Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development between the EU and Afghanistan

2015/0302M(NLE) - 13/03/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 565 votes to 53, with 55 abstentions, 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 (CAPD) between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, of the other part.

The CAPD will be the first contractual relationship between the EU and Afghanistan, confirming the EU's commitment to Afghanistan's future development during the 'decade of transformation' (2014-2024), strengthening historical, political and economic ties between the two parties.

Political and strategic aspects

Parliament reaffirmed its commitment to support the Afghan government in its efforts to build a secure and stable future for the people by carrying out reforms to strengthen governance and the rule of law, combat terrorism and extremism, achieve sustainable peace and development, build legitimate and democratic institutions, ensure respect for human rights (including the rights of women, children, ethnic and religious minorities), combat corruption, combat drugs and promote social and rural development.

The resolution 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.

Since 2002, the European Union and its Member States collectively have been the largest international donor to Afghanistan and its people, providing over EUR 3.66 billion in development and humanitarian aid. Members 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, Parliament 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

Concerned about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan, Parliament condemned attacks by Taliban militants and various terrorist groups such as the IS-KP against Afghan civilians, security forces, institutions and civil society. It reaffirmed the Union's support for the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process and expressed its readiness to contribute, to this with all appropriate EU instruments, as soon as a meaningful peace process is launched. It called on the Taliban to denounce violence, join the peace process and accept the Afghan Constitution.

State building

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

The EU is called on to ensure that EU funds are invested in projects that support the Afghan population, to promote support for civil society and to prioritise funding for projects that support human rights and foster the development of locally rooted dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms.

Parliament called on the Afghan government to introduce targeted measures to reverse the trend of increasing opium cultivation in Afghanistan and called for concrete and sustainable alternatives to poppy cultivation.

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 resolution 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. 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.

While the agreement provides that the parties should sign a formal readmission agreement, Members deplored that only an informal agreement has been concluded. They called for any readmission agreement to be formalised in order to ensure democratic accountability.

Noting that according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 5.5 million people in Afghanistan are in need of humanitarian assistance, Members called for increased efforts to address humanitarian problems and the needs of populations, with particular attention to vulnerable people.

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.