Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Kazakhstan, of the other part

2017/2035(INI) - 12/12/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 545 votes to 68, with 39 abstentions, a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Kazakhstan, of the other part.

Kazakhstan is the first Central Asian country to have signed an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) with the EU. The agreement sets out a broad spectrum of new areas of cooperation.

Members noted **Kazakhstan's consistent strategy of rapprochement with the EU** and stressed the country's essential contribution to the implementation of the EU-Central Asia strategy, which will undergo a substantial review in 2019.

The EPCA establishes a solid basis for the deepening of relations and Members consider this new-generation agreement to be a **good model** that could in future also be applied to other countries in the region.

Members reiterated their call on the Council, Commission and the VP/HR to provide for a **comprehensive monitoring mechanism** between Parliament and the EEAS once the EPCA fully enters into force.

Parliament called on the EU to consistently prioritise in its political dialogue with Kazakhstan, the issues of the **rule of law and democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights**.

In general, Kazakhstan is called upon to:

- take proactive and concrete steps on **political, democratic and social reforms**, including a clear separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches, and introducing further checks and balances within the constitutional system;
- fully implement the recommendations from the OSCE/ODIHR international observation mission to the 20 March 2016 elections according to which the country still has a considerable way to go in meeting its OSCE commitments for democratic elections;
- avoid restricting the activity of independent candidates;
- enhance governance and reform, with a **truly independent judiciary** free from corruption and guaranteeing the right to a fair trial and defence rights, and for greater, more efficient efforts in fighting corruption, organised crime and drug trafficking;
- step up programmes aimed at strengthening and consolidating the action of independent NGOs;
- end the judicial persecution, harassment and imprisonment of independent journalists, civil society activists, opposition political figures and other outspoken individuals in retaliation for their exercise of the freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms;
- release of all activists and political prisoners currently in jail, as well as for the lifting of restrictions placed on the movements on others;

- refrain from restricting **access to state-critical online and offline media** in the country and from abroad;
- revise its Trade Union Law of 2014 and the Labour Code of 2015 to bring them in line with ILO standards;
- maintain commitment and play a constructive role on the international scene; Members welcomed in this respect its call for the progressive elimination of armed conflicts by nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament;
- cooperate to fight violent extremism and terrorism.

For its part, the EU is urged to:

- engage in more active energy cooperation and to bolster its dialogue with Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries to strengthen EU energy security;
- assist Kazakhstan so as to make its economy environmentally friendly and sustainable

Parliament recalled that the EU is the country's first trade and investment partner and that Kazakhstan is the EU's main trade partner in Central Asia. It reiterated the importance of greater diversification of its trade with the EU. It welcomed Kazakhstan's accession to the WTO on 1 January 2016 and stressed that the EU could play an important role in the implementation of the programme to **diversify Kazakhstan's economy** which is largely based on the exploitation and export of raw materials and hydrocarbons.