission. The forthcoming report on the EU Strategy for the South Caucasus and the relating hearing on frozen conflicts which will be held by this committee on 27 January will usefully contribute to this debate and will also be the opportunity to update on the situation in Nagorno Karabakh.

As a rapporteur has recently been nominated for the full Trade and Co-operation Agreement with Turkmenistan, a subject which is bound to be contentious, it will be essential that the rapporteur is fully included in all meetings/the delegation visit planned for 25 – 29 May 2010.

Maghreb, Mashrek, Israel and Palestine

In this case I would merely point at the need to schedule the visit to Lebanon as early as possible in 2010. The formation of a national unity government, after many months of negotiations, and the resumption of parliamentary work lead us to believe that work on the electoral reform, in view of the forthcoming local elections, could be pursued. Our visit would be a sign of our support for the work of the new government and its EU-orientated agenda and ensure that due attention is paid to the recommendations of the last EU Election Observation Mission.

Clearly, the committee will also seek to coordinate its planned delegation visit to the Middle East with the scheduled inter-parliamentary meetings in Israel and in the Palestinian territories.

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Iran, Iraq

Given that the Committee on Foreign Affairs is following the rapidly changing situation in Iran, a very close collaboration – possibly participation by an AFET rapporteur – with the activities of the IPM in May 2010 would be highly desirable.

In anticipation of the forthcoming Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between EU and Iraq, which AFET will be dealing with, it will be useful to have feedback from the early 2010 Iraq Delegation Bureau visit to Iraq.

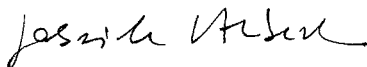
The Americas

We welcome the fact that most meetings with our Latin American counterparts are scheduled before the EU-LA Summit, in May 2010, and hope that these will feed into the report which our committee is about to commence on the new EU-Latin America strategy.

We also assume that the negotiations for regional agreements with the Andean Community and Central America will feature high on the agenda of the respective delegations and would welcome feedback on such issues, which are of strategic importance.

The above are but initial comments on the work programme. I sincerely hope that the dialogue between our committee and the relevant delegations will be pursued throughout the year, so as to ensure that our work is complementary and well coordinated.

Yours sincerely,



Gabriele Albertini

Copy: Jerzy Buzek, President