

**EU – AZERBAIJAN**

**PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE**

**SIXTH MEETING**

**18-19 APRIL 2005**

**BAKI**

**DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

# **EU – AZERBAIJAN 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 ISLER BEGUIN (Greens/EFA, France) and Mr Siruz TABRIZLI the sixth meeting of the EU-Azerbaijan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee was held in Baki on 18-19 April 2005. The Committee exchanged views with Mr Abid SHARIFOV, Deputy Prime Minister, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Dr Laurie BRISTOW, Ambassador of the United Kingdom in Azerbaijan, on behalf of the Luxembourg Presidency-in-Office of the European Union, Mr Anthonius DE VRIES, Special Envoy to the Republic of Azerbaijan, on behalf of the European Commission.

The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee

### **EU-Azerbaijan relations**

1. reiterates its strongly held view that the people of Azerbaijan share a common destiny with other peoples of Europe, and that the integration of the Republic of Azerbaijan into European structures is in the mutual interest of both the EU and Azerbaijan, requiring adoption and implementation of common European values in the Azerbaijani society as appropriate; in this way it also notes again the importance of preservation and dissemination of national values which would promote mutual cultural enrichment between EU and Azerbaijan;
2. stresses that bringing the EU closer to Azerbaijan as well as to the other two countries of the South Caucasus will help to promote the creation of a democratic region of the states mutually respecting their territorial integrity and sovereignty, firmly dedicated to the cause of stability, prosperity and good neighbourly relations;
3. considers the European Neighbourhood Policy as an important instrument in fostering the EU-Azerbaijan political, economic and trade relations with due account of the transition state of the Azerbaijani economy and calls on the European Commission to further assist Azerbaijan in strengthening this process;
4. welcomes the publication of the Country Report on Azerbaijan on 2 March 2005; also welcomes the Commission's recommendations on a significant intensification of relations with Azerbaijan;
5. welcomes the presentation of the Country Report to the European Council in March 2005 and hopes that this will allow a rapid progress to be made to enable an Action Plan to be drawn up in cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan;

6. Acknowledges that the Action Plan should set out a comprehensive set of priorities in areas of importance: in particular, recognising the need to raise the public awareness of European values and standards among the population of Azerbaijan stresses the importance of enhancing opportunities for promoting human rights education, youth development and training of policy-makers, officials and civil society in the country, thus contributing to the emergence of a new generation of leaders committed to European core values;
7. strongly reiterates its call on the Commission to open a full EC Delegation in Baki; which will increase the effectiveness of the EU's activities in Azerbaijan;
8. underlines again the importance of the development of infrastructure and strengthening links and communications between regions of Azerbaijan, thus enhancing the integrity of the country;
9. recalls the need for the European Commission to continue to support areas that will help the Azerbaijani Government to improve the investment climate in the country, and recognises the assistance from the European Commission that has already been given to Azerbaijan in the context of business development, strongly encourages the Government of Azerbaijan to accelerate its fulfilment of its own commitments in this area and to continue tackling the corruption that discourages investment;
10. expresses its interest at the new railway connection project, linking Azerbaijan to Europe through Georgia and Turkey which could promote economic and trade development; asks the parties to raise the proposal through the appropriate channels;
11. underlines again the importance of full implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement which remains the cornerstone of the EU-Azerbaijan relationship;
12. takes note of the conclusions of the OSCE on the municipal elections of December 2004 and of the conclusions of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe regarding the municipal elections of 17 December 2004; in this regard urges the Azerbaijani authorities to continue taking steps to remedy the identified shortcomings;
13. urges Azerbaijan to ensure that the parliamentary elections scheduled to take place in November 2005 will fully meet recognised international standards and the shared values common to the European Neighbourhood Policy;
14. expresses the necessity to continue rendering technical assistance by the EU to Azerbaijan aimed at implementation of legal and institutional reforms in the field of human rights and rule of law;
15. in this regard stresses the importance of the continuation with Azerbaijan of the Joint Programme between the European Commission and the Council of Europe on strengthening of democratic stability, taking into account the specific needs of this country;
16. underlines the importance of strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights, freedom of expression and freedom of the press; in this regard, is concerned with the

situation around the media and cases of abuse of journalists; calls for an effective solution of these issues, particularly by strengthening the independence of the media;

17. in particular expresses its concern following the recent assassination of journalist Elmar Huseinov, takes note of the rapid response and steps taken so far by the Government of Azerbaijan and urges the Government of Azerbaijan to ensure that a detailed and independent enquiry takes place as soon as possible;
18. takes note of the conclusions of the OSCE report on trial monitoring in Azerbaijan, which was published on 4 February 2005; encourages the government of Azerbaijan to take steps in this direction and welcomes the stated consent of the Azerbaijani authorities to proceed with examination, together with the OSCE, of the recommendations from the abovementioned report;
19. welcomes the efforts of the Government of Azerbaijan towards establishment of the National Public Television in compliance with the obligations undertaken before the Council of Europe;
20. welcomes the decision of the Azerbaijan authorities to pardon 114 people, including those imprisoned in connection with public disturbances in the direct aftermath of the 2003 Presidential Elections, including the seven opposition leaders who had been convicted of taking part in the mass protests: stresses that this represents a positive step towards the re-establishment of political pluralism in Azerbaijan and the fulfilment of its international obligations and towards the end of the issue of political imprisonment;
21. reiterates, once again, its call on the Azerbaijan authorities to sign and ratify the Statute of the International Criminal Court;
22. welcomes the steps taken to date by the government of Azerbaijan in the process of accession to the WTO and supports further efforts that must be taken: calls upon the European Commission to provide necessary assistance to that end: underlines the need to accelerate negotiations on WTO accession;

#### **On the situation in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan**

23. recalls the positions of the European Parliament and the Azerbaijan Parliament as expressed in previous joint statements; reiterates its full support to the peaceful settlement and just solution of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan on the basis of principles and norms of international law which includes the respect to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the states as well as the respect for minority rights; once again urges Armenia and Azerbaijan to eliminate the consequences of the conflict and to adopt the selfsame values of reconciliation and co-operation, which first of all stipulate the peaceful settlement of the conflict between them on the basis of the principles and norms of international law;
24. welcomes the adoption of the resolution 1416 (2005) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the recent statements by both Armenia and Azerbaijan during the

negotiations with the representative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe when they have declared their readiness to continue negotiations on the peaceful settlement of the conflict between them; urges the political forces and media of both sides to refrain from statements which undermine the peaceful resolution of the conflict;

25. expresses its concern that the military action, and the widespread ethnic hostilities which preceded it, led to large-scale ethnic expulsion of civilians and the creation of mono-ethnic areas which resemble the terrible concept of ethnic cleansing;
26. welcomes the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan under the Prague Process that took place in January 2005; expresses hope that a compromise solution to the problem will be found in the nearest future;
27. expresses concern at the ongoing humanitarian crisis of refugees and IDPs in Azerbaijan and, reiterates its call to reach a solution to the problem by providing for their voluntary return to their homes in safety and with dignity; supports every effort to grant them physical security and well-being;
28. stresses the importance of using the experience of the EU countries in finding concrete solutions which respect the principles of territorial integrity as well as the rights of minorities;
29. stresses with regret that efforts to bring the three countries of the region closer together are impeded by the persistence of the armed conflicts caused by territorial claims, separatism and extremism; underlines that conflict zones are often used as safe havens for organised crime, money laundering, illicit drug trafficking and smuggling of weapons;
30. confirms its position on non-acceptance of the *fait accompli* as a basis for the settlement; points to the figures of the report of the OSCE Minsk Group fact-finding mission on settlements of non-indigenous people in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and welcomes the appeal of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to discourage any further settlement of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan;
31. applauds the decision of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to keep this issue on the agenda for further review;
32. welcomes the appeal of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to the international organizations to conduct the appraisal of material and financial needs of the region with the purpose of the relocation of the population presently inhabiting the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and, at the same time, bringing back the internally displaced persons into the places of their permanent dwelling;
33. notes with alarm and expresses deep concern with the recent and very frequent breaches of the cease-fire in the front-line between Armenia and Azerbaijan;

*Adopted unanimously.*