

# **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

## **DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH IRAN**

**1<sup>st</sup> EP/Iran Interparliamentary Meeting  
9-10 October 2006**

**Brussels**

**Report from the Chair, Ms Angelika BEER**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The 1<sup>st</sup> interparliamentary meeting between delegations from the European Parliament and the Majlis of the Islamic Republic of Iran took place on 9-10 October 2006 in Brussels. Following the decision by the European Parliament in September 2004 to set up this Delegation, and the visit by the Bureau of the Delegation to Tehran in April 2005, it is a matter of great satisfaction, as well as an important political signal, that a parliamentary exchange with the Majlis has been established; in view of the importance of subjects discussed, this dialogue should be maintained in the future, if possible on a regular basis.

The dialogue encompassed a wide-ranging agenda, including political, economic, trade relations between the EU and Iran. Energy, nuclear negotiations, human rights issues were also discussed, as well as developments in the Middle East and fight against terrorism and drug trafficking.

### **II. WORKING SESSION (9 October 2006, 15.00 – 18.30)**

#### **A. Official welcome**

The Chair, Ms Beer, welcomed the Delegation from the Majlis of the Islamic Republic of Iran. She stressed that, as directly elected parliamentarians, both Delegations had a special role to play in advancing relations between the respective peoples and countries. The Delegation from Iran would have the opportunity, in the course of its visit, to appreciate the variety of opinions in the European Parliament; this variety of opinions, in fact, forms the strength of parliamentary democracies.

Following a short presentation of both Delegations by Ms Beer and by Mr Mohammadi, chair of the Iranian Delegation, the draft agenda was adopted without modifications. Mr Ebrahimpour (chargé d' affaires of the Islamic Republic of Iran) as well as Mr Hostrup, representing the EU Commission, were also introduced..

## **B. EU-Iran relations**

### **B.1 - Trade relations**

This item was introduced by the Commission representative, who pointed out the delays incurred by the TCA (Trade and Cooperation Agreement) negotiations, in particular following the difficulties experienced in the nuclear dossier.

In the following dialogue, while the **Iranian side** indicated that the various subjects should be separated, so as not to link, e.g., agricultural trade to nuclear energy, the **European Delegation** insisted on the fact that cooperation agreements concluded by the European Union always included provisions dealing with e.g. democracy and human rights. It was not therefore possible to separate the various elements of the "package". Both Delegations then exchanged information on ratification procedures in the respective institutional systems.

### **B.2 -Iranian accession to WTO**

The discussion developed from the previous item.

The **European side** enquired on which subjects Iran would experience difficulties in view of WTO-compliance (e.g. legal regime of religious foundations, minimum standards); the **Iranian Delegation** indicated that time was needed for Iran to adapt its policies to WTO. The European experience of integration was a valuable inspiration, but Europe should be flexible, and not put barriers to Iran's integration in the global economy. In any case, trade had to "go hand in hand" with all other aspects of the relationship. Europe should prefer also "friendly dialogue" to "exerting pressure".

### **B.3 - EU/Iran cooperation**

The discussion then expanded not only to the field of energy security (as originally foreseen in the agenda), but also to the whole range of EU/Iran cooperation.

While the **European Delegation** explained the model of pluralistic society prevailing in the EU, and lamented the fact that Iranian society did not display an equivalent range of pluralism, a certain deterioration in EU/Iran relations was also remarked, in particular following recent declarations by the President of the Islamic Republic. Also, the EU/Iran Human Rights Dialogue had not been able to meet since 2004, and recent developments in this area were not positive.

The **Iranian side** stressed the need for mutual acceptance of cultural differences. The common denominator were values, which should be accepted in all circumstances, including, e.g. Palestine. Communalities should be promoted, and good ties with Europe established and reinforced. The Delegation would report to the Majlis that it should ask

for TCA negotiations to be resumed. As a preliminary, it was necessary to build up trust between both parties.

#### B.4 Nuclear negotiations

The **European Delegation** remarked that, on 1st June 2006, a very comprehensive package had been offered to Iran by the EU3, the US, Russia, China and the EU itself. This package included provisions on nuclear cooperation, international trade, civil aviation, energy partnership, telecommunications infrastructure, agriculture.

On nuclear issues, there was much uncertainty in the EU, as the example of North Korea had showed. However, negotiations towards a peaceful solution excluding military actions were the preferred option. A solution which permitted adequate controls was the best outcome. Iran had a right to use nuclear energy, but when Iran declares it does not want to produce nuclear weapons, there is a problem of trust. Mutual trust has to be established, and, at least in a first phase, enrichment should not take place in Iran itself.

The **Iranian side** agreed that dialogue and negotiations are the right path. Clean atomic energy is a necessity for Iran, since oil is not eternal. Iran would not build WMDs, since Islam is against such weapons.

Certainly, the situation in the Middle East, in Iraq and Afghanistan, had aggravated international tensions, but Islam was not the culprit.

The main problem was one of mistrust. Nuclear energy development had started under the Shah's regime, and Western countries were, then, eager to cooperate. Iran's population had doubled in the meantime, and problems of technological development could not be ignored in view of Iran's future.

Iran is not a rich country, and has to develop its economy. The solution lies therefore in a more efficient monitoring system, on the basis of the NPT.

#### B.5 Human rights issues

On Human Rights, **the European Delegation** felt that some of the news from Iran were very disturbing, in particular with regard to:

- corporal punishments and conditions in prisons, including torture
- executions of homosexuals and of minor offenders
- death penalty for adulterers
- freedom of religion, in particular for Baha'is
- rights of ethnic minorities

**The Iranian side** indicated that, while some of the information quoted by European Members was inaccurate, other cases mentioned were simply the result of correct implementation of the law. Serious crimes, like murder, required serious punishments.

However, it was announced that a law adopted just 10 days before had prohibited execution of minor offenders.

The Majlis was very sensitive to problems such as mistreatment of prisoners, or torture, and exercised control on prisons. The European Delegation was invited to bring any specific problem to the attention of the Majlis.

Minorities in Iran were able to follow their laws in personal matters, such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and certain cases of discrimination, which existed in the past (such as in the payment of blood money) had been terminated. In particular, there was no discrimination against the Jewish community. Jews who had left the country were of course free to return..

Furthermore, Human Rights issues could legitimately be raised with regard also of situations like Guantanamo and non-respect of Geneva Conventions

## **C. Middle East and regional security.**

### **C.1 Developments in Middle East (including Iraq, Afghanistan) and**

#### **C.2 Fight against terrorism and drug trafficking**

**The Iranian Delegation** indicated that the construction of "barrier walls" could not bring security, whereas mutual respect and cooperation could. In Iraq, the main cause of insecurity was the US Army. Iran was ready to cooperate for a secure Iraq, and the solution could come from an international conference, with participation of the 5 Security Council Members and the 6 neighbour States.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban had been brought to power by the US, and Iran was and is still opposed to them, and supports the Government.

**The European Parliament Delegation** remarked that the situation in Guantanamo represented an infringement of Human Rights, and that the EP had created a temporary committee on this subject. In Iraq, the situation was evolving in the wrong direction, but in Afghanistan a democracy had been established. More time was needed to consolidate it.

Terrorism was escalating its attack, trying to destabilize not only fragile countries, but also countries such as some EU Member States.

The European Union had adopted a list of terrorist organizations, and the MKO was included on it. The EP had not been consulted on this list, and the Chair of the Delegation regretted that a Member of this organization had been invited in the EP.

## **Final remarks**

The **Iranian Delegation** stressed that each country had the right to decide its name, and Iran's name was "Islamic Republic of Iran". The name of the EP Delegation should reflect this choice.

The **European Delegation** remarked that the European Parliament plenary had voted against the change in the Delegation name, whereas the Delegation itself had taken a positive view with regard to the change of its denomination.

Both sides indicated great satisfaction for the excellent dialogue, and expressed the wish to continue the exchange as soon as possible.

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PE/D-IR\_14/CR/06-01

9-10 October 2006

## **BRUSSELS**

### DRAFT PROGRAMME

#### **Monday 9 October**

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|-------------|--|
| 15.00-18.30 | 1st session, interparliamentary meeting<br><i>Room PHS 5B001</i><br><i>European Parliament,</i><br><i>Rue Wiertz 60</i>  |
| 20.00       | Dinner hosted jointly by Mr Friedrich, Vice-President of the European Parliament and Mrs Beer, President of the Delegation (Presidential Dining Room, 12 <sup>th</sup> floor, Paul-Henri Spaak building) |

#### **Tuesday 10 October**

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|-------|--|
| 11:30 | Meeting with Mr Watson, Chairman, ALDE group<br>PHS 5 1/2 - Room C 12              |
| 13:00 | Meeting with Mr Swoboda, Vice-Chairman, PSE group<br>(Protocol Room N°II)          |
| 16:00 | Meeting with Mr Cohn-Bendit, co-President, Green/EFA group<br>(Protocol Room N°II) |
| 18:00 | Meeting with Mr Pinheiro, Vice-Chairman, PPE-ED group<br>(ASP 08 E 130)            |

#### **Wednesday 11 October**

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| 18.00 | Meeting with Mr Francis Wurtz, Chairman, GUE Group<br>(ASP 08 E 130) |
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- October CC/GC

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### **Members of the Iranian Delegation (4)**

- Mr. Mahmoud Mohammadi , Chair of the Foreign Relations committee
- Mrs. Elham Aminzadeh, Member of Parliament
- Mr. Ali Ahmadi, , Member of Parliament
- Mr. Moris Motamed, , Member of Parliament

### **Staff accompanying the Delegation (6)**

- Mr. Ebrahimpour, head of the Mission to the EU
- Mr. Fazlolah Baghestan, Secretary of the Delegation
- Mr. Mohammadi, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. Reza Zabib, Counselor, Mission to the EU

### **Interpreters**

- Mr. Akhavan (EN)
- Mr. Arab (FR)

Brussels, 5 October 2006/gc