

EU-RUSSIA PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION
COMMITTEE

WORKING GROUP
30 September 2010

The meeting of the Working Group started at 9.40 a.m. with Knut Fleckenstein and Andrei Klimov co-chairing.

In his opening remarks, Mr FLECKENSTEIN presented his apologies for the cancellation of yesterday's presentation by the former German Minister for Defence, due to problems in transportation.

He then proceeded to present a summary of the work of the EU-Russia PCC and the working groups until the present one, on the theme of NATO, OSCE, EU and Russia in maintaining security and the new European Security Agreement presented by the Russian President Medvedev. He stressed that in this globalised era, threats are also global and security should not be viewed as the security of one party against the other but as a common concern between neighbours and allies. There are many aspects to security, internal as well as external, soft security and hard; there should be no monopoly on security and no competition between allies. Working together is the best way forward.

Mr KLIMOV stressed that after the disappearance of the USSR there were problems in the implementation of the Helsinki agreement, as Russia was politically and economically trying to find a new path in the new circumstances. It is clear that security should now be viewed differently and therefore the Institutions should also be reformed, as EU is currently doing with the Lisbon Treaty. In a recent discussion in the Russian Duma with the ex-Foreign Secretary Ms Albright this was widely agreed. This is the framework of the proposals presented for the reform of the Euro-Atlantic Security by President Medvedev. The proposals aim at establishing a more efficient security system and new security architecture. Russia is open to dialogue and welcomes all constructive proposals in this respect. In the EU-Russia Summit in Nice the EU seemed willing to discuss but no progress has been made since. We need to see the new threats and examine whether the existing mechanisms are adequate to respond to them.

The Head of the Permanent Mission of Russia to the EU, Ambassador Mr CHISOV proceeded to give a short overview of the historical basis of the notion of collective security, one of the oldest ideas in Europe, discussed already in the 1930s. Despite this, collective security for all has not been achieved. Now there is a real opportunity to proceed in this direction without, however, dismissing the principles on which it should be based, such as the indivisibility of security; on the contrary, these principles should be enshrined in law to achieve their effectiveness. He reminded that in 1999 there was an EU initiative on a European Security Charter which included a chapter on cooperative security but now it seems that this idea is no longer discussed. The nature of today's threats is global and cannot be faced on the basis of last century's means. Between all the Organisations and bodies dealing now with issues of security there is a serious problem of duplication of efforts and lack of cooperation.

Mr LUNDIN, Head of the Delegation of the EU to the International Organisations in Vienna, agreed that there is a difference of perception but this does not prevent a permanent dialogue on security. He mentioned that there are many concrete problems that need concrete solutions. The legal solutions proposed by President Medvedev will of course be taken into consideration but they can only come at a later stage. He presented four priorities that need to be addressed first, such as the arms conflict, the human dimension, the international threats and a definition of security, which the Western side sees as broader.

The Russian President's proposals are being discussed within the Corfu process and already the OSCE Presidency has produced a 60 pages document encompassing all the relevant proposals. It is to be noted that the 1st of December OSCE Summit is the first one after eleven years and a consequence expectations are high.

He noted that there are indeed new problems of security as the new conflicts, the threats to NGOs and journalists as well as new sources of threats deriving no longer only from States but also from small groups of people (pirates, terrorists). These threats can be faced only on a common ground and using both soft and hard security means. Internal policies and foreign policies are now amalgamated and for this reason a broad definition of security is necessary.

From his side Mr ROGOZIN, Head of the Permanent Mission of Russia to NATO, remarked that many good ideas sink and disappear in the lengthy discussions. The Russian President's ideas do not merit meeting the same fate.

As for the NATO issue, it is clear that a new strategic concept is needed for the future in order to face better the new threats to security. He enquired whether Article 5 of the NATO Treaty can also cover these new threats, as for example a cyber attack on a NATO country. A response to threat should be appropriate and this means that it can not always be a military response.

He went on to stress that Russia is not a threat to the West; the military presence in its western borders is only symbolic. The real threat stems from other places and other causes, such as the very real and serious threat to Russia from Afghanistan's heroine traffic, which kills more than 30,000 people annually in Russia.

Finally, he pointed to the ambivalent attitude of EU towards Russia in security matters, when in the same text Lady Ashton exalts the need for Russia to be a strategic partner of the EU and on the other foresees the need to establish deterrents against Russia. Equally, the cooperation within NATO is far from cooperation between equals, as evidences the fact that one of the documents produced by the Albright group is kept secret from the Russians.

Mr SIMMONS, Deputy Assistant to the Secretary General of NATO, agreed that indeed there is need for a transformation process to face the new security challenges. This was already on the agenda in 1999. The new strategic concept for NATO, always within Article 5 of the Treaty, is based on the definition of common threats, crisis management and international stability. There is close cooperation with Russia in the Joint Council since 2002. These relations were frozen in the aftermath of the Russian-Georgian war, but have now resumed. There are many issues on which close cooperation exists, as is the case for Afghanistan. NATO fully recognises the need for an active political dialogue and welcomes Russian contribution on the reforms needed

for meeting the new security challenges. He proceeded to assure the Russian counterparts that issues in the secret document will be discussed with them as well in the spirit of real partnership.

In the questions and remarks which followed participated the Members of the EP NIKOLAI, SCHULTZ, LANDSBERGIS, OOMEN-RUIJTEN, MIGALSKI, MIRSKY, PETERLE and ZELLER and DRAGANOV, from the Russian Duma and GORBONOV from the Russian Federation Council.

In their answers, Mr LUNDIN stressed the point of the actions which can be jointly undertaken, and as such he enumerated:

on the conflicts: establish a Security Community and granting the capacity to the OSCE to use force as well as instrument which can be used to prevent a conflict situation. This can be based on building up the capacity of the already existing institutions.

On conventional arms: take into consideration the issue of human security.

On human dimension: include response to threats stemming from organised crime, terrorism, killings by reinforcing the rule of law and strengthen the election observation mechanism as well as the role of the media.

On a coherent international strategy: take into account the need of cooperation and concerted action.

Mr CHISOV pointed that the question whether new structures are needed whether the old ones can be reformed should be answered in a pragmatic way, as there is no point of destroying the ones that have been working efficiently.

In his conclusion, the co-Chair KLIMOV remarked that the parliamentary dimension is very important in establishing a working system for facing the new security threats. He proposed a stepping-up of the cooperation in this field. A concrete proposal in this direction could be the organisation of a parliamentary Conference on this topic. He reminded the Members that this present platform of EU-Russia PCC provides a unique opportunity as no other Organisation has such an important parliamentary element. Other proposals, ideas and initiatives on how to improve the EU-Russia cooperation on security are more than welcome. On the issue of NATO, the sentiments of our citizens can provide the basis for a meaningful cooperation if viewed constructively.

MariaElena EFTHYMIOU
Policy Department
External Policies Directorate