

Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development between the EU and Afghanistan

2015/0302M(NLE) - 01/02/2019 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the report by Anna Elbieta FOTYGA (ECR, PL) containing a motion for a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, of the other part.

Political and strategic aspects

Members reaffirmed their commitment to support the Afghan government in its efforts to build a secure and stable future for the Afghan people. They stressed that Afghanistan's long-term development will depend on accountability, good governance, the sustainability of human security, as well as poverty reduction and job creation, access to social and health services, education and the protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights, including the rights of women and minorities.

The report stressed the need to manage affairs in a manner that ensures inclusive economic growth and favourable conditions for sustainable foreign investment that benefits the people of Afghanistan, with full respect for social, environmental and labour standards.

Members called on the EU to assist in efforts against the long-term trend of inter-ethnic tensions that contributes to the disintegration of central power. They expressed their long-term support for credible, free, fair and transparent elections in line with international standards, as well as for the observation of elections in the country by the Union.

With regard to the EU's financial and political support for the social and economic development of Afghanistan, humanitarian aid and regional connectivity, the report called for further efforts to promote joint programming between the EU and its Member States.

Regional actors

Members stressed that the support and positive cooperation of neighbouring countries and regional powers, in particular China, Iran, India, Russia and Pakistan, were essential for the stabilisation, development and economic viability of Afghanistan. They called on these neighbours to refrain from involving proxy allies in their rivalries in Afghanistan and called on regional powers to cooperate fully in order to achieve a stable and lasting peace in Afghanistan.

Underlining the mobility and sustained activity of terrorist networks operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Members called on the EU to step up its efforts to engage in dialogue and cooperation with regional partners to combat drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorist financing and trafficking in human beings.

Security and peace

Members expressed concern about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan and the steady gains of territory by Taliban militants and various terrorist groups such as the IS-KP, which appears to be greatly reinforced by the presence of foreign fighters. They condemned the attacks perpetrated by these actors against Afghan civilians, security forces, institutions and civil society. They

reaffirmed their commitment to the fight against all forms of terrorism and their support for Afghanistan's inclusive peace and reconciliation process.

State building

Members called on the Afghan government to show more political inclusiveness, strengthen accountability and actively combat corruption.

The EU is called on to: (i) ensure that EU funds are invested in projects that support the Afghan population and that municipalities receive adequate support to provide essential services and build local governance, (ii) ensure coordination between central and local authorities to identify investment priorities, (iii) promote support to civil society and prioritise funding for projects that support human rights and foster the development of locally rooted dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms.

Civil society and human rights

Members welcomed the EU-Afghanistan Partnership and Development Cooperation Agreement on dialogue on human rights issues, in particular the rights of women, children and ethnic and religious minorities. They insisted that the EU maintain a strong stance on respect for human rights and called for specific measures to be taken if the Afghan government violates essential elements of the agreement. The Afghan government is urged to introduce a moratorium on capital punishment, with a view to the complete abolition of the death penalty.

Development and trade

The report underlined that the end goal of EU aid to Afghanistan is to help the country's government and economy eradicate poverty and develop to a state of independence and growth with internal development and regional cooperation through external trade and sustainable public investment.

Members insisted on the need to find a solution to address the high rate of unemployment and fight poverty, provide more job opportunities outside of farming and working for the government are needed in order to prevent young men from being recruited to the Taliban and support the Afghan education system in order to increase the number of children in school at all levels. They called for programmes such as Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 to be exploited to the fullest in this context.

Migration

Members are concerned about the unprecedented numbers of returning migrants mainly from Pakistan and Iran, and to a lesser extent from Europe. They pointed out that issues relating to internally displaced persons and refugees are a result of the threat of violence from insurgent groups in Afghanistan, as well as economic and environmental factors. They stressed that efforts by the EU and the international community should be focused on preventing the root causes of mass migration. While welcoming the Afghan national return management strategy, Members are concerned about the lack of standing integration policies of the Afghan authorities to manage the present returnees.

The Commission is invited to present comprehensive strategies for each sector with the aim of ensuring widespread development in all areas of cooperation with Afghanistan.

Lastly, Members stressed the role of the European Parliament, the parliaments of the Member States and the Afghan Parliament in monitoring the implementation of the agreement.