EU-Armenia relations

2021/2230(INI) - 20/02/2023 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Andrey KOVATCHEV (EPP, BG) on EU-Armenia relations.

The report noted that over more than three decades, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as well as the recent incursion by Azerbaijan into Armenian sovereign territory have resulted in tens of thousands of casualties, immense destruction and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has not yet been resolved.

Conflict resolution and normalisation of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations

Members are convinced that durable and sustainable peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan cannot be achieved through military means and the threat of force but requires a comprehensive political settlement in accordance with international law. They reaffirmed that, in order to be effective, a **comprehensive peace treaty** must include provisions that guarantee the integrity of Armenia's sovereign territory, the rights and security of the Armenian population residing in Nagorno-Karabakh and other conflict afflicted areas, and the prompt and safe return of refugees and internally displaced people to their homes.

The report strongly condemned the large-scale military aggression by Azerbaijan in September 2022 against multiple places in the sovereign territory of Armenia, which constituted a serious breach of the ceasefire and contradicted earlier commitments, including those made as part of EU-mediated talks.

The Azerbaijani authorities are called on to:

- immediately withdraw from all parts of the territory of Armenia and to release the POWs under their control;

- remove any obstacles that would hinder freedom and security of movement along the Lachin corridor.

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan are urged to:

- fully implement the tripartite ceasefire statement of 9 November 2020 in all its aspects;

- advance discussions on the future peace treaty, to address the root causes of the conflict and to refrain from any steps that could lead to further escalation;

- urgently implement measures to prepare their respective populations for peaceful coexistence, including those enhancing people-to-people contact;

- refrain from any hostile rhetoric or actions that may be perceived as inciting hatred or outright violence or as supporting impunity, or that risk undermining the efforts to establish and promote an atmosphere conducive to trust and reconciliation, cooperation and sustainable peace;

- set up a transitional **justice mechanism** as a confidence-building step to achieve lasting peace and reconciliation, with a mandate to establish the fate of missing persons, to repatriate POWs and to invest in establishing historical truths based on a factual assessment of events during the armed conflict which started in 1988.

Enhanced EU involvement

The EU is urged to be more actively involved in settling the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In this regard, the report recalled that the EU's perceived passive stance during and immediately after the 2020 war gave other regional actors, such as Russia, Iran and Türkiye, the opportunity to gain influence in the region. Members strongly support the initiative taken by the President of the European Council Charles Michel to **convene and mediate bilateral meetings** of the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Brussels.

Furthermore, Members welcomed the establishment of the **civilian European Union Mission in Armenia** under the common security and defence policy, which aims to help increase security in the region by decreasing the number of incidents in conflict-affected and border areas in Armenia, to reduce the level of risks for the population living in such areas and thereby to contribute to the normalisation of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the ground, while at the same time increases visibility of the EU in the region.

While welcoming the humanitarian assistance provided by the EU for the conflict-affected population in and around Nagorno-Karabakh and its leading role in assisting humanitarian demining in the areas affected by the conflict, the Commission is called on to ensure **additional funding and assistance** for demining efforts, including equipment, training and risk education. The report also called for additional demining cooperation with experts from EU Member States and NGOs.

Foreign and security policy

Members support the normalisation of relations between Armenia and Türkiye in the interest of reconciliation, regional stability and security as well as socio-economic development and welcomed the progress achieved so far, including the resumption of flights between the two countries. Türkiye is encouraged once again to recognise the Armenian Genocide to pave the way for genuine reconciliation between the Turkish and Armenian peoples, and to fully respect its obligations to protect Armenian cultural heritage.

The committee draws the attention of the Armenian authorities to the risks of cooperating with the Iranian authoritarian regime, which, among other crimes and violations, is a supplier of military equipment that is being used by Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine.

Democratic reforms, rule of law and good governance

The report welcomed the full entry into force of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) on 1 March 2021 and Armenia's commitment to its implementation. Members commended Armenia for the significant reforms and thorough democratisation process implemented over the past few years and for thus becoming a leader in democracy in the region. They also acknowledged Armenia's successful fight against crime and corruption, making it one of the safest countries in the region. They, however, encouraged Armenia to continue its efforts to implement reforms and strengthen democracy, the rule of law and good governance and appreciates the progress already made.

Armenia should take the steps necessary to better protect human rights, especially women's rights and the rights of minorities, including LGBTIQ people.

Economic and trade relations

The report noted that over the last 10 years, the volume of Armenia-EU bilateral trade has been increasing. Armenia, the EU and its Member States, as well as European companies and investors, are encouraged to take the necessary steps to further enhance their economic and trade relations.