



EU-UKRAINE PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE
Remote Meeting 7 December 2020 (Brussels/Kyiv)

STATEMENT

In order to ensure continuity of contacts and a robust parliamentary dimension to bilateral relations, a remote session of the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee (PAC) was held on 7 December 2020. The meeting was co-chaired by Vadym Halaichuk on behalf of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, and by Witold Waszczykowski on behalf of the European Parliament.

Participants underlined the importance of regular and frequent contacts and structured deliberations, while emphasising that this remote meeting cannot be regarded as a viable substitute for the regular PAC meetings and look forward to return to physical meetings once circumstances allow.

Having discussed the recent developments in Ukraine and EU-Ukraine relations, and having exchanged views on the priorities for future developments with representatives of the Ukrainian government and the European External Action Service and the European Commission, the PAC Bureau agreed upon the following statement.

On EU-Ukraine relations and their parliamentary dimension

Members reiterated the pro-European strategic course enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine and welcomed that the 22nd EU-Ukraine Summit acknowledged the European aspirations of Ukraine based on Ukraine's European perspective pursuant to Article 49 of the TEU. Members underlined the implementation of the Association Agreement (AA)/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) as a reflection of the shared ambition of the EU and Ukraine to move towards political association and economic integration, also serving as a blueprint for reform.

Discussions emphasised the crucial role the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine as the key law-making body in pursuing an ambitious legislative agenda and recalled the need to respect an adequate balance between enacting a steady pace of reforms and allowing for transparency and appropriate parliamentary scrutiny. Both sides committed themselves to step up cooperation on practical institutional matters, including in the framework of the renewed Memorandum of Understanding between the European and the Ukrainian Parliaments.

Members acknowledged the significant challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to parliamentary work but reiterated their resolve to pursue an ambitious parliamentary agenda and fulfil their key legislative, budgetary and scrutiny functions.



Reforms and legislative agenda

The PAC welcomed recently enacted legislation in Ukraine, notably banking reform, the law on safety and quality of donor blood and blood components, the law on inland water transport, agricultural land reform, decentralisation and administrative reform and legislation on digital communications and markets.

Partners agreed on the need to ensure and maintain the independence of the National Bank of Ukraine and its competent management of monetary policy. The effective cooperation with international financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund, based on meeting relevant criteria and trust, was recognised as a cornerstone of a country's economic stability at times of dramatic challenges.

Both sides recognise the need to address the long-term economic and social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and to this effect encourage further joint efforts in the area of public health, the recalibration of EU assistance, as well as ensuring long-term macrofinancial stability. Members also recognise the significant potential to step up sectoral cooperation in priority areas, such as the digital economy, energy and climate change and welcome in particular Ukraine's ambitions to align itself with the EU's digital single market and European Green Deal objectives and policies.

Members called on the EU Member States to respect the European aspirations of Ukraine and its European choice as stated in the Association Agreement and abstain from any actions that could have a negative impact on the implementation of the objectives of the Association Agreement, including the gradual integration of Ukraine into the EU Internal Market.

Participants stressed the need for Ukraine and the EU to consider jointly the update of the trade and sectoral parts of the Association Agreement. They called in this regard for the comprehensive review in 2021 of the achievement of the Agreement's objectives.

Members commended the work of the Support Group for Ukraine in supporting reforms in Ukraine, contributing to the efficient implementation of the AA and the DCFTA and reiterated the need for the Commission to step up supporting capacity development in public administration and civil society.

Common values and anticorruption

Participants reiterated that the relationship between the EU and Ukraine is based on common values, namely respect for democratic principles, the rule of law, good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Participants underlined the crucial importance of ensuring full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of minorities, preserving freedom of expression and



media pluralism. Minorities in Ukraine and the European Union have the right to preserve their language, customs and culture, thereby contributing to the enrichment of cultural heritage. It is therefore of paramount importance to ensure the right to education in their mother tongue, at all levels.

Against the backdrop of poisonous disinformation and propaganda originating from the aggressor state, partners agreed that it is vital for Ukraine to support, not undermine independent media outlets, including the opposition ones.

PAC members stressed that the consolidation of the rule of law, incorporating fair, impartial and independent judicial proceedings, and good governance, including the effective fight against corruption, constitute a fundamental basis for economic recovery and development. In this respect they stressed the importance of an independent, accountable, transparent, and effective justice system, vital for the further development of relations between the EU and Ukraine.

Members acknowledged that the recent local elections in Ukraine were a significant step in further consolidating democracy at local level and that they were evaluated as free and fair, despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. They also constitute an important building block complementing the recently enacted decentralisation and administrative reform.

The partners discussed current proposals to overcome the legal and institutional hindrances in the fight against corruption, ensuing from the ruling of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine of 27 October. They expressed hope that adequate legislative and institutional solutions can be pursued that ensure an efficient, transparent and irreversible reform of the anti-corruption architecture, while also preserving legal stability and upholding public trust in the constitutional order of Ukraine.

In this respect they welcomed the recent adoption by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the draft law reinstating criminal liability for public officials who provide deliberately false information in their mandatory assets declarations. Members noted the need for any forthcoming legislation to take into account any relevant guidance provided by the awaited opinion of the Venice Commission.

It was acknowledged that there is a need for an inclusive legislative process in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, opposition and civil society, as well as international partners if the situation so requires.

Members underlined the importance of the fight against corruption as a key commitment made by Ukraine, notably as part of the visa-liberalisation agenda, and underlined the need for all institutions of the anti-corruption architecture to remain independent, effective and adequately resourced. All selection procedures should be transparent and merit-based, with appropriate vetting and integrity checks.



Security situation, Crimea, Donbas and the wider Eastern Partnership region

The PAC emphasised its strong and unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and recalled its repeated condemnation of Russia's acts of aggression against Ukraine, which constitute a serious and deliberate violation of international law, democratic principles and fundamental values.

Members reiterated their support for the internationally coordinated sanctions against Russia and stressed that lifting sanctions should not occur until all relevant conditions have been met, including the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements and the restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

They also strongly condemned human rights violations carried out by Russia on the occupied territories and called for international law, international humanitarian law as well as the freedom of navigation to be respected by the Russian Federation.

Members commended the approval of the global human rights sanctions mechanism of the EU, as well as the established horizontal sanctions mechanism on cyber crimes.

Members expressed grave concern about the humanitarian situation in the territories currently not controlled by the Ukrainian Government, including against the background of the Covid-19 pandemic and urged international access and support to address this.

Members continue to condemn the illegal occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol and the de facto occupation of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk. They called on the Russian Federation to fulfil its international obligations, to withdraw its military forces from the territory of Ukraine.

Participants welcomed the launch of the Crimean Platform as a viable mechanism to focus international attention on specific issues, including serious human rights violations, against the background of the illegal occupied Crimean peninsula, allowing for contacts at different levels, including among parliamentarians. Members expressed confidence that the Platform could contribute to finding a viable solution to the current unacceptable situation in Crimea.