



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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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 18-19 February 2013
Chairs: Mr Brok (EPP, DE), Mr Provera (EFD, IT), Mr Kukan (EPP, SK)

I. Debriefing by Eamon Gilmore, Irish Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, on the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) of 18 February 2013

Mr Gilmore presented the conclusions of the FAC and then replied to a number of questions raised by Members.

Mr Salafranca (EPP, ES) and Ms Lunacek (Greens/ALE, AT) wondered if any of the sanctions on Syria had been lifted. The Minister reassured them that the arms embargo as such had not been lifted but that a clarification had been made on a certain type of arms - non-lethal military equipment - that could now be provided to ensure the safety of civilians.

A number of questions dealt with the EU mission to Mali and revolved around criticism that the EU had acted too slowly, that its military structures were lacking or not well suited to the task and that the military initiative had regrettably been left to Member States. Mr Gilmore replied that substantial preparations had been made for the EUTM mission and the training of Malian forces could start soon. He also noted that, while the debate on EU military structures was legitimate, the reason why France could intervene so quickly was that it was already present with its army in the neighbouring countries. On the transformation of the African force into a UN peace-keeping force (Mr Danjean (EPP, FR)), the Minister underlined that it would be quite a long process, as it would be necessary for the UNSCR to give a clear mandate. The priority now was rather to stabilize the country.

Mr Paleckis (S&D, LT), Ms Lunacek and Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) raised the issue of the Eastern Partnership, with particular reference to Belarus and Ukraine. The Minister said the preparation of the summit in Vilnius was well ahead of schedule and that this topic would stay high on the agenda in the coming months. Concerning the signature of the agreement with Ukraine, he said that the EU should use the economic leverage to push for reform on the rule of law, but it also had to encourage the European perspective so as to facilitate the reform process.

Mr Atkins (ECR, UK), who deplored the lack of action by the Quartet, called on the Council to put more pressure on Israel on the issue of settlements. Mr Gilmore said that there was indeed a shared sense of a new window of opportunity being open and that the EU ought to be more proactive.

Mr Roucek (S&D, CZ) and Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) questioned the Minister about the possible inclusion of Hizbollah on the EU terrorist list. He said that the issue had not been raised in the last FAC but that, more generally, the position of Lebanon was critical.

II. Topical debate - Egypt

Mr Berger of the EEAS updated Members on the situation in Egypt. He mentioned the growing political polarization, the violation of human rights and the worsening of the economic situation. At the same time he welcomed the fact that, on the occasion of the visit of the EUSR for human rights in Egypt, the President had showed readiness to engage with the EU in the drafting of the law on NGOs and associations and had invited an EU election observation mission to observe the upcoming elections. He also considered as a positive development the fact that the EU-Egypt association council had met after two years of interruption.

During the debate that followed, Members were rather critical of the EU stance towards Egypt. Ms Schaake (Greens/ALE, NL) feared that the EU was not sufficiently connected with people. While acknowledging that the EU needed both carrot and stick, she commented that it was unable to draw a clear line between the two. She wondered what vision was behind the "more for more" principle. She noted that both Lady Ashton and President van Rompuy had gone to Egypt, and questioned what their respective role had been. She deplored the fact that in a recent declaration by HR Ashton there had been no condemnation of the death penalty. Ms Brantner (Greens/ALE, DE) did not share Mr Berger's enthusiasm for the association council being reconvened, rather interpreting this as reverting to "business as usual". She asked what the EU red lines and expectations were at this kind of meeting.

Mr Berger replied that EU red lines for the "more for more" principle were clear: political pluralism and respect for human rights. The issue of death penalty had been dealt with directly with the Egyptian authorities. HR Ashton and President van Rompuy had raised the same issues, but Lady Ashton had gone there in her capacity of head of the Task Force. Concerning carrots and sticks, he said that, for the time being, only assistance for poverty alleviation had been provided by the EU, while the assistance under the principle of "more for more" was not yet in place. Finally, on the meeting of the association council, he said that it was not a happy event in itself but it was positive to have the cooperation back on track so as to have a forum to say where the EU red lines were.

III. Exchange of views with the EEAS on EU agreements with countries in the Asia-Pacific region

This topic was discussed in camera. See separate document.

IV. Exchange of views with Ranko Krivokapić, the Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro, on the country's EU accession process (*In association with the Delegation for relations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo*)

Introducing the debate, Mr Kukan (PPE, SK) recalled that Montenegro was the only country of the Balkans negotiating accession: it had to be praised for that but it also meant that it bore a special responsibility because it had to set an example for the region. Mr Krivokapić summed up his country's situation since its independence and said that Montenegro was now undergoing a revision of its constitution of 2007 so as to ensure the full independence and accountability of the judiciary. He said that the parliament was the "place for integration" and underlined that a number of committees were chaired by the opposition. He added that Montenegro was a good example of multi-ethnic society, and should be considered a model for the whole region. On Croatia's accession he said that it was a stimulus for Montenegro.

Members taking the floor commended Montenegro for its achievements, calling it a success story in the Balkans, but also reminded Mr Krivokapić of some critical issues for the integration process: the border dispute with Croatia to be resolved, the economic situation, good neighbourly relations, the situation of minorities, and freedom of the press.

Mr Krivokapić said that he was optimistic on the economic situation. As far as the region was concerned, he said that Montenegro was a key factor for the stability in the Balkans. He indicated that he did not like speaking of minorities and preferred "nationalities", adding that, for example, the Albanian minority was more devoted to the State than the majority.

V. Exchange of views with Pierre Vimont, Executive Secretary General of the EEAS, on the situation in the Sahel following the Ministerial meeting of the Monitoring and Support Group for Mali of 5 February 2013

Mr Brok opened this item by speaking of his frustration at a Sahel strategy that seemed not to have gone very far. He reminded those present that the decision to send a mission to Mali had been taken in October but it was being deployed only now.

Mr Vimont outlined three different issues: the military situation, the political and diplomatic situation and the economic development of Mali. After having outlined the military situation on the ground, he said that the objective was now to stabilise and bring security to the country. The EUTM mission had been launched with a view to advising and training the Malian forces. He noted that most of the 27 Member States had contributed to the force. As to the transfer from the African force to a UN peace-keeping force, Mr Vimont said that it would take time, as it would require a UNSCR, a budget and several practical arrangements, not to mention the fact that the country would need to be stable.

Concerning the political track, Mr Vimont recalled that the political roadmap had been adopted in Mali and elections had been scheduled for 7 July, the EU being ready to support the electoral process.

On financial assistance, Mr Vimont said that the EU not only provided humanitarian assistance but also budgetary assistance to help the reconstruction of the State.

In reply to Mr Brok's comments, Mr Vimont said that the Malian authorities would not have shared his view, because they did not feel that the EU was late; he recalled that a *coup d'état* took place in Mali and it took time to have constitutional authorities back in power to give the green light for the deployment of the EU mission, the pace of which was accelerated once the crisis broke out. Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) insisted that there had been little EU-EAS involvement at the beginning of the conflict and that only States could react rapidly. Mr Vimont replied that, should battlegroups have been deployed, it would also have taken 5 to 6 weeks, while France already had some troops deployed in Western Africa. The EU, - but, he noted, also NATO - was not able to do that and everybody had been taken by surprise. But the EU had been successful in contributing added value after the rapid French intervention. Mr Arlacchi (S&D, IT) deplored the fact that Algeria and its support for some terrorist groups were missing from Mr Vimont's picture. Other insisted on the crucial importance of regional coordination and the involvement of neighbouring countries in the solution to the crisis. Mr Vimont said that the terrorist attack in Algeria was a wake-up call for this country. He acknowledged the importance of the regional dimension and considered that the upcoming appointment of the EUSR for Sahel would facilitate the coordination to tackle problems such as terrorism which extended beyond borders.

Mr Bicep (Greens/ALE, FR) focused on national reconciliation and considered that MNLA should not be criminalized but rather involved in the negotiations. While acknowledging the importance of national reconciliation, Mr Vimont recalled the position of the Malian authorities, who were opposed to the involvement of any movement challenging the territorial integrity of the country. He also considered that a distinction had to be made between rebels (whose nationality was not only Malian) and the Tuareg community, with whom a political solution had to be found. Mr Roatta (EPP, FR) echoed his concerns on the humanitarian situation in the country after the departure of the French troops. Mr Vimont said that the EU mission's precise objective was to train the African troops so as to enable them to guarantee the security of the country.

In reply to Ms Gomes (S&D, PT) who wondered if the EU financing of the African Peace Facility was rewarding, Mr Vimont said that Somalia was the best proof of the positive answer to the question.

VI. Debriefing by Cristian Dan Preda and David Martin on the election observation mission to Jordan on 21 - 25 January 2013

Mr Preda (PPE, RO), chief of the EP mission, said positive conclusions could be drawn as no major incidents had happened, even though the electoral culture in Jordan was rather different from the Western one, with the electoral campaign continuing in the polling stations and polling stations being separated for men and women. Mr Martin, the head of the EU mission, said that these elections, which were very well organized from a technical point of view, were a good start to improve democracy.

VII. Exchange of views on the recovery of frozen assets in the context of the Arab revolutions

Ms Gomes (S&D, PT) recalled that on the occasion of the meeting with national parliaments in Cyprus, EUSR León had encouraged the EP to be involved in the issue of the recovery of frozen assets. The S&D group had then organized a seminar whose outcome was the suggestion to set up a team of experts on the legal aspects of this complex issue.

The AFET committee decided to return to this issue at a future meeting.

VIII. Reports

a) **The freedom of press and media in the world**

AFET/7/05943, 2011/2081(INI)

Rapporteur: Marietje Schaake (ALDE, NL)

Responsible committee: AFET

Opinions: DEVE – Decision: no opinion

- Consideration of working document

The rapporteur presented a discussion paper which, she explained, was based on a thematic approach and therefore did not mention specific countries. On the issue of how the EU could address media freedom, she said that the EU should be ambitious and to this end it needed a strategic vision with precise benchmarks and clear goals in mind.

Mr Salafranca (PPE, ES) challenged the approach she had followed and considered that countries systematically violating media freedom had to be mentioned in the report. He also called for caution on the language used about the EU response to the lack of media freedom.

Provisional timetable:

- 2nd consideration: 30 March;

- deadline for amendments: 9 April;

- vote in AFET: 7 May;

- plenary: June.

b) **2012 progress report on Bosnia and Herzegovina**

AFET/7/11178, 2012/2865(RSP)

Rapporteur: Doris Pack (EPP, DE)

Responsible committee: AFET

- Consideration of draft motion for a resolution
- Deadline for tabling amendments: **25 February 2013, 18.00**

Ms Pack (EPP, DE) gave a very negative assessment of the situation in the country, which was falling behind the other Balkan States. The political leadership shared no common vision of the country's future and was falling back on ethnic issues. The government's collapse, widespread corruption, the leadership's lack of political responsibility because of the presence of a High Representative, the dire economic situation and the divided political landscape were some of the elements underlined by the rapporteur. The shadow rapporteur, Mr Roucek (S&D, CZ) and Ms Lunacek (Greens/ALE, AT), were not more optimistic. The representative of the Commission noted that the draft text was very much in line with the Commission's assessment.

c) **Recommendation to the EEAS and to the Council on the 2013 review of the organisation and the functioning of the EEAS**

AFET/7/10939, 2012/2253(INI)

Rapporteurs: Elmar Brok (EPP, DE), Roberto Gualtieri (S&D, IT)

Responsible: AFET –

Opinions: DEVE – Birgit Schnieber-Jastram
(PPE)

BUDG – Nadezhda Neynsky (PPE)

CONT – Ivailo Kalfin (S&D)

ENVI – Decision: no opinion

JURI –

- First exchange of views without document

The rapporteurs circulated an "issue paper" on the approach that they intended to follow and the issues to be considered in their recommendation.

Mr Brok (EPP, DE) said that the EEAS was not yet functional, but he called for a fair and constructive criticism towards it. He also hoped that a dialogue could be set up with the Council and the Commission so as to coordinate the respective positions on the review. Coming to the substance, he said that one of the problems of the EEAS was its unduly long decision-making process and the lack of structures, notably in the field of CSDP. He also mentioned the problems of the chain of command in delegations, the geographic and gender balance, the political representation of the High Representative and her presence in the plenary and the information of AFET, including *ex-ante* information and consultation. Mr Gualtieri (S&D, IT) recalled that the review was not mandatory. On the role of the High Representative, he insisted on the need, on one hand, to strengthen her link with the Commission (for example by appointing a deputy Secretary-general (SG) tasked with liaising permanently with the Commission) and, on the other hand, to appoint deputies, arguing that the Foreign Minister of the rotating presidency was not the only possible alternative. Concerning the EEAS structure, he criticized the administrative dualism represented by the SG and the Chief Operating Officer (COO), as well as the marginalization of the CSDP structures. On the Madrid agreement on the High Representative's political accountability, he called for the full respect of Art. 218, for the early involvement of the EP in decisions in the field of CFSP/CDSF, and for pre-briefings of AFET ahead of FAC meetings.

The shadow rapporteurs focused on the same issues highlighted by the rapporteurs.

Mr Salafranca (PPE, ES) regretted that, despite the aspirations of the EP and the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, it was the intergovernmental and not the community dimension that finally prevailed in the EEAS. He insisted on the crucial importance of "political attachés" of the High Representative, who, in his view, should include the SG, EUSRs and representatives from the EP. On the staff, he deplored the fact that the highest grades were mainly occupied by Member States' officials.

Ms Neyts (ALDE, BE) considered the very existence and functioning of the EEAS as a miracle, but acknowledged that that was not enough. She held that the crisis in the Sahel showed the inadequacy of the EEAS and the High Representative and that there was still a long way to go to achieve effectiveness.

Ms Gomes (S&D, PT) said that progress was visible but the EU still did not make the difference on the global stage – the MEPP, the Arab Spring and the reform of the UNSC being only some examples of this. Concerning political accountability, she said that there had been tremendous progress in informing the EP but it had yet to be properly involved in the early stage of decision-making.

Ms Brantner (Greens/ALE, DE) deplored the isolation of CSDP in the EEAS structure and asked for a revision of the Corporate Board. She noted that most staff in delegations came from Member States.

Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) had similar criticism concerning the structure (COO, Corporate Board, etc.) and deplored the lack of a clear contact point for the EP at the EEAS. He also noted that some Member States still preferred to have bilateral contact with third countries rather than passing through the EEAS.

Mr Danjean (PPE, FR), chair of the subcommittee on security and defence, said that the crisis management structures were a problem, not in the sense that they were too numerous but because they lacked any coordination and political impetus. The chain of command was also problematic. He also deplored the fact that CSDP was clearly not a priority for the High Representative, who was often absent from the informal meetings of defence ministers and from EP plenaries.

Ms Neynski (EPP, BU), on behalf of the BUDG committee, recalled the Court of Auditors' conclusions on the 2011 EEAS expenditures.

d) The Role of the EU in Promoting a Broader Transatlantic Partnership

AFET/7/11218, 2012/2287(INI)

Rapporteur: Francisco José Millán Mon
(EPP, ES)

Responsible committee: AFET

Opinions: DEVE

- Consideration of working document and Presentation of the study on "A Broader Transatlantic Partnership"

The working document, building on the study presented by one of the authors, dealt not only with traditional transatlantic relations, i.e. relations between the EU and US, but looked at the wider picture including the two South Atlantic blocs - Latin America and the African rim of the Atlantic. The rapporteur considered that the Atlantic had to be considered as a global community, as was the case for the Pacific, also taking into account that its members shared a number of common challenges, despite a lack of shared vision and of a common feeling of "belonging".

This new perspective on the transatlantic partnership was welcomed by some of the shadow rapporteurs, who noted, for example, the penetration of China in both the Latin American and the African continents. By contrast, Mr Siwiec (S&D, PL) and Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) were rather critical of this approach, considering that it was better to focus on the EU-US relations. Mr Siwiec argued that the concept of transatlantic partnership was not suitable to solve all the world's problems and regretted that NATO was not even mentioned once in the working document. Mr Tannock considered that the more the concept of transatlantic partnership was stretched, the more it was diluted.

IX. Votes

a) 2012 Comprehensive Monitoring Report on Croatia

AFET/7/11179, 2012/2871(RSP)

Rapporteur: Libor Rouček (S&D, CZ)

During the debate that preceded the vote, there was a very large consensus on the preparedness of Croatia to join the EU on 1 July. Members welcomed the preliminary agreement between Croatia and Slovenia on the Ljubljanska Banka

dispute and called on the three Member States that had not yet ratified the accession treaty - Denmark, Germany and Slovenia - to do so as soon as possible. There was only one voice that put into question the general optimism: Ms Macovei (EPP, RO) argued that Croatia was not ready and that a number of issues, such as the conflict of interest or the financing of political parties - most of which were related to the problem of corruption, still had to be properly solved by the country. Therefore she called for a post-accession monitoring mechanism to make sure that, once in the EU, Croatia would take the necessary measures to address those problems. This idea was strongly opposed not only by Croatian observer MEPs, but also by Members from different Member States and of different political affiliations, including the rapporteur. They said that the new negotiating model of "benchmarks", which was applied to Croatia on the basis of past experiences in the enlargement process, was in itself a form of monitoring which took place before accession. Any post-accession monitoring mechanism would not only be inconsistent with that method but would also be unfair, let alone the fact that corruption is not only a problem in Croatia, they argued.

The motion for resolution, as modified by a number of amendments, was adopted by 60 votes in favour, 2 against and 4 abstentions. Ms Macovei's attempt to introduce the idea of the monitoring mechanism via an oral amendment was defeated.

b) 2012 progress report on Iceland

AFET/7/11147, 2012/2863(RSP)

Rapporteur: Cristian Dan Preda (PPE, RO)

The motion for resolution, as modified by a number of amendments, was adopted by 56 votes in favour, 2 against.

c) The impact of the financial and economic crisis on human rights

AFET/7/09955, 2012/2136(INI)

Rapporteur: Inese Vaidere (PPE, LT)

The draft report as modified by a number of amendments, was adopted by 47 votes in favour , 3 against and 17 abstentions.

X. Next meeting(s)

25 February 2013, 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)
