

P7_TA-PROV(2012)0411

Elections in Georgia

European Parliament resolution of 26 October 2012 on the elections in Georgia (2012/2816(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions and reports, and in particular its resolution of 17 November 2011 containing its recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the negotiations of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement¹,
 - having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between Georgia and the European Union, which entered into force on 1 July 1999,
 - having regard to the joint EU-Georgia European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan, endorsed by the EU-Georgia Cooperation Council on 14 November 2006 and laying out the strategic objectives based on commitments to shared values and effective implementation of political, economic and institutional reforms,
 - having regard to the ceasefire agreement on 12 August 2008, mediated by the EU and signed by Georgia and the Russian Federation, and the implementation agreement of 8 September 2008,
 - having regard to the joint statement of 2 October 2012 by the High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Stefan Füle on the results of Georgia's parliamentary elections on 2 October 2012,
 - having regard to the statement of preliminary findings and conclusions arising from the international election observation of the Georgian parliamentary elections held on 1 October 2012,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions on Georgia of 15 October 2012,
 - having regard to the ENP Progress Report on Georgia published on 15 May 2012,
 - having regard to the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit of 7 May 2009,
 - having regard to Rule 110(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the active engagement of Georgia and a commitment to shared values and principles, including democracy, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights, are essential to move the European integration process forward and ensure the success of the negotiations for – and subsequent implementation of – the association agreement; whereas domestic political stability in Georgia and a focus on internal reform are prerequisites for the further development of relations between the EU and Georgia;

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0514.

- B. whereas Georgia is one of the founding members of the Eastern Partnership; whereas at the Warsaw Summit both the EU's and the Eastern Partnership's representatives reaffirmed that the Eastern Partnership is based on a community of values and on principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law;
 - C. whereas the most recent parliamentary elections in Georgia, held on 1 October 2012, were free and fair and in line with internationally recognised standards; whereas, overall, the freedoms of association, assembly and expression were respected and the people of Georgia, despite a very polarised campaign, freely expressed their will;
 - D. whereas the Council and the European Parliament took note of the preliminary assessment by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the conduct of the Georgian parliamentary elections held on 1 October 2012;
 - E. whereas some key issues of the electoral code still remain to be addressed, with regard, in particular to certain important recommendations made earlier by the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission, e.g. relating to disparities in population size among the single-member constituencies;
 - F. whereas Georgia, as an important partner of the EU, demonstrated its strong commitment to democratic standards during these parliamentary elections;
 - G. whereas the Georgian breakaway territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia are still de facto occupied by the Russian armed forces; whereas, despite the six-point ceasefire agreement signed in 2008 by the Russian Federation and Georgia, access for the EU Monitoring Mission to South Ossetia and Abkhazia remains hindered;
 - H. whereas the EU has remained committed to and has continued to give its full support to Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty and to the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Georgia;
 - I. whereas the broadcast of video footage showing the torture of inmates in Georgian prisons has caused a widespread outcry and has revealed serious misconduct on the part of government agencies responsible for law and order; whereas two ministers resigned because of this scandal;
- 1. Congratulates the Georgian people on the significant step they have taken towards the consolidation of democracy in their country; welcomes the fact of the democratic parliamentary elections of 1 October 2012, which were conducted in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments, although certain issues remain to be addressed; stresses that this election represents an important step for the democratic development of Georgia and the political future of the country; welcomes the first instance of the transfer of power by means of democratic, free and fair elections to have occurred in Georgia;
 - 2. Stresses that one of the EU's foreign policy objectives is to enhance and foster relations with Georgia;
 - 3. Welcomes the progress in relations between the EU and Georgia, and reaffirms the values, principles and commitments of democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the market economy, sustainable development and good governance;

4. Encourages all Georgian political parties to work together constructively during the coming transition period, and afterwards to ensure stability, the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance, on a basis of full respect for the democratically expressed will of the Georgian people;
5. Calls on all political forces to show restraint, and trusts there will be constructive cooperation between the executive and legislative powers in Georgia during the expected period of cohabitation; notes that the period of constitutional cohabitation will require a concerted effort to seek political compromise and consensus while fully respecting the Georgian Constitution and its cardinal laws; stresses that constructive relations between the President, the Government and the Parliament are essential for Georgia's democratic credentials and governance;
6. Welcomes President Saakashvili's statement accepting his party's defeat in the elections, and stresses that the fact of such a statement being made at so early a stage after the elections sends out a positive signal with regard to democracy in Georgia; considers this an extraordinary event in a country and a region where other post-Soviet leaders have in many cases given up office only under pressure from mass protests or the threat of civil war;
7. Calls on the Georgian authorities to fully address all the shortfalls identified by the International Election Observation, including the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission concerning the electoral code;
8. Welcomes the implementation of the principles of 'must carry' and 'must offer', which significantly contributed to media pluralism ahead of the elections;
9. Notes that despite the polarised and tense electoral environment, the freedoms of expression, association and assembly were respected overall; is aware, however, that instances of harassment and intimidation of party activists and supporters marred the campaign environment at times;
10. Stresses the importance for a fully functioning democracy of adopting and implementing a stringent and effective law on party financing, as well as a law on potential and actual conflicts of interest, in order to draw a clear dividing line between private and public interests for persons holding public office;
11. Urges the Georgian authorities to investigate and prosecute all cases of ill-treatment and torture in Georgian prisons, and calls for a deep and effective reform of the penitentiary system; in line with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; welcomes the decision of the Georgian prisons minister to form a monitoring group in order to let human rights activists and the media visit facilities to check the conditions;
12. Insists that the new government must continue to combat corruption and implement the political reforms already begun by the current government;
13. Calls on the Council and Commission to ensure the necessary support for the new administration and to continue the ongoing dialogue, so as to ensure continuity and maintain momentum in the negotiations for an Association Agreement, and to consider it in line with the principle of 'more for more' to redouble the efforts to complete the negotiations for a visa-free regime between Georgia and the EU, in the context of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement;

14. Reaffirms the EU's support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia; hopes that both Georgia and Russia will continue actively to engage in conflict resolution without preconditions; hopes Georgia will maintain its engagement in the Geneva International Discussions and pursue an effective policy in engaging with the breakaway regions;
15. Calls on the VP/HR to make further efforts to encourage Russia to comply with the six-point Sarkozy Plan to stabilise and resolve the conflict in Georgia; calls, in this regard, on Russia to withdraw its troops from the breakaway Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and to allow unfettered access for the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to those two provinces;
16. Stresses the need for the new government to maintain Georgia's constructive engagement in the Geneva International Discussions; regrets, in this respect, the slow pace of negotiations and the absence of any substantial progress between the two parties at the Geneva Discussions on Security and Stability in the South Caucasus, and calls for a stronger engagement with a view to complying in full with all six points of the ceasefire agreement of September 2008; notes the invitation to the Georgian Dream coalition to send representatives to participate in the 21st round of internationally mediated peace talks on the Georgian conflicts, to be held in Geneva;
17. Looks forward to the conclusion of the negotiations of the new Association Agreement between the EU and Georgia, in line with the European aspirations of the country, and stresses the importance of Georgia's European integration process for the continuation of economic, social and political reform; welcomes the EU's commitment to the objective of visa-free travel, and expects the parties to make substantial progress in this respect;
18. Expects the new majority and the new government to continue cooperation with the EU and NATO, and hopes that relations between the EU and Georgia will remain strong; welcomes the express commitment on the part of the incoming Georgian government to further Euro-Atlantic integration and its determination to build on the results of the good work done by the previous authorities;
19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President / High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the Governments and Parliaments of the Member States, the President, Government and Parliament of Georgia, the Secretary-General of NATO and the OSCE.