

P6_TA(2008)0104

Armenia

European Parliament resolution of 13 March 2008 on Armenia

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its past resolutions on Armenia and the South Caucasus, particularly that of 17 January 2008 on a more effective EU policy for the South Caucasus: from promises to actions¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2008 on a Black Sea Regional Policy Approach²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2007 on the European Neighbourhood Policy³(ENP),
 - having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part⁴, which entered into force on 1 July 1999,
 - having regard to the ENP Action Plan endorsed by the EU-Armenia Cooperation Council on 14 November 2006, which allows a whole package of reforms to be implemented with EU assistance,
 - having regard to the statement of the preliminary findings and conclusions of the International Election Observation Mission of 20 February 2008, as well as to the post-election interim report of 3 March 2008,
 - having regard to the Declaration of 5 March 2008 by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the situation after the presidential elections in Armenia on 1st March 2008, as well as to the Declaration of 25 February 2008 by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the presidential election in Armenia, 19 February 2008,
 - having regard to the statement of 2 March 2008 by Javier Solana, the EU High Representative for the CFSP, and to the statements of 21 February 2008 and 4 March 2008 by Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the European Union remains committed to further developing its relations with Armenia and to supporting the country in its efforts to introduce the necessary political and economic reforms, as well as measures to establish solid and efficient democratic institutions, and to tackle corruption; whereas the ENP Action Plan provides Armenia with

¹ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0016.

² Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0017

³ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2007)0538

⁴ OJ L 239, 9.9.1999, p. 3.

the opportunity to become closer to the EU and to embrace and share its founding values,

- B. whereas the above-mentioned International Election Observation Mission stated that the presidential elections of 19 February 2008 were ‘administered mostly in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards’, but also identified a number of concerns, in particular concerning the media’s commitment to providing impartial information,
 - C. whereas there were deemed to be further requirements in order to address remaining problems (such as the absence of a clear separation between State and party functions, ensuring equal treatment of election candidates and the conduct of the count) and to restore public confidence in the electoral process,
 - D. whereas the official results of the presidential elections in Armenia on 19 February 2008 showed a first-round victory for Prime Minister Serzh Sarkisian but were contested by one of the opposition leaders, Levon Ter-Petrosian, as being fraudulent; whereas the Constitutional Court examined the applications made by the opposition and concluded that, although irregularities had occurred, there was not enough evidence to justify calling the outcome of the election into question,
 - E. whereas opposition supporters began peaceful rallies on 20 February 2008 in Yerevan to protest against the election result and demand a rerun; whereas on the evening of 1 March 2008, after eleven days of protest by opposition supporters, violence erupted when police moved into Freedom Square in central Yerevan to disperse the protesters camped out in tents, leaving eight people dead, including one police officer, and dozens injured; whereas a state of emergency was declared on 1 March 2008, which imposed restrictions on the freedom of the media, freedom of assembly and political parties,
 - F. whereas the television stations controlled by the government have virtually ignored the rallies; whereas, under the state of emergency, local journalists are barred from disseminating any information that comes from a source other than the government; whereas, as a consequence, seven leading newspapers, some independent and some linked to the opposition, have refused to operate under such restrictions and suspended publication; whereas the internet and satellite connections of some independent papers have been blocked,
 - G. whereas many people have been arrested and a number of them charged with instigating and participating in mass disorder and attempting to seize power by force; whereas on 4 March 2008 the Armenian Parliament waived the immunity of four of its Members facing criminal charges,
 - H. whereas the Armenian economy and regional stability are still being harmed by the border closure with Turkey,
 - I. whereas the Republic of Armenia is involved in an unresolved conflict with the Republic of Azerbaijan over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh,
1. Expresses its concern at recent developments in Armenia, with the violent police crackdown on opposition demonstrations, leading to the death of eight citizens, including one police officer, with over a hundred injured, and calls on all parties to show openness and restraint, to tone down their statements and to engage in a constructive and fruitful dialogue aimed at

supporting and consolidating the country's democratic institutions;

2. Calls for a prompt, thorough, transparent, independent and impartial investigation of the events of 1 March 2008, including an independent investigation of the police intervention during the dispersal of the demonstration, and for all those responsible to be brought to justice and punished for misconduct and criminal acts of violence; calls on the Council and the Commission to offer EU assistance to the Armenian authorities with such an investigation;
3. Calls on the Armenian authorities to lift the state of emergency, which was mitigated by a presidential decree on 10 March 2008, to restore media freedom and take all the measures necessary to ensure a return to normality; urges them, furthermore, to take into account and address the shortcomings pointed out in the official report released by the Republic of Armenia's Ombudsman;
4. Calls on the Armenian authorities to release citizens detained for having exercised their right of peaceful assembly;
5. Stresses that Priority Area 1 of the ENP Action Plan deals with the strengthening of democratic structures and the rule of law; urges the Commission in this context to focus its assistance to Armenia on the independence of the judiciary and the training of police and security forces, and calls on the Armenian authorities to implement swiftly all the remaining recommendations made by the International Election Observation Mission;
6. Supports the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Peter Semneby, in his role of facilitating dialogue between the political groupings and investigating possible ways of resolving the political crisis in Armenia, and welcomes the mediation by the OSCE's Special Envoy, Ambassador Heikki Talvitie, who has a great deal of experience of the South Caucasus region, and urges the Armenian authorities to cooperate fully with the international community in finding an agreed solution;
7. Deplores the recent loss of life on the 'line of control' during fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces; calls on both sides to refrain from further violence and to return to the negotiating table;
8. Reiterates the clear EU commitment to building closer ties with Armenia and the South Caucasus countries, notably by further developing and strengthening the ENP; emphasises, however, that closer cooperation with the EU must be based on real and tangible progress and reforms and a full commitment to democracy and the rule of law; calls on the Commission to further support efforts aimed at improving the political culture in Armenia, strengthening dialogue and defusing the high level of tension between governing parties and opposition;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the President and Parliament of Armenia, the OSCE and the Council of Europe.