



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 25 March 2014

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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** held in Brussels on 17 and 18 March 2014

The hearing on the EU response to Russian policy towards the countries of the EaP focused on the situation in Ukraine and attracted many people. By contrast, few MEPs were present for the rest of the first day, thus reducing discussions on draft reports to be approved the next day. On the second day, the draft recommendations on EU strategy towards Iran were rejected.

The other draft reports were approved, including on EU-Japan partnership, 69th session of UNGA, participation of Georgia in EU programmes, visa restrictions for Russian officials (MAGNITSKY case). There was a long exchange of views with the President of the Syrian

opposition coalition, followed by one with the head of EU Delegation in Egypt and a debriefing by the EEAS Managing Director for the Americas on negotiations with Cuba and other developments in Latin America. Several items were *in camera*: an exchange of views with the newly appointed Head of the EU Delegation in Ankara, a strategic dialogue with the European Commissioner for enlargement on implementation of IAP II and European Neighbourhood Instrument and the debriefing of the Enlarged Bureau by the Executive Secretary of the EEAS on the 17 March 2014 Foreign Affairs Council on Ukraine.

The meeting was chaired by Mr BROK (EPP, DE), Mr PASCU (S&D, RO), Mr KOVATCHEV (EPP, BU) and Mr SALAFRANCA (EPP, ES).

17 March 2014

Item 1 on the agenda

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2 on the agenda

Chair's announcements

The Chair briefly referred to the conclusions on Ukraine adopted on the same day by the Foreign Affairs Council.

Item 3 on the agenda

Approval of minutes of meeting of 20-21 January 2014

The minutes were approved.

Jointly with the Committee on International Trade

Item 4 on the agenda

Public hearing on the EU response to Russian foreign and trade policy towards the countries of the Eastern Partnership (EaP)

Introducing the hearing after the AFET Chair, Mr WAŁĘSA (EPP, PL, representing the Committee on International Trade) considered that the EU should develop stronger tools to assist countries of the EaP. He raised the issue of shortcomings in the financial and security aspects of the EaP, as well as in the EU official communications in response to recent Russian media campaigns.

Dr WOLCZUK (University of Birmingham) explained that among the countries of the EaP, Ukraine was the most vulnerable to the Russian "carrot and stick" policy: the Ukrainian economy is heavily dependent on the Russian market, and energy prices affect the Ukrainian economy across the board. She stressed the need for a roadmap to minimise the costs of EU partnership/integration for Eastern countries, as, in her opinion, Russia will increase these costs in the long term using all levers at their disposal: trade embargoes, tariff increases, energy prices and labour migration. As to Russian leverage in general and in reply to MEP Mr VULJANIĆ (GUE, HR), she referred to Russia having breakaway regions in countries of the EaP, to control over pipelines and to the possibility of them being blown up.

To avoid new conflicts in the future, Dr CASIER (Brussels School of International Studies and Kent University) pointed to the need to reverse the logic of EU/Russia competition in the long term (possibly in a post-PUTIN era) and to reinforce EU structures to address Russia's main concerns – for example the strategic role of Ukraine for Russia and the issue of minorities – in EU dealings with EaP countries. Replying to MEPs Ms LYUBCHEVA (S&D, BG) and Ms CRONBERG (Greens/EFA, FI), he underlined the necessity of building trust with Russia.

Mr WIEGAND (Director Russia, EaP, Central Asia, Regional Cooperation and OSCE, EEAS) rejected any EU responsibility for the current events in Ukraine. He referred to the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions agreed the same day as an EU firm stance (scalable sanctions, support for Ukraine, support for the OSCE monitoring mission in Ukraine) and looked to the meeting of the European Council on 21-22 March. In reply to MEPS Mr TANNOCK (ECR, UK) and Mr SEVERIN (NI, RO), he expressed his belief that pressure on Mr PUTIN could come from the Russian business sector.

Mr BALAS (Deputy Director General, DG Trade, Commission) took a chronological perspective of trade relations and stressed that Russia had not expressed concerns until summer 2013, when it had started developing intimidation measures towards EaP countries. As to the next steps vis-à-vis Eastern partners, he mentioned swift EU application of measures such as autonomous trade preferences and special tariff preferences.

Item 5 on the agenda

Recommendations to the Council on the negotiations on the EU-Japan Strategic Partnership agreement

AFET/7/15310

Rapporteur: Mr PETERLE (EPP, SL)

- Consideration
- Deadline for tabling amendments: 5 March 2014, 12.00

Mr PETERLE expressed satisfaction at being close to an agreement with the shadow rapporteurs. He noted that the key words of the draft recommendations were peace, stability and cooperation and that the recommendations should be forward-looking and constructive rather than going into too much detail on past history. That approach was supported by Mr PASCU (RO) on behalf of S&D and Mr SALAFRANCA (EPP, ES). Mr SALAFRANCA stressed the need to agree on an appropriate formulation of the democracy clause and to sign the agreement with Japan soon. Mr BÜTIKOFER (Greens/EFA, DE) expressed concerns on some specific provisions, referring in particular to amendment 1 on comfort women, amendment 5 on nuclear energy and amendment 30 on a comprehensive global response to climate change.

Item 6 on the agenda

Recommendation to the Council on the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

AFET/7/15149

Rapporteur: Mr LAMBSDORFF (ALDE, DE)

- Consideration
- Deadline for tabling amendments: 26 February 2014, 12.00

Ms NEYTS-UYTTENBROECK (ALDE, BE) presented some amendments on behalf of the rapporteur who was absent.

Mr SALAFRANCA spoke on behalf of the EPP in the absence of the shadow rapporteur Mr PREDÁ (EPP, RO). He highlighted a few issues on which he requested support: implementation of the declaration of the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law; strengthening of the role of regional organisations in peace keeping and conflict prevention; the post-2015 goals and in particular sustainability; a re-drafting of the provision on the funding of the post-2015 development agenda so as to not give the impression that the EU is reluctant to commit financially.

Mr SALAFRANCA also promoted the reform of the UN system, with the long-term goal of the EU having a seat in the Security Council (amendment 57 of Mr MILLAN MON, EPP, ES).

On behalf of the shadow rapporteur Ms MUNIZ DE URQUIZA (S&D, ES), who was absent, Mr PASCU asked for support for her amendments on women's rights as well as for a definition of "climate refugee".

Item 7 on the agenda

Recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service on EU strategy towards Iran

AFET/7/15055

Rapporteur: Ms MUNIZ DE URQUIZA (S&D, ES)

- Consideration
- Deadline for tabling amendments: 18 February 2014, 12.00

In the absence of the rapporteur, Ms MUNIZ DE URQUIZA (S&D, ES), the Chair, Mr PASCU (S&D, RO), suggested proceeding directly to the vote on Tuesday 18 March, as the groups had found an agreement. Ms SCHAAKE (ALDE, NL) and Mr SALAFRANCA (EPP, ES) insisted on discussing the matter. During the discussion, the degree of support for certain important ideas contained in the draft recommendation varied substantially between the groups as well as within the EPP.

Ms CRONBERG (FI), shadow rapporteur for the Greens/EFA, welcomed the draft recommendation. Referring to Lady ASHTON's recent visit to Iran, she said that we should not make negotiations more difficult and called on the EU to increase relations with Iran and to open a delegation in the country. She considered that the draft recommendation should mainly favour the start of a dialogue with Iran.

Ms SCHAAKE (NL), shadow rapporteur for ALDE, also stressed the need to open an EU delegation in Iran, increase relations with the country and use the current window of opportunity for that. But she recalled the importance of fundamental rights and condemned the negative regional impact of Iran's support for Hamas and Hezbollah.

Mr SALAFRANCA explained that his group's amendments sought to open up dialogue with Iran while not avoiding human rights issues.

Mr TANNOCK (ECR, UK) indicated that his group would abstain on the recommendation, as Iran had to prove itself willing to negotiate in good faith. He expressed reservations on the involvement of Iran in talks on Syria and called for a softer alternative to the opening of an EU delegation in Iran. Mr VIDAL-QUADRAS (EPP, ES) stressed that Iran remained in violation of many UN resolutions and should allow the UN to investigate on human rights. He also called for a firm condemnation of Iran's active support for the Syrian regime.

Item 8 on the agenda

Recommendation to the Council on establishing common visa restrictions for Russian officials involved in the Sergei MAGNITSKY case

AFET/7/15148

Rapporteur: Ms OJULAND (ALDE, EE)

- Consideration
- Deadline for tabling amendments: 27 February 2014, 12.00

Sir Graham WATSON (ALDE, UK) presented the draft report on behalf of the rapporteur, who was absent. He criticised the Council and the High Representative for not having responded to the 2012 EP recommendation on establishing common visa restrictions for Russian officials involved in the Sergei MAGNITSKY case. Therefore Ms OJULAND had now included a list of persons to be subject to EU sanctions. He noted that the inclusion of that list was supported by all political groups, with the exception of the S&D. He hoped that amending the provision concerned to leave the Council room to decide on the final list would rally support from the S&D. He concluded that the adoption of this report would send a double signal: both to Russian officials, and to the Council and High Representative to take EP recommendations more seriously. He was supported by Mr SALAFRANCA (ES) on behalf of the EPP rapporteur who was absent. Mr TANNOCK (ECR, UK) wondered whether some of the listed officials were the same as those who were the subject of sanctions decided by the Foreign Affairs Council on 17 March 2014 regarding the situation in Ukraine.

Item 9 on the agenda

Framework Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the general principles for the participation of Georgia in Union programmes

AFET/7/13475

Rapporteur: Mr LISEK (EPP, PL)

- Consideration
- Deadline for tabling amendments: 27 February 2014, 12.00

There was no particular comment on the draft recommendation on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of a Protocol to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, on the one part, and Georgia on the other part, on a Framework Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the general principles for the participation of Georgia in Union programmes. The Chair referred to the vote due to take place on this item the next day.

18 March 2014

***** Voting time *****

Item 10 on the agenda

Recommendations to the Council on the negotiations on the EU-Japan Strategic Partnership agreement

AFET/7/15310

Rapporteur: Mr PETERLE (EPP, SL)

- Adoption

The draft recommendation was approved unanimously, with 47 votes in favour, 0 against and no abstention.

Item 11 on the agenda

Framework Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the general principles for the participation of Georgia in Union programmes

AFET/7/13475

Rapporteur: Mr LISEK (EPP, PL)

- Adoption

The draft framework agreement was approved unanimously, with 57 votes in favour, 0 against and no abstention.

Item 12 on the agenda

Recommendation to the Council on establishing common visa restrictions for Russian officials involved in the Sergei MAGNITSKY case

AFET/7/15148

Rapporteur: Ms OJULAND (ALDE, EE)

- Adoption

The draft recommendation was approved, with 53 votes in favour, 1 against and 2 abstentions.

Item 13 on the agenda

Recommendation to the Council on the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

AFET/7/15149

Rapporteur: Mr LAMBSDORFF (ALDE, DE)

- Adoption

The draft recommendation was approved, with 46 votes in favour, 7 against and 2 abstentions.

Item 14 on the agenda

Conclusion of a Protocol to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Montenegro, of the other part, to take account of the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union

AFET/7/13502

Rapporteur: Mr TANNOCK (ECR, UK)

- Adoption

The draft recommendation on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the protocol was approved unanimously, with 49 votes in favour, 0 against and no abstention.

Item 15 on the agenda

Recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service on EU strategy towards Iran

AFET/7/15055

Rapporteur: Ms MUNIZ DE URQUIZA (S&D, ES)

- Adoption

The Committee rejected the draft recommendation by 30 votes against, 25 votes in favour and 1 abstention.

Ms SCHAAKE (ALDE, NL) demanded an explanation as to why the Committee had not been able to agree. Mr BROK (EPP, DE) replied that in his personal view, adoption of the recommendation had become impossible due to the adoption of the GUE amendment making the link with nuclear-free zones in the Middle East, saying that such link was not constructive vis-à-vis Iran. Mr SALAFRANCA (EPP, ES) explained that the recommendation's message was too tolerant vis-à-vis the regime and that the voting process in the Committee had not enabled the EPP to support the recommendation.

The rapporteur, Ms MUNIZ DE URQUIZA (S&D, ES), indicated that the issue of human rights had been agreed with the Greens and ALDE. She showed openness to find a consensus on the EPP's concerns. Mr SALAFRANCA agreed to try and find a compromise to be presented in the plenary but said that in the absence of a compromise the recommendation should be considered rejected by the Committee.

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

In association with the Delegation for relations with the Mashreq countries

Item 16 on the agenda

Exchange of views with Ahmad AL-JARBA, President of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces on the third anniversary of the beginning of the Syrian revolution

Mr AL-JARBA recalled the beginning of the revolution on 18 March 2011, the scale of the tragedy and the humanitarian dimension: more than 200 000 deaths; 9 million displaced people or refugees; one third of the territory destroyed; parts of Syria isolated (no water, no food, no medicine) with Bashar AL-ASSAD's motto being "submit or starve"; scarce means of the opposition coalition to treat the injured.

He accused the regime of Bashar AL-ASSAD of systematically massacring the people, even while sitting at the negotiating table.

He explained that Bashar AL-ASSAD's regime had let "mercenaries" enter Syria: from Hezbollah; from the Iranian republican guard; from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, "a terrorist organisation" which benefits from logistical support from AL-ASSAD's regime. He said that the opposition coalition had to fight both the regime and those violent groups.

Mr AL-JARBA considered that Bashar AL-ASSAD was the one reason for failure of the negotiations in Geneva, as he had no intention of finding a peaceful solution. He was pessimistic as to the chances of success of future negotiations: in his opinion, the regime would not accept a transitional government if Bashar AL-ASSAD was not to be represented in it.

Most MEPs who took the floor (e.g. Mr BROK, EPP, DE) asked questions about the solutions to be found to the crisis. Mr AL-JARBA took the view that the solution would ultimately be political, although there would be two parallel strands for the time being: one political, one military. In his opinion, Bachar AL-ASSAD only understood force, as shown when he decided to abandon chemical weapons when the United States, France and the United Kingdom threatened him with military action. Mr AL-JARBA was therefore of the opinion that a political solution would not be possible with Bachar AL-ASSAD if the military balance of power on the ground was not in favour of the opposition coalition.

Mr AL-JARBA denounced the complicit silence of the international community on the crime against the Syrian people. He called on the international community to support the opposition by humanitarian means, militarily and politically, beyond the mere condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by the regime, as conventional warfare was used everyday against the people.

He specifically called on the EU to supply the opposition coalition with anti-missile weapons to protect the people against the regime's air forces.

He also stressed that the UN should adopt a resolution under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter and take binding measures to call all militias and foreign armed groups to leave the Syrian territory.

He expressed the wish to establish a transitional government including all moderate actors, to draft a constitution, to hold elections and to establish democracy and respect for human rights.

MEPs who took the floor mainly expressed solidarity with the opposition coalition and the Syrian people in this tragedy.

Some MEPs admitted that the international community's and the EU's reaction to the crisis had not been sufficient but stressed that the opposition was too heterogeneous and not sufficiently coordinated (Mr HOWITT, S&D, UK, Sir Robert ATKINS, ECR, UK). Several MEPs (Mr HOWITT, Ms SCHAAKE, ALDE, NL) were concerned about extremists groups, or feared that one "bad group" would ultimately replace another (Mr HOWITT, Mr Hans-Gert PÖTTERING, EPP, DE). Some MEPs (Ms SCHAAKE) referred mainly to EU humanitarian aid, hoping that it would be properly conveyed to at least the areas that were not controlled by the regime.

There were questions on the influence of Russia, China and Iran. Mr AL-JARBA replied that Bachar AL-ASSAD was supported by Russia, but not by China. He said that he had met with Chinese representatives in Montreux (France), who had qualified the opposition's approach as constructive, while criticising Bachar AL-ASSAD's approach. He indicated that he would soon reply to their invitation to officially visit China. As for Iran, Mr AL-JARBA said that he would be in favour of Iran's positive involvement in the Geneva negotiations, on the pre-condition that Iran accepted the Geneva I declaration and that it acted to ensure that members of the Iranian Republican Guard left the Syrian territory.

Item 17 on the agenda

Exchange of views with James MORAN, Head of the EU Delegation to Egypt, on the situation in Egypt

Mr MORAN drew a mitigated picture of the situation and developments in Egypt.

He saw the new Constitution as generally promising, especially regarding human rights and fundamental freedoms (except for some provisions such as military trials of civilians) but admitted that much depended on implementation.

In that regard, the situation would be clearer after the parliamentary elections which would follow the presidential elections (not before May 2014). Mr MORAN indicated that a new electoral law had just been adopted and the EU had been invited to send an elections monitoring mission to Egypt.

As for security threats (terrorism in particular), Mr MORAN feared for Egypt but also for the international potential consequences. He also considered the economic situation worrying, even more so due to the alarming drop in the tourism sector (due to terrorism), which in part explained the increasing poverty level.

On a more positive note, Mr MORAN shared his impressions that the government was showing openness to reforms (e.g. energy policy) and to cooperation with international financial organisations. In the area of international relations, he mentioned the new relationship that Egypt wanted to build with Russia. He also indicated that Egypt wanted to revive its relations with Africa (issue of Nile's water with Ethiopia).

Mr MORAN pointed out that the High Representative remained committed to EU action in Egypt (she visited Egypt six times in 2013), that the Council had decided to pursue efforts in terms of assistance and in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, and that the EU had proposed a framework partnership agreement.

Finally, Mr MORAN strongly encouraged MEPs to pursue contacts with Egypt, to follow the elections (possibly in a monitoring mission) and hoped that parliamentary cooperation would be possible after the elections.

Some MEPs, such as Mr TANNOCK (ECR, UK), shared Mr MORAN's ambivalence regarding the situation. Most MEPs expressed concerns: political instability, the economic situation, poverty, human rights (Mr SALAFRANCA, EPP, ES), security in Sinai, sensitivity on the question of "foreign interference", the situation for NGOs (Ms NEYTS-UYTTEBROEK, ALDE, BE). Finally, a few MEPs questioned the action of the EU in Egypt. Mr MILLAN MON (EPP, ES) wondered why EU action had not been successful since the Arab Spring (external factors?) and Ms SCHAAKE criticised the EU for lack of clarity in its positioning.

Item 18 on the agenda

Debriefing by Christian LEFFLER, EEAS Managing Director for the Americas, on the state of play in negotiations on a Political Dialogue and Co-operation Agreement with Cuba and other developments in Latin America

Cuba:

As Mr LEFFLER put it, Cuba is the new kid on the block in Latin America. He indicated that following quite some controversy among the Member States, in February 2014 the Council adopted directives for the EU to start negotiating with Cuba with a view to concluding an agreement. According to Mr LEFFLER, that would provide a framework to pursue the political dialogue and sectorial cooperation that was re-launched in 2008, and would help achieve more consistency, considering the multitude of bilateral agreements between individual Member States and Cuba.

Several MEPs took the view that the situation in Cuba would not change as long as the CASTRO family remained in power (Mr TANNOCK, ECR, UK; Mr KREISSL-DÖRFLER, S&D, DE). Mr SALAFRANCA (EPP, ES) expressed concerns on the issue of human rights. Having noted that the Parliament had not objected to the adoption of the negotiating mandate, he asked questions on the roadmap for the negotiations, recalling that the Parliament would ultimately be asked to consent to the agreement. Mr LEFFLER replied that Cuba had already accepted the principle that the future agreement would contain the usual provisions on human rights and on non proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. He also indicated that negotiations would start soon (when the parties found a suitable date). Ms LÖSING (GUE, DE) welcomed the normalisation of EU relations with Cuba and wished that negotiations would be based on mutual respect, including for the sovereignty of Cuba.

MERCOSUR:

Mr LEFFLER referred to the meeting of chief trade negotiators on 21 March 2014 to take stock of reciprocal liberalisation offers. He showed hope – although no full confidence - that the difficulties among MERCOSUR countries on the offer would be overcome. Mr SALAFRANCA expressed the wish that the process be re-dynamised. Mr YANEZ-BARNUEVO GARCIA (S&D, ES) considered that negotiations with MERCOSUR had failed. Mr KREISSL-DÖRFLER assessed that we should concentrate on the countries that wished to work towards an agreement with the EU rather than wait for progress with MERCOSUR.

Ecuador:

Mr LEFFLER indicated that the second round of negotiations aiming at integrating Ecuador into the existing framework agreement with Columbia and Peru would take place in the week starting 21 March 2014. He was positive about the process involving Ecuador even though he considered that progress would be slow, mainly due to socio-economic differences between Ecuador on the one hand and Columbia and Peru on the other. Mr SALAFRANCA supported the process and stressed the need for Ecuador to ensure legal certainty for investments and enterprises.

Mexico:

Mr LEFFLER mentioned the progress made in February 2014 by the joint working group towards an agreement for dialogue and cooperation in the trade and economic sectors. He hoped work would enable the Commission to present a proposal for a negotiating mandate in autumn 2014.

Chile:

Mr LEFFLER considered that discussions on an upgrade of the existing agreement with Chile could take a long time, as Chile's proposals last February were less ambitious than the EU's objective.

As a general comment, Mr SALAFRANCA emphasised that relations with Latin America should remain a priority in the AFET Committee and asked that the Commission's DG TRADE put enough resources on that region, rather than concentrating them all on the TTIP agreement with the United States.

Item 19 on the agenda

Exchange of views with Stefano MANSERVISI, newly appointed Head of the EU Delegation in Ankara (in compliance with the Declaration on Political Accountability of the HR/VP)

This item was *in camera*.

Item 20 on the agenda

Strategic dialogue with Štefan FÜLE, European Commissioner for Enlargement, on the implementation of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) and of the European Neighbourhood Instrument

This item was *in camera*.

Item 21 on the agenda

Any other business

There was no other business.

Item 22 on the agenda

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 31 March and 1 April 2014.

Item 23 on the agenda

Enlarged Bureau

This item was *in camera*. The enlarged bureau was debriefed by Mr VIMONT, Executive Secretary of the EEAS, on the 17 March 2014 meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council regarding Ukraine.