

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

EU-AZERBAIJAN PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION

COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE

SIXTH MEETING

18-19 April 2005

BAKY

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Annex: List of attendance

The meeting began at 15.00 hrs on Monday, 18 April 2005, under the joint chairmanship of Mrs Marie Anne Isler Béguin, head of the EP delegation, and Mr Siruz Tabrizli, head of the Azerbaijani Parliament delegation.

Mr Tabrizli welcomed the EP delegation and in particular the new members appointed following elections to the EP held in June 2004. Mrs Isler Béguin thanked Mr Tabrizli and drew attention to some positive developments since the previous meeting, in particular the appointment of an EU special envoy to Azerbaijan.

1. The agenda was adopted.
2. The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted without any objections.
3. Opening statements were made by the Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, the government of Azerbaijan and the European Commission.

Dr Laurie Bristow, ambassador of the UK and representing the Luxembourg Presidency-in-Office, spoke of the significant intensification of relations between the EU and Azerbaijan represented by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the future action plan. The Commission's recent report on Azerbaijan showed that relations were already close on both economic and political levels. The EU was seeking to assist its neighbours in building security and prosperity for all and to prevent the emergence of new divisions. It would seek to help in reaching a just solution to the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh through the efforts of the Minsk Group, but also to help in strengthening the rule of law in Azerbaijan and public accountability, as well as assisting in the fight against corruption. The ambassador emphasised the importance of the forthcoming parliamentary elections on November 2005 and the need to promote the confidence of the electorate of Azerbaijan in the state. He also drew attention to the need to diversify the economy of Azerbaijan if long-term prosperity was to be achieved.

Mr Abid Sharifov, deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan, welcomed the participants and stated that broadening links with the EU was a major priority for Azerbaijan in its efforts to build up a democratic society. He acknowledged the support provided by the EU in regard to food security and to economic development. He discussed the substantial institutional reforms now being undertaken in regard to administration and banking and mentioned the healthy inflow of foreign investment. The EU's ENP provided an important tool, which should further assist major improvements to infrastructure and public utilities. In this regard he described the current process of development of energy and transport infrastructure assisted by the EU programmes TRACECA and INOGATE, which were important for relations between the South Caucasus countries as well as for relations with the EU. The new pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan would soon substantially increase Azerbaijan exports to the EU. Azerbaijan welcomed the EU's support for its accession to the WTO. It sought to diversify the economy and to this end had established an entrepreneurial council. It was a particular concern of government to spread economic development outside Baku to the countryside. Other initiatives of the government, which he mentioned included improvement to government purchasing, the fight against corruption and new legislation to control arms trafficking. The government would participate actively in drawing up an action plan in the context of the ENP and appreciated the Commission's recommendations. An EU ambassador permanently resident in Baku was a major priority and there was very widespread support for increasing cooperation with the EU.

Mr Anthonius W. De Vries, Special Envoy to the Republic of Azerbaijan, spoke on behalf of the European Commission. He stated that he was not a fully-empowered EU ambassador, but

that at least he was a special envoy. He regretted that it had not been possible so far to establish a permanent delegation in Baku. The negotiations on the action plan proposed under the EU's ENP was to be a common effort with the government of Azerbaijan. Many different areas for cooperation were proposed, including security, judicial matters, arms trafficking, access for Azerbaijani products to EU markets and many aspects of social and economic development. It was also hoped to promote joint ventures between European and Azerbaijani companies. It was necessary for Azerbaijan to appoint a spokesperson who could coordinate the position of the various ministries and to engage the commitment to the development effort of all parts of civil society.

4. and 5.

In the ensuing discussion, Mr Tabrizli, Mrs Mammadova, Mr Mammadkhanli, Mr Gandilov, Mr Swoboda, Mrs Panahova, Mr Novruz Guliyev and Mr Nizam Guliyev spoke. Issues raised included the need to change mentality to allow Azerbaijan to get closer to the EU and create a market economy; the possible impact of changes in Georgia, the Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan on efforts to promote a working democracy in Azerbaijan; the great possibilities for development of agriculture, given the huge variety of terrain and the historical importance of cattle-breeding and arable farming; the problems of refugees and internally-displaced persons (IDPs), especially in finding employment; the undermining of the democratic process and the process of economic development which resulted from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; the need to differentiate between aggressor and victim in this conflict; the role of the Soviet Union and now Russia in manipulating the territorial integrity of the countries of the South Caucasus; the need to avoid double standards in making judgements on the conflict with Armenia and the ineffectiveness of the Minsk Group. The issue of establishing democratic traditions in a country deeply affected by conflict with a neighbouring state was discussed at length.

6.

On the issue of human rights and development of democracy, Mr Tabrizli spoke of the difficulty inherent in the transition from the Soviet system to democratic and European values. Other problems included getting people to understand the role played by democracy in local government and municipalities. In the past important posts had been filled by appointment and not by election. The role of an independent press had also still to be fully assimilated by some of those in powerful positions. The murder of the editor of the opposition Monitor magazine had been especially shocking and constituted a serious threat to the stability of the country. Rising prices were also now causing unrest, especially amongst the poorer sections of the population. Democratic reform was a pre-condition for the success of the process of catching up with western societies which Azerbaijan had begun.

For the EP, Mrs Brepoels said that the European Commission's country report on Azerbaijan should provide a useful basis for the proposed action plan and asked the opinion of Azerbaijani members of parliament on this document. She sought information on the accusations of widespread corruption and on the proposed expenditure from the national oil fund. She drew attention to certain points in the Commission's report, including issues of housing, prison conditions and violence against women. She also sought clarification on the procedure within Azerbaijan for deciding on the use of EU financial assistance through TACIS and on the reasons for the recent prevention from travelling to Geneva for the director of the Human Rights Institute in Azerbaijan. Finally, she asked for clarification in regard to negotiations on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh.

In reply, Mr Tabrizli stated that the population was apathetic in regard to political problems because politicians were not expected to solve public policy problems. There was a great need for the healthy forces in society to come together behind the President to address issues of concern to the public and regain its trust. Mrs Mammadova stated that there was a steady

improvement in democratic standards and that the elections in November should be free and fair. There was now public debate on TV and in the press in regard to particular officials accused of corruption, but only the first steps to combat corruption had been taken. Poverty was a major factor contributing to corruption, which was also widespread in the education system.

Mr Novruz Guliyev sought to have Armenia identified as aggressor in the Committee's recommendations. He said that a major change to the environment was necessary for free elections to be held with equal conditions for all parties. Opposition meetings should not be banned in future and arbitrary behaviour by public officials should be criticised openly. The parliament should seek to monitor government spending but so far ministries did not accept criticism. The oil fund should permit future improvements in regard to public salaries, especially for teachers.

Mrs Panarova spoke of the resentment caused by the high salaries offered to young women with a knowledge of foreign languages by international companies and the difficulty of gaining acceptance for a changed role of women outside the home.

The meeting adjourned at 1845 hours and resumed on 19 April 2005 at 0915 hours.

Items 6 to 9 were discussed jointly.

Mrs Isler Béguin spoke of the proposed formation of a Chamber Orchestra for the Caucasus and hoped that Azerbaijani musicians would be able to participate. Mr Diaz de Mera Garcia urged Azerbaijan to fight against injustice and promote high standards in the forthcoming elections of November. He stated that abuse of power and corruption could best be fought through democratic checks and balances.

Mr Swoboda spoke on the ENP and the role of the EU in promoting a just solution for Nagorno-Karabakh. He mentioned the parallel of South Tyrol and its importance for post-war relations between Austria and Italy. The situation there was now fully resolved, in particular because of the role of the EU. A peaceful compromise giving the right of return to all refugees should be the principal objective for Nagorno-Karabakh. He emphasised the concept of mutual interest, which lay behind the EU's Neighbourhood Policy. He urged the need to be transparent, to involve NGOs and to be responsive to public concerns in the use of oil revenues.

Mr Tabrizli, co-chair, responded, emphasising that even though his party was pro-government, it also maintained a critical approach towards government policies. He himself had decided not to stand as a candidate in the November elections to parliament.

His delegation had obtained a translation into Russian of the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the EP delegation on the occasion of their meeting with a delegation from the parliament of Armenia the previous week in Strasbourg. He emphasised the incompatibility of that national self-determination, recognised as a goal in those recommendations, and the territorial integrity on which the republic of Azerbaijan was continuing to insist strongly. He also stated that the needs of the refugees must predominate over attempts to forge links with Armenia through initiatives such as the Caucasus Chamber Orchestra.

He then mentioned the risk of a conflict between Islam and Christianity replacing that between communist and capital worlds in the minds of ordinary citizens. He further stated that members of parliament in Azerbaijan were sadly unable to protect the human rights of Azerbaijani citizens. He then left the room at 10am and did not return. He was replaced as Co-

Chair by Mrs Mammadova, Vice-Chair of the Azerbaijani Delegation to the EU-Azerbaijan PCC.

Mr N. Aliyev, head of the international relations department in the secretariat of the Azerbaijan parliament, then took the floor. He spoke of the process of diagnosing the disease in Nagorno-Karabakh and the role of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in confirming the continued occupation of Azerbaijani territory. Azerbaijan resented the failure of other international organisations to state clearly who was the aggressor in this conflict and condemned the wish to remain impartial in this affair as being untenable. Ethnic Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh were citizens of Azerbaijan and should be clearly identified as such, in accordance with UN documents on national minorities and state rights.

The following members then spoke: Mr Ahmadova, who emphasised the dangers for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity represented by the joint declaration adopted by the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee; Mrs Isler Béguin, who explained the context of the latter declaration, which had contained nothing new; Mr Duka-Zólyomi, who urged the Azerbaijani side to make positive proposals in regard to the autonomy of Nagorno-Karabakh and drew attention to the many parallels in central Europe where communities such as the Hungarian minority in Slovakia were accorded wide-ranging political rights; Mr Duka-Zólyomi further emphasised the unacceptability of the existence of any political prisoners in countries which were members of the Council of Europe and the major importance of promoting the independence of the judiciary; Mr Mustafaga (of the Azerbaijan Institute of Human Rights in the National Academy of Science), who spoke on the interventions by Russia in the South Caucasus and the risk of disintegration of Azerbaijan.

Mrs Isler Béguin urged members not to try to anticipate the results of negotiations in the Minsk Group of the OSCE and said that the European Parliament delegation would not take sides in regard to Nagorno-Karabakh but would continue to support a peaceful resolution of the problem.

The meeting was interrupted at 10.30am for a consultation within each delegation. It reconvened after 30 minutes.

10.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to discussion and adoption of the Final Statement and Recommendations. Mrs Isler Béguin urged members to concentrate on reaching agreement on a text. Mrs Mammadova replaced Mr Tabrizli as co-chair. While understanding the wish of the EP delegation to avoid taking side, she urged it to acknowledge that international law required that Armenia be named as the aggressor state. She also strongly regretted that the text of the draft final declaration was not available in Azeri.

Following a discussion in which Mr Nizam Guliyev, Mr Ahmadova, Mr Diaz de Mera, Mr Aliyev, Mrs Isler Béguin, Mr Swoboda and Mr Nusret Guliyev participated, concerning the nature of the final declaration to be adopted, the committee began work on the draft text which was available only in English. The ambassador of Azerbaijan in Brussels, Mr Arif Mamedov, lent his assistance to the meeting. There was a long debate over the wording of an article in the declaration concerning the territories occupied by Armenia and eventually this article was dropped because of the absence of agreement. The remainder of the text was adopted unanimously after compromises were found on two other points.

11. No further items were discussed.

12. The next meeting would take place in Brussels or Strasbourg at a date to be agreed.

* * * * *

The meeting ended on Tuesday, 19 April at 13.30hrs.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
EU-AZERBAIJAN PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE
SIXTH MEETING
16-21 April 2005
Baku

Members of the Delegation

Members:

Mrs Marie Anne ISLER BÉGUIN <i>Chairman</i>	Verts/ALE	France	Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
Mr Árpád DUKA-ZÓLYOMI <i>2nd Vice-Chairman</i>	EPP-ED	Slovakia	Human Rights
Mr Johannes BLOKLAND	IND/DEM	Netherlands	Environment, Public Health and Food Safety; Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
Mrs Frederika BREPOELS	EPP-ED	Belgium	Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
Mr Agustín DÍAZ DE MERA GARCÍA CONSUEGRA	EPP-ED	Spain	Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
Mrs Siiri OVIIR	ALDE	Estonia	Employment and Social Affairs; Women's Rights and Gender Equality
Mr Johannes SWOBODA	PSE	Austria	Foreign Affairs; Security and Defence
Mr Tadeusz ZWIEFKA	EPP-ED	Poland	Legal Affairs

Secretariat of the Delegation:

Mr Tim BODEN, Head of Secretariat
Mr Anthony COMFORT, Administrator
Mrs Sarah WHITTALL, Administrative Assistant
Mrs Elke SCHMUTTERER, Administrative Secretary

Secretariat of the Political Groups:

Mr Joao SILVA MAIA, Group of the European People's Party/European Democrats
Mrs Majella McCONE, Group of the European Socialists
Mr Paolo BERGAMASCHI, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance

Interpreters:

Azeri booth:

Mr Fuad AKHUNDOV
Mrs Fatima ASLAN
Mehriban VAN DE GRIENDT

English booth:

Mrs Jill RICHES
Mr Mike HILL

French booth:

Mr Michel LESSEIGNE (team leader)
Mr Laurent BERNHARD

Others:

Mrs Gaelle LEGROUX, Assistant Mrs ISLER BÉGUIN
Mr Marcin LITOWCZENKO, Assistant Mr ZWIEFKA

Abbreviations:

EPP-ED	European People's Party/European Democrats	GUE/NGL	European United Left/Nordic Green Left
PSE	Party of European Socialists	IND/DEM	Independence/Democracy Group
ALDE	Alliance of Liberal and Democrats for Europe	UEN	Union for Europe of the Nations Group
Verts/ALE	Greens/European Free Alliance	NI	Non-attached

REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN
THE MILLI MEJLIS

**Delegation from the Azerbaijani Parliament to the
EU-Azerbaijan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee**

Members

Mr. Siruz TABRIZLI, Chairman	<i>New Azerbaijan Party</i>
Mr. Anar MAMMADKHANLI	<i>non-attached</i>
Mr. Novruz GULIYEV	<i>non-attached</i>
Mr. Bahruz GANDILOV	<i>non-attached</i>
Mr. Karam ALIYEV	<i>non-attached</i>
Mrs. Gulchohra MAMMADOVA	<i>New Azerbaijan Party</i>
Mr. Nizami GULIYEV	<i>Azerbaijan Popular Front Party</i>
Mr. Anar AKHUNDZADA	<i>New Azerbaijan Party</i>
Mr. Gular AHMADOVA	<i>New Azerbaijan Party</i>

22.03.2005/es