



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 24 May 2012

10373/12

**PE 227
PESC 644
COHOM 119
COEST 171
COMED 3**

NOTE

from : General Secretariat of the Council
to : Delegations

Subject: Summary of the meetings of the **Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET) of the European Parliament**, Strasbourg, 21 and 24 May 2012

The meetings were chaired by Mr Brok (EPP, DE).

1. The Annual Report from the Council to the European Parliament on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

2012/2050(INI)

Rapporteur : Elmar Brok (EPP, DE)

Responsible : AFET

- Consideration of draft report

The rapporteur pointed out that this was the first report since the inception of the EEAS and the triple mandate of Ms Ashton (HR for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the Commission and Chair of the Foreign Affairs Council). He said that the CFSP needed strategic guidelines, highlighted new financial instruments as a key area of focus and supported budgetary priorities which reflected political priorities, generating European added value. In this context, he said that resources and their deployment should be assessed more thoroughly. He considered that the High Representative should provide high-level political leadership and improve the political quality of foreign policy work; he called for more political reports and information from EU delegations to avoid being dependent on reporting by the Member States.

The draft report was generally welcomed by Members. However, almost all speakers criticised the fact that Turkey's status as an accession country was not specifically mentioned (Ms Neyts-Uyttebroeck (ALDE, BE), Ms Lunacek (Greens/EFA, AT), Ms Koppa (S&D, EL) and Mr Peterle (EPP, SI)). Mr Duff (ALDE, UK) added that the report was not clear about the stance on future enlargements.

Members also mentioned concentric circles in the context of strategic priorities, the focus on the immediate neighbourhood and the European Neighbourhood Policy and conflict prevention and peace building, imbalances between the EEAS's civilian and military capabilities, financial and budgetary architecture, ending obsolete and counterproductive partnerships, an arbitration mechanism for Western Balkans countries in the interests of neighbourly relations and the need to take into account the specific characteristics of each country for accession purposes, and for a greater focus on Russia.

2. Exchange of views with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, and Commissioner Štefan Füle, on enhancing complementarity between the EU and the Council of Europe (CoE) in the EU Neighbourhood

In his introductory statement, Mr Füle stated that the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was based on a "more for more" approach, meaning more support from the EU in return for more progress towards democratic reforms. He gave an overview of the measures/actions that had been taken to implement the policy (such as the election observation missions in Tunisia and Algeria, the decision to deploy an election assessment team in all main Libyan cities, etc), the funds that had been made available to the neighbouring partners (e.g. additional grant funding of EUR 1 billion, EUR 1.15 billion increase in lending ceilings on loans to partner countries from the European Investment Bank, etc), progress on important policy areas with countries that had made the most progress on political and economic reforms (e.g. Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Moldova and Georgia) and mobility partnerships (with Armenia). He also said that the new approach focused on mutual accountability and that the progress reports contained recommendations for each partner, as well as reform challenges and sectors of cooperation to which the partner's attention needed to be drawn to improve the pace of reforms. He highlighted the crucial cooperation with the Council of Europe in this area and characterised the cooperation as mutually reinforcing.

Mr Jagland reminded Members that the objective of the Council of Europe (CoE) was to achieve a single judicial area based on the standards and values of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and underlined that the CoE and the EU had to work together, complementing each other's efforts to achieve this goal, as the EU *acquis* did not cover all issues and the EU did not cover the entire European continent. As for the ENP, he pointed out that there was a common interest in stabilising regions. He gave several examples of successful cooperation, including Ukraine and its adoption of a code of criminal procedure. He explained that Ukraine had taken on board the CoE suggestions, based on their interest in concluding an Association Agreement with the EU. Mr Jagland stated that the CoE could offer its expertise to help countries to make laws that complied with EU standards, to rewrite constitutions and to reform the judiciary; the countries could accede to some of the CoE conventions (e.g. the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings or the Convention on Cybercrime) as the EU could not combat these challenges without having its neighbours on board. He urged the EU to accede to the ECHR to create a positive geopolitical impact and to prevent the creation of a dividing line, with two different sets of courts and case law.

During the subsequent discussions, Members mentioned in particular the situation in Azerbaijan and the Eurovision song contest; Russia and its commitments in the framework of the CoE; the extent of CoE dealings with corruption cases inside the EU; the reasons for EU accession to the ECHR and progress towards implementing the Brighton declaration; the "more for more" approach; the new Commissioner for Human Rights and the focus of his work; the nature of contacts between the CoE and the Commission and their cooperation as the object of a report to ensure efficiency and to avoid overlapping.

Addressing the queries on Azerbaijan, Mr Jagland was concerned about freedom of expression there and commented on the interconnection between widespread corruption and the lack of an independent judiciary. He said that the CoE was interacting with local authorities and trying to set up an action plan to see how it could help reform these areas. Concerning Russia, he thought that it was too early to assess the situation, but informed Members that both Mr Putin and Mr Medvedev recognised the problems with the judiciary and corruption. As for corruption in the Member States, he pointed out that all of them had acceded to the Convention on Corruption. Regarding the adoption of the ECHR by the EU, he disagreed with the UK perception of case law. Furthermore, in the context of the Brighton declaration, he said that the courts margins of appreciation could not be allowed to harm the rights of individuals and minorities. He reiterated that the EU should accede to the ECHR to avoid having a "black hole" on human rights in Europe and two separate sets of standards and case law for non-EU and EU countries.

Mr Füle underlined that the ENP could not be successful unless the EU addressed long-running conflicts and highlighted mutual cooperation between the EU, neighbouring countries and third countries. Concerning Azerbaijan, he supported the CoE action and pointed out that the country was seeking a strategic relationship with the EU in the field of energy. He was not sure whether it would be feasible to create a civil society forum in the southern neighbourhood, but was keen to develop structured dialogue with civil society. He concluded by assuring Members that even if "more for more" was better reflected in the new instrument of neighbourhood assistance within the new MFF, it would not be put on hold until 2014 - it should start to deliver.

*** *Electronic vote* ***

3. 2013 Budget - Mandate for Trilogue

2012/2016(BUD)

Rapporteur for opinion : Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE, FI)

Responsible : BUDG

The draft opinion was adopted as amended (55 for, 5 against, 6 abstentions).

4. Additional Protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an Association between the EC and Israel on an Agreement between the EC and Israel on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products (CAA)

2009/0155(NLE)

Rapporteur for opinion : Véronique De Keyser (S&D, BE)

Responsible : INTA

The vote on the draft opinion was postponed.

5. The EU Special Representative for Human Rights

2012/2088(INI)

Rapporteur : Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (EPP, LT)

Responsible : BUDG

The draft report was adopted as amended (53 for, 3 against, 4 abstentions).

*** *End of electronic vote* ***

Date of the next meeting

- 30 May 2012, 9.00 – 12.30 and 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)
- 31 May 2012, 9.00 – 12.30 (Brussels)