P7_TA(2014)0457

Eastern Partnership countries and in particular destabilisation of eastern Ukraine

European Parliament resolution of 17 April 2014 on Russian pressure on Eastern Partnership countries and in particular destabilisation of eastern Ukraine (2014/2699(RSP))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on the European Neighbourhood Policy, on the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and on Ukraine, with particular reference to those of 27 February 2014 on the situation in Ukraine[1] and of 13 March 2014 on the invasion of Ukraine by Russia[2],

– having regard to its position adopted at first reading on 3 April 2014 with a view to the adoption of Regulation (EU) No …/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the reduction or elimination of customs duties on goods originating in Ukraine[3],

– having regard to the conclusions of the extraordinary meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on Ukraine of 3 March 2014 and to the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council meetings of 17 March and 14 April 2014,

– having regard to the statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine at the European Council of 6 March 2014,

– having regard to the European Council's conclusions on Ukraine of 20 March 2014,

– having regard to the conclusions of the Vilnius Summit held on 28 and 29 November 2013,

– having regard to the resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 9 April 2014 on 'recent developments in Ukraine: threats to the functioning of democratic institutions',

– having regard to the UN General Assembly resolution of 27 March 2014 entitled 'Territorial integrity of Ukraine'[4],

– having regard to the joint statement made by the G7 leaders in The Hague on 24 March 2014,

– having regard to Rule 110(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas an illegal and illegitimate referendum was organised on 16 March 2014 in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and was conducted under the control of Russian troops; whereas, despite the international condemnation of the

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1 Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0170.
2 Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0248.
3 Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0285.
4 A/RES/68/262.

referendum, the Russian authorities and lawmakers proceeded swiftly with the annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula, against international law;

B. whereas limited numbers of pro-Russian demonstrations have taken place in eastern and southern Ukraine over the last few days; whereas pro-Russian separatists, led in most cases by Russian special forces, stormed local administration buildings in Kharkiv, Luhansk and Donetsk; whereas these elements, under the leadership of a group called 'the Russian Sector', occupied the local government building in Donetsk, proclaimed the creation of a sovereign 'People's Republic of Donetsk' independent from Kyiv, and announced a referendum on the secession of the region, to be held no later than 11 May 2014;

C. whereas on 12 and 13 April 2014 police stations and government buildings in Slovyansk, Kramatorsk, Krasny Lyman, Mariupol, Yenakiyeve and other towns in the Donetsk region were attacked and seized by well-armed, unidentified masked gunmen, believed to be led by Russian special forces, in a series of coordinated raids; whereas at least one officer died and several were injured during the clashes;

D. whereas any further escalation of violent destabilisation in eastern and southern Ukraine risks being used by Russia as a false pretext for further aggression by military means, prevention of the presidential elections, and forced federalisation as a precursor to the partition of Ukraine;

E. whereas Russia is still maintaining large numbers of combat-ready troops along the Ukrainian-Russian border, despite having promised a withdrawal in order to ease the tensions; whereas there is a serious possibility that Russia could try to repeat the 'Crimea scenario';

F. whereas Russia continues to violate its international obligations, such as those stemming from the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Statute of the Council of Europe and, in particular, the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on security guarantees for Ukraine;

G. whereas the EU has adopted an economic package in support of Ukraine that also includes macro-financial aid and autonomous trade measures; whereas Ukraine is about to finalise an agreement with the International Monetary Fund on an aid plan; whereas the conditions attached to this agreement have so far been kept confidential;

H. whereas the social and economic situation of the country is further deteriorating, owing inter alia to Russian destabilisation and trade restrictions; whereas widespread poverty remains one of the most acute socioeconomic problems in Ukraine; whereas according to a recent UN report the poverty rate in Ukraine is now around 25 %, with 11 million people earning less than local social standards;

I. whereas on 21 March 2014 the EU and Ukraine signed the political provisions of the Association Agreement (AA), undertaking to sign the remainder of the agreement, which includes the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), as soon as possible;

J. whereas strong international diplomatic action at all levels and a negotiated process are needed to de-escalate the situation, ease tensions, prevent the crisis from spiralling out of control and secure a peaceful outcome; whereas the EU must respond effectively so as to allow Ukraine and all other eastern neighbouring countries to fully exercise their sovereignty and territorial integrity free from undue external pressure;

K. whereas, immediately after Crimea was annexed, the Supreme Soviet of the separatist region of Transnistria in Moldova sent an official request to the Russian Federation to consider annexing Transnistria;

L. whereas Russia is still occupying the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali / South Ossetia, in violation of the fundamental norms and principles of international law; whereas ethnic cleansing and forcible demographic changes have taken place in the areas under the effective control of the occupying force, which bears the responsibility for human rights violations in these areas;

M. whereas Russia increased gas prices for Ukraine from USD 268 to USD 486 per thousand cubic metres from 1 April 2014, unilaterally ending the discount Ukraine received as part of the Kharkiv Accords governing the lease of the Sevastopol naval base, and, in the last few days, has banned Ukrainian dairy products from entering Russian territory; whereas the Russian Federation has also arbitrarily applied unilateral trade restrictions on products from Georgia and Moldova;

N. whereas Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula represents, beyond any doubt, a grave violation of international law which undermines trust in international instruments, including the agreements on disarmament and on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; whereas a new arms race could lead to further escalation; whereas it is imperative to prevent such a dangerous situation, which could easily spiral out of control;

1. Condemns in the strongest possible terms the escalating destabilisation and provocations in eastern and southern Ukraine; rejects any preparation for illegal 'Crimea-like' referendums; warns that the increasing destabilisation and sabotage caused by pro-Russian armed, trained and well-coordinated separatists led by Russian special forces could be used as a false pretext for Russia to intervene militarily, prevent the presidential elections and force federalisation as a precursor to the partition of Ukraine;

2. Expresses its gravest concern over the fast-deteriorating situation and bloodshed in eastern and southern Ukraine; urges Russia to immediately withdraw its presence in support of violent separatists and armed militias who have seized government buildings in Slovyansk, Donetsk and other cities, to cease all provocative actions designed to foment unrest and further destabilise the situation, to remove troops from the eastern border of Ukraine, and to work towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis by political and diplomatic means; expresses its full support for and solidarity with the Government of Ukraine as it seeks to re-establish authority in the occupied cities, welcomes the restrained and measured manner in which the Ukrainian Government has dealt with the current phase of the crisis so far, and recalls that the Ukrainian authorities have the full right to use all necessary measures, including the right to self-defence as defined in Article 51 of the UN Charter; warns Russia against using Ukraine's legitimate right to defend its territorial integrity as a pretext to launch a full-scale military invasion;

3. Strongly reiterates its support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine and of all Eastern Partnership countries; looks upon Russia's acts of aggression as a grave violation of international law and its own international obligations stemming from the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Statute of the Council of Europe and the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on security guarantees, as well as bilateral obligations deriving from the 1997 Bilateral Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership;

4. Stresses that no attacks, intimidation or discrimination whatsoever against Russian or ethnic Russian citizens or other minorities have been reported recently in Ukraine, as confirmed by credible international monitors such as the UN, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe;

5. Is convinced that Russia's assertion of the right to use all means to protect Russian minorities in third countries, as proclaimed by President Putin in his speech of 18 March 2014, is not supported by international law and contravenes fundamental principles of international conduct in the 21st century, while also threatening to undermine the post-war European order; calls on the Federation Council to immediately withdraw its mandate to use force on Ukrainian soil;

6. Reiterates the necessity for the EU and its Member States to speak to Russia with one united voice; considers that the current situation requires the Council to strengthen the second phase of sanctions and be ready for the third phase (economic sanctions), which must be applied immediately; reiterates, furthermore, its call on the Council to swiftly apply an arms and dual-use technology embargo;

7. Calls for measures against Russian companies and their subsidiaries, particularly in the energy sector, as well as Russian investments and assets in the EU, and for all agreements with Russia to be reviewed with a view to their possible suspension;

8. Urges the EU to support Ukraine in international bodies, particularly international judicial bodies, should Ukraine decide to bring cases against Russia for violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity;

9. Stresses the urgent need for Russia to engage in a constructive dialogue with the current legitimate Government of Ukraine, and supports the active engagement of the EU in diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the crisis; looks forward to the quadripartite meeting between the EU High Representative, the US Secretary of State and the Foreign Ministers of Russia and Ukraine, and hopes that this can contribute to reducing tension and paving the way for a comprehensive and lasting diplomatic solution to the crisis; stresses, however, that Ukraine's future choices can only be made by the Ukrainian people themselves through a democratic, inclusive and transparent process;

10. Points out that the suspension of the voting rights of the Russian delegation by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, together with the resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly condemning Russia for the annexation of Crimea, are unequivocal signs of the Russian Federation's growing isolation at international level that should be given all due consideration by the Russian authorities if Russia wants to remain a credible international player;

11. Calls for the introduction of economic, trade and financial restrictions in respect of Crimea and its separatist leadership; takes the view that these restrictions should be implemented rapidly on the basis of the Commission's analysis of the legal consequences of Crimea's annexation;

12. Reiterates its concern over the fate of the Tatar community in Crimea and the safety and access to rights of persons belonging to the Ukrainian-speaking community; stresses the responsibility of the Russian Federation, under the Fourth Geneva Convention, to protect all civilians in the occupied territories;

13. Welcomes the deployment of an OSCE Special Monitoring Mission tasked with gathering information about atypical military activity and provocative actions aimed at destabilising the situation, as well as monitoring human and minority rights in Ukraine, and calls for its expansion; regrets, however, the fact that the mission has not secured access to Crimea, where various human rights violations, including cases of violence against journalists and their families, have taken place; regrets the fact that attacks on journalists are now also being reported in eastern Ukraine;

14. Calls, furthermore, for an in-depth election observation mission from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR), and also from Parliament and the EU, to monitor the elections comprehensively; calls for the presidential elections on 25 May 2014 to be conducted in full compliance with international standards; rejects any external pressure to delay these elections;

15. Welcomes the Ukrainian Government's intention to hold early parliamentary elections;

16. Welcomes, in principle, the idea of holding a nationwide referendum on the future status and territorial set-up of Ukraine, as suggested by acting President Oleksandr Turchynov in his televised address of 14 April 2014;

17. Welcomes the recent resolution of the Ukrainian parliament calling for the immediate disarmament of all illegal self-defence forces, and looks forward to its implementation;

18. Welcomes the Council's readiness to assist Ukraine in the field of civilian security-sector reform and provide support for the police and the rule of law, and to examine all options, including a possible CSDP mission, as well as the possibility of an EU monitoring mission;

19. Expresses its strong support for Ukraine and its people in these difficult times; welcomes the signing of the political chapters of the Association Agreement and the subsequent adoption of the unilateral trade measures; calls for the signing of the full AA/DCFTA as soon as possible and before the expiry of the unilateral trade measures;

20. Welcomes the announcement by the Ukrainian Government of an ambitious economic and social reform agenda, and highlights the vital importance of its swift implementation in order to stabilise and overcome the country's critical financial situation; welcomes the decision of the international financial institutions and the EU to provide Ukraine with substantial short- and long-term financial aid; recalls the need to organise and coordinate an international donor conference, which should be convened by the Commission and take place as soon as possible;

21. Supports the conditionality laid down by the EU regarding much-needed structural reforms that will help create more favourable conditions for sustainable economic growth, improve the management of public finances, develop the social safety net and tackle corruption; calls for transparency in the spending of EU funds and effective monitoring by the Commission;

22. Draws attention to the serious economic and social situation in the country; calls for measures to accompany the structural reforms with the aim of alleviating the current situation with regard, in particular, to the most vulnerable sections of the population;

23. Encourages Ukraine to continue to move ahead with its course of political reform, in particular constitutional reform, which should be the subject of a broad, in-depth discussion

among all components of Ukrainian society; welcomes the will of the Ukrainian Government to implement its commitments to ensure the representative nature of governmental structures, reflecting regional diversity, to ensure the full protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, to align the country's anti-discrimination legislation with EU standards, to investigate all human rights violations and acts of violence and to fight extremism;

24. Welcomes the Commission's decision to create a Support Group for Ukraine which will work on the implementation of the 'European Agenda for Reform';

25. Supports the efforts of the Ukrainian Government, working in close cooperation with the OSCE and the Council of Europe, to ensure due respect for the legitimate rights of the Russian-speaking population and other cultural, national and linguistic minority groups, in line with the provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;

26. Reiterates its call for the setting-up of an independent commission to investigate the Kyiv shootings and the tragic events on Maidan, with the inclusion of a strong international component and under the supervision of the Council of Europe International Advisory Panel; welcomes the appointment of a third party to that panel and the holding of its first meeting on 9 April 2014;

27. Welcomes the signing of the political provisions of the AA and expects the quick implementation of the autonomous trade preferences adopted by the EU to bridge the gap until the signing of the remainder of the agreement, which includes the DCFTA;

28. Welcomes the initial measures adopted by the Commission to enable Ukraine to tackle an energy crisis should Russia cut gas supplies to the country, and urges the Council and the Commission to assist and support Kyiv in its efforts to resolve the long-standing gas dispute with Moscow; stresses the urgent need for a strong common energy security policy (an Energy Union), with the aim of reducing the EU's dependency on Russian oil and gas, including the diversification of energy supply, the full implementation of the Third Energy Package and the possibility of suspending gas imports when necessary; takes the view that the South Stream pipeline should not be built, and that other sources of supply should be made available; is convinced that EU assistance to Ukraine in securing reverse-flow supply through further diversification, enhanced energy efficiency and effective interconnections with the EU will strengthen Ukraine against political and economic pressures; recalls, in this connection, the strategic role of the Energy Community, of which Ukraine holds the presidency in 2014;

29. Calls on the Council to authorise the Commission immediately to speed up visa liberalisation with Ukraine, so as to advance along the path of introducing a visa-free regime, following the example of Moldova; calls, in the meantime, for the immediate introduction of temporary, very simple, low-cost visa procedures at EU and Member State level;

30. Stresses that the Russian concerns as regards the EU association process of Ukraine and the other Eastern neighbours must be adequately addressed and explained, so as to ease fears of new geopolitical dividing lines on the European continent; points out that each country has every right to make its own political choices, but that the EU's engagement with the Eastern partners aims to spread prosperity and increase political stability, from which the Russian

Federation will also ultimately gain;

31. Reiterates that the AAs with Ukraine and the other EaP countries do not constitute the final goal in their relations with the EU; points out in this connection that, pursuant to Article 49 of the TEU, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – like any other European state – have a European perspective and may apply to become members of the Union provided that they adhere to the principles of democracy, respect fundamental freedoms and human and minority rights and ensure the rule of law;

32. Calls on the Council to sign the AAs/DCFTAs between the EU and its Member States and Moldova and Georgia, respectively; expresses its approval of the proposal for a Council decision on the provisional application of the EU–Moldova and EU–Georgia AAs immediately upon signature; urges the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union to reduce the notification procedures following the signing of the AAs, so that provisional application can take effect as soon as possible after signing; states its intention, in the event of all requirements being met and the AAs subsequently being signed, to proceed with full ratification of the EU–Moldova and EU–Georgia AAs as soon as possible and before the end of the Commission's current term; calls for the allocation to those countries of the additional financial assistance required; calls, furthermore, for a frank and open dialogue with the Russian Federation in order to make every effort to develop synergies aimed at benefiting EaP countries;

33. Expresses particular concern over renewed instability in the separatist region of Transnistria in Moldova; believes that the recent request of 16 April 2014, by the self-proclaimed authorities in Tiraspol for Transnistria to be recognised by Russia as an independent state represents a dangerous and irresponsible step; recalls that the so-called referendum in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia was against the constitution of Moldova and therefore illegal; reiterates its full support for Moldova's territorial integrity and calls on all parties to urgently resume dialogue, under the 5+2 framework, and calls for an enhancement of the EU's status to that of negotiating partner, leading towards a peaceful and sustainable settlement of the issue;

34. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States, the Presidents, Governments and Parliaments of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the President, Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation.