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PROPOSAL FOR A RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

pursuant to Rule 49(1) of the Rules of Procedure

by Bastiaan Belder

on behalf of the EDD Group

on EU-Russia relations

PE 337.872

European Parliament recommendation to the Council on EU-Russia relations

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the European Union and Russia,
 - having regard to the Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia, the period of application of which has been extended to 24 June 2004,
 - having regard to the Commission's Country Strategy Paper and the TACIS National Indicative Programme for Russia,
 - having regard to its earlier resolutions on the implementation of the Common Strategy, the Northern Dimension, Kaliningrad, Chechnya, Ukraine and South Caucasus,
 - having regard to Rule 49(1) of the Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, owing to its size, resources, policies and ambitions, Russia plays a crucial role for security and stability in Europe,
- B. whereas Russia's importance as a direct neighbour of the EU will further increase as a result of the EU enlargement,
- C. whereas there is a high degree of complementarity between the EU's and Russia's interests as regards bilateral trade and economic cooperation and important shared interests exist also in many other areas, including in relation to various 'soft security' challenges,
- D. whereas the foundations of the EU's Russia policy, notably the PCA, the Common Strategy and the TACIS programme, were laid a number of years ago and must be reviewed, given the experience of their application which has now been gained and new developments, to which the EU should respond,
- E. whereas EU-Russia joint statements describe the bilateral relationship as a 'strategic partnership on the basis of common values', but various problems in relation to these concepts exist; whereas Parliament can make a useful contribution to the development of the relationship, inter alia by openly discussing these problems, and help to ensure that the EU's Russia policy combines a high level of ambition with a sufficient dose of realism,
- F. whereas the EU and Russia have declared as a long-term objective the creation of a common economic area, a common area of freedom, security and justice, an area of cooperation in the field of external security and an area of research and education, including cultural aspects; whereas few questions on the actual meaning of this have yet received any answer and it also remains unclear to what extent the framework for EU-Russia relations and the Wider Europe policy framework should be brought in line with each other,

- G. whereas uncoordinated statements by leaders of Member States complicated negotiations with Russia on Kaliningrad transit and greater solidarity between Member States in certain contexts would improve the EU's ability to defend important values and interests,
- H. noting that Russia has not gone through a transition of the kind foreseen when the international community, including the EU, formulated its basic response to developments there a decade ago; convinced that if instead a 'managed democracy' is being consolidated, if economic reforms remain relatively slow at least as long as the extractive industries continue to prosper and if, in practice, pursuit of ever greater leverage on some neighbours is as important as the search for mutually beneficial cooperative solutions, the EU must fully take this into account,
1. Recommends that the Council replace the unrealistically broad principal objectives for the EU's Russia policy laid down in the Common Strategy with the following main objectives:
 - Ensuring good neighbourly relations, including by appropriate border management, cross-border cooperation and effective measures to address 'soft security' problems such as nuclear hazards, pollution, trans-border crime etc,
 - Exploiting the potential for increased trade, deeper economic relations and mutually beneficial cooperation in other areas,
 - Promoting human rights and democracy,
 - Cooperating in addressing 'frozen conflicts' in the South Caucasus, resolving the Transnistria issue and controlling the international trade in arms;
 2. Notes that the narrow concept of technical assistance, which is the basis for the TACIS programme, reflects unrealistic expectations in relation to the transition process at the time of the inception of the programme; points out that the usefulness of TACIS as a support for the above policy objectives is also seriously limited by the burdensome and excessively time-consuming procedures associated with it; therefore calls for a new instrument to replace it when the regulation expires in 2006 and recommends that the Commission exploit all possibilities to use the TACIS programme more flexibly in the meantime;
 3. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council and, for information, to the Commission.