Pakistan's regional role and political relations with the EU

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The European Parliament adopted by 457 votes to 26 with 65 abstentions, a resolution on Pakistan's regional role and political relations with the EU.

Parliament noted that Pakistan's strategic role in the region, its relationship to its neighbours and EU-Pakistan relations were of major and growing importance to the EU.

Although parliamentary elections in March 2013 marked the first transfer of power from one elected civilian government to another in the modern history of Pakistan, the country's political and economic progress was hampered by **pervasive internal and regional security problems** (extremism, sectarian strife, suicide and targeted killings).

Parliament recalled that that Pakistan was one of the largest recipients of EU development and humanitarian assistance and the EU was Pakistan's largest export market. The EU and Pakistan had recently chosen to deepen and broaden their bilateral ties, as exemplified by the 2012 EU-Pakistan five-year engagement plan and the first EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue. Moreover, as from 1 January 2014, Pakistan was integrated into the EU's special generalised scheme of trade preferences (GSP+).

Governance: Parliament stated that building a sustainable democracy and a pluralistic society – as well as achieving greater social justice, eradicating deep poverty and malnutrition in parts of the country, raising the basic education level and preparing the country for the effects of climate change – would entail deep and difficult reforms of Pakistan's political and socio-economic order. The latter remained characterised by:

- feudalistic structures of land ownership and political allegiances;
- imbalances in priorities between military spending on the one hand and welfare provision, education and economic development on the other;
- a dysfunctional revenue collection system that systematically undercut the state's capacity to deliver public goods.

Parliament considered that that elected civilian governments, endowed with democratic legitimacy, devolution of power to the provinces and effective local government were the best means of containing the tide of violence and extremism, restoring state authority in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and ensuring Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Governance: Parliament reiterated that good governance, accountable and inclusive institutions, separation of powers and respect for fundamental rights were important elements to address the nexus of development and security in Pakistan.

Security issues: Parliament called on the Pakistani Government to fulfil its security obligations and responsibilities by further engaging in the fight against extremism, terrorism and radicalisation, with the implementation of strict and uncompromising security measures and law enforcement, as well as by addressing inequality and socio-economic issues likely to fuel the radicalisation of Pakistani youth.

As regards **drone attacks**, Parliament noted that the Pakistani Government had clearly expressed its opposition to US drone strikes on its territory. It welcomed the UN General Assembly resolution which called for further clarification of the legal framework applicable for the use of armed drones.

On the other hand, Parliament was concerned by reports that Pakistan were considering **exporting nuclear weapons to third countries**. It called on Pakistan, as a nuclear weapon state, to legally ban exports of all nuclear weapons-related material or know-how and to actively contribute to international non-proliferation efforts.

It considered that the signing and ratification of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) by Pakistan – as well as India – would demonstrate a strong commitment to peaceful regional co-existence and enormously contribute to the security of the whole region.

Pakistan-EU relations: Parliament stressed that **EU-Pakistan relations needed to grow deeper and more comprehensive** by developing political dialogue, thereby maintaining a relationship of mutual interest amongst equal partners. Members considered that Pakistan's democratic transition had engendered an opportunity for the EU to follow a more explicitly political approach in bilateral relations and provision of assistance. EU support to Pakistan should prioritise the consolidation of democratic institutions at all levels.

The EEAS and the Commission were urged to pursue a nuanced and multi-dimensional policy towards Pakistan that synergised all the relevant instruments at the EU's disposal, such as political dialogue, security cooperation, trade and assistance, in line with the EU's comprehensive approach to external action and with a view to preparations for the next EU-Pakistan summit. They should also ensure that EU policy towards Pakistan was **contextualised and embedded in a broader strategy for the region**, thereby reinforcing EU interests across South and Central Asia.

Discrimination against women: Parliament remained deeply concerned about the quality of **education** and, in a related manner, the alarming situation of **women** in many parts of Pakistan. They called for concrete and visible measures to enforce women's fundamental rights in the society, including the enactment of legislation against domestic violence, steps to improve the investigation and prosecution of honour killings and acid attacks, and a revision of the legislation that facilitates impunity. Parliament pointed to the need to ensure better access to education, better integration of women in the labour market and better maternal healthcare.

Parliament also reiterated concern that Pakistan's blasphemy laws – which could carry the death sentence and are often used to justify censorship, criminalisation, persecution and, in certain cases, the murder of members of political and religious minorities – were open to a misuse that affects people of all faiths in Pakistan. The Pakistani government should implement a moratorium on the use of these laws. Pakistan should also intensify its efforts to preserve **freedom of religion and belief**, including by moving towards abolition of the death penalty.

Lastly, the resolution condemned all attacks on Christians and other religious minorities living in Pakistan.