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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 8 September 2014

The Committee, chaired by Mr Brok (EPP, DE), held a half day extraordinary meeting to vote on Parliament's consent to the conclusion of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, thus allowing for the plenary final vote to take place next week in Strasbourg. The Committee voted in favour of the consent (48 votes in favour, 8 votes against and 4 abstentions).

It also held an exchange of views with Shawqy Ibrahim Abdul Kareem Allam, the Grand Mufti of Egypt. He viewed the situation in Egypt as reassuring, and condemned the acts of the armed group "Islamic State" in Iraq and Syria, considering that they were damaging Islam.

3. Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part, with the exception of the provisions relating to the treatment of third-country nationals legally employed as workers in the territory of the other party

The Committee voted in favour of the recommendation by the rapporteur, Mr SARYUSZ-WOLSKI (EPP, PL), to give the consent to the conclusion of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, by 48 votes in favour, 8 votes against and 4 abstentions. It rejected the respective amendments from GUE/NGL and EFDD (in both cases by 49 votes against, 8 in favour and 4 abstentions). The aim of these amendments was for the EP not to give its consent to the agreement.

In the discussion that preceded the vote, the Chair explained that the recommendation on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the agreement was due to be adopted at the next EP plenary session (week starting 15 September 2014), while the Ukrainian *Verkhovna Rada* would vote on the ratification of the agreement. In the view of the rapporteur, the (possibly) simultaneous votes by the EP (consent to conclusion) and the *Verkhovna Rada* (ratification) would be symbolic, in addition to sending a strong signal of the European Parliament's solidarity with Ukraine.

Mr SCHOLZ (GUE/NGL, DE) asked for the vote to be postponed. The Chair consulted the Committee, and concluded that the vote would take place as planned. A discussion between the Chair and a member of EFDD (William (the Earl of) DARTMOUTH, UK), who wished to vote electronically on postponing the item, led the Earl of DARTMOUTH to leave the room.

The representatives of the EPP (Mr PREDA, RO), S&D (Mr PICULA, HR), ECR (Mr TANNOCK, UK), ALDE (Mr VAN BAALEN, NL) and the Greens/EFA (Mr MESZERIC, HU) indicated that their groups would support the draft recommendation, contrary to EFDD and GUE/NGL. Mr CARVER (EFDD, UK) feared that the agreement would degrade relations with Russia, while Ms LÖSING (GUE/NGL, DE) explained that her group was opposed to several provisions of the agreement (e.g. free trade, and cooperation on migration, asylum and border management). Mr MESZERIC (Greens/EFA, HU) noted that his group could not fully subscribe to the provisions of the agreement on free trade, but considered that ratification of the agreement was necessary, although not sufficient, to prevent the crisis from deepening.

4. Exchange of views with Shawqy Ibrahim Abdul Kareem Allam, the Grand Mufti of Egypt

The Grand Mufti supported respect for the rule of law and respect for human rights (in particular for women's rights and freedom of religion). He stressed the need for dialogue between religions, and for balanced diplomacy to build bridges between the Islamic world and the West. He called for cooperation, in particular between young people, to prevent radicalisation. Finally, as Egypt's leading interpreter of Islamic law, he condemned terrorism and the use of religion to justify acts in contradiction with Islam, in particular by the armed group Islamic State, which he considered to pose a danger to Islam and Muslims.

Views did not diverge between the MEPs. They saw it as a positive sign that the Grand Mufti was now elected rather than appointed by the President, and commended the openness and moderation of the Grand Mufti, as well as the fact that he rejected a death sentence issued against Muslim Brotherhood leaders in August. They asked questions on the following:

- The rule of law and respect for human rights in Egypt, and in particular the death penalty and mass sentences, women's rights, freedom of religion and the situation of Christians, freedom of the press, and the independence of justice (questions on accusations concerning the ousted President Morsi). The Grand Mufti replied that the death penalty was viewed by Egypt as an essential dissuasion tool, but that in practice it would rarely be applied due to procedural rules. He considered the current situation in Egypt reassuring in terms of political rights, the rule of law and Egypt's commitment to respect ratified international conventions, and human rights (situation of women and of Christians).
- The use of Islam to contravene human rights, with a focus on Islamic State. The Grand Mufti explained that the use by the armed group of the terms "State", "Islamic" and "caliphate" was not correct, and qualified their acts as crimes, which needed to be judged. He reiterated the need for political and cultural dialogue and cooperation between all parties of the Islamic world and the West, to prevent radicalisation.

The Chair thanked the Grand Mufti and concluded that an excellent possibility for dialogue had now been opened.

6. Next meetings

- 22 September 2014, 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)
 - 23 September 2014, 9.00 – 12.30 and 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)
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