Negotiations on an enhanced partnership and cooperation agreement between the EU and Kazakhstan. Recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Liisa JAAKONSAARI (S&D, FI) containing the European Parliament's recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service on the negotiations for an EU-Kazakhstan enhanced partnership and cooperation agreement (PCA).

Members, first of all, underline the troubles which have marked the political life of this country and note that, notwithstanding the Kazakh government's stated ambition to strengthen Kazakhstan's democratic process and to conduct elections in line with international standards, the general elections held on 15 January 2012 were deemed by the OSCE not to be in line with its standards.

They also recall that, after the tragic events of December 2011 in Zhanaozen, (demonstration of strikers within the oil sector which the anti-riot police answered by opening fire on the civilians, causing the death of several people) opposition parties, independent media, trade unions, activists and human rights defenders have become **targets of repression**. Members also emphasise the fact that the opposition within the country is persecuted.

Whilst they welcome Kazakhstan's political will and practical engagement to further deepen partnership with the EU, they consider that the negotiations must ensure that this PCA is a comprehensive framework for the **further development of relations, addressing all priority areas, including human rights, the rule of law, good governance, and democratisation** but also economic development, trade and investment, energy and transport.

Among the broad topics for negotiation, Members prioritise the following key elements:

Political dialogue and cooperation: Members demand that the EU works closely with Kazakhstan in order to promote **regional cooperation and the improvement of neighbourly relations in the Central Asia region**, whilst ensuring that the tackling of questions such as border management, the fight against extremism and counter-terrorism. Members particularly insist that the EU encourages Kazakhstan to work together with its neighbours in order to come to a **common solution on the status of the Caspian Sea**.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms: Members believe that the PCA should incorporate clauses and benchmarks relating to the protection and promotion of human rights as enshrined in the Constitution of Kazakhstan and other relevant international instruments. Progress in the negotiation of the new PCA must be linked to the **progress of political reform** of the type that builds up an open and democratic society including an independent civil society and opposition. Evoking the Parliament's resolution of 15 March 2012 demanding the release of all persons detained on politically motivated charges in the country, Members call on the Kazakh authorities to investigate all allegations in connection with the Zhanaozen violence and to punish those responsible. They call on the country's authorities, moreover, to allow the opposition to express itself and to release condemned activists such as Vladimir Kozlov, Akzhanat Aminov et Serik Sapargali. Members demand, among other things: i) a binding commitment from the country to bring the legal system fully into line with international standards; ii) access to independent

justice; iii) the end of politically motivated arrests and convictions carried out on the basis of the vague criminal charge of “inciting social discord”; iv) the establishment of independent civil society platforms in order to ensure that the aspirations and voices of civil society are heard; v) intensifying the scope of the exchange programmes in education and culture, and visa facilitation.

Economic cooperation: in conformity with WTO rules, Members call for the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers in order to extend trade, particularly trade in services and foreign investment. Principally within the **field of energy**, the cooperation must be reinforced, particularly in terms of the efforts to develop the trans-Caspian energy route. Members further recommend that Kazakhstan’s participation in the Russian-led Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union does not constitute **a barrier to trade or to economic and financial cooperation** with the EU.

They call for:

- the convergence of Kazakhstan’s standards and regulatory systems with those of the EU;
- stepping up its technical assistance to Kazakhstan in the field of water conservation and management of water resources;
- the adoption of effective mitigation measures and cleaning-up programmes of radioactive waste and radioactive pollution in the Semey/Semipalatinsk region;
- a binding trade and sustainable development chapter to be included in the trade title of the new agreement;
- increased trade flows and investment, which would favour the modernisation and diversification of Kazakhstan’s economy;
- a binding trade and sustainable development chapter;
- the adoption of stronger and binding provisions in relation to corporate social responsibility and the fight against corruption;
- the use of dumping practices in connection with **phosphorus production and export** to be categorically ruled out, as the interests of European producers are allegedly being harmed by dumped imports.

On the **institutional level**, lastly, Members hope that the European Parliament sees its role reinforced within the framework of these negotiations and the follow-up of this agreement. They call for the establishment of a comprehensive monitoring mechanism between Parliament and EEAS once the Agreement is concluded, so as to allow for comprehensive and regular information on the implementation of the PCA, and in particular of its objectives, so as to duly inform the Parliament of the results of the actions undertaken as regards reform in the field of the human rights.