

Resolution on the conclusion of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Tajikistan, of the other part

2009/2624(RSP) - 17/09/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place on 16 September 2009, the European Parliament adopted a resolution, tabled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, on the conclusion of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, and the Republic of Tajikistan which was presented the same day.

It notes that the current framework for EU-Tajikistan relations, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and the former Soviet Union, will be replaced by a PCA once this has been ratified by all the EU Member States and by Tajikistan and once Parliament has given its assent. Parliament is aware of the strong sense of disappointment on the part of the Tajik Government that the PCA has not yet been concluded, and it expresses its intention to give its assent. However, it refers to the reforms that are desperately needed and draws the attention of Tajikistan above all to the conditionality implicit in the human rights/suspension clause.

Economic situation: Parliament is seriously concerned that, owing to the impact of the economic crisis and the inadequacies of the agricultural sector, 1.5 million people were in a situation of food insecurity. It urges the Tajik Government to address the supply-side root of the problem and to review its policy of over-ambitious projects which do nothing to address the fundamental needs of the people. At the same time, it calls on it to strengthen regional markets and improve local production and to implement food-support and job-creation programmes. Members want the Tajik Government to address the disastrous state of the education and health sectors, and to exploit the country's huge potential for hydroelectric power generation in a democratic manner. They urge the Commission to make every effort to facilitate the development of joint projects which involve all regional actors potentially affected and are in line with EU standards.

Political situation: whilst Tajikistan is a relatively stable country, there are indications of some cracks in the regime which have raised questions about the President's grip on power. Parliament draws attention to fears that entrenched poverty, rampant corruption and an increasingly authoritarian government may increase the risk of future political, economic and social instability. It calls on the Tajik Government to honour its commitments with regard to democratisation by allowing the emergence of a genuine multi-party political system and revising the Electoral Law.

Regional issues: Parliament stresses Tajikistan's geographical neighbourhood role vis-à-vis Afghanistan with a common frontier running for more than 1300 km with Afghanistan, and the related issues of drugs, terrorism and extremism. It notes the potential for Tajikistan to create a modern, functioning state capable of acting as a firewall against the spread of extremism from Afghanistan and the region. It also draws attention to the energy dispute between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (as evidenced by, the closure of the border by Uzbekistan, its cutting-off of gas supplies and the doubling of prices) and to the water disputes with Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyzstan, and calls for urgent region-wide consultations on the rational use of energy resources.

Human rights: Members are seriously concerned by human rights abuses in Tajikistan, perpetrated with virtual impunity and taking various forms, including pressure applied on courts and judges both by the government and by criminal networks, pressure on the media, widespread abuse of women's rights, child labour and the exploitation of students, including minors, for cotton harvesting, workers living in what the US-based Freedom House has described as 'financial servitude', appalling conditions of detention, including torture and other forms of mistreatment, and human trafficking.

The international community: Parliament urges international donors to take all possible steps to encourage the emergence of a dynamic civil society and to encourage the independent media to cover the issue of state corruption and the flow of international funds. It calls on the Commission to ensure that democracy and human rights are fully taken into account at all levels of its dialogue with Tajikistan and that the EU offers Tajikistan all the assistance it requires in those fields.

Lastly, the Commission is urged to engage in negotiations with the Tajik Government on the conclusion of implementing agreements for the PCA, such as that concerning readmission and the control of illegal immigration.