



ΕΒΡΟΠΕΪΣΚΗ ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤ ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤΟ ΕΥΡΟΠΕΟ ΕΥΡΟΠΣΚΪ ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤ ΕΥΡΟΠΑ-ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤΕΤ
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Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA

Introduction and summary of activities during the Parliamentary Term 2004-2009

General introduction

The inter-parliamentary delegations' main objective is to establish, channel and promote parliamentary dialogue with the partner country's legislative institutions. This is achieved by means of regular gatherings at Parliament's places of work during which topics of mutual interest in the national, regional and international spheres are discussed. Every year the members of the delegation may also participate in working missions to the region and receive visits from representatives of different Indian institutions;

After each inter-parliamentary meeting, the chairman of the delegation submits a report on the outcome of the meeting to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Development and the Committee on International Trade. Sometimes, these reports can give rise to European Parliament resolutions.

The India delegation holds regular meetings in Brussels and Strasbourg to examine matters such as the current social, economic and political situation in India. Meetings also frequently focus on discussing matters of regional interest, such as the situation in neighbouring countries or development of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Relations between the EU and India such as the negotiations between the EU and India on a Free Trade Agreement or the annual EU-India summit are also on the agenda. An important interlocutor for the delegation is therefore the country desk officer in the European Commission who is invited to attend the meeting and to inform Members on the current developments in the bilateral relations.

As provided for in the implementing provisions governing the work of delegations, interparliamentary meetings shall, as a general rule, be held alternately in one of the Parliament's places of work and in the third country concerned. Whenever the interparliamentary meeting takes place in the country concerned, the programme generally includes also meetings with members of the executive and the legislative, political parties, businessmen, trade unions and representatives of civil society, in particular organisations involved in protecting and promoting human rights. In addition, working meetings with the accredited ambassadors of the EU Member States are held and projects financed by the European Union are visited.

Brief history of the India delegation

Relations between the European Union and the Republic India go back to the early 1960s. The first meeting between the European Parliament and the Lok Sabha, the lower chamber of the Indian Parliament, took place in 1981 and parliamentary exchanges between the EP and India have been institutionalised for several years under the EP Delegation for Relations with the Countries of South Asia and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

The 12th EU-India inter-parliamentary meeting took place, within the framework of the SAARC delegation, in Strasbourg on 5-6 July 2005. It was the first in Europe for twelve years and marked the renewed interest for relations between the EU and India in both Parliaments in what was a new term for both of them. Since then the Indian side has regularly requested the EP to set up a specific delegation for relations with India distinct from the SAARC Delegation. This request was fulfilled when the EP established the new Delegation for Relations with India on 12 April 2007.

As soon as the new delegation was established, the Bureau of the Delegation visited Delhi in August 2007 to engage with the Indian parliament. Another visit of the bureau took place in August 2008 while a working group travelled to the states of Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh in December 2007. On 5 June 2008 the Indian side established an Indian Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the EP to act as the counterpart to the EP India Delegation.

Chronology of activities during the 2004-2009 term:

Date	Location	AGENDA
12/04/2007	Brussels	Constitutive meeting
08/05/2007	Brussels	- EU-India Strategic Partnership and its Action Plan - Exchange of views on the priorities for the delegation
11/06/2007	Brussels	- Report on the EU-India Troika meeting (Berlin, 31/05/2007) - EU-India Civil Society Dialogue - Exchange of views on the 2007 work priorities and programme
27/06/2007	Brussels	- EP report on Kashmir
21-25/08	Delhi	Bureau Visit to Delhi
18/09/2007	Brussels	- Report of the Bureau visit to Delhi - Exchange of views with visiting Members of the Indian parliament
09/10/2007	Brussels	- Exchange of views on preparations for the annual EU-India Summit (Delhi, 30/11/2007)
21/11/2007	Brussels	- Exchange of views on Climate Change - Preparation of the Delegation's Working Group visit to India (15-20 December 2007)
12/12/2007	Strasbourg	- Briefing on the EU-India Summit (Delhi, 30/11/2007) - Preparation of the Delegation's Working Group visit to India
15-20/12/2007		Working group Visit to Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh
22/01/2008	Brussels	- Feedback on the Delegation's Working Group visit to India - Draft calendar of activities for 2008
26/02/2008	Brussels	- EU-India relations/ activities of the EP-India Delegation in 2008 - Adoption of the report of the Working Group visit to India (Dec.)

01/04/2008	Brussels	- Update on the Review of the EU/India Joint Action Plan - Review of the annual programme
16/04/2008	Brussels	- Extraordinary meeting in the Framework of the Tiger Awareness Day
27/05/2008	Brussels	- Exchange of views with Mr N.N. VOHRA, Indian Co-chair of the EU-India Round Table on Civil society
09/06/2008	Brussels	- Exchange of views with a delegation from Maharashtra Legislature
25/06/2008	Brussels	- Exchange of views on the Workshop on India's Foreign policy - Exchange of views with the European Commission
11-14/08	Delhi	Bureau Visit to Delhi
03/09/2009	Brussels	- In the presence of Commissioner Mrs Benita FERRERO-WALDNER, EU-India Relations and the EU-India Summit of 29/9/2008
04/11/2008	Brussels	- Report of the Bureau visit to Delhi - EU-India Relations and the EU-India Summit of 29/09/2008
04/02/2009	Strasbourg	- EU-India Relations and the EU-India Free Trade Agreement negotiations
05/03/2009	Brussels	- Exchange of views with H.E. Dr. J. BHAGWATI, Ambassador of India to Belgium and Luxembourg and the EU
28/04/2009	Brussels	- Working lunch with H.E. Dr. J. BHAGWATI, Ambassador of India to Belgium and Luxembourg and the EU on EU-India Relations and the EP Delegation for Relations with India/Lok Sabha future activities

Overview of some important issues

The EU has upgraded in 2004 its relations with the world's largest democracy to a strategic partnership. The EU is already India's first partner in terms of trade and investment flows and it is its largest bilateral donor. The relationship lags however far behind those with Japan and China, the EU's other strategic partners in Asia and far behind the India-USA relation. Europe is still viewed in India primarily through the prism of its largest member states.

Nevertheless there is growing interest in Delhi for increased engagement with the EU as it is viewed as an alternative pole of dialogue for Indian foreign policy. Upgrading relations with the EU as a young, emerging actor on the world scene is indeed seen as a way for India to boost its own international profile as a dynamic aspiring great power. There is also increasing interest for EU soft power as a model for India's own influence in South Asia and regional integration within the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). India's commitment to a rule-based international order and effective multilateralism makes it a natural ally for the EU. The relationship is based upon a commonality of values and strong mutual interests.

- The EU-India Strategic Partnership

In 2004 the EU and India decided to forge a Strategic Partnership. It identifies the challenges, opportunities and expectations for international, economic and development policies between the EU and India and suggests areas for future strategic co-operation. Both sides adopted in 2005 an EU-India Joint Action Plan (JAP) to implement the partnership. On 23 April 2007 the Council approved a mandate for the negotiation of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India. In the same decision the Council requested the Commission to engage with India in exploratory talks for the possible negotiation of a Partnership and Cooperation agreement (PCA) which would replace the 1994 Co-operation agreement that still forms the basis for the bilateral relations. The exploratory talks were launched on 4 September 2007 but India has since made clear that it is not interested in such a PCA.

It is also worth noting that India finally joined the ASEM process in 2006.

- The EU- India Free Trade Agreement negotiations

The EU-India Summit in October 2006 endorsed the case made by the High Level Trade Group for a bilateral trade and investment agreement and agreed to launch negotiations for such an Agreement, in line with the principles set out in the Commission's *Global Europe* communication. India is a dynamically growing economy with a large market potential, with a relatively high trade protection, actively seeking bilateral agreements with other major trade partners. The negotiations were launched in June 2007 and should be concluded by the end of 2009. The discussions so far have enabled a clearer picture on areas of convergence and on the sensitivities of both sides.

- Pakistan and Kashmir

The Kashmir dispute remains the central stumbling block to peaceful relations between the two neighbours. Kashmir independence is rejected by both India and Pakistan and the status quo is not an option for Pakistan. Summit meetings between the Indian Prime Minister and the Pakistani President have confirmed the willingness to move forward and set out plans to develop confidence building measures. But violence regularly flares up in Indian-administered Kashmir and the Mumbai terrorist attacks did put a brake on the attempts to improve relations.

An own-initiative report on Kashmir discussed in AFET ("Kashmir: present situation and future prospects" - rapporteur: Baroness Nicholson) has led the EP to pass a resolution on Kashmir on 24 May 2007 which was strongly opposed by the Pakistan Government .

On 9 July 2008 the EP voted a resolution on alleged mass graves in Indian-administered Kashmir. In its resolution the EP calls on the Government of India to urgently ensure independent and impartial investigations into all suspected sites of mass graves in Jammu and Kashmir. The EP also calls on the Lok Sabha to amend the Human rights Protection Act in order to allow the national Human Rights Commission to investigate independently allegations of abuse by members of the armed forces.

Secretariat (as of September 2009)

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