Scope and mandate for EU Special Representatives. Recommendation to the Vice President/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Hilde VAUTMANS (ALDE, BE) on a European Parliament recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on the scope and mandate for EU Special Representatives.

Members recalled the EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) are appointed by the Council on a proposal from the VP/HR, with the mandate of advancing particular goals of a thematic or geographically specific political or security nature. There are currently five regional EUSRs (for the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, Central Asia, the Middle East Peace Process, and the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia), two country-specific EUSRs (Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina), and one thematic EUSR, responsible for human rights. The EUSRs are financed out from the CFSP budget, as co-decided by Parliament, and are accountable for budget implementation vis-à-vis the Commission.

The committee made certain recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the VP/HR:

- to ensure that EUSRs are only appointed if there is a clear added value in using this instrument, i.e. if their tasks cannot be efficiently fulfilled by existing structures within the EEAS, including by EU Delegations, or within the Commission;

- to ensure that EUSRs are primarily used to step up EU efforts in conflict prevention and resolution and implementation of the EU strategies, in particular through mediation and dialogue facilitation, and to advance EU policy objectives in specific thematic fields;

- to consider all possible means to strengthen the role of the EUSRs as an effective tool of EU external policy, capable of developing and advancing EU foreign policy initiatives;

On the mandate

- to permit an adequate length of mandate that creates a perspective enabling the hiring of qualified senior staff and allows implementation of the mandate, as well as confidence-building with partners, establishing networks and influencing processes;

- to ensure that Parliament’s Committee on Foreign Affairs is involved in the drafting of the mandates, new and extended, of the EUSRs;

On the tools

- to maintain the flexibility and autonomy that EUSRs currently enjoy as a distinctive CFSP instrument with a separate financing source and a privileged relationship with the Council;

- to address the shortcomings in maintaining institutional memory and continuity between outgoing and incoming EUSRs by reinforcing logistical and administrative support;

On the personal profile

- to appoint as EUSRs persons with extensive diplomatic and political expertise and an appropriate profile, ensuring in particular that they have the political clout needed to establish links and mutual trust with high-level interlocutors;

- to ensure that the appointment of EUSRs may only be confirmed after a positive evaluation by Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs;

On the areas covered

- to phase out the mandates of the existing country-specific EUSRs and, pending the overall division of responsibilities in the next Commission and the EEAS, to consider the appointment of regional EUSRs;

- to consider appointing thematic EUSRs for the international coordination of the fight against climate change, for international humanitarian law and international justice, and for disarmament and non-proliferation, in the last-named case to take over from the current EU Special Envoy for this area;

- to appoint a new EUSR for Ukraine, focusing in particular on Crimea and Donbas, to be responsible for monitoring the human rights situation in occupied territories, implementation of the Minsk Agreements, de-escalation in the Sea of Azov and pursuing the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs), as previously called for by Parliament in its resolutions.

On interaction and cooperation

- to reinforce the interaction and coordination of EUSRs with the different EU institutions, civil society and the Member States so as to ensure maximum synergy and coherent engagement of all actors;

- to reinforce Parliament's oversight of the EUSRs' activities and to enhance their level of accountability and the transparency of their work;

- to encourage interaction and facilitate dialogue with civil society and citizens, in the regions covered by EUSRs.

Members considered that the next European Parliament should require a commitment from the new VP /HR to come up with a strategic reflection on the use of EUSRs, in the context of the implementation of the Global Strategy and along the lines of the principles and recommendations set out above, within the first six months of his or her mandate.