



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 20 June 2013

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NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Delegations

Subject: Summary record of the meeting of the European Parliament **Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)** held in Brussels on 17-18 June 2013
Chair: Mr Brok (EPP, DE)

- I. Exchange of views with Pirkka Tapiola, newly appointed Head of EU Delegation to Moldova**
In camera. See separate document.
- II. Exchange of views with Vygaudas Ušackas, newly appointed Head of EU Delegation to Russia**
In camera. See separate document.
- III. Exchange of views with Nataliya Apostolova, newly appointed Head of EU Delegation to Libya**
In camera. See separate document.

IV. "Foreign Policy Considerations in EU relations with ASEAN and Southeast Asia"

In the framework of the upcoming initiative report on EU-ASEAN relations to be drafted by Mr Bütikofer (Greens/EFA, DE), the AFET committee organised a hearing with the following panelists: H.E. Nyan Lynn, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Political Security Community, Mr Jonathan Holslag, Research fellow, Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Studies (BICCS), Dr Clara Portela, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Singapore Management University, Prof. Jürgen Rüländ, Southeast Asian Studies, University of Freiburg, Mr Karsten Warnecke, Deputy Executive Director, Asia-Europe Foundation, Singapore. They focused on the historic background and the future perspectives of relations between the EU and Asia, whose importance they said went beyond the issues of trade and economic development. The possibility of setting up a joint EP-ASEAN Parliamentary Assembly based on the model of Euronest was echoed in the debate.

V. Presentation of studies on "the involvement of Salafism/Wahhabism in the support and supply of arms to rebel groups around the world" and "Salafist/Wahhabite financial support to educational, social and religious institutions"

Mr Racimora and Mr Moniquet presented the two studies on Salafism and Wahhabism. They explained the origin and development of these movements. The main issue discussed in the debate was if and to what extent Saudi Arabia as a State was involved. The authors replied that there was no evidence that the State as such was behind these movements and their financing. Indeed, Saudi Arabia had itself been the victim of terrorist attacks. However, some members of the royal family did seem to be behind their financing.

VI. Exchange of views with David Usupashvili, Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia, on recent developments in Georgia (*In association with the Delegation to the EU-Armenia, EU-Azerbaijan and EU-Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committees*)

Mr Usupashvili outlined the main features of the political transition put in place by the government coalition "Georgia dream". Following the parliamentary elections of last October, the new government was indeed changing the centralised and monolithic system of power that characterised Georgia under the previous regime. Mr Usupashvili made it clear

that this did not affect the European agenda, which was the only element of continuity with the former government. On the other hand, the new coalition was trying to change relations with Russia and to normalise them. On the domestic front, the government was working on the independence of the judiciary and on the protection of personal data, by destroying hundreds of illegal recordings discovered in the police archives. Mr Usupashvili concluded by saying that the new coalition was ready to build on the success of the previous government but also to change what had not been done in the right way.

In the debate that followed, with the exception of Mr Roucek (S&D, CZ), members were rather critical of the new direction taken by Georgia. Mr Lisek (EPP, PL), rapporteur on Georgia, drew a parallel with Ukraine. Mr Saryusz-Wolski (EPP, PL) went further by saying that the situation was even worse: he said that it was not a peaceful transition but selective justice, revenge and repression of the opposition. He added that if Georgia did not change, he would not be in favour of the conclusion of the association agreement. Serious concerns regarding the imprisonment of former political leaders were voiced by Ms Neyts (ALDE, BE), Ms Gomes (S&D, PT) and Mr Vajgl (ALDE, SI). Mr Salafranca (EPP, ES) added that by following the path of selective justice, Georgia was giving the impression of backtracking and was putting its credibility at risk. Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) noted with some surprise that the speaker of the Parliament had described himself as a representative of the government, which was contradicting one of the basic elements of democracy, namely the separation of powers.

Mr Roucek (S&D, CZ) noted instead that this was the first peaceful political transition in Georgia. A one-party system led by an authoritarian leader had been replaced by a multi-party system. The change in attitude towards Russia was also to be welcomed in his view. That being said, political "vendetta" had to be avoided and reforms to be adopted, he added. Mr Usupashvili reacted to a number of comments. On Russia, he said that Moscow was not particularly happy with the new Georgia's approach, which was looking to improve relations step by step in concrete situations. In addition, Russia wanted direct talks concerning the border, which was unacceptable for Georgia, which wanted to keep them in the framework of the Geneva conference. On selective justice, Mr Usupashvili recalled that in the previous regime, 99.99% of officials came from the ruling party, therefore it should come as no

surprise that investigations into cases of alleged abuse of power, corruption and other charges would concern representatives of this party. Mr Usupashvili spoke of systemic torture in jail and illegal taping of people, i.e. such widespread crimes that the former Interior Minister could not have been unaware of them. For Mr Usupashvili it was not revenge but justice for victims of the former regime.

VII. Debriefing by Libor Rouček on the ad-hoc delegation to Georgia on 3 - 4 June 2013

Mr Roucek gave a positive assessment of the fact-finding mission to Georgia. He said that the country was going through a political transition from a one-party system to a multi-party system. The cohabitation between the Prime Minister and the President remained difficult and the polarisation in the country was high. The EP delegation's goal was to calm down the situation and to help the transition. Mr Roucek added that Georgia's foreign policy had not changed, at least as far as the Euro-Atlantic Orientation was concerned. On Russia, Georgia had changed its strategy though: it had realised that it did not have the strength necessary to change the situation on the ground, so it focused instead on practical cooperation with Russia, for example on the Olympic games or transport routes, etc. But Russia was not making it easier for Georgia, for example building a fence in the middle of a Georgian village.

While Mr Zala (S&D, SK) concurred with Mr Roucek in this assessment of the situation, agreeing that the new government had opened the political space to democracy, most of those who took the floor voiced their concerns regarding the worsening of the situation in Georgia. For Mr Lisek (EPP, PL), Georgia was not moving in the right direction. Ms Neyts (ALDE, BE), said that, despite the affiliation of the Georgian ruling party with her group, she was seriously concerned by the arrest of leaders of the opposition, which conjured up the spectre of a Ukraine-like scenario. She said it was very difficult to find the truth in the reciprocal allegations of the government and the opposition and that it was indeed a miracle that the transition remained peaceful and had not turned into violence. For Mr Saryusz-Wolski (EPP, PL) a red line had been crossed with the imprisonment of the leader of the opposition.

Mr Roucek acknowledged that it was more difficult for the EPP to accept the present situation as Mr Sakaashvili's party was affiliated to the EPP but he said that the situation in Georgia after the elections was an improvement for everybody. He invited colleagues not to compare the situation of Georgia to Ukraine. Any transition was a difficult process but in Georgia it was still peaceful.

VIII. Exchange of views with Sadullah Ergin, Minister for Justice of Turkey, and Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, on the judicial reform process in Turkey

Due to the events in Turkey, the visit of the Turkish Minister for Justice had been cancelled. The AFET committee decided however to hold a debate on the situation in Turkey.

The Chair, Mr Brok (EPP, DE) announced that following statements made by representatives of the government of Turkey on the EP resolution adopted the week before, the AFET committee had decided to cancel its visit to Turkey planned for 19-20 June. He said that he had spoken with the Turkish Minister for EU Affairs, and his comments had not been helpful. Mr Brok added that the cancellation of the visit did not amount to a cutting-off of contacts with Turkey, which was and remained an important partner for the EU. But this country had to understand how to deal with criticism. Mr Atkins (ECR, UK) wondered if this was the right strategy. In his view, it would have been preferable to carry out the visit, albeit with a smaller delegation, and to continue a frank and open dialogue with Turkey at this time. He suggested Mr Brok write a letter to the Turkish PM. Mr Brok agreed to do this but at a later stage.

Ms Flautre (Greens, EFA, FR), Chair of delegation for relations with Turkey, said that the meeting of the IPM, scheduled for the following week in Brussels, had not been cancelled and hoped that the debate would be frank and productive. She considered the Turkish PM's reaction worrying. She recalled that criticism of Turkey in EP resolutions was long-standing and the latest resolution, adopted the previous week, was not "extravagant". She regretted that the EU had not opened chapters 23 and 24, because the more Turkey was anchored to the EU, the more the protesters were protected from police and judiciary abuses. She also warned of possible fallouts of the present situation on the Kurdish issue: the fact that very few protests occurred in the Kurdish areas was proof that the PKK was not the main driver behind the demonstrations, but the peace talks could be at risk.

Mr Sophocleous (S&D, CY) considered the PM's reaction to the EP resolution, and the fact that he had given "orders" to the EP, unacceptable. He opposed any opening of new chapters and called for a clear signal to be sent to Turkey. Mr Hadjigeorgiou (GUE/NGL, CY) regretted that the EU message to Turkey was unclear, with Member States divided on this issue, and some hiding behind the others. He also opposed the opening of chapters 23 and 24, arguing that there was no connection between them and the police reaction.

Mr Brok acknowledged that in the EP's resolution on the annual report it had requested that chapters 23 and 24 be opened, but he considered that this was not the right moment to do so. Maybe later in September, he added.

IX. Exchange of views with the EEAS on the EU-Afghanistan cooperation agreement on development and partnership

In camera. See separate document.

X. Votes

a) Recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the negotiations for an EU-Malaysia partnership and cooperation agreement

AFET/7/12224, 2013/2052(INI)

Rapporteur: Emilio Menéndez del Valle (S&D, ES)

The draft report was adopted by unanimity with one abstention.

XI. Next meeting(s)

27 June 2013, 9.00 – 12.30 (Brussels)
