

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

EU-RUSSIA PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE

SIXTH MEETING

24 and 25 September 2003

STRASBOURG

1.1. CONTENTS

1. Adoption of draft agenda (PE 331.279	2
2. Adoption of the minutes of the fifth EU-Russia PCC meeting of 25 and 26 November 2002 held in Brussels (PE 331.280.....	2
3. Exchange of views on current political and economic developments in the EU and the Russian Federation and on the EU-Russia Summit of 11 November 2002	2
with statements from:	
- Mr Guy Legras , Director-General, on behalf of the European Commission;	
- H.E. Ms Marie-Louise Overvad , on behalf of the Danish Council Presidency; and	
- Mr Avetisyan , representing H.E. Mr Vasili Likhachev , Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the EU, on behalf of the Government of the Russian Federation.	
4. The EU Convention proposal for a constitution for the EU	4
5. The ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by the Russian Federation.....	5
6. General situation of the Kaliningrad region and implementation of the Facilitated Transit	5
7. Other business	6
8. Date and place of next meeting	6

Annexes: Record of attendance

List of the Russian delegation

The meeting opened at 3.15 p.m. with Mr. Bart Staes and Mr. Vladimir Lukin, Co-Chairmen, jointly in the chair.

Mr. Staes welcomed those present. He announced that Lord Bethell, PPE-DE, United Kingdom, the 1st Vice-Chair of the PCC EU-Russia, has resigned the day before for health reasons. According to an information by the PPE-DE group, Mr. Robert Goodwill, MEP, was candidate to succeed Lord Bethell. The Chairman asked for further nomination. Since no other candidatures were put forward, Mr. Goodwill was elected by acclamation as 1st Vice-Chair of the EP delegation to the EU-Russia PCC. Mr. Staes welcomed Mr. Goodwill as a Member of the Board, and Mr. Goodwill shortly addressed the meeting, thanking for his election and honouring the work of his predecessor.

1. Adoption of draft agenda.

The draft agenda was adopted.

2. Adoption of Minutes of the 5th EU-Russia PCC Meeting on 25-26 November 2002 in Brussels.

The minutes of the fifth EU-Russia PCC meeting held on 25 and 26 November 2002 in Brussels were approved after some reductional changes.

3. Exchange of views on current political and economic developments in the EU and the Russian Federation, on the EU-Russia Summit on 6 November 2003 in Rome and on the implementation of the results of the St Petersburg EU-Russia Summit in May.

Mr. Staes introduced into the exchange by pointing out that the priority was reinforcing the co-operation, focusing on the various chapters of the PCA, which had been discussed and given an overall importance within this framework at the St.Petersburg Summit. He indicated that the new Permanent Partnership Council of Ministers EU-Russia was going to meet in the near future. Elections both for the EP and for the State Duma were coming, thus this meeting of the PCC was to be the last one in the present composition.

Mr. Lukin thanked all for the fruitful and interesting work accomplished together. He suggested to hold a conference on the 10th anniversary of the PCA signature in 2004 in order to have thorough look of its achievements and its shortcomings, and to discuss and eventually elaborate a follow-up PCA, adopted to the then new historical situation. He also pointed out that Russia was looking with great interest at the prospects of adoption of the European Constitution. Russia had been part of Europe for many centuries, and he therefore underlined that it was regrettable that Russian representatives had not been invited for even symbolic participation as guests in elaboration of the European Constitution. Those European countries sharing the basic values with the EU, that were not members and in the near future wouldn't be members of the EU, should be better informed on this matter. Mr. Lukin asked the PCC to speak up on the possibility to invite Russian representatives to the final meeting when the adoption of the Constitution will take place.

The Head of the Mission of the Russian Federation to the EU, H.E. Mr. Fradkov, in his speech touched upon the actual moments of co-operation Russia-EU in four fields: economy and trade, justice and home affairs, education and culture, security and defence, as well as on the institutional mechanism of the co-operation, the "Single Economic Space" (SES) of Russia and Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and the question of Chechnya. He insisted that, in particular, at the coming Russia-EU Summit in Rome an assessment of Russia-EU talks on Russia's WTO access should be made, the Concept of the Common Economic Space should be adopted, as proposed by the High-Level Group, the Report on 4th stage of the energy dialogue Russia-EU should be discussed, and the very important topic of co-operation in the field of security and defence and its legislative basis and legal framework should be addressed. He also indicated that there was no request from the Russian side to abolish visas right away, but to set up a

roadmap for visafree transit between the EU and the Russian Federation. For the Russian Federation the conclusion of a Readmission Agreement would be bound up with the visas issue. Therefore, the proposal to replace the Co-operation Council by a Permanent Partnership Council, convening at the level of ministers, was the useful step to fulfil, and its accomplishment would be very instrumental for the co-operation in the future, in particular in the above mentioned fields. He pointed out that the SES should not be contradictory to the common economic space between the Russian Federation and the EU.

Senator Antonione, Undersecretary of State, on behalf of the Italian Council Presidency, touched the issues of co-operation in the four areas to be dealt with at the coming Summit in Rome, the issue of strengthening the Co-operation Council and the concept "Wider Europe - New Neighbours".

Mr. Leigh, Deputy Director General, on behalf of the Commission, stressed that the coming enlargement of the EU would have a positive overall effect on EU-Russia relations. He referred in particular to the additional trade links, the growth potential for Russian as well as European market operations, and to the geopolitical and historical advantages of the candidate countries could build upon and strengthen their economic relations with the Russian Federation. However, if the SES would lead to a customs union, this should hardly be compatible with Russia's WTO accession. The visa policy should not be considered in isolation from other questions of JHA; the EU was ready to meet on ad hoc basis with Russian experts on visa issues. The EU was also ready to discuss political measures to support the solution of the conflict in Transnistrian region of Moldova. The European Commission was also considering a special assistance program for reconciliation and adaptation in Chechnya; the population of Chechnya was to recognise the legitimacy of the coming presidential elections in the Republic. Finally he insisted that the aim of the "Wider Europe" initiative was to insure that all of the EU's neighbours should benefit from the enlargement.

In the following exchange of views Mr. Tannock, Ms. Hedkvist Petersen, Mr. Väyrynen raised following points:

- An article by Mr. Berezovsky currently residing in London had been published the day before in the English press where he had accused the FSB of attempting to assassinate him in the UK.
- The possibility to have a common market between those countries which signed the SES agreement was doubtful due to the differences in their economic systems. However it could pursue political goals.
- In the process of solving the problem of Transnistria, the Russian government could bring more pressure on the Transnistrian regime.
- In the communication of the European Commission on Wider Europe, too many different countries were brought under the same umbrella. There was need to draw a distinction between European and non-European neighbours, and the possibility for new financial instruments should be considered.
- The co-operation on environment, particularly in the Barents Sea, was important for the whole EU-Russia relations. There had always been administrative problems hampering the development of co-operation.

There followed comments by Mr. Bicheldey, Mr. Fradkov, Mr. Lukin. It was mentioned that:

- The Republic of Tyva still had the state of war with Germany - this paradox should be settled diplomatically.
- The article of Mr. Berezovsky should be seen in relation to the parliamentary elections campaign in Russia. Mr. Berezovsky reportedly was well known for his complicated reputation, and his words only were no proof for his allegations. The British special services were said to be investigating the matter, and this seemed to be the appropriate reaction.

- The states participating in the SES had reserved their sovereignty rights to be free in their relations with the EU, and therefore the SES should not be an obstacle for the EU-Russian relations.
- There were negotiations being conducted with participation of OSCE, Ukraine, and Russia on the problem of Transnistria. The position of the EU, observing the peace making process, but not participating actively in the Kiev group had been a wise choice.

4. The EU Convention proposal for a constitution for the European Union.

Mr. Napolitano, MEP, the Chair of the EP Committee on Constitutional Affairs, and Vice-President of the Convention, informed about the process of the elaboration of the final draft of the European Constitution made by the Convention and its substance. The Intergovernmental Conference would have the final word on the matter, though it would be difficult to make any major change. The Parliament's position on the draft had been expressed in the resolution the week before, supporting the text issued by the Convention and calling on IGC to respect its overall balance. The EU would continue the co-operation with its neighbours aiming at the establishment a "ring of friends".

Mr. Seppänen, a representative of the EP at the Convention, explained his views of the results of the Convention, and underlined those fields of policy making where unanimity would still be required. He also indicated that on the question of moving towards a common defence there was not unanimity, though a large majority had supported it in the European Parliament.

Mr. Tannock added that the outcome of the Convention in his view was a top-down solution imposed by the presidium of the Convention and that there had been no formal vote on any issue at the Convention itself. At the IGC therefore, there would certainly to be expected debates on various points of its contents.

In the following discussion, Mr. Evstifeev, Mr. Koptev-Dvornikov and Mr. Lukin took the floor and pointed out:

- what would be the consequences for a country violating the fundamental rights of the EU as listed in the new Constitution like the respect of the rights of minorities, for instance, for the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic states;
- that the Art.56 of the Constitution referred to the neighbours of the EU, taking regard to the values of the EU as the base for the relations with its neighbours. Would this make it necessary that the neighbours should also adopt a special legislation affirming their loyalty to those values;
- that Art.57 envisages the possibility of accession to the EU for any European state sharing the values of the EU: who would determine whether a state was European and whether it shared the European values;
- that Art.56 contained no new approaches to and no strategical prospects for the "new neighbourhood" of the EU: if this meant that the borders of the EU were firmly fixed and the countries of the "immediate environment" should remain forever outside the EU;

Mr. Napolitano, MEP, took the floor and referred to these questions, indicating:

- that all the candidate countries had been examined whether they were meeting the Copenhagen criteria, particularly the respect for the values and rights of the EU. Once these countries as EU members would violate the EU's values and rights, the procedure of the Art.58 of the Constitution would apply and for example the voting rights of the countries concerned could be suspended.
- that with regards to the new neighbourhood approach, only Croatia had applied for joining the EU so far; the criteria for application states would remain the same.

- Mr. Napolitano underlined the fact that there had been a 2/3 majority in the EP for endorsing the Convention result. The word 'federal' had been deleted by the Convention from the text of Art.1 of the draft Constitution.

5. The ratification of the Kyoto-Protocol by the Russian Federation.

After an introduction by Chairman Bart Staes, who underlined the usefulness of such a "single-issue-delegation", composed mainly in view of the members interest in this topic, and therefore of a high substantial competence, as well as the excellent programme as prepared by the State Duma officials, Mr. Moreira da Silva, MEP, the EP rapporteur on the Kyoto Protocol, informed the meeting of his impressions of the delegation visit to Moscow. According to his views, the ratification of Kyoto protocol didn't seem to be a priority in Russia. A linking up of this issue with Russia's access to the WTO raised concerns and would not be helpful.

In the following discussion, Ms. Larotschkina, Mr. Lukin, Mr. Evstifeev, Mr. Fradkov took the floor, raising the following points:

- the deputies of the State Duma could only wait for the ratification documents to be submitted to them by the government.
- Russia was interested in a discussion on economic terms. Negotiations on ratification of Kyoto protocol should be conducted in close relation with the energy dialogue. Russia was keen on realising projects in the field of energy preserving technologies and renewable sources of energy, in the exploration of new hydrocarbon deposits in Russia, expecting to double thus the supply of Russian gas to Europe by 2020.
- the negotiations on the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol should be very flexible, bearing in mind the strong interest of Russia is access to the WTO and linking it with EU's interest in Russia's ratification of the protocol.
- it should be taken into account that Russian gas deposits explored would be exhausted in 40-60 years.
- the final position of the government had not been presented yet, and it was too early to link this question up with anything.
- an international conference on climate change would take place in Moscow in the coming days.

Mr. Moreira da Silva warned against dealing with the Kyoto protocol programme on the same level as the energy dialogue. The ratification should lead to the rise of foreign investments to Russia. The delay of the ratification of the Kyoto protocol by Russia was detrimental for the achievements of the last ten years of co-operation between EU and Russia in the field of environment. The conference to be held in Moscow seemed rather to be promoted as an alternative to what the UN Environmental Agency has been developing and fostering throughout all these years: the Kyoto Protocol.

6. General situation of the Kaliningrad region and implementation of the Facilitated Transit Regime.

Mr. Elmar Brok, MEP, Chairman of the EP Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy, informed the PCC about the results of the parliamentary conferences of the speakers of the Russian Federation National Assembly, the Lithuanian Saimas, the Senate and the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, and of the European Parliament, and underlined the overall satisfaction of the application of these solutions since July 1st for the transit of people between the Russian Federation main territory and its Kaliningrad Oblast exclave. He also mentioned the possibilities of modernising the means of travel (High Speed trains, Air travel), and insisted on the necessity to find now the means to strengthen the social and economical situation in this region. Linking certain Tacis programme in Russia with projects financed through the EU funds in the new member states could be useful, but would to a certain extent depend on the Russian Federation's government. A future meeting with the above mentioned frame should therefore take place in the Kaliningrad region to provide the necessary "down to earth" impressions.

Mr. Koptev-Dvornikov added that the State Duma had ratified agreements on land and sea border and the agreement on readmission with Lithuania. Since the 1st of July a Facilitated Transit Regime had entered into vigour, and was functioning very well, facilitating people's transit between the Russian Federation main land and its Kaliningrad exclave. He also mentioned the remaining problems of transit of goods and the issue of border exchange agreements between Russia and Lithuania and Russia and Poland. The proposal of Lithuanian colleagues to conduct a parliamentary meeting EU-Poland-Lithuania-Russia in Lithuania should be supported.

Ms. Magdalene Hoff, MEP, referred to the problems still to overcome, asking for more information on the draft law facilitating trade with Kaliningrad. A second EP report on possibilities of facilitating trade and access to Kaliningrad was being worked on, whereas proposals of the first report had not been realised yet by the Council.

Mr. Hack representing the Commission also admitted the scheme of facilitated transit to function satisfactorily. The high-speed train feasibility-study was under consideration, its characteristics were actually discussed, and by the end of the year the project should be defined to enough detail to allow for the feasibility study to be put up for tender. He also reminded the PCC, that the European Commission had adopted a EUR 25 mio. programme for the strengthening of the socio-economic development of Kaliningrad region.

Mr. Tannock asked about reports on citizens' initiative to change the name of Kaliningrad back to Königsberg.

Mr. Lukin indicated that some problems still remained: the movement of goods and the feasibility study of high speed train, which had been a commitment by the EU. The common parliamentary monitoring should be maintained till all the problems had been solved. He asked to take account of these issues at the EU budgetary discussions for 2004.

Mr. Koptev-Dvornikov said no plans to rename the city of Kaliningrad existed.

Mr. Fradkov noticed that the goods transit issue could be dealt with at the Summit in Rome.

7. Any other business.

Mr. Watts raised a point concerning the annual hunt on baby hop seals in the White Sea. He reported that the Russian government had been assuring that the hunt would be reduced, but it had been doubled over the last ten years. The requests on Russian government to provide figures and to accept independent monitoring had been unanswered.

Mr. Fradkov said he could meet Mr. Watts to discuss the matter.

Mr. Paasilinna touched the road transport matters.

8. Date and place of next meeting.

The next PCC meeting to take place provisionally in March 2004.