

EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee

TENTH MEETING

7- 8 April 2009

YEREVAN

Final Statement and Recommendations

pursuant to Article 89 of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

Under the co-chairmanship of Mrs Marie Anne ISLER BEGUIN (Greens/EFA, France) and Mr Avet ADONTIS (Prosperous Armenia Party), the tenth meeting of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee was held in Yerevan on 7-8 April 2009. The Committee exchanged views with Deputy Foreign Minister, Mrs Karine KAZINIAN, representing the Government of the Republic of Armenia, Mr Tomasz KNOTHE, Ambassador of Poland, representing the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and Mr Raul de LUZENBERGER, Head of the European Commission Delegation to Armenia, representing the European Commission.

The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee

1. *welcomes* and supports the continuous European aspirations expressed by Armenia and *calls on* the European Commission to continue to assist Armenia in achieving the objectives of the ENP Action Plan;
2. *stresses* that proper implementation of the ENP Action Plan will reinforce an increasingly close relationship, going beyond co-operation, to involve a significant measure of economic integration and a deepening of political cooperation; *takes note* with satisfaction of the fact that during past years important steps have been taken to enhance political dialogue and to establish cooperation in foreign policy matters; *notes* that Armenia has widely aligned with CFSP declarations and is generally very active in cooperating on foreign policy issue but *stresses* the importance for the development of the EU-Armenia partnership of full respect for international commitments concerning human rights and democracy;

EU-Armenia relations

3. *underlines* again the importance of the full implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement which remains the cornerstone and legal basis of the EU-Armenia relationship; taking into account the fact that the initial period of application of the PCA ends this year and the substantial efforts Armenia has made in a number of areas over the last years; *welcomes* the establishment of the interdepartmental commission to oversee the implementation of the ENP Action Plan;
4. *calls on* the European Commission to ensure that there will be a significant increase and reallocation in funding for the European Neighbourhood Policy, in order to make up for the limited administrative capacity of the country; it, therefore, *welcomes* the signature of the General Terms of Reference on the project of the EU Advisory Experts Group on 6 November 2008; and notes with satisfaction that the first experts have already arrived in Armenia and started their activities;

5. *welcomes* the opening of a full European Commission Delegation in Yerevan, which will help increase the effectiveness of EU' s activities and visibility in Armenia;
6. *welcomes* positive results of the feasibility study for the possible establishment of a free trade agreement between the EU and Armenia which will also look at regional trade and economic integration aspects; *hopes* that the negotiations of the deep and comprehensive FTA will start in the near future;
7. *stresses* the need for the conclusion of visa facilitation and readmission agreements between the EU and Armenia and the launch of dialogue on mobility issues; *supports* the proposal on the establishment of EU-Armenia Cooperation Subcommittee on Justice, Liberty and Security;
8. *welcomes* the Declaration of the European Council on the establishment of the Eastern Partnership which confirms the growing EU engagement in the South Caucasus and *expresses its hope* that the initiative will promote tailor-made and targeted cooperation, taking into account the needs of individual partners; *stresses* the importance of the multilateral track of the Eastern Partnership since inclusive regional cooperation based on shared values will contribute much to confidence building; *welcomes* Armenia's positive response to the initiative of establishing parliamentary assembly EURONEST;

Internal situation of Armenia - respect for human rights and rule of law

9. *welcomes* the election of Mr Serzh Sargsyan as President of Armenia in February 2008; *expresses concerns* over the following demonstrations which resulted in clashes between the police and the demonstrators on March 1, 2008 and numerous arrests of the opposition supporters;
10. *notes* with satisfaction the adoption of the Law on Amending and Supplementing the Law on Conducting Meetings, Assemblies, Rallies and Demonstrations in line with the Council of Europe standards and *expects* its quick and full implementation; *reiterates its demand* that freedom of assembly should also be guaranteed in practice in Armenia; in this respect, it welcomes that the recent opposition rallies, including the one on 1 March 2009 took place unimpeded; and urges the Armenian authorities to release all persons deprived of their liberty in relation to events of March 1 and 2, 2008, who did not personally commit violent crimes;
11. *welcomes* the establishment by the President of Armenia of a "fact-finding group of experts to inquire into the events of March 1 and 2, 2008" and *welcomes* the decision of the opposition to fully participate in the work of this group;
12. *welcomes* the amendments to the Criminal Code (done in cooperation with the Council of Europe) which clearly define usurpation of power (Article 300) and mass disorder (Article 225) and allow to revise the charges brought against the persons detained in relation to events of March 1 and 2; *stresses* that it is the application of these amendments that will ultimately matter; *welcomes* the increasing number of pardons granted by the President of Armenia;
13. *stresses* the importance of the implementation of existing legal and institutional reforms in the field of human rights and the rule of law; *takes note* of amendments to the Rules of Procedures of the National Assembly of Armenia aimed at strengthening the role of the opposition in the legislative;

14. *recalls* the vital role played by a free and independent media as a precondition for the development of democracy; *stresses* the need to ensure the freedom of independent central and provincial media outlets; *urges* the Armenian authorities therefore to investigate seriously all the cases of harassment of journalists;
15. *draws the attention to* the ruling by the European Court of Human Rights concerning the case of the "A1 +" broadcaster; *calls* on the licensing authority to ensure that the broadcasting law is respected in a way to enable the unhampered functioning of independent media outlets;
16. *calls on* the Armenian government to ensure freedom of religion and freedom of the conscientious objectors and *expresses hope* that the new legislation in this field will meet Council of Europe standards;

Economic policies

17. *notes* that a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Armenia would lead to Armenia's genuine integration with the EU in the area of trade and economy, thus bringing the medium and longer term economic benefits to the Armenian and European companies and consumers;
18. *welcomes* the declared priority and efforts of the Armenian Government to improve tax administration and customs aimed at further improvement of the business environment, reduction of the shadow economy and increased competitiveness;
19. *underlines* the importance of further EU involvement including by means of a special technical assistance in gradual approximation of Armenia's trade and investment related legislation with relevant EU law and procedures;
20. *calls on* the Armenian government to implement its reform programme focusing on economic development, fight against corruption, tax and customs reforms and improving the investment climate, in accordance with the objectives of the ENP Action Plan; *urges* the Armenian government to finalise the 2008-2012 anti-corruption programme;
21. *notes* that the small size of the Armenian economy and its vulnerability to external shocks as well as its limited reserves to combat effects of the global crisis help to explain the current economic crisis in Armenia; *welcomes* steps to restore macroeconomic stability through increased cooperation with international and European financial institutions;

Regional issues

22. *acknowledges* the significant negative impact of the Georgian-Russian conflict on Armenia's economy, mainly due to the temporary disruption of transport routes and the deterioration of the investment climate; *welcomes* Armenia's balanced and unbiased position during and following the August events in South Ossetia;
23. *welcomes* the Decision of the European Council on the Eastern Partnership which will create new opportunities for tailor-made, targeted, enhanced and inclusive regional and multilateral cooperation;
24. *welcomes* the initiative of the President of Armenia Mr Serzh Sargsyan to engage into a dialogue with Turkey and to invite the President of Turkey Mr. Abdullah Gül to Armenia and commends the decision of the latter to accept the invitation;

25. *hopes* that the process of full normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations will include the lifting of the land blockade imposed on Armenia, opening of borders, and establishment of diplomatic relations;
26. *takes due note* of the idea of a Caucasian Platform for Stability and Cooperation and considers this as a positive sign in the right direction;
27. *expresses* its support for Armenia's presidency of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and *encourages* the Armenian authorities to use this regional framework in order to promote economic development, security and stability of the Black Sea region as a whole;
28. *welcomes* Armenia's participation in the Ministerial summit of TRACECA intergovernmental commission in Baku in December 2008 despite unnecessary diplomatic obstacles; *stresses* the strong desirability of further infrastructure development which includes all the countries of the region and therefore strengthens stability, economic and trade development; further *calls on* all actors to take concrete steps to create the necessary conditions;
29. *strongly encourages* the Armenian authorities to enhance their contribution to the implementation of urgent security measures at the Medzamor power plant and to speed up its definite decommissioning; *calls on* the Armenian authorities to take into consideration using renewable energy sources given the high risk of earthquakes in this area; *urges* the European Union to continue its technical and financial support to this action;
30. *underlines* the importance of regional structures such as the Regional Environmental Centre (REC) for the implementation of projects within the framework of the Black Sea Synergy; *calls on* the Armenian authorities and on the European Commission to enhance their support to this structure;

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict

31. *expresses* its support to the efforts of the Minsk Group and its three co-chairs aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict;
32. *welcomes* the meetings of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, held in St Petersburg, Moscow and Zurich and the signing by the Presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation on November 2, 2008 of a common declaration confirming their commitment to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in peaceful political manner, based on the principles and norms of the international law; in this regard *recalls* that this is the first joint document since the cease-fire agreement signed in 1994, in Bishkek;
33. *stresses* the unacceptability of militaristic rhetoric and hate propaganda and welcomes the readiness of Armenia to develop confidence building measures; *underlines* the importance of regional cooperation in order to improve the atmosphere for the solution of the conflict; in this respect, *welcomes* the appeal of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to develop confidence building measures and consolidate cease-fire;
34. *reiterates* its belief that there is no alternative to the peaceful resolution of the conflict; in this regard, *refers* to the Statement of OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs of 19 February 2009;

35. *hopes* that the peaceful solution will be reached via negotiations respecting the three following principles: right for self-determination, territorial integrity, and non-use of force or threat of force;
36. *asks* the European Commission to explore the possibility of providing humanitarian aid and assistance, in form of local confidence-building and local economic rehabilitation projects to Nagorno-Karabakh, with a view to helping resolve the conflict there;
37. *deplores* that hundreds of thousands of Armenian refugees, victims of ethnic cleansing in late 1980s-early 1990s are still deprived of their right to return safely and in dignity to their homes;
38. *welcomes* the Declaration of the Foreign Ministers of the Co-chair countries issued in Helsinki in November 2008 and the Declaration adopted unanimously by the Foreign Ministers of the OSCE participating states stressing that the military option as a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be excluded and that parties should commit to political, peaceful settlement;
39. *calls upon* the parties to the conflict to withdraw snipers from the line of contact in accordance with the Joint Declaration of Foreign Minister of OSCE MG Co-chair countries made on 4 of December, 2008 in Helsinki;
40. *attaches importance* to the involvement of representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh in the negotiations;
41. *stresses* that reconciliation between the Armenian and Azerbaijani peoples, the enhancement and deepening of the regional cooperation in the South Caucasus is essential for regional prosperity, security and stability.
