



**D-IR\_PV(2012)0918**

**MINUTES**

of the meeting of 18 September 2012, from 15.00 to 16.00  
Brussels

The meeting opened at 15h10 on Tuesday, 18 September 2012, with Ms Tarja Cronberg (Chair) in the chair

**1. Adoption of draft agenda**

The agenda was adopted without modification.

**2. Adoption of the minutes of 11 July 2012**

The minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting and were adopted without modification.

**3. Communications by the Chair**

Members were informed that

- a recent CSIS report outlines the US simulation for a possible military strike against Iran, resulting in wide-spread instability in the region;
- the European Parliament had, again, endorsed the twin track approach to the nuclear negotiations by adopting the Brok annual report on Common foreign and Security Policy during the September 2012 plenary session (12 September);
- Ambassador Barimani had confirmed his invitation to Members of the delegation to attend a dinner to discuss Human Rights in Iran on Wednesday 10 October. Members who wish to travel to Iran in October were encouraged to attend this event and inform the secretariat of their availability;
- the DROI hearing on Iran will take place end-November, in order to allow Mrs Tarja Cronberg to report back on the delegation visit to Iran;
- two Iranians have been proposed for the 2012 Sakharov Prize - Ms Nasrin Sotoudeh and Mr Jafar Panahi.

**4. Discussion on EU-Iran relations in the presence of Mr Steven Blockmans, Centre European Policy Studies (CEPS) Senior Research Fellow and Head of the EU Foreign Policy Unit; and Mr Hameed Arefi deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

Mr Blockman is the author of a recent CEPS policy paper "Beyond entrenchment over Iran: Can the EU offer a framework for regional security?"

Commenting on the IAEA report of August 2012, in his view Iran is already nuclear capable, and could have a bomb if they want one.

The risk of wider regional war looms. Efforts to stave off war and the disastrous consequences for Iran and the region turn the vicious circle into a virtuous one.

He presented three thoughts:

- 1) Although sanctions are having a considerable impact on the Iranian economy, they will not change the mindset of the leadership. They have led to
  - depreciation of the Rial against the USD,
  - most big international traders in refined petroleum products in the energy sector, stopping dealing with Iran,
  - making payment in USD, or Euros, ever more difficult for commercial entities, who are increasingly cut off from global financial markets.

However, many loopholes have rendered the sanctions regime partially ineffective and Iran is still managing to sell oil and oil related products. China has been given exemptions by the US Congress and has now replaced the EU as Iran's main trading partner. Sanctions are actually reinforcing citizens' support for the tough-line strategy of their Leader and his anti US-rhetoric.

- 2) The Iranians seem neither really interested in real talks on the suspension of uranium enrichment to 20%; to close down underground enrichment facilities or to allow intrusive inspections of nuclear facilities; nor really committed to the negotiations. They are playing for time to allow them to reach the point they wish to attain.

A *game changer* is needed to break the deadlock, for example, the E3+3 could "normalise" diplomatic relations to break the deadlock, offering real incentives for cooperation and allowing negotiations on substance. However, this could be misinterpreted as Iran being rewarded for its clandestine activities. The end goal of such a diplomatic process could be a security arrangement which would tie in all parties by addressing each of their security concerns; covering all weapons of mass destruction; centring on the triangular strategic relationship Iran-Turkey-Israel and backed up by the UN Security Council.

- 3) The EU should lead the international effort to find a way out of the impasse. The EU is in a better position to launch an initiative as only the EU has maintained day-to-day exchanges with all countries in the region; it also steers the Quartet's efforts in the Middle East Peace Process and has strategic relations with Turkey.

Iran would wish to see the end of sanctions and to re-establish trade links with Europe. However, bringing together the diverse actors is a difficult task.

The EU should try hard to normalise diplomatic relations with Iran allowing all parties to enter into structured and constructive negotiations on substance; to generate a genuine interest to redefine diplomatic negotiations and new objectives to the talks going beyond Iran's nuclear programme, taking into account the wider regional context and looking at a wider negotiated deal.

Iran has to be regarded as part of the region, not as a threat to the region. An overall sense of purpose and direction is currently lacking.

In view of the changing strategic landscape and security concerns in the region, the EU could propose a regional security framework tying in all relevant actors, taking all security interests into account in order to diminish the mistrust that fuels proliferation.

Realistic prospects and conclusions of a common security framework for the Middle East, going beyond unsuccessful attempts to create a nuclear free zone, would represent a real incentive for substantial negotiations and a step forward in geopolitical terms. However time is short and the agenda huge and Israel is threatening a pre-emptive strike.

In his intervention Mr Arefi, deputy ambassador at the Iranian mission to the EU, brought four points to the attention of MEPs:

- the **Iranian economy** reached and passed 1 thousand billion\$ GDP in 2011. Iran is located in a region of 15 countries, with 350 million people, connected to 4 major different economies and cultural orientations. It is currently listed as the 17th world economy, with an import/export trade capacity in 2011 of almost 200 billion\$;
- **military doctrine** : since the mid 17th century Iran has followed a sustainable defensive, not offensive, policy;
- **lesson of the past** - since the revolution Iran has been a responsible and stabilising power in the region helping to find peaceful solutions to disputes in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan;
- **EU-Iran** strategic long-term relations have more common interests than differences - regional stability, security and broader cooperation including Afghanistan and Iraq; stability of oil markets; security of energy supply; combating drug trafficking.

Confidence building measures for the future of the EU-Iran relationship are necessary. The Middle East region in the aftermath of the Arab Spring is volatile and EU-Iran cooperation on the stability of the region is more than ever necessary.

The professed aim of sanctions is to deter the Iranian nuclear programme. However the real impact of sanctions is affecting ordinary Iranians, as an example, development aid was prevented from reaching the recently devastated earthquake area in Iran.

EU and Iran have common - and different - interests and views. The best way forward is cooperation on common interests and dialogue on differences.

In the ensuing debate MEPs Schaake, Ernst, Zalewski, Weidenholz and Ehrenhauser enquires as to the most decisive points for a comprehensive approach to the region; the amount of leverage the EU actually has; what confidence and trust building measures could be taken; the Iranian approach to Syria and to developments in the Pamir region in Tajikistan; the role of Israel in the region and their security interests.

The speakers were also asked their views on a recent article in the "*Foreign Affairs*" magazine which argues that if Iran had a nuclear bomb; it could provide stability in the region - similar to India/Pakistan where the situation is tense but stable.

Mr Blockman was of the opinion that the EU was pushed into the driving seat of a global problem and does have realistic leverage as other negotiating partners are not regarded as neutral mediators in the dispute. However, he fears that the situation could escalate before any solution would be found.

Decisive points for change could be to align the security interests of both Israel and Iran, which would need more goodwill and more US pressure.

In order to create a level playing field no party in the region should have a nuclear bomb capacity.

Regarding Iran and Syria, Mr Arefi referred to the meeting of Foreign Ministers of Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt which had just taken place in Cairo. Diplomacy must, and will, work as it is for the benefit of all.

For more than 10 years pressure has been put on Iran to revise their policies, what was initially a political matter has now been turned into a security issue. Iran is expanding its economic ties with Asian countries - trade with the EU is down to 10-12 b\$/per annum from 45b\$/per annum; whereas in 2011, trade with China increased to 50 billion \$.

Iran has fully supported Tajikistan's integrity and independence and the role of other Central Asian countries in the region and in the Middle East.

#### **5. Discussion on the preparations for the 4th Interparliamentary meeting EP/Iran (27 October-2 November 2012)**

Members were given a copy of the preliminary draft programme for the IPM visit which includes requests for meetings with government members; members of the Majlis, including opposition and minority representatives; business, judiciary and human rights representatives. It is hoped that the delegation will be able to visit a border crossing with Afghanistan to observe drug-trafficking control operations. The EU provides limited aid to Iran for cooperation in this field (via the UN Office on Drugs and Crime).

Members should arrive in Teheran on Saturday 27 October, and the programme will finish on Friday 2 November 2012.

The Chair proposed that the delegation be composed of 9 MEPs, which would allow 6 MEPs to be able to travel to Iran in 2013. The composition proposed is 3xEPP, 2xS&D, 1xALDE, 1xGUE, 1xEFD/NI. The V/ALE group is represented by the Chair, Mrs Tarja Cronberg, outside the numerical quota.

If there are more requests than places, the Bureau will decide on numbers and participation taking into account participation at delegation meetings, political group affiliation and allowing flexibility.

Members were invited to make known their interest to participate in the IPM visit to the secretariat and encouraged to participate at the dinner to be hosted by Ambassador Barimani on 10 October and at the NGO briefing on Human Rights to be organised before the dinner and the IPM visit.

## **6. Any other business**

All delegations have been asked to submit proposals for their 2013 activities for a preliminary discussion at a meeting of the Conference of Delegation Chair, prior to the formal approval of the Conference of Presidents.

For the Delegation for Relations with Iran for 2013, it is proposed to invite the Majlis to send a delegation for an Interparliamentary meeting in Strasbourg or Brussels in May and for an "Enlarged Bureau" visit, to include a representative from each of the political groups, to travel to Iran in October 2013 to carry on the dialogue.

The 2013 calendar of activities for the Iran delegation programme thus proposed was approved by Members.

## **7. Date and place of next meeting**

18 October 2012, pending confirmation of group meetings outside Brussels, in the presence of Dr Ali Vaez, senior analyst and the International Crisis Group in Washington DC and an Iranian nuclear expert.

An informal briefing on Human Rights will be requested via the NGO network in Brussels and a delegation meeting will be organised during the Strasbourg October session as a last preparatory meeting for the visit.

The meeting closed at 16h05.

ПРИСЪСТВЕН ЛИСТ/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZENČNÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/  
ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KOHALOLIJATE NIMEKIRI/ΚΑΤΑΣΤΑΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/  
LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKLĒJUMU REĢISTRIS/DALYVIŲ ŠARŠAS/JELENLÉTI ÍV/  
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Tarja Cronberg (P)
Членове/Diputados/Poslanci/Medlemmer/Mitglieder/Parlamendiliikmed/Μέλη/Members/Députés/Deputati/Deputāti/Nariai/Képviselők/ Membri/Leden/Posłowie/Deputados/Deputați/Jäsenet/Ledamöter
Cornelia Ernst, Josef Weidenholzer, Oreste Rossi, Marco Scurria, Pawel Zalewski
Заместници/Suplentes/Náhradníci/Stedfortrædere/Stellvertreter/Asendusliikmed/Αναπληρωτές/Substitutes/Suppléants/Supplenti/ Aizstājēji/Pavaduojantys nariai/Póttagok/Sostituti/Plaatsvervangers/Zastępcy/Membros suplentes/Supleanți/Náhradníci/Namestniki/ Varajäsenet/Suppleanter
Martin Ehrenhauser, Marietje Schaake, Marita Ulvskog

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193 (3)
49 (6) (Точка от дневния ред/Punto del orden del día/Bod pořadu jednání (OJ)/Punkt på dagsordenen/Tagesordnungspunkt/Päevakorra punkt/Ημερήσια Διάταξη Σημείο/Agenda item/Point OJ/Punto all'ordine del giorno/Darba kārtības punkts/Darbotvarkēs punktas/ Napirendi pont/Punt fuq l-agenda/Agendapunt/Punkt porządku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/ Točka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Föredragningslista punkt)

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Einollah Souri, Anwar Mirsattari, Sarah Vader, Kocianova, Lydia Boons, J. Muurinen, Wasilzyk, Billiet Stijn, Jukka Roiha, Hikki L, Maud Vanwalleghen, Agustina Vasileva, Chun-Han Wang, Fery Malek Madani, Sofia Antub, Patrick Lammer, Magdalena X, Vadim Kononenko

По покана на председателя/Por invitación del presidente/Na pozvání předsedy/Efter indbydelse fra formanden/Auf Einladung des Vorsitzenden/Esimehe kutsel/Με πρόσκληση του Προέδρου/At the invitation of the Chair(wo)man/Sur l'invitation du président/ Su invito del presidente/Pēc priekšsēdētāja uzaicinājuma/Pirmininkui pakvietus/Az elnök meghívására/Fuq stedina tal-President/ Op uitnodiging van de voorzitter/Na zaproszenie Przewodniczącego/A convite do Presidente/La invitația președintelui/Na pozvanie predsedu/Na povabilo predsednika/Puheenjohtajan kutsusta/På ordförandens inbjudan
Steven Blockmans, Hameed Arefi

Съвет/Consejo/Rada/Rådet/Rat/Nðukogu/Συμβούλιο/Council/Conseil/Consiglio/Padome/Taryba/Tanács/Kunsill/Raad/Conselho/Consiliu/Svet/Neuvosto/Rådet (*)	
Комисия/Comisión/Komise/Kommissionen/Kommission/Euroopa Komisjon/Επιτροπή/Commission/Commissione/Komisija/Bizottság/Kummissjoni/Commissie/Komisja/Comissão/Comisie/Komisia/Komissio/Kommissionen (*)	
Barara Stacher	
Европейска служба за външна дейност/Европска служба pro vnější činnost/EU-Udenrigstjenesten/Europäischer Auswärtiger Dienst/Euroopa välisestustus/Ευρωπαϊκή Υπηρεσία Εξωτερικής Δράσης/European External Action service/Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior/Service européen pour l'action extérieure/Servizio europeo per l'azione esterna/Eiropas Ārējās darbības dienests/Europos išorės veiksmų tarnyba/Európai Kültügyi Szolgálat/Servizz Ewropew għall-Azzjoni Esterna/Europese dienst voor extern optreden/Europejska Służba Działań Zewnętrznych/Serviço Europeu para a Acção Externa/Serviciul european pentru acțiune externă/Európska služba pre vonkajšiu činnost/Evropska služba za zunanje delovanje/Euroopan ulkosuhdehallinto/Europeiska avdelningen för yttre åtgärd (*)	
Roberto Olmi	
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PPE	Jan-Willem Vlasman
S&D	Eldar Mamedov
ALDE	
ECR	
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GUE/NGL	Karin Schüttpelz
EFD	
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DG PRES	
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Ainhoa Markuleta	

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