

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH THE GULF STATES, INCLUDING YEMEN

PE/DGUL-13/PV/06-10

MINUTES

of the meeting of 2 February 2006, from 17.30 to 18.30
Room ASP 5E2

BRUSSELS

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Annex: Record of attendance

07 February 2006
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PE 369.069

The meeting opened at 17.35, with Ms Gruber (Chairperson) in the Chair.

1. Adoption of draft agenda (PE 365.464)

The draft agenda was adopted.

2. Approval of minutes of the meeting on 16 November 2005 (PE 365.460)

The minutes were approved.

3. Chairperson's announcements

The Chair informed the Members about the following:

➤ **Saudi Arabia:**

Situation of women: several, albeit small, positive signs:

- Following in the footsteps of 2 businesswomen who won seats in the Jeddah chamber of Commerce, and of an architect who got elected to the engineers' syndicate in December, 6 women have now launched their campaigns in the elections for the board of the Eastern Province Chamber of Commerce.
- Women can at last receive their personal ID without the consent of a male guardian. Thousands are rushing to get them -- often for practical reasons as, for years now, the practice for a woman to prove her identity was to bring 2 men, not necessarily relatives, as witnesses. This allowed widespread fraud.
- 60% of Saudis favor allowing women to drive; the fact that this result was published in the usually not strikingly courageous local press suggests prior high-level approval.
- Early January: for the first time, the authorities made an exception to the rule that women and men don't mix in public and allowed Swedish female soccer fans who live in the kingdom to attend a friendly match between the 2 countries.

➤ **United Arab Emirates:**

- Relations between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are moving towards a crisis because of a growing dispute over the Al-Shibah oil field. The UAE has decided to alter the official maps pertaining to its border with Saudi Arabia in order to include the oilfield, which has estimated reserves of around 15 billion barrels.
- Following the death of his brother, Sheikh *Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum* became on Jan. 4 the new ruler of Dubai, one of the 7 emirates of the UAE federation. The new ruler has for a long time been considered the "real boss" in this city-emirate, and is seen as trying to project an image of a modernist moderate Arab leader.

➤ **Yemen:**

- Mid January: clashes between troops and slain cleric's followers left 20 dead, including eight soldiers. Fighting is reported to be continued in Saada (north Yemen). The clashes began when the followers of late al-Hawthi, who was known for his anti-American views, insisted on celebrating a religious event on Wednesday despite a government ban. President Ali Abdullah Saleh pardoned several of Al-Hawthi's imprisoned followers late last year, but tribal officials argue that the detainees have not been released.
- President Ali Abdullah Saleh ordered security forces to arrest the abductors of a former German diplomat and his family, released a day earlier, and pledged to fight foreign hostage taking "like we fight terrorism". Tribesmen frequently kidnap tourists in an attempt to force concessions from the government. Hostages are usually released unharmed.
- An official source has denied that the United States had requested permission from Yemen to open a secret detention centre.

4. Exchange of views on the visit of the delegation to Kuwait (November 2005)

Ms GRUBER announced that the report on the visit of the Delegation has been drafted and is available in German. Translations will be sent electronically to Members as soon as they are available and before the next meeting of the Delegation.

Following the passing away of Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah, the new ruler of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah was sworn in by the Parliament on Sunday 29 January.

The new emir, Sheikh Sabah, has been Prime Minister since 2003. Seen as a reformist and a proponent of women's rights, he now has one year to choose the new Crown Prince, his own successor.

5. Preparation of the visit of the Delegation to Yemen (April 2006), in presence of H.E. the Ambassador Jaffer H. M. Jaffer

The Chair proposed to consider planning the visit to Yemen between the 19th and the 30th of May 2006 and gave the floor to the Ambassador of Yemen, M. Jaffer H. M. JAFFER, to comment upon the recent clashes in Yemen and their reasons.

M. JAFFER began by showing his appreciation for the invitation and for the objective of the Delegation to keep Interparliamentary meetings on a regular basis. The visit of the Delegation will be an opportunity for the EP to appraise the real situation and challenges Yemen, the least developed country of the Gulf, faces; an income of less than 500 USD per capita, an illiteracy rate of 50% and an unemployment rate of 25 %. This difficult situation has been exacerbated by the Gulf war. Furthermore, the war against terrorism is also taking place in Yemen, due to the return of many Yemen Mujaehdins from Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, Yemen also knows successes: good chances for women, who enjoy voting rights, can be elected, and count Ministers and Ambassadors in their ranks. Democracy, enshrined by the Sana'a Declaration, commended by the EP, is also being strengthened in the country. Yet M. JAFFER took the opportunity to ask for further EU involvement so as to help fighting terrorism and maintain the stability, and the democratic character, of the country.

Replying to M. LAGENDIJK, M. JAFFER insisted that terrorism in Yemen is mainly an imported problem, as local fanatics get support from abroad. While M. LAGENDIJK, to some extent, may be right in arguing that a causal link may exist between terrorism and dissatisfaction with the government, M. JAFFER underlined that as Yemen is a very poor country, often the government is simply not able to provide with the social services (i.e. education and health services) one could hope for. The result is often a low-intensity form of terrorism, by local tribes which, regrettably, use the weapon of kidnappings in order to attract attention. But the fact remains that Yemen is less affected by the extreme violence that can be found in much wealthier neighbouring countries.

The Chair proceeded by bringing up the Sana'a Declaration and asking the Ambassador for his expectations of the involvement of the EU in the situation in Yemen.

M. JAFFER explained that there will be Presidential elections held in September, preceded by local elections. These reflect the current attempt to achieve a democratic decentralisation process. Yemen would therefore require advice and guidance from the EU in order to achieve fair and transparent elections; for instance, help could be needed in order to organise the way the free press operates in the context of pre-electoral activity.

6 Any other business

No discussion took place on this point.

7. Date and place of next meetings

The scheduled days for the next meetings during the first semester 2006 are as follows:
Monday the 20th of March, 15.00-16.00, ASP 5E-2
Thursday the 1st of June, 16.15-17.15, ASP 5E-2
Tuesday the 11th of July, 16.15-17.15, ASP 5E-2

The Chair expressed, however, her concern over the new rules according to which the Delegation can no longer meet in Strasbourg, as the result is that meetings in Brussels, when organised on Mondays or late Thursdays, can be problematic for many members. She therefore promised to Members she would fight for more appropriate time-slots.

The meeting closed at 18.13

**DELTAGERLISTE/ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KATAΣΤΑΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/LIITE RECORD
OF ATTENDANCE/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/LISTE DE PRESENCE/ELENCO DEI
PRESENTI/PRESENTIELIJST/LISTA DE PRESENÇAS/LÄSNÄOLOLISTA/DELTAGARLISTA**

Til stede	Formandskabet/Vorstand/Προεδρείο/Bureau/Ufficio di Presidenza/Mesa/Puhemiehistö/J.L. Presidium: (*)
Anwesend	GRUBER (P), Medlemmer/Mitglieder/Μέλη/Members/Diputados/Députés/Deputati/Leden/Deputados/Jäsenet/Ledamöter:
Παρόντες	ATTARD-MONTALTO, GALA, LAGENDIJK Stedfortrædere/Stellvertreter/Αναπληρωτές/Substitutes/Suplentes/Suppléants/ Membri supplenti/Plaatsvervangers/Membros suplentes/Varajäsenet/Suppleanter:
Present	
Presentes	
Présents	
Presenti	
Aanwezig	
Lasna	
Närvarande	
Art. 178,2	
Art. 183,3	
Endv. Deltog/Weitere Teiln./ Συμμετείχαν επίσης/Also present Participaron igualmente/ Participaient également/ Hanno partecipato altresì/ Andere deelnemers/ Outros participantes/ Muut osallistujat/ Dessutom deltog	
(Dagsorden/Tagesordnung Pkt/Ημερήσια Διάταξη Σημεί/Point OJ/Punto OG/Agenda Punt/Ordem do dia Punto/punto orden del dia/Esityslist Kohta/ Föredragningslista punkt):	

- * (P) = Formand/Vorsitzender/Πρόεδρος/Chairman/Président/Presidente/Voorzitter/Presidente/Puhemies/Ordförande
(VP) = Næstform./Stellv. Vorsitz./Αντιπρόεδρος/Vice-Chairman/Vice-Président/Vicepresidente/Varapuhemies/Ondervoorz./
Vice-Pres./Vicepres/Vice ordförande.

Til stede den/Anwesend am/Παρόν στις/Present on/Présent le/Presente il/Aanwezig op/Presente em/Presenteel/Läsnä/Närvarande den.

Efter indbydelse fra formanden/Auf Einladung d. Vorsitzenden/Με πρόσκληση του Προέδρου/At the invitation of the Chairman/Por invitación del presidente/Sur l'invitation du président/Su invito del presidente/Op uitnodiging van de voorzitter/A convite do presidente/Puhemiehen kutsusta/På ordförandens inbjudan:

Rådet/Rat/Συμβούλιο/Council/Consejo/Conseil/Consiglio/Raad/Conselho/Neuvosto/Rådet: (*)
BERGER

Kommissionen/Kommission/Επιτροπή/Commission/Comisión/Commissione/Commissie/Comissão/Komissio/Kommissionen: (*)

Cour des comptes:
C.E.S.:

Andre deltagere/Andere Teilnehmer Επίσης Παρόντες/Also present Otros participantes/Autres participants/Altri partecipanti Andere aanwezigen/Outros participantes Muut osallistajat/Övriga deltagare		H.E Amb. JAFFER (Yemen)
Gruppernes sekretariat Sekretariat der Fraktionen Γραμματεία των Πολ. Ομάδων Secretariat political groups Secr. De los grupos políticos Secr. Groupes politiques Segr. Dei gruppi politici Secr. Van de fracties Secr. Dos grupos políticos Puolueryhmien sihteeristö Gruppernas sekretariat	PPE-DE PSE ALDE Verts/ALE GUE/NGL IND/DEM UEN NI	VILELLA MEYER
Cab. Du Président		
Cab. Du Secrétaire Général		
Generaldirektorat Generaldirektion Γενική Διεύθυνση Directorate-General Dirección general Direction générale Direzione generale Directoraat-generaal Direcção general Contrôle financier Service juridique Pääosasto Generaldirektorat	I II III IV V VI VII VIII	KRAUSS
Udvalgssekretariatet Ausschubsekretariat Γραμματεία επιτροπής Committee secretariat Secretaria de la comisión Secrétariat de la commission Segretariato della commissione Commissiesecretariaat Secretaria de comissão Valiokunnan sihteeristö Utskottssekretariatet Assist./Βοηθός		KAMARIS, BERTER BRAID

* (P) = Formand/Pres./Πρόεδρος/Chairman/Président/Voorzitter/Puhemies/Ordförande

(VP) = Næstform./Vize-Pres./Αντιπρόεδρος/Vice-Chairman/Vice-Président/Ondervoorz./Vice-pres/Varapuhemies/Vice ordförande.

(M) = Medlem./Mitglied/Μέλος/Member/Miembro/Membre/Membro/Lid/Membro/Jäsen/Ledamot

(F) = Tjenestemand/Beamter/Υπάλληλος/Official/Funcionario/Fonctionnaire/Funzionario/Ambtenaar/Functionário/Virkamies/Tjänsteman