

**EU – ARMENIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE**

**SIXTH MEETING**

**15 - 16 March 2004**

**YEREVAN**

**DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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6 April 2004  
EUR/TB/ES

# **EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee**

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### **Final Statement and Recommendations**

#### **pursuant to Article 89 of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement**

Under the co-chairmanship of Mrs Ursula SCHLEICHER (EPP-ED, Germany) and Armen RUSTAMYAN the sixth meeting of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee was held in Yerevan on 15-16 March 2004. The Committee exchanged views with Mr Rouben SHUGARYAN, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Armenian Government, H.E. Mr Hans-Wulf BARTELS, Ambassador of Germany to Armenia on behalf of the Irish Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, and H.E. Mr Torben HOLTZE, Head of the EC Delegation in Armenia, on behalf of the European Commission.

The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee:

1. recognises again the strong European vocation of Armenia and its desire to integrate more deeply into European structures; stresses that the EU's relations with Armenia are solidly based on a long term commitment to partnership and cooperation and looks towards a strengthening of this relationship;
2. underlines the importance of the continued development of democracy and human rights and their key role in promoting stability in the whole South Caucasus region;
3. draws attention to the vital role played by a free press in ensuring the development of democracy in Armenia and stresses in particular the importance of pluralism in the electronic media;
4. welcomes the introduction in August 2003 of a new Criminal Code that no longer includes the death penalty; considers this to be a significant step in the implementation of Armenia's commitment to the values and principles which are at the core of the community of European states;
5. urges the Armenian authorities to ratify as soon as possible the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which it signed on 1 October 1999;
6. expresses concern at the report of the International Election Observation Mission on the parliamentary elections of 25 May 2003, which found that the overall election process did not meet international standards for democratic elections in a number of key aspects; welcomes the willingness expressed by the EU, together with other relevant international institutions such as the OSCE and Council of Europe, to assist the Armenian authorities to address these shortcomings, in line with the recommendations made in the report of the Mission; appreciates statements by the Armenian side of its firm readiness to embark on a common effort to attain the desired results;
7. welcomes the adoption by the Government of Armenia of the Anti-Corruption Strategy and Implementation Plan in November 2003 and subsequent joining GRECO in January

2004 and calls upon the Government to ensure its effective implementation with the close involvement of civil society and in cooperation with the international community;

8. underlines the need for the further improvement in the implementation of the relevant legislation that will promote foreign investment and urges international financial institutions to provide credits, especially to projects supporting small and medium sized businesses and for sustainable infrastructure investments;
9. stresses again the importance of giving the highest priority to the full and effective implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) by applying European principles and standards necessary for future association, while underlining the need to adapt the Agreement in order to take account of EU enlargement;
10. welcomes the appointment on 7 July 2003 of Mr Heikki Talvitie as the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus as a sign of the EU's stated wish to play a more active political role in the region; stresses that he must be provided with all the necessary powers and resources to ensure that his action is effective and visible and to enable him to contribute both to implementing the EU's policy goals in the region and to bringing the policies of the three South Caucasus countries closer together;
11. calls for the South Caucasus region to be given a defined status in the Wider Europe-New Neighbourhood policy, in accordance with the principle of avoiding the creation of new dividing lines in Europe and promoting transborder cooperation among them and with neighbouring states; in this respect welcomes the statement by the Council of the European Union on 26 January 2004 requesting that the European Commission should bring forward a recommendation on the relationship of Armenia and the other countries of the South Caucasus to the European Neighbourhood Policy;
12. supports the call of the European Parliament in its resolution of 26 February 2004 that there should be a set of minimum requirements for Armenia and the other South Caucasus countries to fulfil in order to be included in the "Wider Europe-New Neighbourhood" policies; welcomes too its call on the Council to increase EU efforts for peace and stability in the region through the creation of stronger incentives for reform and for cooperation among parties to conflicts;
13. stresses that increased EU engagement in the region should be based on a willingness to act as a mediator in conflicts and promoter of reforms; EU assistance and deepened cooperation should be clearly linked with progress in key areas such as conflict resolution, respect for fundamental rights, the rule of law and democratic values, and progress measured against clear benchmarks;
14. welcomes the appointment of the Ombudsperson (Human Rights Defender) in line with the commitments undertaken by Armenia as a member of the Council of Europe; looks forward to the Armenian National Assembly having the powers to appoint the Ombudsperson in accordance with the future constitutional amendments;
15. reiterates its call for the early establishment of a full Delegation of the European Commission in Yerevan;
16. underlines that the resumption of regional cooperation is an essential step in the further European integration of Armenia and the other countries of the South Caucasus

17. in this respect welcomes progress in negotiations between the Armenian and Iranian governments on the Iranian gas pipeline extension to Armenia and hopes that this project will help Armenia to develop efficient alternative energy supplies; stresses that the project should comply with international environmental standards;
18. stresses again that reconciliation between the Armenian and Azerbaijan people, as well as regional prosperity and stability, are best served by measures that pave the way for constructive cooperation between them, such as removing barriers to trade and exchange, and calls for initiatives for confidence building measures between them; calls upon all the countries in the region not to block efforts to bring the three states closer together by demanding a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a precondition;
19. notes again that the European Parliament position on the issue is reflected in its resolutions of 18 June 1987, 28 February 2002 and 26 February 2004 on a political solution to the Armenian question; calls on both the Turkish and Armenian governments to promote good neighbourliness in order to defuse tension and calls on Turkish and Armenian academics, social organisations and NGOs to embark on a dialogue with each other in order to overcome the tragic experiences of the past;
20. urges Ankara to be fully committed to its candidate status and to take the necessary steps to establish good neighbourly relations, with particular regard to the lifting of the trade restrictions and the gradual reopening of the land border with Armenia;
21. expresses its sympathy with the bereaved and dispossessed families in Armenia and Azerbaijan over the absence of a peace settlement between their two countries and welcomes the call of the European Parliament in its resolution of 26 February 2004 for an overall solution to the refugee problem; also welcomes its statement that, while refugee return should form part of a negotiated settlement, refugees and displaced persons should not be exploited as tools in conflicts and its recommendation to the countries concerned to make every effort to grant physical security and well-being to refugees and displaced persons;
22. emphasises its support for all efforts to reach a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh dispute; which is a principle barrier to resumption of dialogue and the development of genuine regional cooperation;
23. stresses that international involvement is necessary in efforts to resolve the conflict, although ultimately only the Armenian and Azerbaijan sides can take the decisive steps to reach a peaceful solution to this long-standing problem within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group;
24. welcomes the call by the European Parliament in its resolution of 26 February 2004 for the Commission to set up twinning programmes between Nagorno Karabakh and regions with special status in EU countries;
25. underlines the growing geostrategic importance of the South Caucasus region and the need for secure sources of energy and safe means of transporting this energy;
26. reiterates its view that the nuclear power plant (NPP) in Medzamor should be closed as soon as alternative, reliable, diversified and secure sources of power can be brought into service, with the instrumental contribution of the international donor community;

27. welcomes the economic progress made by Armenia in recent years, with 13.9% real GDP growth in 2003;
28. supports assistance provided by the TACIS programme, including support for the development of ICT in Armenia, underlines again the role of the TACIS funded Armenian-European policy and Legal Advice centre in assisting the Armenian authorities in carrying out the necessary reforms so as to contribute to accelerated PCA implementation;
29. welcomes the adoption of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper by the Government of Armenia and regards this as a significant step towards sustainable development of the Armenian society;
30. takes note again of the concern about the acute problem of obsolete pesticides and calls for urgent steps to be taken to examine and evaluate the scope of ecological and health consequences and for the European side to consider possible future provision of assistance to prevent further deterioration and to attain gradual rectification;
31. welcomes the contribution of Armenia in the work of the European Regional Environment Office in Tbilisi, and again emphasises the need to extend regional cooperation between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to other policy sectors, as means of bringing about constructive initiatives for the benefit of all peoples in the region;
32. welcomes the desire of the Armenian side to expand cooperation with the EU in the field of science, education and technologies, and recommends the Commission to explore possibilities for enhanced cooperation in these fields;
33. condemns the killing in Budapest of an Armenian serviceman by his Azerbaijani colleague and rejects any statements that might inflame the situation.

*Adopted unanimously.*