



January - February 2016

DROI Meeting of 25 January

Exchange of views with the EEAS on the EU's priorities for the upcoming 31st Session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)



Ciara O'Brien, Chair of the COHOM Working Group, briefed the Subcommittee in advance of the EU Foreign Affairs Council's adoption of the EU priorities for the 31st session of the UN Human Rights Council, taking place from 29 February to 24 March 2016. This exchange of views came after the adoption of the EP resolution in January, thus allowing for the COHOM Chair to comment on the resolution,

and for MEPs to go into more detail regarding Parliament's objectives. Ms. O'Brien welcomed the EP's pro-active approach and gave a list of countries and thematic issues that require particular attention from the EU perspective. Among the countries are North Korea, Myanmar, Burundi, and Syria and, as regards the thematic issues, children's rights and freedom of religion and belief. The Council Conclusions were adopted on 15 February.

Children in armed conflicts: the challenges for international action - Exchange of views with Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, United Nations

Jointly with the Subcommittee on Security and Defence, the Subcommittee on Human Rights welcomed the UN Special Representative who gave a very moving testimony of her activities carried out during the course of last year. She called on the EU to consistently integrate children's concerns in its external policies. She also pleaded for more cooperation on the ground and strong political engagement by EU Delegations in advancing children's rights, insisting on the need of genuine reintegration efforts for children involved in armed conflicts. Members also touched upon the growing trend toward radicalisation and extremist discourse, which has been linked to the apparent increase in the recruitment of children in different conflict regions of the world (Somalia, Nigeria, Yemen, etc.).

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Exchange of views with

- Leyla Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, United Nations

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- Ad-hoc delegation to Mexico and Guatemala, 8-12 February

Debates on

- Human rights situation in Georgia
- Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)
- Human rights situation in Afghanistan
- International Humanitarian Law

Work In Progress

Urgency resolutions

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Exchange of views on the human rights situation in Georgia

The exchange of views took place directly after the adoption of Parliament's resolution on the Association Agreements, including Georgia. DROI heard presentations by two Georgian civil society experts on judicial reform, the administration of justice, media freedom and the wider issue of freedom of expression.

The Georgian prime minister's adviser on human rights also took the floor to put forward the government's views, notably on the progress in reforms and the implementation of Georgia's National Human Rights Action Plan. The EEAS commented on EU support for Georgia in the context of the Association Agenda and the visa liberalisation process.

Report-back from the informal meeting of the Subcommittee on Human Rights with the ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Committee on Women and Children

Barbara Lochbihler chaired that meeting on 21 October 2015 and pointed out that the mandate of the AICHR, which remains inter-governmental, is limited to the promotion of human rights and does not cover investigation into alleged violations. The approach between the EU and the ASEAN when dealing with human rights remains very different. Ms Lochbihler then underlined the different topics that were discussed, including the death penalty, land-grabbing, violence against women, migrant workers and the shrinking space for civil society actors. In the context of fostering EU-ASEAN cooperation she recommended follow-up meetings to be organised with the AICHR members, in particular during DROI delegation visits to South-East Asian countries.

DROI Meeting of 17 February

Exchange of views on the situation of human rights, notably of women and girls, in Afghanistan

In association with the Delegation for Relations with Afghanistan



Members of DROI held an exchange of views on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan at a time when security is deteriorating in the country. Women and girls are particularly targeted and Parliament, as expressed in its resolution of November 2015, is deeply concerned by the current situation. Afghanistan receives assistance from the EU development aid programme, and the EU strategy for 2014-2016 should keep the focus on the rule of law and human rights protection, especially in the case of human rights defenders. Two speakers with extensive experience in Afghanistan gave presentations and highlighted the central role women play in social and economic development despite the numerous restrictions and difficulties faced on a daily basis in a very traditional and conservative society. The EEAS provided substantial comments on the security and political situation as well as on EU support and aid programmes.

Exchange of views on strengthening the application of International Humanitarian Law

This exchange of views focused on the strengthening of compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL), with a specific look at the recent attacks on civilian targets, such as hospitals and schools, such as those which have occurred in recent months in Yemen, Afghanistan and Syria. DROI Members heard from three experts representing the International Committee of the Red Cross, Médecins sans Frontières and Save the Children, who all pointed to the terrifying trend of non-compliance with IHL by the governments and non-state actors involved in conflicts.

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The panellists called for political action from the international community and for the EU to face up to the responsibility of urgently finding a way to stop this alarming tendency. The Commission and the EEAS were present and took the floor to present the work which has been and is being undertaken by the institutions.

[Press statement](#)

Exchange of views on violence and threats against Human Rights Defenders (HRDs): the EU's response and the new EU Human Rights Defenders Mechanism

DROI held a very well-attended exchange of views on the situation of human rights defenders and on the EU's response to the matter through the new "protectdefenders.eu" mechanism. FrontLine Defenders, a leading NGO, took the floor and presented the trends and challenges. DROI members also had the opportunity to hear the personal testimony of Manuela Picq, a Brazilian/Ecuadorian activist and journalist. In addition, the newly established secretariat of protectdefenders.eu outlined the functioning of this new EU mechanism. Both the Commission and the EEAS set out the key elements of the EU's response and approach, against the backdrop of the key challenges and problematic issues.

Briefing by the EEAS on the forthcoming meeting of the EU-Algeria Subcommittee on Political Dialogue, Security and Human Rights

The exchange of views took place in the run-up to the human rights consultations in the framework of the EU-Algeria Subcommittee on Political Dialogue, Security and Human Rights, and focused on recent legislative advances and constitutional reform that have important repercussions for respect of human rights. Members asked questions related to specific EU action on human rights defenders, trial monitoring and projects under the EIDHR. The EEAS provided information regarding the on-going projects related to the promotion of human rights and on the support provided in the implementation of legislative reform. The Embassy of Algeria also made comments of a general nature, in the light of the forthcoming EU-Algeria Subcommittee meeting. The next meeting will be a debriefing of the EU-Algeria Subcommittee on Political Dialogue, Security and Human Rights, which is scheduled to take place on 23 February.

DROI Missions

DROI ad-hoc delegation to Mexico and Guatemala, 8-12 February 2016



The DROI mission was led by DROI Vice-Chair Cristian Preda (EPP) and further composed of Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea (ALDE) and Hans-Olaf Henkel (ECR).

In Mexico, the mission addressed a large number of human rights issues, focusing on the following three areas: the situation of human rights defenders and of journalists; violence against women and women's political participation, and the disappearance of the 43 trainee teachers from Iguala.

The delegation also met with Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Carlos de Icaza and Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Miguel Ruiz Cabañas to discuss a number of issues, including the imminent updating of the EU-Mexico Global Agreement. The discussion looked at the human rights initiatives Mexico has been undertaking in recent years, from the very comprehensive legal reform improving the human rights framework, to the new mechanisms put in place for the protection of human rights defenders and journalists, and to the challenges related to the implementation of these new measures.

Discussions with a large number (some 50+) of representatives from the very vibrant and committed Mexican civil society revealed the fact that, although there are legal and administrative tools now in place for the protection of human rights and their defenders, actual implementation remains problematic.

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Regarding the disappearance of the 43 trainee teachers from Ayotzinapa, DROI Members welcomed the meeting with Claudia Paz y Paz, one of the five members of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI) investigating the students' disappearance. Members expressed strong support for the work carried out by GIEI and the hope that their investigation would bring clarity about the disappearances and also bring about due judicial proceedings. Ms Paz y Paz presented the results of the first report of the investigation and explained the difficulties in accessing evidence and information crucial for the completion of the investigation. Members also met with the fathers of two of the 43 students.

In Guatemala, all counterparts highlighted the turning point the country is at, as well as the significant potential for positive change if the country continues with the reforms it has embarked upon.



Members met President Morales on his 27th day in office. The President presented his programme which focuses on tackling corruption, health, education, malnutrition, economic development, security, and justice and impunity. Members expressed support for the country's endeavours to curb corruption, fight impunity and reform the justice system.

[Press release](#)

Work In Progress

Implementation of the 2010 recommendations of Parliament on social and environmental standards, human rights and corporate responsibility (2015/2038)

- Rapporteur for opinion: Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl
- Deadline for amendments: 19 January
- Vote in AFET: 4 April 2016
- Vote in plenary: tbc

Human rights and migration in third countries (2015/2316 (INI))

- Rapporteur: Marie-Christine Vergiat
- Deadline for amendments: 17 March 2016
- Vote in AFET: 23 May (tbc)
- Vote in plenary: June II (Brussels)

The fight against trafficking in human beings in the EU's external relations

- Rapporteur: Barbara Lochbihler
- Deadline for amendments: 8 March 2016
- Vote in AFET: 23-24 May 2016
- Vote in plenary: July 2016

Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with special regard to the Concluding Observations of the UN CPRD Committee (2015/2258 (INI))

- Rapporteur for opinion: Richard Howitt
- Deadline for amendments: 23 March 2016
- Vote in AFET: 23 May
- Vote in plenary: tbc

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Urgency Resolutions

February 2016

Human rights situation in the Crimea, in particular of the Crimean Tatars; Bahrain, the case of Mohammed Ramadan; the case of the missing book publishers in Hong Kong

January 2016

EU citizens under detention in India, notably Estonian and UK seamen; Ethiopia; North Korea

[Link](#) to all resolutions

Calendar of DROI Meetings

The next DROI meetings will take place on the following dates:

Wednesday 16 March, am + pm
Wednesday 20 April am + pm
Monday 30 May, pm
Wednesday 15 June, am + pm
Thursday 30 June, am
Wednesday 13 July, am + pm

- Linkt to [DROI Calendar 2016](#)

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