

P5_TA(2003)0335

Chechnya

European Parliament resolution on Chechnya

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the findings of its ad hoc delegation to Chechnya of 15 to 17 June 2003,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Russia,
 - having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Russia which entered into force on 1 December 1997,
 - having regard to the Common Strategy of the EU on Russia dating from June 1999 and valid for a period of four years,
 - having regard to its resolutions of 10 April 2002¹ and 16 January 2003² on Chechnya,
 - having regard to its resolution of 21 November 2002 on the outcome of the EU-Russia summit of 11 November 2002³,
 - having regard to the Commission Communication to the Council and Parliament entitled ‘Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: a new framework for relations with our eastern and southern neighbours’ (COM(2003) 104),
 - having regard to the sixth meeting of the Cooperation Council between the EU and Russia on 15 April 2003,
 - having regard to the 2003 tercentenary celebrations in St Petersburg and the EU’s representation,
- A. whereas the Chechen Republic has been experiencing, for more than a decade, a situation of armed conflict, insecurity and instability in all spheres of life,
- B. whereas a referendum took place in the Chechen Republic on 23 March 2003, which should be regarded as a step towards stabilising the situation but which was flawed by widespread irregularities and did not help to bring peace to Chechnyan society,
- C. whereas the people of Chechnya, regardless of their ethnic background, are suffering the daily consequences of this conflict,

¹ OJ C 127 E, 29.5.2003, p. 585.

² P5_TA(2003)0025.

³ P5_TA(2002)0563.

- D. whereas, as in all armed conflict, the vulnerable sections of the population are those who suffer most and who will bear the long-term repercussions,
 - E. whereas living conditions in Chechnya and in particular in Grozny are disastrous, the water supply, sewage system and electricity grid are severely damaged, the employment situation is apparently shattered and security standards are obviously very low,
 - F. highly concerned at the plight of the more than 110 000 Chechen refugees sheltered in the camps in the bordering republics,
 - G. whereas humanitarian organisations are being hindered in their work by lack of access to Chechnya and lack of support from the Russian side, particularly in the form of permission to import necessary technical and security equipment,
 - H. whereas the European Union and other international donors have repeatedly offered their assistance to alleviate the humanitarian situation,
 - I. whereas the OSCE mission's original 1995 mandates in Chechnya covered alleged human rights violations, relief aid, help for refugees, conflict resolution and supporting mechanisms for maintaining law and order,
 - J. stressing that a genuine EU-Russia partnership must be based on the sharing of common values and that the present appalling human rights situation in Chechnya is an obstacle to its full development,
1. Endorses the conclusions of its ad hoc delegation to Chechnya;
 2. Welcomes the Russian Duma's invitation to the ad hoc delegation to Chechnya and thanks the Russian authorities for organising the visit; welcomes this as a sign of openness;
 3. Is convinced that the EU should not neglect this remote area of the continent as the values the EU cherishes are at stake there as well;
 4. Is of the opinion that there are several causes for this war: the struggle for independence, a deterioration in the rule of law leading to mounting crime, the emergence of a 'failed state', obscure economic activities, terrorism and violent repression;
 5. Notes that all political, diplomatic, security and civilian means should be applied in order to regain the confidence of the population, and that there cannot be a military solution to the conflict;
 6. Notes that for some months the Government of the Russian Federation has been shifting towards a political solution, and invites both sides to make full use of this opportunity, in particular in the run-up to the December 2003 and March 2004 elections; calls upon all parties to work towards a ceasefire;
 7. Welcomes in this context the start of the work on an autonomy agreement between Chechen officials and Russian government representatives on 30 June, giving Chechnya a maximum of autonomy while remaining a full part of the Russian Federation;

8. Calls on the Russian Government to reform the 'rules of engagement' on the spot, taking into account the necessity to improve the relationship with Chechen citizens;
9. Calls upon the Russian Federation to involve as many Chechen leaders as possible in a peace process which might lead to the establishment of an autonomous republic, as part of the Russian Federation, where the rule of law is respected;
10. Notes the absence of full reconciliation and physical reconstruction after the first Chechen war, which caused hostilities between Chechens and Russians and provided the ideal ground for a wide range of criminal activities; urges the Russian central government, therefore, to continue and intensify its efforts to reconstruct Grozny and other parts of Chechnya in order to provide the basic requirements for political and social reconciliation; points out that, during its visit, it was able to witness the first signs of reconstruction in Grozny;
11. Calls on the Commission and the Council to offer their services as intermediaries and to support any other diplomatic activity with a view to putting an end to the violence;
12. Condemns all terrorist attacks in Chechnya and considers that the total eradication of terrorism in the province is also part of the international fight against terrorism;
13. Reiterates its concern at, and firm condemnation of, the persistent and recurring mass violations of humanitarian law and human rights committed against the civilian population by Russian forces, which constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity that must be investigated and prosecuted, as well as the attacks, the violations and the kidnappings of paramilitary and guerrilla groups;
14. Urges the Russian Federation to agree to the renewal of the full OSCE mandate, which should not be restricted to focusing on coordinating humanitarian assistance in the region but should also include all former tasks of the OSCE missions;
15. Calls on the Russian Government to facilitate access to the region for international humanitarian organisations such as ECHO and UNICEF, the personnel of the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the UN, NGOs and, in particular, humanitarian health organisations, providing security and giving permission for the import of necessary technical and security equipment;
16. Calls on the Russian authorities to step up their efforts to find and free Arjan Erkel, the head of the MSF mission in Dagestan, who was abducted in August 2002;
17. Stresses that the return of internally displaced people should be an objective, but that this return must be voluntary and based on a real improvement in living conditions in Chechnya, in particular as regards security;
18. Recalls that the reconstruction of Chechnya is conditional on achieving long-lasting peace in the region and starting full reconciliation; states that, while the primary responsibility lies with Russia, the EU is ready to assist the Russian Government and the Chechen authorities in this process;

19. Welcomes the decision by the Commission to commit further funds to humanitarian aid for Chechen refugees;
20. Regards the referendum as a first step towards normalisation in the region, but calls for an ongoing political process involving all parts of Chechen society, with a view to holding truly democratic and fully representative elections by the end of the year;
21. Calls on the Commission to prepare as of now a possible programme of rehabilitation in Chechnya, including in particular educational programmes such as professional training and support for higher education, which will be needed urgently for the rehabilitation of an entire generation of young people deeply endangered by the decade of armed conflict;
22. Invites the Council to put in place long-term election monitoring in order to support the preparation of free and fair elections;
23. Calls on the Council and the Member States to raise the issue of Chechnya at their meetings with the Russian Federation in order to make sure that this area does not escape international attention and care;
24. Calls on the Council and the Member States to remind the Russian leadership of the universal values to which Russia has subscribed as a member of the Council of Europe and the UN; calls on the Council, the Member States and the Russian Federation to refrain from seeking to avoid mutual criticism at this level;
25. Calls on the Council to prepare, in cooperation with the European Parliament, a conference on Chechnya to which the Russian authorities, representatives of all parts of Chechen society, the OSCE and the Council of Europe will be invited;
26. Reiterates its call on the Council to appoint a special envoy for the Caucasus in order to enhance the profile of the EU in the region and contribute more effectively to the solution of the ongoing problems;
27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the government and parliament of Russia.