



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 2 March 2012

7244/12

**PE 91
COHOM 49**

NOTE

from:	General Secretariat of the Council
to:	Delegations
Subject:	Summary of the meeting of the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) of the European Parliament, held in Brussels on 28 February 2012

The meeting was chaired by Mr Grzyb (EPP, PL).

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted as proposed.

2. Approval of minutes of meetings of:

- **5 December 2011** **PV – PE478.383v01-00**

The minutes were approved.

3. Chair's announcements

The Chair recalled the human rights resolutions adopted during the last Plenary session, namely condemning the death penalty in Belarus and Japan and the situation in Egypt. He welcomed the Commission's proposal for mandatory disclosure of payments information for extractive industries in order to fight corruption and mismanagement in the natural resources sector presented in October 2011.

4. Hearing on the situation of Human Rights in Russia, focusing on discrimination, freedom of association and the rule of law

The first invited speaker, Mr Cherkasov, Memorial's Council Member, spoke about the work conducted by his organisation in documenting the forceful abductions of people in the so called Second Chechen War or War in the North Caucasus during which more than 4000 civilians disappeared (secret prisons, extrajudicial killings, torture). He stressed that only three criminal proceedings were ever brought before criminal courts and that impunity remained widespread. He proposed that the EU should put pressure on Russia to declare these crimes 'crimes against humanity' so that they would not be subject to statute of limitations.

The second invited speaker, Mr Verkhovsky, Director of the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, explained that existing criminal legislation on hate crimes, which lacked in precision, allowed for arbitrary prosecution of various religious groups; such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Falun Gong, as well as labour activists.

The third invited speaker, Ms Chirikova, leader of the Campaign for the Defence of the Khimki Forest, spoke about the current political situation in Russia and stressed that Russians were denied the right to choose their leaders and that a small group of oligarchs had appropriated Russia's mineral wealth and placed these funds abroad. She called on the EU to closely watch events after the Presidential elections.

The fourth invited speaker, Mr Kleiner, Partner, Hermitage Capital Management (employers of Sergey Magnitsky), presented in great detail the events surrounding Magnitsky's death and stressed that this case was so important because it was well known who were the officials involved in his death.

DROI also listened to a pre-recorded video message by Ella Kesaeva, co-Chair of 'Voice of Beslan', organisation representing some of the families of the victims of the 2004 Beslan school siege, who spoke about their efforts to obtain an independent and objective investigation of the Beslan School Siege. Mr Kay, attorney for Beslan School siege victims, presented the court action brought against Russia in the European Court of Human Rights.

The EEAS representatives stressed that the current political awakening was not only motivated by top-down decision making and electoral irregularities but was also the result of the lack of rule of law, impunity and corruption. He agreed with previous speakers that there was considerable scope for improvement of the human rights situation in Russia. The EEAS also communicated to the Russian counterparts their views on how to modify the existing modalities of HR Dialogues in order to ensure greater involvement of civil society. The EEAS representative explained that for the time being the Russian side did not envisage any changes, and promised to keep the EP informed of any further developments.

In the subsequent debate Mr Schulz (Greens, DE) discussed how terrorism was used as a tool by the authorities. Ms Ojuland (ALDE, ET) stressed that it was important to follow developments after the Presidential elections. Ms Andrikiene (EPP, LV) was concerned about the growing divide in values between the EU and Russia and said we should prepare for a time when the middle class would bring about political changes. Mr Donskins (ALDE, LT) agreed that preparations for the post Putin era should begin.

The fifth invited speaker, Mr Pole, Council of Europe, explained that the Venice commission had been examining five important Russian legislative acts and would be giving its opinion on them on 16 and 17 March.

5. Annual Report on Human Rights in the World and the European Union's policy on the matter including implications for the EU's strategic human rights policy

AFET/7/06845

2011/2185(INI)

Rapporteur: Richard Howitt (S&D)

Responsible: AFET –

Opinions: DEVE – Cristian Dan Preda (PPE)

FEMM – Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio (PPE^o)

- Consideration of amendments

In this very brief exchange of views the rapporteur Mr Howitt (S&D, UK) made some initial comments on amendments tabled and said he was looking forward to working with shadows on possible compromises.

Mr Tavares (Greens/EFA, PT), Mr Donskins and Ms Vergiat (GUE/NGL, FR) expressed support for the overall approach of the report and gave some justification for various amendments tabled. Ms Gomes (S&D, PT) insisted on adding a reference to development policy and human rights. The Chair stressed the importance of mentioning the persecution of Christians.

Discussion of amendments : 19 March

Vote : 20 March

6. Next meeting(s)

- 19 March 2012, 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)
- 20 March 2012, 9.00 – 12.30 (Brussels)
