



MEETING OF THE CHAIRPERSONS OF THE COMMITTEES ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF PARLIAMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE PARLIAMENTARY FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY

Parliaments for democracy: towards more ambitious global cooperation

27-28 November 2013

Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
Vilnius

PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS

The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, as the Presidency Parliament,

Having regard to the objectives set forth in the Vilnius Declaration of the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy adopted on 10-12 March 2010 and its subsequent declarations and documents,

Having regard to the documents adopted by the Community of Democracies,

Having regard to Article 8 of the Treaty on European Union, according to which “the EU shall develop a special relationship with neighbouring countries, aiming to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation”,

Having regard to and endorsing the Conclusions of the Interparliamentary Conference on Common Foreign and Security Policy and Common Security and Defence Policy, which took place on 4-6 September 2013, and the Contribution of the L COSAC, which took place on 27-29 October 2013 in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania,

Having regard to the statement of the EU High Representative Catherine ASHTON of 21 November 2013 on Ukraine,

Having regard to the joint statement by the President of the European Council Herman VAN ROMPUY and the President of the European Commission José Manuel BARROSO of 25 November 2013 on Ukraine;



Having regard to the resolutions of the European Parliament of 12 September 2013 on the pressure exerted by Russia on the Eastern Partnership countries and of 23 October 2013 on the European Neighbourhood Policy: towards the strengthening of the partnership;

Promoting Democracy in the World

1. Reiterates the widely shared adherence to the fundamental values and principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international covenants on human rights, the Agenda for Democratisation presented by the UN Secretary General at the 51st session of the UN General Assembly and other relevant instruments of international law;
2. Supports the EU policy of promoting democracy, gender equality and equal opportunities policy around the world, especially in its Eastern neighbourhood as enshrined in the objectives of the Eastern Partnership policy;
3. Condemns authoritarian and totalitarian regimes for their constant and systemic suppression of human rights and democracy, practices that separate such regimes from the Community of Democracies; expresses its whole-hearted support for politicians, human rights activists, civil society actors and non-governmental organisations fighting for freedom and democracy against autocratic and totalitarian regimes throughout the world;
4. Points out that parliaments, elected in free and fair elections, are institutions that embody the very concept of democracy as they represent the will of the people; encourages regular inter-parliamentary meetings, consultations and good practice seminars among parliamentarians from new or restored democracies together with representatives from the long-established ones in efforts to exchange views on such topics as democratic and parliamentary consolidation and the strengthening of the civil society; underlines the importance of developing tools that would contribute to the strengthening of political parties in new and restored democracies;

Eastern Partnership: Towards More Ambitious Cooperation

5. Highlights the strategic importance of the Eastern Partnership countries for the EU and the wider European region and stresses that the long-term stability and security of these countries will only be ensured through the consolidation of democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, market economy and good governance – values and principles that are at the core of the Eastern Partnership policy;
6. Welcomes the progress achieved on the Association Agreements, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements, with Georgia and Moldova; hopes that the Association Agreements with these countries will be successfully initialled during the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius; calls on all parties concerned not to delay the signature of the agreements and looks forward to their provisional application as soon as 2014; commends the political leadership and the civil society of Georgia and Moldova for maintaining a strong and consistent pro-European choice and is convinced that the long-term security and well-being of these countries depends on the depth of political and economic association with the EU;

7. Stresses the substantial judiciary, economic and public sector reforms that have been implemented by the Ukrainian authorities during the negotiations on the Association Agreement with the EU and expects that this process will eventually be concluded by the signature of the Association Agreement in the nearest possible future; is convinced that the Ukrainian people and businesses would be the ones who would profit most from closer political and economic ties with the EU; therefore calls on the EU to keep the door open for Ukraine and not to abandon European aspirations and hopes of the Ukrainian people;
8. Commends the effort and the results of the European Parliament Monitoring mission to Ukraine and wishes to thank Mr Pat COX, former President of the European Parliament and Mr Alexander KWASNIEWSKI, former President of the Republic of Poland, for their relentless commitment and dedication to resolve selective justice problems and facilitate the necessary judiciary reforms in Ukraine;
9. Deplores the blatant political and economic pressure that Russia has been applying to Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership countries in the run up to the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit; is of the view that such conduct of international affairs violates the norms of the civilised international community as enshrined in the Helsinki Accords, the WTO rules, the UN Charter and international law more generally, and should have no place in Europe of the 21st century; calls on the Member States, the European Commission and the European Parliament to take a united stance against such practices and step up the engagement and support for Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership countries in order to offer these countries a real and sustainable alternative to various forms of political and economic integration promoted by Russia;
10. Considers that facilitated visa regimes, especially visa-free travel, can significantly strengthen people-to-people contacts and act as catalyst for the pro-European choice in the partner countries; welcomes the signing of the agreement with Armenia on visa facilitation and readmission, the intention to sign the agreement on visa facilitation with Azerbaijan, and progress achieved by Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in implementing the Visa Liberalisation Action Plans (VLAPs); welcomes the proposal made by the European Commission on 27 November 2013 to allow visa-free travel to the Schengen area for Moldovan citizens holding a biometric passport and hopes that similar proposals will be made with regard to Georgia and Ukraine, once the benchmarks set in their respective VLAPs are implemented;
11. Stresses that notwithstanding the choices of the political leadership, the civil society in the Eastern Partnership countries is more mature than even before, as exemplified by the recent massive protests across Ukraine in favour of association with the EU, and that ultimately the success of the democratic reforms in these countries will depend on the strength and vitality of their civil societies; calls on the relevant EU institutions to continue engaging the civil society in the partner countries, especially those countries where reforms have been most stagnant, such as Belarus; considers that the expansion of various professional, cultural or student exchange programmes, such as Erasmus Plus, foreseen for the 2014-2020 financial period, to the Eastern Partnership countries would have the potential to significantly expand and strengthen human ties between young people in these countries with those in the EU;

12. Highlights the special role that parliaments have to play in fostering people-to-people contacts between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries both through the development of inter-parliamentary cooperation, such as the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy, EURONEST or the parliamentary assemblies of NATO, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as through the direct engagement of civil society; considers that possibilities should be explored of how to include members of the EU national Parliaments in the work of the EURONEST parliamentary assembly in the future;
13. Emphasises the strong support that exists in Lithuania across the political spectrum for the pro-European course of the Eastern Partnership countries and reminds that ensuring closer political and economic association of these countries with the EU has been one of the key priorities of the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council.

ANNEX 1 – PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE CHAIRPERSONS OF THE COMMITTEES ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF PARLIAMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE PARLIAMENTARY FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY

Introductory remarks

The Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Foreign Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union and the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy took place on 27-28 November 2013 in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania in Vilnius.

The Meeting was opened by the hosts Prof Benediktas JUODKA, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, and Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS, Chair of the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy. Participants were welcomed by Mr Petras AUŠTREVIČIUS, Deputy Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.

Session I, entitled ***The European Union Eastern Partnership: Towards More Ambitious Cooperation***, was divided into three parts. In the first part (*EU Eastern Partnership: on the eve of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius*) the following keynote speakers took the floor: Mr Linas LINKEVIČIUS, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, and H. E. Igor CORMAN, Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. In the second part (*The view of the Eastern Partnership countries*) there were the following keynote speakers: Ms Ana GUȚU, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, Mr Tedo JAPARIDZE, Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, and Mr Artak ZAKARYAN, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia. In the third part (*The Ukrainian course*) presentations were given by the following keynote speakers: Mr Pat COX, Member of the European Parliament monitoring mission to Ukraine, former President of the European Parliament, Mr Vitaliy KALYUZHNYI, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Mr Vitali KLITSCHKO, Member of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, and Mr Elmar BROK, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament.

In session II, entitled ***Democracies in Transition: Lessons to Share***, the following keynote speakers took the floor: H. E. Karim GHELLAB, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Morocco, Prof Vytautas LANDSBERGIS, Member of the European Parliament, former Speaker of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, and Prof Marija Aušrinė PAVILIONIENĖ, Member of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Chair of the Women's Parliamentary Group.

SESSION I. THE EUROPEAN UNION EASTERN PARTNERSHIP: TOWARDS MORE AMBITIOUS COOPERATION

EU Eastern Partnership: on the eve of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius

In his presentation Mr Linas LINKEVIČIUS, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, welcomed the decision of the European Commission to propose granting visa-free access to the EU for Moldovan citizens. He also expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved by Georgia and Moldova on the Association Agreements (AAs) with the EU and the

intention to initial the agreements during the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius. He expected the AAs to be signed by autumn 2014. The Minister was more sceptical about Ukraine's readiness to sign its own AA during the Vilnius Summit but stressed that the door to Ukraine should remain open. He also noted that there had been progress with Ukraine on the VLAP negotiations. In other words, Ukraine was still on the path towards Europe, its latest actions did not represent a 180 degrees turn. Mr LINKEVIČIUS also took the opportunity to commend the work of the European Parliament mission of Mr Pat COX and Mr Alexander KWASNIEWSKI, which had made in total 27 visits to Ukraine over the previous 18 months.

H. E. Igor CORMAN, Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, stressed that the path of Moldova towards association with the EU had not been easy but that Moldova was firmly on the path towards Europe. Mr CORMAN reaffirmed the readiness of Moldova to fully implement the requirements of the AA, the DCFTA and the visa liberalisation process. At the same time Moldova was ready for new benchmarks and for further integration. The Speaker noted that more than half of Moldova's foreign trade was with the EU and he expected these volumes to increase due to the AA and the DCFTA provisions. He expected other positive effects of the AA, such as the reduction of corruption, and stressed that all relevant provisions would be open for application to the Transnistrian region as well. Mr CORMAN noted that despite the complex geopolitical situation, Moldova did not see its integration with the EU as a zero-sum game and wanted to maintain healthy relations with its Eastern neighbours.

During the debate it was stressed that the EU might be less able to help its neighbours at the time because of the shrinking budgets both at the national and the EU level. There was more generosity when countries like Portugal or Spain joined the EU or when the new Member States joined in 2004. The situation in Belarus was recalled by several participants, namely the lack of basic freedoms and the disrespect for human rights and democratic norms in the country. Many participants condemned the pressure that Russia had been applying towards the Eastern Partnership countries. A representative from Georgia called on the EU to scrutinise Georgia's respect of the AA provisions and hoped the EU would not allow Georgia to backslide on democratic reforms. It was also emphasised that the EU was not only a union of interests but also of values and therefore the spread of European values lied at the core of the EU's policy towards the Eastern partners. It was stressed that Europe is not interested in a geopolitical scramble with Russia and that zero-sum thinking represented Cold War mentality.

The view of the Eastern Partnership countries

In her presentation Ms Ana GUȚU, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, emphasised that the AA, to be initialled during the Vilnius Summit, would establish an adequate legal framework, necessary for the advancement of the relationship with the EU, to a much more developed stage of cooperation, manifested in political association and economic integration. Ms GUȚU spoke about the difficulties Moldova had had to undergo in implementing the necessary reforms and meeting the challenge of competitive pressures, emanating from trade liberalisation and the fulfilment of the commitments within the visa liberalisation dialogue. She spoke about the reforms that had been implemented to meet food safety requirements, to adjust to particular

technical regulations and quality infrastructure, ensure adequate competition and state aid framework for facilitating gradual access to the European Single Market in order to obtain maximum benefits from the DCFTA. Ms GUȚU thanked for the openness of the EU to partially cover associated costs. She therefore expressed hope that the Vilnius Summit would lay solid foundation for the continuation of democratic transformation in Moldova and would create the necessary momentum for the irreversibility of its European trajectory.

Mr Tedo JAPARIDZE, Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, spoke about the process of Europeanisation and gave the example of the Baltic States, which had transformed significantly as a result of early engagement with the EU. This engagement helped reshape policy as much as identity of these countries. Now this complex and comprehensive process of transformation/modernization, or Europeanization, should be applied to Georgia. It should all be about making Georgia a viable economy and a normal, functioning, relevant regional democracy based on rule of law and justice. Mr JAPARIDZE expressed hope that the AA would be one of the tools to accelerate Georgia's Europeanisation process. The speaker also stressed that Georgia would like to go further than the AA and strive for EU membership. He admitted that Georgia might not be ready for membership at the time being but that it was committed to following this path.

Mr Artak ZAKARYAN, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, emphasised that Armenia attached great importance to cooperation with the EU and that during the negotiations on the AA Armenia had already implemented significant reforms in all relevant fields. He recalled that the EU-Armenia agreements on visa regime facilitation and readmission had been already approved and ratified both by the European Parliament and the Armenian Parliament. Mr ZAKARYAN pointed out that by declaring its intention to join the Customs Union Armenia had not changed the direction of its foreign policy. Russia had always been and remained a strategic partner and ally of Armenia, while the EU was one of Armenia's important partners. He noted that the decision made by the Armenian authorities had been motivated by the concerns of economic development, as well as energy and strategic security of the country.

The debate started with the intervention of Mr Anatoliy LIABEDZKA, representing Belarusian democratic opposition, who recalled that there had been no free elections in Belarus since 1995, while political prisoners were still jailed. He noted, however, that the solution to the situation in Belarus could only be found in Minsk, not in Brussels, Washington, Vilnius or Moscow. As for Georgia, it was stressed that there could be no alternative for Georgia but to be in Europe. 80% of Georgians supported such direction. In the previous year the Georgian government had changed peacefully for the first time in history but now there was the risk that the losers of the election would be forced to disappear. That is why the EU should continue to place strict conditions on Georgia in order to ensure the development of its democracy and legal system. It was also reminded of South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's continued occupation by Russia but it was stressed that despite the economic blockade by Russia, Georgia had managed to survive and was not importing any gas from Russia and was a net exporter of electricity to Russia. At the same time it was emphasised that for countries like Georgia the success of Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership countries to establish closer ties with the EU was of crucial importance. In the case of Armenia, it was mentioned that the EU's engagement had been top-down, i.e. concentrated on the elites. However, more of the civil society should be involved to create a bottom-up process of

support for closer association with the EU. The EU should also seek to create alternative proposals to those promoted by Russia, otherwise strategic mistakes of historic proportions could be made.

The Ukrainian course

Mr Pat COX, Member of the European Parliament monitoring mission to Ukraine, former President of the European Parliament, informed that the European Parliament had had in total 27 visits to Ukraine, including 18 meetings with President Viktor YANUKOVYCH, 25 with Prime Minister Mykola AZAROV and 17 with Ms Yulia TYMOSHENKO. According to him, EU-Ukraine relations represented a win-win engagement. He also underlined that the majority of people in Ukraine, especially young people, were supporting closer ties with Europe. That was why the door should remain open for Ukraine. It was not clear what agreement had been reached between Ukraine and Russia, but the EU would not participate in “geopolitical auction politics” yet would remain a stable and reliable partner. Mr COX reminded that the issue of Ms Yulia TYMOSHENKO was not the primary reason for Ukraine’s decision to halt the association process – economic reasons had been cited instead. Another problem was that the EU was going to have elections in 2014, while presidential elections in Ukraine would take place in 2015. So there was the “Vilnius window of opportunity”; and if it was closed, it would take time to reopen it as the status quo would not necessarily stay unchanged.

Mr Vitaliy KALYUZHNYI, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, acknowledged that the people of Ukraine had already expressed their support for closer ties with Europe, as was evident from the demonstrations at the Maidan square in Kyiv. He also pointed out that the Ukrainian legislature had made the same choice, as it had passed many necessary laws to fulfil the requirements of the association process. Mr KALYUZHNYI agreed that the recent decision to halt the association process was damaging Ukraine’s international image but stressed that Ukraine’s economy was weaker than previously thought and because of hostile economic actions of certain third countries against Ukraine, the leadership needed time to re-assess the situation.

Mr Vitali KLITSCHKO, Member of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, emphasised that the AA would have the power to transform the country. Now political repressions and the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of the few were distancing Ukraine from the real community of democracies. According to Mr KLITSCHKO, the Ukrainian people aspired to live in a country based on the rule of law, respect for human rights and a society with high social standards. But according to him, their hopes had been crushed as President YANUKOVICH was putting his interests above those of the Ukrainian people. He also felt that the economic arguments for halting the association process were merely an excuse. According to the speaker, the President felt much better in the club of authoritarian leaders of the post-Soviet space rather than among democratic leaders of the EU.

Mr Elmar BROK, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament, defended the European Neighbourhood Policy and emphasised that this policy had already delivered results. He admitted that if the EU wanted to become an important regional player, it had to act more strategically and use all of its policies, such as trade, energy or migration policies, in a more coherent way. He also pointed out that those who had been arguing that

that the EU had not offered enough to Ukraine, did not understand how the EU functioned. The EU was a union of values and its values, such as rule of law and stable democracy, brought investments and prosperity in the long-term. Mr BROK emphasised, however, that in order for the reform agenda to work the partner countries had to demonstrate genuine commitment to European values. Now the economic arguments used by the Ukrainian authorities were merely an alibi. He also stressed that the Vilnius Summit was not the end of the process, it was only a step in the process. And even if steps taken by the partner countries were not always large and significant, he underlined that transformation took time and that it was important to recognise that countries like Ukraine, Georgia or Moldova had already achieved significant progress implementing the reforms.

During the debate all of the participants expressed their support for the pro-European choice of Ukraine. It was noted that Ukraine had been a success story before but since 2010 it had started backsliding on democracy. The Eastern Partnership was a strong and needed policy but only those countries that took it seriously would benefit from it. As association with the EU required real democratic reforms, it was no surprise that authoritarian leaders felt threatened. Others stressed that Ukraine was a locomotive of the Eastern European region so its success was very important for other countries in the region as well. The view was also expressed that the will of the people would ultimately prevail and Ukraine would establish closer ties with the EU, as this was the aspiration of the Ukrainian people. In the meantime, it was suggested that the EU should provide Ukraine with the visa-free access to send a positive signal to all Ukrainians. Participants also spoke against the pressure that Russia had been applying towards Ukraine. Some spoke about a new iron curtain that Russia was trying to erect in Europe's East. However, it was emphasised that independent countries did not need to ask for Russia's permission to develop their relations with the EU and that colonialism should not be allowed to take hold in Europe of the 21st century.

SESSION II. DEMOCRACIES IN TRANSITION: LESSONS TO SHARE

H. E. Karim GHELLAB, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Morocco, spoke about the constitutional reforms that Morocco had implemented following the Arab Spring that had started at the beginning of 2011. Morocco followed a different approach from its other Arab neighbours and willingly accepted the call for more democracy and human rights from the Moroccan people. The new version of the Moroccan Constitution was adopted by referendum at the end of 2011. The new Constitution created a number of new civil rights, including constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, social equality for women, rights for speakers of minority languages and the independence of judges. The prime minister replaced the king as the head of government and chair of the government council, gaining the power to dissolve parliament. Elections to the Moroccan parliament took place in November 2011 and brought the opposition parties to power.

Prof Vytautas LANDSBERGIS, Member of the European Parliament, former Speaker of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, warned against the usage of such terms as "people's democracy", "managed democracy" or "sovereign democracy". According to him, this was "Orwellian language" and posed danger to the very concept of democracy. The rivalry between the different forms of government should therefore remain in the framework of democracy vs. non-democracy. Selective justice represented the case of non-democratic

law, as in some of the Eastern Partnership countries at the time. According to Prof LANDSBERGIS, democracy meant due respect for every human being and for sound reason in general. Democracy was not a doctrine to be taught and learnt but a sensibly educated human approach to everything and everybody around, including one's own brothers and sisters of the same existential destiny.

Prof Marija Aušrinė PAVILIONIENĖ, Member of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Chair of the Women's Parliamentary Group, focused her presentation on issues of gender equality. The speaker stressed that gender equality was a human right that had to be cherished and respected, while real democracy was not possible without gender equality. According to Prof PAVILIONIENĖ, there was ample data demonstrating the vastness of gender inequality both within and outside the EU. She noted that not more than 20% of political representatives in the world were women. Globally, women spent 80% of their time caring for family, while men spent only 20% of their time for this purpose. She also spoke about other relevant problems, such as the use of contraceptives, reproductive health issues, participation of women on company boards, etc. She also noted with satisfaction that a women's forum was established at the 50th jubilee meeting of COSAC on 27-29 October 2013 in Vilnius.

During the debate similarities between the democratic transition in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism and in the Arab world following the Arab Spring were highlighted. Arab countries were urged to learn from the experience of the Eastern European countries. In efforts to build a genuine democracy, Arab countries were advised to curb extremism as strong extremes, no matter which side of the political spectrum they represented, were detrimental to democracy. It was noted that democracy was under threat in Europe as well – due to the rise of populism and extremism in the aftermath of the economic and social crisis. There was agreement among the participants that there was no better form of government than democracy but that democracy took time to build. At the same time equality, not only gender but also religious equality, was a prerequisite for any free society. Participants from Islamic countries stressed that gender equality did not contradict Islam.