



PRESS RELEASE

Delegation of the European Parliament pays official visit to Pakistan

Karachi, 31 October 2018

A delegation of the European Parliament is paying an official visit to Pakistan from 29 to 31 October 2018, on the occasion of the 11th inter-parliamentary meeting between the European Parliament and the National Assembly of Pakistan. The European delegation is comprised of the Chair Ms Jean Lambert (Greens, UK), Mr Georg Mayer (ENF, Austria) and Mr Wajid Khan (S&D, UK).

This is the first official visit following the elections of 25 July 2018 in Pakistan, which were observed by the European Union, including some Members of this delegation. This visit provides Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) with an opportunity to meet with the new Government and Parliament to discuss issues of common interest, such as EU-Pakistan cooperation in a number of fields, bilateral trade and GSP+, climate change, regional issues, good governance and the rule of law, civil society issues and human rights, among others.

The delegation started its official visit in Islamabad on Monday 29th October and met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Human Rights, the Minister for Law and Justice, the Prime Minister's Advisor on Climate Change, the Prime Minister's Advisor on Commerce, the Deputy Chairman of the Senate, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus and prominent Members of Parliament, with civil society organisations and with representatives of the media. European Parliamentarians also had the opportunity of meeting Mr Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, leader of the EPP, and with the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services.

In Karachi, MEPs met with the Chief Minister of Sindh, with business representatives and visited a vocational training project funded by the EU.

The European delegation was encouraged by the signals of the new Pakistani Government as regards regional cooperation and peace, including fostering relations with India, and invited interlocutors to pursue and intensify cooperation with Afghanistan and further endorse the Afghan-led peace process.

Furthermore, MEPs also welcomed the fact that many recommendations issued by the EU election observation mission (EOM) in 2013 had been included in the new Election Law, and invited the Authorities of Pakistan to examine the conclusions of the latest EOM report released by EU Chief Observer Mr Gahler, just a few days ago in Islamabad, in the same spirit.

MEPs welcomed the progress achieved in further consolidating democracy in Pakistan and hoped to see a continuation of that encouraging trend, while reminding that respect for human rights, freedom of expression, the rule of law and strengthening democratic institutions is part of that process. MEPs also reminded that it is essential to guarantee the necessary space for civil society organisations and looked forward to forthcoming clarifications on the issue of registration of INGOs.

The European Parliamentarians noted the progress that was achieved in the implementation of the EU-Pakistan Five-Year Plan (2012-2017), as it deepened bilateral relations in a number of areas, such as political cooperation, security, governance, migration and human rights, and new areas such as counter-terrorism. MEPs underlined that Pakistan has made visible progress in combatting terrorism and in further consolidating democracy and democratic institutions. MEPs now look forward to the signature of the new Strategic Engagement Plan, which will establish the foundation of an even more ambitious and comprehensive common agenda. In particular, the promotion of human rights and the rule of law must be at the forefront of that enhanced engagement.

Pakistan has benefitted from the European Union's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP+) scheme, leading to considerable surpluses in favour of Pakistan. MEPs noted the progress made so far, such as relevant legislation being adopted, but recalled, following the GSP+ mission the previous week, that some issues regarding the implementation of ILO conventions remain pending and that further progress in human rights and rule of law is needed so that Pakistan can continue benefitting from that favourable trade scheme.

MEPs also reiterated their strong opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances and call upon the Pakistani Authorities to reinstate the moratorium with the objective of full abolition.

For more information, please contact the Secretariat: Walter Masur (walter.masur@ep.europa.eu)