

# **EU – GEORGIA**

## **PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting**

**18 - 19 June 2001**

**Brussels**

## **DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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27 June 2001  
IRE/PCC/GH/KM/es

Under the co-chairmanship of Mrs Ursula SCHLEICHER (EPP-DE, Germany) and Mrs Nino BURJANADZE (Georgian Citizens' Union), the third meeting of EU-Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee was held in Brussels on 18-19 June 2001. The Committee exchanged views with Mr Hans OLSSON, Director in the Swedish Foreign Ministry, representing the Swedish Presidency of the European Union, H.E. Mr Konstantin ZALDASTANISHVILI, Georgian Ambassador to the EU representing the Government of Georgia as well as with Mr Cornelis WITTEBROOD, Head of Unit, representing the European Commission.

### **The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee**

1. notes with satisfaction that, since the entering into force of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), all respective institutional structures have been established and have held their first meetings, thereby providing a solid basis for developing a strong political and economic partnership between the EU and Georgia;
2. took note of the second meeting of the Cooperation Council between the European Union and Georgia on 10 October 2000 in Luxembourg as well as of the EU's Ministerial Troika visit to the Southern Caucasus on 20/21 February 2001;
3. welcomes the statement by the Council of the European Union following the Troika visit to the Southern Caucasus in February 2001, demonstrating that the EU is willing to play a more active political role in the region, as well as to reinforce the bilateral and multilateral political dialogue with the countries concerned;

### **on economic and trade relations**

4. welcomes the continued economic reform process in Georgia as well as strengthened efforts to deepen economic relations and economic integration with the rest of the world. The PCC noted, however, that the implementation of the WTO obligations as well as of the economic reforms in some spheres remains a challenge for the country in some areas;
5. noted with satisfaction the intention and efforts by the Georgian Government to take active steps to improve investment conditions for local and foreign capital and know-how;
6. considered that one of the main obstacles for intensified economic and trade relations between Georgia and the EU as well as for the economic development of the country itself, is the business climate which still needs to be improved in order to attract investment and create favourable conditions for trade;
7. underlines that an important condition for strengthening economic links between Georgia and the EU is the approximation of Georgia's existing and future legislation to that of the EU;
8. welcomed in this respect the recent setting up by the Georgian authorities of a coordinating board for cooperation with the European Union as well as the approval by

the Georgian government of a strategy for legal approximation with the EU;

9. reiterated the need to simplify administrative and fiscal procedures and to reinforce the judiciary so that it can act independently of the executive, and impartially and efficiently deal with disputes, which are also essential for efficient operation of a social market economy;

#### **on EU assistance**

10. noted that, with regard to the relatively low level of EU-Georgia trade, one of the major aspects of EU-Georgia relations has been and should remain assistance in various areas for the renewal of civil society, democracy and the economy;
11. stressed in this respect that with an amount of about 333 Million Euro since independence the overall EU assistance to Georgia has been considerable;
12. took note of the approval in November 2000 of a new Tacis Indicative Program, outlining the Tacis strategy for 2000-2003 as well as the new Action Program 2000, with a budget of 11 Mio Euro and hopes that the additional 4 Mio Euro from the 2001 Action Program will be approved by 16 July. The PCC endorsed the respective selection of actions in the three key priority areas: institutional, legal and administrative reform, support for the private sector and assistance for development of infrastructure networks. The support of the social consequences of the transition is foreseen as an additional priority for the AP 2002-2003;
13. noted the allocation of additional EU grants to Georgia since its last meeting, including another tranche of 12 Mio Euro under the "1999 Food Security Program", targeted at the promotion of agricultural production and support for socially vulnerable families as well as two grants of 0.6 Mio Euro and 1.05 Mio Euro in October 2000 and March 2001 respectively via the EU's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), in order to help people who have been particularly affected by drought. The PCC supports new allocations of the Food Security program as from 2002;
14. recommended a further shift from humanitarian assistance to promoting trade and investment, including legislative approximation to EU law, as well as rehabilitation of conflict areas;
15. specifically welcomed the delivery by the European Commission, on the basis of a Council's Joint Action on border post equipment, worth 1 Mio Euro, in order to improve border security and to protect OSCE observer missions at the Georgian border with the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation, thereby demonstrating the importance which the European Union attaches to the security of Georgia and to the integrity of its borders. The PCC considers this assistance not as a single act, but rather as a first step in a long-term approach to EC assistance to Georgia for building-up capacity for border management. The PCC considers important further EU support for the strengthening of the Georgian Border Guards, including the improvement of their capacity to protect OSCE monitors at the northern borders of the country;

### **on political reform, democratisation and human rights**

16. welcomes the progress achieved by Georgia in the fields of democracy and human rights in the context of its accession to the Council of Europe, and reiterates the need for detailed information on the outcome of court cases on elections appeals;
17. considers that the establishment of a new legal framework for local government to be directly elected would strengthen democracy and the rule of law and would improve the efficiency of public administration in Georgia;
18. reiterates the importance of an active civil society and active NGOs for a democratic Georgia, and subscribes to the respect of the principles of freedom of expression and freedom of religion; in this light also expresses its concern about recent facts of religious violence and intolerance, while emphasising the need for new religious movements to respect the attachment of the majority of Georgian people to Christianity for 1,700 years;
19. encourages the Georgian Government and Parliament to continue to work on the basis of Council of Europe principles and ODIHR recommendations to review election legislation, and to improve access by Georgian citizens to an effective and impartial judicial system, which should ensure the basic rights and freedoms of the individual;
20. reminds the Government of Georgia to continue its judicial reform process, aiming at establishing a fully independent and apolitical judiciary, and expects judicial reform to be extended to the law enforcement authorities;
21. takes note of the progress achieved regarding the situation in prisons, mental hospitals and detention centres in Georgia and reiterates the necessity for further improvement;
22. recalls the active participation of Georgia in the diplomatic conference of plenipotentiaries for the establishment of an international criminal court and expresses the wish that Georgia will ratify as quickly as possible the statute on the International Criminal Court;

### **on EU-Georgia relations in a framework of regional cooperation**

23. reiterates the strategic, political and economic importance of Georgia, and the South Caucasian region, for the European Union, and its perspective of becoming a major transit corridor between Asia and Europe; recalls that the membership of Georgia in the Council of Europe gives it the opportunity to table a application for accession to the European Union;
24. recommends the Council of the European Union and the European Commission to develop and adopt as soon as possible a common strategy for the countries of the Southern Caucasus, incorporating the objective of the full integration of Georgia into the European Union;
25. notes with satisfaction the inauguration of the new Baku based secretariat for the EU-

financed TRACECA Project (Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia); stressed the importance of this and other projects of regional co-operation such as INOGATE (energy co-operation) and RARP (agricultural reform) for economic growth and prosperity in Georgia and in the whole region;

26. takes note of the work of the Regional Environment Centre in Tbilisi as an example of successful regional co-operation with substantial participation and support from the EU;
27. acknowledges that the imposition of visas in respect of international law is a matter for the sovereignty of a state, expressed, however, its deep concern about the impact of the unilateral introduction by the Russian Federation of a visa regime for Georgian citizens which was an attempt to exert additional political pressure on Georgia; moreover, regarding the exemption from the Russian visa regime of residents who are Georgian citizens in the secessionist Georgian regions of Tskhinvali/South Ossetia and Abkhazia, maintains that this exemption is a challenge to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia, which could be considered as a *de facto* annexation of those regions, an annexation confirmed by the circulation of the Russian rouble as the official currency for exchange in the secessionist regions;
28. underlines the importance of respecting the terms and conditions of withdrawal of the Russian military bases from the territory of Georgia as set out in the OSCE Istanbul Summit Declaration and expresses its concern because of the possible delay in the withdrawal of the military detachments from the Gudauta base; calls on the Russian Federation to be constructive while negotiating with Georgia the terms and conditions of the withdrawal of the military bases from Batumi and Akhalkalaki (Georgia);

#### **on the prospect of resolution of the internal conflicts in Georgia**

29. stresses that the unresolved internal conflicts in Georgia and in other parts of the South-Caucasian region impede economic development and political stability in the countries and in the whole region, confirming the reluctance of the Russian Federation to accept a new political order in Europe which respects the sovereignty of states and human rights;
30. reiterates its deep concern about a situation whereby the territories of the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia are *de facto* lawless territories outside the jurisdiction of Georgian law, and that the principles of democracy, human rights and rule of law, which Georgia has adhered to as a full member of the Council of Europe, are not fully respected in these secessionist territories; any negotiation on the status of the territories will have to be based on the relevant resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council. In this respect the PCC notes the necessity of the prompt adoption by the UN Security Council of the basic document on Division of the Constitutional Powers between Tbilisi and Sukhumi elaborated and approved by all States which are included in the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary General (apart from the Russian Federation);
31. calls upon all parties to, and mediators in, the conflicts in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia to intensify the efforts to find a political and peaceful solution to the conflicts on the basis of international law and with full respect for Georgia's

sovereignty and territorial integrity. The PCC expressed its full support to respective efforts by the UN and the OSCE. The EP supports involvement of the OSCE Ministerial “Troika” in the process of settlement of the Georgian/Ossetian conflict;

32. denounces the holding of local elections in the breakaway region of Abkhazia in March 2001 and considers their results null and void, and contrary to international efforts for a settlement of the situation;
33. equally condemns a referendum held in April 2001 by the separatist authorities in South Ossetia on the "adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of South Ossetia" aimed at a full independence of the territory;
34. reiterates its view that any solution on the future status of Abkhazia should respect the extensive rights of all ethnic and national groups, the territorial integrity of Georgia, the right of all refugees and displaced persons to unconditional return to their homes, in order to overcome the consequences of the ethnic cleansing committed against predominantly ethnic Georgian population living in Abkhazia;
35. welcomes the efforts of the European Commission to contribute to increasing confidence between the parties in the conflicts, in particular through the Rehabilitation Programme in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and the planned rehabilitation of the Inguri hydro power plant close to Abkhazia.