



EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee

Seventeenth Meeting

Yerevan, 19-20 December 2017

FINAL STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Pursuant to Article 83 of the EU-Armenia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)

The Seventeenth meeting of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (PCC) was held in Yerevan on 19-20 December 2017, under the co-chairmanship of Mr Armen Ashotyan on behalf of the National Assembly of Armenia and of Mr Sajjad Karim on behalf of the European Parliament. The Committee heard Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Garen Nazarian on behalf of the Government of Armenia, and Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Armenia H.E. Piotr Antoni Świtalski.

Having thus considered the state of play of EU-Armenia relations, the Parliamentary Cooperation Committee agreed upon the following final statement and recommendations.

The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee:

1. Recalls the crucial role of the European Parliament and of the National Assembly of Armenia, on the basis of their democratic legitimacy, in the development of the Eastern Partnership dynamics;
2. Welcomes the signature of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the EU and Armenia, in the fringes of the Eastern Partnership Summit that was held in Brussels on 24 November 2017;
3. Stresses that this historical Agreement is based on the EU's and Armenia's common commitment to democracy, the rule of law, good governance and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; notes with deep satisfaction that it sets a solid legal basis to invigorate the political dialogue and broaden the scope of economic cooperation as well as cooperation in sectors such as energy, transport, environment and climate change, creates a framework for new opportunities in trade and investments, and paves the way for increased mobility for the benefit of the citizens; underlines that elements of paramount importance for the strengthening of democracy, such as the rule of law, consolidation of the judiciary, development of public and social institutes, and good governance, are at the core of the new Agreement;
4. Urges both the EU and Armenia to stay committed to a thorough and lasting implementation of this Agreement;
5. Emphasises the role of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Agreement between the EU and Armenia, which gives new impetus to the strengthening of the parliamentary

cooperation between the EU Parliament and the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia; stresses the importance of launching the new parliamentary partnership cooperation format aimed at enhancing the parliamentary dimension of the cooperation between the EU and Armenia;

6. Stresses that both the European Parliament and the National Assembly of Armenia should provide appropriate mechanisms for the strengthening of the parliamentary oversight, fostering public awareness and building up the appropriate tools for the inclusion of society;
7. Urges the National Parliaments of the EU Member States to ratify the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement without undue delay;
8. Emphasises that the Eastern Partnership dynamics should not be considered as a tool aimed at forcing the EU's Eastern Partners to choose between the European path and other partnerships; notes that Armenia has signed a far-reaching Agreement with the EU whilst being at the same time a member of the Eurasian Economic Union;
9. Recalls that, following the principle of differentiation that guides the Eastern Partnership, every Eastern Partner should be given the possibility to deepen its cooperation with the EU, in coherence with its ambitions, and with the pace and quality of its reforms;
10. Welcomes the steady progress that has been made in Armenia's reform agenda; highlights nevertheless the need to further work on the top priorities consistently identified over the last years, i.a. giving greater momentum to the reforms process, fighting corruption, ensuring media plurality and freedom and protecting minorities;
11. Recalls that the EU has already planned to provide, under the Single Support Framework 2017-2020, a bilateral financial support totalling around €160 million (to be compared to €118.5 million in grants for the period 2014-2017), focusing on areas such as economic development and innovation, improving the rule of law and the business environment, electoral assistance, connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change;
12. Calls on closer cooperation to improve energy security and efficiency through investments in interconnectivity and infrastructure and the diversification of energy sources, in particular by increasing renewable energy and reducing dependence on fossil fuels; underlines the importance of ensuring full respect for international nuclear safety and environmental protection agreements and obligations;
13. Reckons that the EU assistance should reflect the growingly ambitious goals of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, provided that Armenia meets the required conditions as far as the reforms jointly agreed with the EU are concerned, in line with the principles of differentiation and "more for more"; encourages the European Commission to further enhance its assistance and to align its budgetary instruments, such as the European Neighbourhood Instrument and the European Fund for Sustainable Development, to match the ambitions of the new EU-Armenia partnership;

14. Stresses that the EU financial support will be strictly conditional on concrete reforms steps and their effective implementation, notably in terms of upholding the rule of law, ensuring good governance, and defending human rights as well as the plurality and freedom of media; recalls and that the EU's incentive-based approach aims at benefiting those Eastern Partners most engaged in genuine, ambitious reforms;
15. Encourages Armenia's active participation in the COSME and Horizon 2020 programmes, in regional programmes funded under the European Neighbourhood Instrument in the fields of environment, energy, transport, culture and youth, in cross-border cooperation actions, and in the initiatives open to all the Eastern Partners such as Erasmus+, Erasmus Mundus, eTwinning Plus, TAIEX, SIGMA, and the Neighbourhood Investment Facility;
16. Recommends to the European Commission to allow for a more intensive participation of Armenia in EU-supported programmes that are open to non-EU countries and to open the way for the participation of Armenia, when the conditions are met and under a legally appropriate framework, in EU agencies;
17. Welcomes the achievements in strengthening people-to-people contacts, including through education, youth, cultural and scientific exchanges between Armenia and the EU; calls for reinforced engagement in modernising education, research and innovation systems, increased investment in young people's skills, entrepreneurship and employability, and welcomes in this regard the strengthened "Youth Package" presented by the EU under the EU4Youth initiative;
18. Calls on the European Commission to focus on tangible deliverables for the citizens; underlines, in this respect, that the EU-Armenia Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreement that entered into force in January 2014 is already up-and-running; looks forward to strengthening cooperation and further progressing in the area of mobility in a secure and well-managed environment and to considering in due course the opening of a visa liberalisation dialogue with Armenia, provided that the conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place, including the effective implementation of the visa facilitation and readmission agreement between the parties mentioned hereinabove;
19. Notes positively the initiation of reforms in the area of territorial management and local self-government, seeking to enhance the role of municipal authorities and shape stronger links with the local communities in the decision-making processes;
20. Welcomes the Council of Europe's Venice Commission's and OSCE/ ODIHR's generally positive assessment of Armenia's ongoing reforms towards ensuring the rule of law and notes measures enacted with a view to enhancing the efficiency of the Prosecutor's office; notes positively, as far as the reform of the Electoral Code is concerned, that a number of previous recommendations from the OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission have been addressed; regrets, however, that many factors, specifically identified by them, as yet need to be addressed; calls on the Armenian authorities to take all the necessary steps - legislative measures and others - to tackle these issues, seeking in so far as necessary the technical assistance of the international community, e.g. of the European Union and in particular of the European Parliament;
21. Notes positively, as far as the April 2017 elections are concerned, that the observation

mission led by the OSCE/ODIHR, to which the European Parliament contributed, found that the public media channel gave an equitable coverage to each contestant during the campaign period, that the elections were generally well administered and that fundamental freedoms were generally respected; stresses, nevertheless, the shortcomings also identified by the OSCE/ODIHR-led mission, such as the persistence of pressure and vote-buying practices, and the illegitimate interference of party representatives or police officers at the voting stations;

22. Recalls the importance of the gender dimension in the EU-Armenia relations and, as a whole, within the Eastern Partnership framework; recalls that gender equality, non-discrimination and women's empowerment are among the 2020 deliverables, as it was stressed during the Eastern Partnership Summit of 24 November 2017; calls on the authorities of Armenia to continue paying attention to this issue, i.a. by fighting negative gender stereotypes, bridging the pay gap between women and men, and declaring zero tolerance for any form of gender-based harassment, intimidation or violence;
23. Recalls that international human rights bodies, such as the UN CEDAW Committee, have underlined the necessity to eradicate harmful gender norms and practices on numerous accounts, and have called on the authorities of Armenia to ensure that traditions do not hamper the realisation of women's rights and potentials;
24. Welcomes the commitment of Armenian authorities to sign, ratify and thoroughly implement the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the "Istanbul Convention"); encourages them to do so without undue delay;
25. Welcomes the adoption of the law for the prevention of violence in the family, the protection of the victims of violence in the family and the restoration of the harmony in the family that was first proposed for public debate in October 2017, as a major, positive step forward; stresses that the EU stands ready to offer all support and expertise to help Armenian authorities to best deal with all matters of domestic violence and all related issues; underlines that there must be follow-up in order to deliver effective implementation and enforcement, and that the victims' needs must be priority at all times;
26. Stresses the need to tackle all forms of discrimination, as defined by the United Nations' Conventions and Resolutions, and put in place the appropriate mechanisms to address all forms of discrimination;
27. Commends the Armenian authorities for their endeavours to accept and integrate Syrian refugees of Armenian descent; calls on the European Commission and the EU Member States to respond positively to any request for assistance from the Armenian authorities aimed at facilitating this integration;
28. Deplores the continued human losses caused by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; deeply regrets the regular violations of the cease-fire agreement, which repeatedly claim the lives of both military personnel and civilians, whilst hampering the socioeconomic development of the entire region; acknowledges that the current status quo is neither acceptable nor sustainable, and that there can be no military solution to the conflict;
29. Reiterates its unwavering support to the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs

and to their 2009 Basic Principles as noted in the CEPA Preamble – refrain from the threat or use of force, territorial integrity of States, and equal rights and self-determination of peoples - as well as its appreciation of their endeavours to advance towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict; stresses that efforts shall follow commonly shared principles of maintaining international peace and security as enshrined in the UN Charter, the OSCE Helsinki Final Act and other relevant multilateral documents, underlining the importance of existing agreed formats for the peaceful settlement of the conflict; stresses that arms control and confidence- and security-building measures are of great importance for security, predictability and stability;

30. Welcomes the joint statement made by the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the fringes of the Geneva Summit of 16 October 2017, organised by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs; calls on the authorities of both countries to hold high-level talks in good faith and commit to genuine confidence-building measures and renewed dialogue, in order to ease tensions on the line of contact, stabilise the security situation and promote a more constructive atmosphere for future negotiations aimed to the peaceful resolution of the conflict; reiterates its full adherence to the exclusively peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as proposed by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and supported by the European Union and the European Parliament;
31. Welcomes the efforts and the EU's strengthened role in conflict resolution and confidence-building in the framework of existing agreed negotiating formats and processes; welcomes in this regard its new initiatives aimed at supporting and completing the aforementioned efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, by promoting confidence- and peace-building activities across the conflict divide and bringing the civil societies closer;
32. Regrets deeply that the Armenian initiative of normalisation of relations with Turkey without any preconditions fully supported by the international community and reflected in the Zurich Protocols of 2009 were not ratified by the Turkish side putting forward preconditions for this ratification, thus continuing to keep the border with Armenia unilaterally closed; recalls the approaching of the 70th anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; calls on all the EU Member States to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide; notes that the issue has become in recent years a topic of open and public debate in Turkey itself.