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DRAFT REPORT

on implementation and review of the EU-Central Asia Strategy
(2015/2220(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

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on implementation and review of the EU-Central Asia Strategy (2015/2220(INI))

- having regard to the fourth progress report of 13 January 2015 on the implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia adopted in 2007,
- having regard to the commitments announced at the EU and Central Asian Ministerial meeting in Brussels on 20 November 2013,
- having regard to the results of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting held in Warsaw from 21 September to 2 October 2015,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on the region, in particular those of 20 February 2008 on an EU Strategy for Central Asia¹ and 15 December 2011 on the state of implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia²,
- having regard to its resolution of 29 April 2015 on the Court of Auditors' special reports in the context of the 2013 Commission discharge, in particular its Part II on the Special Report No 13/2013 of the Court of Auditors entitled 'EU Development Assistance to Central Asia'³,
- having regard to its decision of 29 April 2015 on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013, Section III – Commission and executive agencies, and to paragraph 240 thereof⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2011 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of a Protocol to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Uzbekistan, of the other part, amending the Agreement in order to extend the provisions of the Agreement to bilateral trade in textiles, taking account of the expiry of the bilateral textiles Agreement⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 March 2012 on Kazakhstan⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 June 2012 on 'Engaging in energy policy cooperation with partners beyond our borders: A strategic approach to secure, sustainable and competitive energy supply'⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 22 November 2012 on the role of the Common

¹ OJ C 184 E, 4.8.2009, p. 49.

² Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0588.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0119.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0118.

⁵ OJ C 168 E, 14.6.2013, p. 195.

⁶ OJ C 251 E, 31.8.2013, p. 93.

⁷ OJ C 332 E, 15.11.2013, p. 28.

- Security and Defence Policy in case of climate-driven crises and natural disasters¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 22 November 2012 containing its recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service on the negotiations for an EU-Kazakhstan enhanced partnership and cooperation agreement²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2013 on EU-China relations³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 18 April 2013 on the human rights situation in Kazakhstan⁴,
 - having regard to its resolution of 23 October 2014 on human rights in Uzbekistan⁵,
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2015 on ‘Kyrgyzstan, homosexual propaganda bill’⁶,
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2012 on the review of the EU’s human rights strategy⁷,
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2012 on the annual report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2011 and the European Union’s policy on the matter⁸,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 September 2009 on the conclusion of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Tajikistan, of the other part⁹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2014 on EU priorities for the 25th session of the UN Human Rights Council¹⁰,
 - having regard to its legislative resolution of 22 October 2013 on the Council position at first reading with a view to the adoption of a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council providing macro-financial assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic¹¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 11 November 2010 on ‘Strengthening the OSCE – a role of the EU’¹²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 8 July 2010 on the situation in Kyrgyzstan¹³,

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0458.

² Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0459.

³ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0097.

⁴ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0190.

⁵ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2014)0040.

⁶ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0008.

⁷ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0504.

⁸ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0503.

⁹ OJ C 224 E, 19.8.2010, p. 12.

¹⁰ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0252.

¹¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0426.

¹² OJ C 74 E, 13.3.2012, p. 12.

¹³ OJ C 351 E, 2.12.2011, p. 92.

- having regard to its resolution of 6 May 2010 on the situation in Kyrgyzstan¹,
 - having regard to the ongoing reviews of the EU Global Strategy for foreign and security policy and of the European Neighbourhood Policy,
 - having regard to Article 21 of the TEU,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Development, the Committee on International Trade and the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A8-0000/2015),
- A. whereas the EU-Central Asia Strategy was adopted in a context of growing importance of the region and increased EU engagement in neighbouring Afghanistan, the extension of the European Neighbourhood Policy to the Caspian region, ongoing EU support for reform and modernisation of post-Soviet societies, and EU energy security interests; whereas it also recognised the security threats and challenges that require cooperation between Central Asia and the EU;
- B. whereas reaching a common understanding of democracy, the rule of law and human rights is a basic prerequisite for deeper cooperation between the EU and the five countries of Central Asia in areas of mutual interest, in the very meaning of the term ‘partnership’ as vested in the Partnership Cooperation Agreements; whereas the overall situation of democracy and human rights in the region remains to various degrees poor and deeply worrying;
- C. whereas the level of development aid was increased from EUR 750 million in 2007-2013 to EUR 1 028 million in 2014-2020, i.e. by 56 %;

General provisions on EU commitments

1. Stresses the strong political and economic interest of the EU in strengthening its bilateral and multilateral relations with all the Central Asian countries, on the basis of common shared values as stated in the existing Partnership and Cooperation Agreements between the EU and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and in the agreement not yet in force with Turkmenistan;
2. Reiterates the EU’s strong interest in a peaceful, democratic, stable and economically and environmentally sustainable and prosperous Central Asian region, as stated in the strategy of 2007;
3. Welcomes the Review of the EU-Central Asia strategy conducted by the EEAS, the Commission and the Council in 2015; takes the view, nevertheless, that the priorities, objectives and targets should be better defined and accompanied by benchmarks and indicators in a credible timeframe, in order to identify and correct eventual shortfalls;
4. Agrees that the Strategy adopted in 2007 and the long-term priority areas defined therein (human rights and the rule of law; youth and education; trade and investment;

¹ OJ C 81 E, 15.3.2011, p. 80.

energy and transport; the environment and water; common security threats and challenges; and intercultural dialogue) remain relevant and provide the basis for a concrete and potentially fruitful European engagement in the region, in line with the objectives set in the EU strategy;

5. Points out that the review is rather ambitious given that the region is not a geopolitical priority for the EU and its Member States, but concurs with the Council's designation of the region as strategically important, with the condition that democratic transformation should lead to improved and stronger political, diplomatic and trade relations; in this context, welcomes the 56 % increase in and more specific focusing of EU development assistance to the region in period 2014-2020 as compared with the previous period;
6. Shares the view that a differentiated and conditional approach should be applied in order to achieve better results both bilaterally and regionally; believes that regional programmes, such as those for border management, drugs and trafficking, transport and energy, should be tailor-made so as to target interested parties, and could therefore benefit from participation in them being confined to a limited or flexible number of countries of the region, possibly also including Afghanistan, Iran, Mongolia and Azerbaijan;
7. Underlines that the disbursement of EU funds should be conditionality- and incentives-based, along the lines of the principles agreed for the European Neighbourhood Policy, rewarding performance on a number of benchmarks to be established for each country, and depending on measurable progress with regard, in particular, to the fields of democratisation, human rights, good governance, the rule of law, development, human security and good neighbourly relations;
8. Urges the EU and its Member States to speak with one voice fostering foreign policy coherence and coordination in this region, and to introduce joint programming of aid and projects with Member States in order to achieve a full impact and synergy; welcomes closer involvement and ownership on the part of Member States in terms of implementing the strategy;
9. Takes note of the re-establishment of the post of EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Central Asia after a year-long gap, and expects the newly appointed EUSR to make an important contribution to the implementation of the strategy for Central Asian countries by ensuring consistency of the external actions of the Union in the region;
10. Calls on the Commission to ensure synergies, coherence and consistency among the different EU external financing instruments used in the region, such as the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (ISP), the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), and the Partnership Instrument (PI), as well as to step up coordination with the EBRD and the EIB;

Democratisation, human rights and the rule of law

11. Urges the Council, the EEAS and the Commission to prioritise the promotion of democratic transformation, thereby providing a stronger bulwark against internal political, security and economic pressures and challenges;

12. Regrets that the legal obligations vested in the PCAs to uphold democracy and the rule of law have not been observed in most cases, with the exception of limited and fragile progress in Kyrgyzstan;
13. Deeply regrets that overall respect for democratic standards, human rights and fundamental freedoms has further deteriorated during the reporting period; regrets that the human rights situation overall remains worrying, despite limited positive developments in some countries of the region, including legislative reforms, increased efforts to prevent torture, and steps towards the eradication of the use of child labour and forced labour;
14. Highlights the added value and further potential of the Rule of Law Platform, coordinated by Germany and France with active support from Finland;
15. Condemns the continued persecution of human rights defenders, opposition political figures and journalists in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and, regrettably, also in Kyrgyzstan, and calls on the EEAS to speak out and take action in their defence;
16. Expresses its deep concern at the growing trend towards clampdown on civil society on the pretext of security and stability;
17. Is concerned at the wave of legislation in the region restricting freedom of the media, expression, assembly and association, aimed against civil society funding (the ‘foreign agents laws’), and the LGBTI community (the so-called ‘LGBTI propaganda laws’);
18. Welcomes the establishment of Human Rights Dialogues with all five countries of Central Asia; points out, however, the lack of transparency of the process, and calls on the VP/HR to review the role, mandate, objectives and follow-up of the Human Rights Dialogues with the countries of the region, and in particular to involve all stakeholders and introduce systematic human rights monitoring mechanisms in countries with which the EU has entered into legally binding agreements;
19. Calls on the authorities to make further efforts to protect ethnic and religious minorities and LGBTI persons in Central Asian societies and to end discrimination against them;

Education and youth - people-to-people exchanges

20. Welcomes the commitment of Latvia, with the help of Poland, to lead the regional programme on education; regards investment in education as the best way to improve the socio-economic situation of the region;

Economic integration and sustainable development

21. Is of the opinion that economic and trade relations with the countries of Central Asia must in no way develop at the expense of the rule of law, democracy, and human rights and fundamental freedoms;
22. Is of the opinion that development aid should be disbursed only in countries with a genuine interest in the alleviation of poverty and equal and sustainable socio-economic

progress, and that those countries must demonstrate efficient anti-corruption policies and allow the EU to monitor implementation; questions, in this respect, the rationale for and cost-effectiveness of the aid to Turkmenistan which will graduate from bilateral aid in 2017, and of that to Uzbekistan; requests that the policy be reviewed should improvements occur; encourages the VP/HR to help foster progress in this field;

Energy, environment, water, and transport

23. Encourages better coordination and reinvigorated efforts under the crucial water and environment regional platform, led by Italy and Romania;
24. Notes with concern that in addition to increasing climate change impacts, multiple alarming environmental challenges inherited from the Soviet period persist, such as those relating to cleaning up nuclear testing sites, industrial and mining activities, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, land degradation, air pollution, desertification, and, above all, continued catastrophic water mismanagement; urges the Commission, in this respect, to step up technical assistance and provide European know-how and best practice as to how to deal with these problems;
25. Encourages the EU to prioritise and deploy its ‘water diplomacy’ further in order to facilitate improved cross-border water management and to mediate dispute settlement, including promotion of an open and effective framework, in particular in the case of the Rogun dam; in this context urges the EU to stimulate further adhesion to international conventions and legal principles relating to shared water resources;

Regional cooperation, security challenges and border management

26. Recognises that the main threats and challenges identified in the Strategy for Central Asia remain relevant; is, however, acutely aware of the additional external pressures stemming from the current security challenges in Afghanistan, as well as the opaque foreign policy of Russia aimed at reintegration of former Soviet space, triggered by the crisis in Ukraine;
27. Is concerned that stalled and uneven socio-economic development, poor governance and a weak institutional framework, lack of respect for rule of law; unresolved ethnic issues and lack of prospects for orderly succession in the countries of Central Asia are sources of potential instability;
28. Supports the EU’s long-term goal of transforming the nascent EU-Central Asia High Level Security Dialogue into a genuine cooperative forum aimed at cooperation in addressing common security challenges;
29. Recognises the continued implementation of the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone by the five Central Asian Republics;
30. Asks the Member States to refrain from arms deliveries to Central Asia, in line with the eight criteria laid down in the 2008 EU common position on arms export controls; in this respect, raises concern over the export of 300 US armoured vehicles to Uzbekistan in 2014-2015;

31. Regrets that despite the urgent need for Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Central Asian countries, the EU has not been able to integrate it in its strategy;

Country-specific issues

32. Underlines that the following country-specific paragraphs address only priority issues and are therefore not all-encompassing;

Kazakhstan

33. Emphasises that deeper political and economic relations must be based on shared values and correspond to an active and concrete engagement by Kazakhstan on political and democratic reforms, stemming from its international obligations and commitments;
34. Regrets, in this regard, the increasing deterioration in the fields of freedom of the media, freedom of expression, and freedom of association and assembly;

Kyrgyzstan

35. Points out that further efforts are needed to develop a fully functioning democracy, despite the initial encouraging signs shown by Kyrgyzstan regarding pursuing democratic reforms and shifting towards a genuine multi-party system, as one of the pilot countries for EU democracy support;

Tajikistan

36. Regrets the lack of genuine internal reconciliation in Tajikistan following the civil war of 1992-1997; expresses, in this regard, its deepest concern at the decision to ban the Islamic Renaissance Party, following a worrying trend aimed at suppressing legitimate political forces and silencing critical voices; calls on the Tajik authorities to adopt the necessary measures to guarantee freedom of expression, pluralism and a free and open political environment;

Turkmenistan

37. Stresses that the main international indexes give Turkmenistan a very low ranking as regards respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
38. Urges the VP/HR and the Commission to make it clear to the Turkmen authorities that EU engagement is conditional on concrete steps aimed at improving the human rights situation and the rule of law, and firmly to raise human rights concerns at all levels in addition to the ongoing human rights dialogue; points out, in this regard, the importance of setting up an EU Delegation in Turkmenistan, in particular for interaction with civil society and monitoring of the human rights situation;

Uzbekistan

39. Regrets the EU's lack of effective pursuit of democratisation in Uzbekistan, as proven by the government's refusal to engage in any meaningful reform, and reiterates its expectation that the VP/HR should develop a policy of critical, conditional and coherent European engagement with non-aligned Uzbekistan;

40. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, the EEAS, the EU Special Representative for Central Asia, and the governments and parliaments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.