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**NOTE**

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from: General Secretariat of the Council  
to: Delegations

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Subject: Summary record of the meeting of the European Parliament's **Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)** held in Brussels on 16-17 September 2013  
Chair: Mr Brok (EPP, DE)

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**I. Exchange of views with Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin, newly appointed Head of EU Delegation/EU Special Representative to Afghanistan**

*This item was debated in camera. Please see separate report.*

## **II. Exchange of views with Humam Hamoudi, Chair of the Iraqi Foreign Relations Committee, on the situation in Iraq**

Mr Hamoudi said that his country, the first in the region to draft a constitution, could be seen as a model in the context of the Arab spring. He called for the reconciliation and co-existence between the different tenets of Islam. He added that Iraq was following the path of democracy and used democratic tool to fight terrorism. A new wave of energy and dynamism characterized the economic situation of Iraq and, as a consequence, a number of services were offered to Iraqi citizens (healthcare free of charge, fellowships for students abroad, etc.). He explained that the security problem and the instability had their root causes in the Syrian conflict. Moreover, the religious tensions in the country left space for terrorist activities. Finally, he called for compliance with international law and for dialogue and condemned the use of chemical weapons.

To those who hinted at the tensions between Sunni and Shia (notably Mr Salafranca (EPP, ES)), Mr Hamoudi replied that the situation in Iraq was different from that in other Arab countries. He recalled that the Sunni minority was represented at government level by ministers with key portfolios. He reassured the MEPs that the sectarian tensions could be resolved and the political authorities knew what had to be done. He added that multi-ethnicity was part of Iraq and that helped in having good -neighbourly relations. Iraq, he said, was like a hub for relations with different countries, a source of stability and a bridge in the region. Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) and Mr Kelam (EPP, EE) voiced their concerns about a possible break-up of Iraq, also with reference to Kurdistan. Mr Hamoudi said that separatism was not a desirable path but he rejected the view that Kurdistan was looking for independence. He recalled that the oil revenues were shared equally among regions. On discrimination against the Christian minority (Mr Kelam, Ms De Martini (ECR, IT)), he said that there was no discrimination against Christians or Kurds and that, on the contrary, it was a golden age for minorities in Iraq because, thanks to the constitution, they could enjoy their rights. Finally, on Camp Ashraf (Mr Salafranca, Mr Tannock), he stressed that the refugees had been invited to leave and that the government was not able to ensure security for all its inhabitants.

## **III. Exchange of views with Jana Hybaskova, EU Head of Delegation to Iraq, on the situation in Iraq**

*This item was debated in camera. Please see separate report.*

**IV. Exchange of views with Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania, on the country's post-election situation and its European perspective** *(in association with the Delegation for relations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo)*

Mr Rama delivered a speech whose key message was a break with the past political tradition in Albania. The result of the June parliamentary elections was, in his view, a call for change. He said that he would look for a cross-party consensus and would open up to the opposition. In this context, the EU agenda was a catalyst for change and for the Albanian renaissance. He considered that the Serbia-Kosovo dialogue was opening up new opportunities and peace was an instrument for social and economic cooperation in the region. He rejected the "nationalistic fever" and said that he would rather look for a policy of "zero problems" with neighbours.

During the debate that followed, MEPs welcomed the approach followed by the new government, hoping that it was not a simple moment of post-electoral euphoria. Some called for reassurances that concepts such as "great Albania" would be rejected. Mr Rama noted that nationalist parties did not get a single seat in the parliament and considered that nationalist rhetoric was unacceptable for the long-term future of the region. After the Kosovo-Serbia agreement, Albanians should not play the role of the "disturbing kids" in the Balkans as far as Brussels was concerned. He reassured the meeting that this was not just euphoria, but a precise will to give the opposition what the parties now in power did not get when they were in opposition. He added that the ruling party would seek the widest possible consensus with the opposition on key reforms, even though it almost had the qualified majority needed for their adoption. On cooperation with Kosovo, he said that it was important not to leave peace as an empty space: several projects involving economic, social, cultural and educational cooperation were to be set up. He called on all EU Member States to recognize Kosovo, pointing out that its independence had not been the disaster for the region that some had predicted. A number of questions raised the issue of the fight against corruption and the Prime Minister said that the key words were to modernize and inter-connect.

**V. Exchange of views with Sima Bahous, Director of the UNDP Bureau for the Arab States, on the perspectives for Arab States under the current crisis in the region**

Ms Bahous regretted that the Arab revolutions, which had given rise to a new sense of citizenship and were inspiring many, had given way to despair and violence again. Against this background, the humanitarian crises in Syria added another dark element in the region. The weak nature of Arab states, their huge population and the poverty were the root causes of the rise of extremism. But Ms Bahous stated that the UNDP still hoped for the sustainable development of the Arab region, as a number of projects in different areas could prove.

Ms Neyts (ALDE, BE) and Mr Atkins (ECR, UK) shared the same vision as regards the Arab revolutions: the West had expected too much too soon from those countries, while democracy in the West took centuries to become the paradigm that it was today. Mr Panzeri (S&D, IT) invited Ms Bahous to assess the EU neighbourhood policy and she said that the Arab world had changed and policies had to change along with it. In her view, it was important to continue to work with the leadership and with youth organizations, putting special emphasis on education. Ms Gomes (S&D, PT) voiced her concern about the Sunni/Shia divide and Ms Bahous noted that this was a very politicized issue, which had not been at all an issue a few years ago.

**VI. Exchange of views with Tea Tsulukiani, Minister of Justice of Georgia, on recent developments in Georgia, in particular in relation to the justice sector** *(in association with the Delegation to the EU-Armenia, EU-Azerbaijan and EU-Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committees)*

The Chair introduced the item, voicing his concerns about the draft law on the miscarriages of justice which had been criticized by the Venice Commission. On the contrary, he welcomed the partial destruction of illegal recordings undertaken by the previous government as a first step in the right direction.

Ms Tsulukiani said that European integration was the main strategic objective of the Georgian government and that a political and economic association with the EU would make the process irreversible. She hoped that the agreement, to be initialled in Vilnius, could be signed by the end of the Commission's term. She presented some pieces of legislation prepared by her ministry, such as the anti-discrimination law and the law on the prosecutor's office. On the draft law on miscarriages of justice, she said that Georgia had taken note of the Venice Commission's recommendations. Then she presented the work done in preparation for the upcoming presidential elections and confirmed that the Prime Minister would resign in the aftermath of those elections, leaving behind a sound legacy. She stressed that the government's commitment to democracy was not a response to international pressure but to the Georgian people and that the system set up by this government would survive any subsequent change in the government coalition.

Two issues dominated the debate that followed. On the one hand, the MEPs' concerns about selective justice and, on the other hand, Georgia's strategic choice between the EU and the Eurasian Union following the ambiguous declarations by the Prime Minister. On the first issue, the Minister replied in an indirect way, referring to the misconduct of the previous government, responsible for hours of illegal and secret recordings. She said that the recordings of scenes from the private life of opposition politicians, journalists and members of the government meant as instruments of blackmail had been destroyed as recommended by Mr Hammarberg, the EU's Special Adviser for Legal and Constitutional Reform and Human Rights in Georgia. She explained that another set of recordings carrying evidence of acts of torture against members of the opposition related to criminal acts and as such could not be destroyed. The Minister also explained that the reform of the prosecutor's office freed the judges to follow the opinion of the prosecutor or not. On the strategic choice of Georgia between the EU or Russia, the Minister reassured MEPs that her country had made the irreversible choice of moving closer to the EU and that the Eurasian Union was out of question. But she insisted that actions had to follow, implicitly referring to the need to sign the association agreement.

## **VII. Public hearing - The Eastern Partnership and its Multilateral Platforms - what impact?**

Four experts participated in the hearing<sup>1</sup> which evaluated the Eastern Partnership (E.P.) from a political, economic and social point of view. The main conclusions were that the E.P., even though it was the best the EU could offer to its Eastern neighbours, was too little and fell short of expectations. It also suffered from a lack of visibility and its impact had been rather weak, taking into account that, five years on, the countries included in this policy were neither more democratic, nor more stable. Experts considered that free trade agreements, visa liberalization, better communication on EU policy and functioning and stronger contacts with civil society were the instruments to strengthen the E.P.

During the debate MEPs focused on the pressure exerted by Russia on its European neighbours but Mr Tannock's proposal to adopt a retaliatory measure such as a vodka ban was generally dismissed as counterproductive. One of the experts pointed out the E.P. was not designed as a geo-political instrument vis-à-vis Russia and the response to Russia's pressure should rather be to call on Russia to respect its commitments under the WTO or the Council of Europe.

## **VIII. Debriefing by Herbert Reul on the EU-Korea IPM in North and South Korea on 14 - 20 July 2013**

Mr Reul (EPP, DE) reported to the committee on the visit, focusing on the North Korea part. He noted that, even though the situation remained dire, there was a very slight change in society and a slight degree of openness on the part of the authorities. He informed the colleagues that they had had the opportunity to meet the Chinese representative in the Six-Part Talks and had witnessed a change in the attitude of China vis-à-vis North Korea. He insisted on the need to exploit any opportunity for dialogue and to support NGOs. Mr Montaldo (S&D, MT), also a member of the delegation, confirmed the very slight change in the country.

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<sup>1</sup> Lukasz Adamski - historian and political scientist, currently working for the Centre of the Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding.

Pekka Sutela - Visiting Distinguished Professor at the Paris School of International Affairs, previously a senior associate in the Carnegie Endowment on Russia and Eurasia Program and the principal adviser for monetary policy and research at the Bank of Finland.

Susan Stewart - Deputy Director of Eastern European Division at SWP Berlin- German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

Igor Lyubashenko - lecturer and blogger.

Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) expressed some concerns about the risk that EP visits to countries such as North Korea or Iran could be instrumentalized by the dictatorship, being more helpful to the authorities than to the people. Mr Reul replied that, although the visit represented a very small contribution to the opening up of the country, it was the right thing to do.

#### **IX. Presentation of the interim report on the monitoring of journalists trials in Turkey by the ad-hoc delegation of the European Parliament**

The chair of the ad-hoc delegation, Mr Walesa (EPP, PL), presented the interim report, which contained strong indications of unfair treatment meted out to journalists who were on trial because of the opinions they had expressed. They were charged mainly with supporting terrorist organizations. Mr Walesa announced that the final report would be issued in the first half of 2014 and in the meantime the delegation would continue to observe the trials.

MEPs taking part in the debate (M. Sophocleous (S&D, CY), Mr Duff (ALDE, UK), Ms Flautre (Greens/EFA, FR), Mr Tannock (ECR, UK)) voiced their concern about disturbing trends such as government propaganda, self-censorship and lack of respect for media freedom. Ms Flautre and Ms Gomes (S&D, PT) regretted that reports such as this one were misappropriated by those, like the Earl of Dartmouth (EFD, UK), who had an anti-Turkish agenda, while the mandate of the ad hoc delegation had nothing to do with the issue of EU membership. Nonetheless, they called for the continued monitoring of the trials, so as to be remain on the alert for any development regarding the freedom of the press in Turkey.

#### **X. Presentation of the 2013 Sakharov Prize nominees (*Jointly with the Committee on Development and the Subcommittee on Human Rights*)**

The nominees for the 2013 Sakharov Prize are:

- 1) Malala Yousafzai - nominated jointly by 4 political groups:
  - for the EPP group, by José Ignacio Salafranca (ES), Elmar Brok (AT), Michael Gahler (DE), Arnaud Danjean (FR), Joseph Daul (FR), Gay Mitchell (IE) and Mairead Mc Guinness (IE),
  - for the S&D group, by Hannes Swoboda (DE) and Véronique de Keyser (BE),
  - for the ALDE Group, by Guy Verhofstadt (BE), Sir Graham Watson (UK), and Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck (BE),and also by Jean Lambert (Greens, UK) and the ECR group.

- 2) Edward Snowden - nominated by the Greens/EFA group and GUE/NGL group
- 3) Reeyot Alemu and Eskinder Nega - nominated by Ana Maria Gomes (S&D, PT) and 40 other MEPs
- 4) Ales Bialatski, Eduard Lobau and Mykola Statkevich, representing all Belarusian political prisoners - nominated by Marek Migalski (ECR, PL), Filip Kaczmarek (EPP, PL), Jacek Protasiewicz (EPP, PL) and 39 other MEPs.
- 5) Mikhail Khodorkovsky - nominated by Werner Schulz (Greens/EFA, DE) and 40 other MEPs
- 6) "Standing Man" protesters - nominated by Marietje Schaake (ALDE, NL) and 40 other MEPs
- 7) The CNN Freedom Project: Ending Modern-Day Slavery - nominated by Boris Zala (S&D, SK) and 40 other MEPs

A further joint meeting of the committees will be held on 30 September to vote (in camera) on the shortlist with the three finalists. The laureate will be chosen by Parliament's Conference of Presidents on 10 October in Strasbourg and invited to the award ceremony on 20 November, also in Strasbourg.

## **XI. Vote**

### **Protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean EC-Jordan Association Agreement on an EU-Jordan Framework Agreement on general principles for the participation of Jordan in Union programmes**

AFET/7/09648, \*\*\* 2012/0108(NLE) 12138/2012 – C7-0008/2013

Rapporteur: Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck (ADLE, BE)

The report was adopted by 45 votes in favour, one against and two abstentions, following the adoption of amd.1, 2, 3, 6 and 7.



## **XII. Reports**

### **a) The situation of human rights in the Sahel region**

AFET/7/11930, 2013/2020(INI)

*Rapporteur: Charles Tannock (ECR, UK)*

*Deadline for tabling amendments: 1 July 2013, 18.00*

The rapporteur explained the background to the report and its title: a report on the Sahel region and the Western Sahara but with the latter not mentioned in the title. He hinted at the long and difficult negotiations among groups on the issue of the Western Sahara and noted that a number of groups had withdrawn from compromises which had been accepted at the first stage.

All the shadow rapporteurs paid tribute to Mr Tannock for the hard work done and the search for compromise. Some called for a separate report on the Western Sahara (Mr Roatta (EPP, FR), Mr Arlacchi (S&D, IT)), regretting that such an important topic as the human rights situation in the Sahel region had been overshadowed by a divisive issue like the Western Sahara, which, at the same time, could not have been properly dealt with in a more general report on the broader region.

A few comments were devoted to the part on the Sahel. Mr Roatta and Ms Kiil-Nielsen (Greens/EFA, FR) regretted that issues such as reproductive health, domestic violence, slavery etc., had not been dealt with in the report.

On the Western Sahara, compromise 32 (self-determination of the Sahrawi) and compromise 36 (rejection of the fishery agreement under negotiation between the EU and Morocco) were rejected by the EPP. The ALDE groups also withdrew from the latter but the shadow rapporteur could not give a guarantee of the vote of her own group, due to internal divisions. The issue of self-determination for the Western Sahara was debated at length. Mr Panzeri (S&D, IT) gave the meeting to understand that this idea should be abandoned due to the lack of progress towards the Sahrawi's aspirations in recent years. Other MEPs, including the rapporteur (who did not himself take a position on the Western Sahara's final status), tended towards the view that the idea should not be dismissed simply because it was not attainable. With that thinking South Sudan, Namibia, Timor Leste and other countries would not be independent today.

**b) Recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the negotiations for an EU-Canada Strategic Partnership Agreement**

AFET/7/13189, 2013/2133(INI)

*Rapporteur: Elisabeth Jeggle (EPP, DE)*

*Deadline for tabling amendments: 18 September 2013, 12.00*

The rapporteur made a strong plea in favour of concluding this agreement with Canada. The debate focused on two issues. Members were unanimous on the first: once the agreement was signed, Canada should stop discriminating between EU Member States as far as visas were concerned. On the second issue MEPs were divided: as one Member (Mr Montaldo (S&D, MT)) explained, the agreement included a clause on democracy, rule of law and human rights which the Canadians could not accept but that the EU considered a standard language to be included in all its strategic partnership agreements. Ms Weber (ALDE, RO), Mr Atkins (ECR, UK) and Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) strongly criticized this one-size-fits-all approach which could be considered arrogant and unacceptable by a mature democracy such as Canada and called for flexibility in wording. Mr Peterle (EPP, SI) and the rapporteur considered on the contrary that consistency had to be ensured in EU agreements and the fact that Canada was a country respecting the rule of law should not in any case be an obstacle in acknowledging the importance of values such as human rights and democracy.

**XIII. Next meeting(s)**

23 September 2013, 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)

24 September 2013, 9.00 – 12.30 and 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)