



EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee

3rd meeting

Brussels, 9 March 2023

FINAL STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*Pursuant to Article 365 of the EU-Armenia
Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA)*

The third meeting of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee (PPC) was held in Brussels on 9 March 2023, under the co-chairmanship of Mr Arman Yeghoyan, on behalf of the National Assembly of Armenia, and of Ms Marina Kaljurand, on behalf of the European Parliament.

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

The Parliamentary Partnership Committee:

1. Notes with satisfaction the very good relations between the EU and Armenia and recalls the role played by the European Parliament and the National Assembly of Armenia, on the basis of their democratic legitimacy, in the development of these relations;
2. Deeply regrets the loss of life, immense suffering and destruction caused by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and stresses that sustainable peace cannot be achieved by military means and the threat of use of force, but requires a comprehensive political settlement in accordance with international law and based in particular on the key principles of the Helsinki Final Act of non-use of force, territorial integrity, and the equal rights and self-determination of peoples, as well as on the OSCE Minsk Group's 2009 Basic Principles and elements;
3. Strongly supports the initiative of the President of the European Council to convene and mediate meetings of the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan and stresses the urgent need to proceed with the negotiations on a peace treaty, which must address the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and in particular provide guarantees for the rights and security of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh and enable the return of internally displaced persons and refugees; takes the view that an international guarantee mechanism should be established to this end and encourages active involvement of the EU and the EU Member States;
4. Underlines that the full respect and implementation of all agreements reached between the parties, and above all the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020, are necessary preconditions for progress towards peace; condemns, in this regard, the breach by

Azerbaijan of its obligations to guarantee safe movement along the Lachin Corridor; urges an immediate end to the blockade of the Corridor, in line with the binding order of the International Court of Justice of 22 February 2023;

5. Recalls the need to open all transport connections in the region, including between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, in line with the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020; calls on the authorities of Armenia and Azerbaijan to agree on the modalities on this issue, which must fully respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national legislation/jurisdiction of the respective countries; points to the significant potential of unblocking regional communications to boost socio-economic development in the South Caucasus;
6. Strongly condemns the large-scale military aggression by Azerbaijan in September 2022 against the territory of the Republic of Armenia, as well as the military incursions into Armenian territory since May 2021; calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to immediately withdraw from all parts of the territory of Armenia;
7. Stresses the need for the border commissions established by common agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan to take forward joint work on border delimitation and de-escalatory mechanisms as soon as possible; welcomes EU assistance to this process;
8. Welcomes the deployment of a civilian European Union Mission in Armenia (EUMA) to monitor the situation along the Armenian side of the border with Azerbaijan and any conflict-related incidents and calls on the EU to adjust its regional policy, if needed, taking into consideration reports of EUMA; highlights the role of the mission to contribute to increasing security in conflict-affected areas and to building confidence, in order to support the peace process and the normalisation of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan; calls on Azerbaijan to fully cooperate with the EU mission and allow its presence on its side of the border as well;
9. Emphasises the need to address as a matter of priority all outstanding humanitarian issues; demands the immediate and unconditional release of all Armenian prisoners of war and other detainees still held by Azerbaijan and insists that they must be treated in accordance with international humanitarian law; calls on Azerbaijan to investigate reports of enforced disappearances of Armenian prisoners of war, calls on the authorities of Armenia and Azerbaijan to redouble efforts to clarify the fate of missing persons from both sides and from all stages of the conflict;
10. Strongly condemns the acts of torture, mutilation and killing of Armenian military personnel and unarmed prisoners of war by Azerbaijani armed forces in September 2022 and the posting of videos of these crimes on social media; insists on a full and transparent investigation by the Azerbaijani authorities in order to bring the perpetrators to justice; condemns, in the same way, all earlier reports of alleged war crimes committed by any party and urges effective investigations by the responsible authorities;
11. Suggests the creation of an independent transitional justice mechanism to conduct investigations of war crime allegations, address the issue of missing persons and allegations of enforced disappearances and carry out factual assessments of events

during the armed conflict, with the aim to help build confidence and achieve reconciliation; encourages the EU to support such efforts;

12. Deplores the destruction of both Armenian and Azerbaijani cultural, religious and historical heritage since the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; is seriously concerned by reports and declared intentions of altering the origins of Armenian heritage sites in and around Nagorno-Karabakh after the war of 2020; stresses the need for an independent expert mission of UNESCO to be allowed access to Nagorno-Karabakh without preconditions;
13. Strongly encourages EU support to grassroots civil society organisations that genuinely contribute to reconciliation, help foster mutual understanding and people-to-people contacts between Armenia and Azerbaijan and prepare their populations for peace;
14. Welcomes the process of normalisation of relations between Armenia and Türkiye and the progress achieved so far, including the resumption of flights between the two countries, lifting of air-cargo bans and agreement on opening their border to third nationals; encourages further engagement by both sides without preconditions and without linkage to the solution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; points to the potential positive effects for the entire South Caucasus region in terms of security as well as socio-economic development; commends the sending of Armenian humanitarian aid and search and rescue teams to Türkiye after the earthquake of 6 February 2023; stresses the recognition of the Armenian genocide as the most effective preventive mechanism against future genocides;
15. Welcomes Armenia's commitment to the implementation of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the EU and Armenia and the progress made since its entry into force on 1 March 2021; welcomes the fact that the Armenian government recognises CEPA as a strategic blueprint for key reforms in the country;
16. Underlines that the EU provides significant financial and technical support to the reforms efforts and encourages further application of the "more for more" principle to reward reform progress;
17. Stresses that the CEPA 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 positively the important reforms implemented over the past few years that have established Armenia as a full-fledged democracy and a regional leader in good governance; is concerned though by the increase of polarisation of the political scene and calls on all Armenian political forces to show restraint;
18. Welcomes Armenia's achievements in the implementation of the national strategy for judicial and legal reforms, and in particular the establishment of integrity checks for candidate judges; highlights the need to ensure the full independence and impartiality of the judiciary in order to avoid any suspicion of political interference or selective justice; notes that political nominations to public positions at independent state bodies should be avoided;
19. Commends the accomplishments in the implementation of Armenia's national anti-corruption strategy, not least the creation of the specialised anti-corruption institutions, including the Corruption Prevention Commission, Anti-Corruption Committee,

Specialised Anti-Corruption Court and specialised departments at the Prosecutor General's office, but notes that challenges remain; acknowledges also the ambitious police reforms and the entry into force of the new Criminal Code; stresses the need to ensure accountability for all cases of disproportionate use of force by the police;

20. Notes the diverse media landscape in Armenia, but regrets high media polarisation and influence of media owners on editorial policies; emphasises the importance of ensuring a non-restrictive environment for the work of journalists; notes draft legislation on media freedom restrictions under martial law and stresses the need to conduct thorough consultations with stakeholders in order to avoid disproportionate limits to press freedom and ensure transparency of decisions; notes that the EU is concerned by the presence of harsh rhetoric and disinformation, in particular Russian disinformation campaigns targeting the EU and the West in general; encourages EU support to fight disinformation and increase media literacy;
21. Points out that more effort is needed to improve the situation regarding gender equality, women's representation and equal treatment at all levels of political, economic and societal life, as well as to combat gender-based violence and domestic violence; calls also for increased effort from the Armenian authorities to uphold the rights of LGBTIQ persons and prevent and combat their stigmatisation, social exclusion, and all forms of discrimination against them;
22. Recalls that the CEPA has set a solid legal basis to broaden the scope of cooperation in sectors such as energy, transport, environment and climate change, created a framework for new opportunities in trade and investments, and paved the way for increased mobility for the benefit of the citizens;
23. Welcomes the specific cooperation agreements concluded in recent years between the EU and Armenia, notably the Common Aviation Area Agreement and the strategic cooperation agreement with Europol, as well as Armenia's successful joining of flagship EU programmes, such as the Horizon Europe research and innovation programme and the Creative Europe programme, and continued cooperation in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme;
24. Acknowledges the good implementation by Armenia of the visa facilitation and readmission agreements and calls on the Council of the EU to open a visa liberalisation dialogue with Armenia to further strengthen people-to-people contacts;
25. Calls for closer cooperation to improve energy security and efficiency through investments in interconnectivity and infrastructure and the diversification of energy sources, in particular by increasing the production of renewable energy and reducing dependence on fossil fuels; calls for continued EU support to promote nuclear safety and recalls the need to prepare the replacement of the Metsamor nuclear power plant with new capacity as soon as possible; notes Armenia's commitment to 40% reduction of CO₂ emissions by 2030;
26. Highlights the sizable stimulus to investments provided by the EU's Economic and Investment Plan, which will help Armenia build a dynamic and resilient economy; stresses its focus on key areas, including strategically important connectivity projects and support to the most vulnerable regions; welcomes Armenia's progress in the implementation of flagship initiatives under the plan.