



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 7 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 6 June 2013
Chair: Mr Brok (EPP, DE)

- I. Exchange of views with Thomas Hammarberg, EU Special Adviser on legal and constitutional issues in Georgia**
In camera. See separate document.

- II. Exchange of views with Lars Faaborg-Andersen, newly appointed Head of EU Delegation to Israel**
In camera. See separate document.

- III. Exchange of views on the current political developments in Turkey, in the presence of the EEAS**

This item was added on the agenda

Mr Brok opened the debate on what he said appeared to have become a far-reaching conflict in Turkey. He noted that the Prime Minister had yet to apologise. He also drew attention to growing islamisation of the country with a certain Islamic emphasis being put in the constitutional framework.

Saying that this was the worse unrest in Turkey in recent years, the High Representative's adviser on Turkey, from the EEAS, rejected any parallels with the Arab Spring because Turkey was still a democracy. He identified three elements in the recent events: environmental protest, the spread of demonstrations across the country and a spiral of anger about the excessive use of force by the police. The first of these highlighted the need for more discussion with the population on such projects. As for the second, freedom of assembly had to be guaranteed. Finally, the excessive use of force by the police had to be investigated and, depending on the conclusions, condemned. He then recalled the statement issued by the High Representative calling for restraint and dialogue. He said that the EEAS was going to follow this issue very closely and was ready to speak again if needed. The Commission representative pointed to the lack of dialogue and freedom in Turkey and recalled the statement issued by Commissioner Füle, who was now travelling to Turkey to participate in a conference but also to meet representatives of civil society. Most of the MEPs intervening considered the EEAS reaction to events in Turkey too late and weak, considering that there was no need for further proof of the excessive use of violence by the police. Many insisted on the importance of guaranteeing freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and called on the Turkish media not to apply self-censorship. Mr Duff (ALDE, UK) compared the Turkish democratic awakening to the 1968 protest movement in Paris. Others, like Ms Koppa (S&D, EL), agreed that this was different from the Arab Spring but that the EU should nonetheless speak clearly to Turkey, saying that if human rights continued to be violated it had no European future. Mr Hadjigeorgiou (GUE/NGL, CY) recalled that, ironically, before these events, there were people pretending that Turkey was a model of democracy. Mr Howitt (S&D, UK), followed by Ms Schaake (ALDE, NL) and Mr Kazak (ALDE, PL), took another view: the violent repression of demonstrations had to be condemned but should not become a pretext to block Turkey's access to the EU. Rather the opposite: the EU should engage even more with Turkey.

IV. Debriefing by Michael Cashman on the working group of the Delegation for relations with South Africa to Pretoria, Johannesburg and Cape Town on 2 - 5 April 2013

Mr Cashman (S&D, UK) regretted that 4 years of good relations with the South Africa delegation had been damaged by the decision of the Conference of Presidents to reduce the number of inter-parliamentary meetings (IPM) for budgetary reasons, a decision which resulted in the IPM with South Africa becoming a mere working group. This was interpreted by the South African counterpart as a downgrading of relations with the EU and had prompted the cancellation of the meeting. Only thanks to the intervention of the EP President himself, had it been possible to reverse this decision and had the meeting eventually taken place as planned.

Mr Cashman reported that the meeting had discussed IPAs, human rights, BRICS and the DCI instrument. The EP delegation had also had the opportunity to meet some NGOs and to assess how the EU money was being spent in some specific projects. According to Mr Cashman, this money was being spent very effectively and brought added value.

V. Debriefing by Emer Costello on the working group of the Delegation for relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council to Ramallah/East Jerusalem on 27 April - 2 May 2013

Ms Costello (S&D, IE) said that the delegation mainly focused on Palestinian political prisoners and hoped that an EP fact-finding mission on their living conditions could be sent as a matter of urgency. The delegations also dealt with the basic human rights of Palestinians, their daily harassment by Israel and the destruction of EU-financed infrastructure.

Ms Muñiz (S&D, ES) called for some EU action on Palestinian political prisoners, noting that if the same situation had occurred in another country and not in Israel, the EU would have done something long ago.

Mr Kovatchev (EPP, BG) accused the delegation of being "one-sided" and wondered if it had met with victims of Palestinian terrorism. Ms Costello replied that she was not saying that terrorism did not have to be condemned but that it was important to cite injustices such as those of which Palestinian political prisoners were victims.

VI. Reports

The Annual Report from the Council to the European Parliament on the Common Foreign and Security Policy in 2012

AFET/7/12555, 2013/2081(INI)

Rapporteur: Elmar Brok (EPP, DE)

Responsible: AFET – Opinions: BUDG – Nadezhda Neynsky (EPP, BG)

The rapporteur deeply criticised the approach followed by the Council in its annual report, namely one consisting in drafting a sort of catalogue of countries. In his view, the annual report on CFSP should rather be based on a comprehensive approach and focus on key issues and messages and on strategies. This "Thomas Cook's tour of the world", as Mr Duff (ALDE, UK) put it, was equally regretted by many others. Mr Howitt (S&D, UK) recalled that the EP had abandoned this approach long ago in its annual report on human rights. On the substance, Mr Brok pointed out two main problems in foreign policy: the balance between interests and values and the proliferation of strategic partnerships which resulted in the absence of any strategy at all. Mr Duff noted that 2012 had not been a good year for CFSP: the lack of cohesion and trust between Member States in the Council had shown their inability to seriously engage with the task of developing a common foreign policy. He regretted that Mr Brok's report did not have a section on enlargement, but the rapporteur pointed out that the enlargement policy was not part of CFSP. Mr Van Orden (ECR, UK) did not share the views of the majority that the EU role in CFSP had to be more and more enhanced. He rather preferred a pragmatic approach based on needs and circumstances and considered that the EU did not need a vast structure such as the EEAS.

VII. Chair's announcements

Mr Brok regretted the press release issued by his fellow MEP, Mr Stevenson (ECR, UK), chair of the delegation for relations with Iraq. This press release was misleading in that it gave the impression that Mr Brok did not trust Mr Kobler, the UN Special Representative for Iraq, who had recently appeared before the AFET committee. Mr Brok added that living conditions in Camp Ashraf would soon be discussed in AFET with the EU Head of Delegation and that the problem was that very few countries had agreed to receive some of the Camp residents. The UK, of which Mr Stevenson was a national, had not accepted any. Mr Brok finally noted that the EP discussions on Iraq should not be hijacked by the single issue of Camp Ashraf.

VIII. Next meeting(s)

17 June 2013, 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)

18 June 2013, 9.00 – 12.30 and 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)