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*Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula*

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**DARP\_PV(2012)1009\_1**

**MINUTES**

of the meeting of 9 October 2012, from 17.30 to 18.30  
Brussels

The meeting opened at 17.40 on Tuesday, 9 October 2012, with Angelika Niebler (Chair) in the chair.

**1. Adoption of the draft agenda (PE 495.773)**

Draft agenda was adopted.

**2. Adoption of the minutes of the meeting of 18 September 2012 (PE 495.772)**

Minutes were adopted.

**3. Chair's announcements**

First of all, Mrs Niebler recalled the recent visit of a GCC Delegation; many DARP members assisted to this visit. There had been an excellent discussion.

She affirmed EP is aware of the fact that the situation is difficult in this post Arab Spring period. In all situations, the institution promotes open dialogue and defends acquired fundamental values, which are Democracy and Human Rights protection.

Then, Mrs Niebler gave the floor to Mrs Hamidallah.

#### **4. Exchange of views on the human rights situation in the Arab Peninsula with Mrs. Amal Hamidallah, Director of "Bridging the Gulf" Foundation for Human security in the Gulf region**

Mrs Hamidallah started by describing the "Bridging the Gulf" Foundation, which is not an advocacy group, it is a group that rather educates a defined set of target groups to gradually achieve knowledge of and promotion of Human Rights, by using a step-by-step approach.

Its goal is to reinforce civil society, build connections between GCC and Europe, promote the peaceful living in the area, etc. BtG is active also in the field of election monitoring and women empowerment. For example, they monitored recent parliamentary elections in Kuwait: these elections were fair and transparent.

Moreover, many concrete steps towards gender equality were achieved in the region. For example, in Oman and Kuwait the number of women politicians is growing, and some women were appointed as judges. In Saudi Arabia women acceded to the profession of advocate, they will soon have access to the Saudi Parliament, they are now allowed to be part of the Olympic team, and so on.

There has been some progress in promoting European foreign direct investment in the Gulf region.

Unfortunately, there are also cases of destabilising situations, especially the Bahraini one. It would be important that all parties now sit around a table and negotiate a peaceful solution, maybe based on the Crown Prince's peace plan.

There are cases of prisoners for their political activity; Mrs Hamidallah specifically mentioned UAE. And added that, however, what the region needs is not criticism, but a greater degree of understanding of complex situations from Europe. "No one is for radical revolutions, all are for constructive change", she pointed out.

Debate with members followed.

Mrs Niebler stated that maybe EP can help in the case of a BtG colleague imprisoned in UAE. As a matter of fact, the EP Delegation visited UAE and had constructive dialogue with several local political actors.

Mr Fox asked the guest to explore realistic dialogue possibilities in Bahrain and to tell how much the protests are conditioned / fomented by external powers (Iran).

Mr Kraemer said he was surprised to learn there is unrest in Kuwait, which is considered the most democratic country in the region and asked Mrs Hamidallah to depict the possible consequences of this unrest to the neighbouring countries.

Mr Cancian followed the MENA region situation closely. He spoke about the complexity of the Syrian situation, about the positive - removing dictators - and negative - Islamization - consequences of the Arab Spring; eventually he asked the guest to suggest possible EU political strategies in the Middle East complex situation.

Mrs Hamidallah answered first of all on Bahrain. She said she does not know who is more serious and ready to pursue a dialogue, and who less. However, it can be said that the peace initiative of the Crown Prince is very serious. Difficult to say why there is a delay in the implementation of this initiative, and who has interest in delaying it. In general, she pointed out that the language of war, aimed at the promotion of a country or institution's specific interest, is harmful to everybody. Concerning Syria, international institutions should take their responsibilities in trying to find a real solution, not conditioned by egoistic interests. Otherwise we will fail as humanity, exactly as the Society of the Nations failed before World War II. What the GCC needs today is the promotion of a frank and committed partnership with Europe, based on dialogue and cooperation, not shaming and blaming. Reforms in these countries are gradual, they proceed step by step, and this is the only way not to generate further tensions and conflicts. So GCC needs constructive help, a Partnership Agreement GCC-EU would be extremely useful in this regard. She also suggested that the Arab Spring, according to some, represents the real decolonization of the Arab countries. It should be seen as an opportunity, not as a threat.

Mrs Niebler added that actually DARP is promoting exactly the kind of dialogue and cooperation Mrs Hamidallah is suggesting. She also mentioned that Turkey is an important partner with whom to enhance dialogue. She esteems that the Delegation visit to Bahrain, foreseen for next year, is going to be very important, since DARP is going to deal with issues which potentially affect also other countries in the region. The Chair underlined that EP is specially committed to defend Rights of Women.

H.E. Mr Al-Doseri, Bahraini Ambassador, said that it is really important EU tries to put everybody together in Bahrain in order to dialogue constructively. What happened in Bahrain could happen elsewhere, since GCC is a homogeneous macro-region with similar population structure and problems. He added DARP is most welcome in Bahrain!

H.E. Mr Trad, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is very grateful to the BtG association for its activity in bridging the GCC region to the EU. He said Saudi Arabia knows it is living in the 21 century, they are in favour of Human Rights and of Women Rights, and they are trying to promote them, even if sometimes it takes longer than elsewhere. However, EU must also respect diversity. What Saudi Arabia wishes from Europe is help with wise advices and exchanges of good practices, not pushing and criticizing. After all, KSA is a major energy supplier of the EU and the cradle of Islam! He added that his country is always ready to accept advice and wishes to reinforce ties with the EU.

Mrs Corazza Bildt added that unfortunately we are not assisting to a step-by-step progress, but often to a setback. She said EP is trying to understand, to respect other ways of thinking, to adapt to local customs and habits, but there are some issues which can simply not be overlooked, such as:

- Bloggers put in prison;
- People often do not have fair trials;
- Women, who serve in domestic services, do not have any legal status; they are treated like slaves!

"How far will you go in the name of state security?" she asked. She added that GCC region is all part of the UN, so it must be committed to respect fundamental Human Rights. She exhorted GCC partners not to always put a wall when discussing such sensitive topics.

Mr Busini from the EEAS said it is clear that more dialogue and cooperation is needed. This was stressed also during a ministerial meeting in June, in which a step further was proposed. EEAS focuses on vibrant and vital civil society in the Gulf region. In this context, a Joint Action Plan 2010 - 2013 was prepared and implemented. Its goal is exactly to strengthen local civil societies and the relations between GCC and EU. There are projects based on this plan. However, Mr Busini expressed concern, because the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung was responsible to implement some of those plans, together with other actors, but was expelled from the UAE.

The last reply was from Mrs Hamidallah to Mrs Corazza Bildt. She said she does not like the rhetoric speaking about "us" versus "them". She is Arab and Muslim and thinks that there should be no opposition between the entities, since we are all people. What is needed, instead, is a cultural battle based on improving education, and education exchange programs with the European Union for many Arab students.

## **5. Any other business**

Mrs Niebler reminded the Bahraini Ambassador that the tentative dates for the IPM EU-Bahrain are from 29 April to 1 May 2012.

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

The next DARP meeting will be held in Brussels on November 28, 2012, from 17:30 to 18:30.

The meeting closed at 18:42.

**ПРИСЪСТВЕН ЛИСТ/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZENČNÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/  
ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KOHALOLIJATE NIMEKIRI/KATAΣΤΑΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/  
LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKLĒJUMU REĢISTRŠ/DALYVIŲ SAŪAŠAS/JELENLÉTI ÍV/  
REĢISTRU TA' ATTENDENZA/PRESENTIELIJST/LISTA OBECNOŠCI/LISTA DE PRESENÇAS/LISTÁ DE PREZENȚĂ/  
PREZENČNÁ LISTINA/SEZNAM NAVZOČIH/LÄSNÄOLOLISTA/DELTAGARLISTA**

Бюро/Mesa/Předsednictvo/Formandskabet/Vorstand/Juhatus/Προεδρείο/Bureau/Ufficio di presidenza/Prezidijs/Biuras/Elnökség/ Prezydium/Birou/Predsednictvo/Predsedstvo/Puheenjohtajisto/Presidiet (*)
Angelika Niebler (P), Holger Kraemer (VP1)
Членове/Diputados/Poslanci/Medlemmer/Mitglieder/Parlamendiliikmed/Μέλη/Members/Députés/Deputati/Deputāti/Nariai/Képviselők/ Membri/Leden/Posłowie/Deputados/Deputați/Jäsenet/Ledamöter
Antonio Cancian, Ashley Fox
Заместници/Suplentes/Náhradníci/Stedfortrædere/Stellvertreter/Asendusliikmed/Αναπληρωτές/Substitutes/Suppléants/Supplenti/ Aizstājēji/Pavaduojantys nariai/Póttagok/Sostituti/Plaatsvervangers/Zastępcy/Membros suplentes/Supleantî/Náhradníci/Namestniki/ Varajäsenet/Supleanter
Anna Maria Corazza Bildt

187 (2)
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/Darbotvarkės punktas/ Napirendi pont/Punt fuq l-aġenda/Agendapunt/Punkt porządku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/ Točka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Föredragningslista punkt)

Наблюдатели/Observadores/Pozorovatelé/Observatører/Beobachter/Vaatlejad/Παρατηρητές/Observers/Observateurs/Osservatori/  
Novērotāji/Stebėtojai/Megfigyelők/Osservatori/Waarnemers/Observatorzy/Observadores/Observatori/Pozorovatelia/Opazovalci/  
Tarkkailijat/Observatörer

По покана на председателя/Por invitación del presidente/Na pozváni 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 pozwanie  
predsedu/Na povabilo predsednika/Puheenjohtajan kutsusta/På ordförandens inbjudan

Ms Amal Hamidallah, Director of "Bridging the Gulf"

Съвет/Consejo/Rada/Rådet/Rat/Nõukogu/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 (\*)

Европейска служба за външна дейност/Европскá služba pro vnější činnost/EU-Udenrigstjenesten/Europäischer Auswärtiger  
Dienst/Euroopa välisteenistus/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 Külügyi Szolgálat/Servizz Ewropew għall-Azzjoni Esterna/Europese dienst voor  
extern optreden/Europejska Służba Działań Zewnętrznych/Serviço Europeu para a Acção Externa/Serviciul european pentru actiune  
externă/Európska služba pre vonkajšiu činnosť/Evropska služba za zunanje delovanje/Euroopan ulkosuhdehallinto/Europeiska  
avdelningen för yttre åtgärd (\*)

Giuseppe Busini

Други институции/Otras instituciones/Ostatní orgány a instituce/Andre institutioner/Andere Organe/Muud institutsioonid/  
Άλλα θεσμικά όργανα/Other institutions/Autres institutions/Altre istituzioni/Citas iestādes/Kitos institucijos/Más intézmények/  
Istituzjonijiet oħra/Andere instellingen/Inne instytucje/Outras Instituições/Alte instituții/Iné inštitúcie/Druge institucije/Muut  
toimielimet/Andra institutioner/organ

Други учасници/Otros participantes/Ostatní účastníci/Endvidere deltog/Andere Teilnehmer/Muud osalejad/Επίσης Παρόντες/Other participants/Autres participants/Altri partecipanti/Citi klātesošie/Kiti dalyviai/Más résztvevők/Partecipanti oħra/Andere aanwezigen/Inni uczestnicy/Outros participantes/Alți participanți/Iní účastníci/Drugi udeleženci/Muut osallistajat/Övriga deltagare

Ahmed Al Doseri, Ambassador, Bahrain embassy  
 Faisal Trad, Ambassador, Saudi Arabia embassy  
 Hanan Al Wareeth, Yemen embassy  
 Marlene Darwiche, GCC Delegation  
 Kifah Al Lawati, Oman embassy  
 Khalid Fila, Oman embassy  
 Najah Rashid, Bahrain embassy  
 Abeer Alduaij, Kuwait embassy  
 Lateef Alyoushaa, UAE embassy  
 Jasim Alabdouli, UAE embassy  
 Thamer Al Gosaibi, Saudi Arabia embassy  
 Mohamed Charfi, Saudi Arabia embassy  
 Laetitia Ruiz, Human Rights Watch

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PPE	Mauro Belardinelli
S&D	Klemens Wieringer, Jörgen Siil
ALDE	Itziar Munoa Salaverria
ECR	
Verts/ALE	
GUE/NGL	
EFD	
NI	

Кабинет на председателя/Gabinete del Presidente/Kancelář předsedy/Formandens Kabinet/Kabinett des Präsidenten/Presidendi kantslelei/Γραφείο Προέδρου/President's Office/Cabinet du Président/Gabinetto del Presidente/Priekšsēdētāja kabinets/Pirmininko kabinetas/Elnöki hivatal/Kabinett tal-President/Kabinet van de Voorzitter/Gabinet Przewodniczącego/Gabinete do Presidente/Cabinet Președinte/Kancelária predsedu/Urad predsednika/Puhemiehen kabinetti/Talmannens kansli

Кабинет на генералния секретар/Gabinete del Secretario General/Kancelář generálního tajemníka/Generalsekretærens Kabinet/Kabinett des Generalsekretärs/Peasekretäri büroo/Γραφείο Γενικού Γραμματέα/Secretary-General's Office/Cabinet du Secrétaire général/Gabinetto del Segretario generale/Ģenerālsekretāra kabinets/Generalinio sekretoriaus kabinetas/Főtitkári hivatal/Kabinett tas-Segretarju Ġenerali/Kabinet van de secretaris-generaal/Gabinet Sekretarza Generalnego/Gabinete do Secretário-Geral/Cabinet Secretar General/Kancelária generalneho tajomníka/Urad generalnega sekretarja/Pääsihteerin kabinetti/Generalsekreterarens kansli

Генерална дирекция/Dirección General/Generální ředitelství/Generaldirektorat/Generaldirektion/Peadirektoraat/Γενική Διεύθυνση/ Directorate-General/Direction générale/Direzione generale/Ģenerāldirektorāts/Generalinis direktoratas/Főigazgatóság/Direktorat Ġenerali/Direktoraten-generaal/Dyrekcja Generalna/Direcção-Geral/Direcții Generale/Generálne riaditeľstvo/Generalni direktorat/ Pääosasto/Generaldirektorat	
DG PRES DG IPOL DG EXPO DG COMM DG PERS DG INLO DG TRAD DG INTE DG FINS DG ITEC	Marcin Gasiuk, Elyes Ghanmi
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Rok Kozelj	
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Nicole Devos	

- \* (P) = Председател/Presidente/Předseda/Formand/Vorsitzender/Esimees/Πρόεδρος/Chair(wo)man/Président/Priekšsēdētājs/Pirmininkas/  
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