EC/Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

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The Committee was unanimous, with 2 abstentions from the Greens, in agreeing with the recommendation of its rapporteur, Mrs Hélène CARRERE D'ENCAUSSE (RDE, F), that the House give its assent (by a majority of votes cast) to this partnership agreement. At the close of the vote, Mrs CARRERE D'ENCAUSSE expressed the view that saying yes to the partnership agreement was "the only way of aiding the democratic process. One does not help the process by not calling for a dialogue". Recalling the result of the Presidential elections in Poland, she saw there something which "might encourage the revival of nationalism throughout Russia". The rapporteur presented the reasons behind her call for Parliament's assent : - the agreement contains a suspensive clause and the slightest hitch can lead to its suspension. - The rapporteur focused on 3 main points: 1. Such an agreement can help stabilise Russia and the surrounding region. 2. The agreement is a decisive instrument of foreign policy and will provide a basis for dialogue. 3. Finally, the agreement seeks the economic integration of Russia into an enlarged European arena. - The content of the agreement signed on 24 June 1994. This was largely based on the European agreements signed with the CCEE, but unlike the latter its ultimate purpose is not accession to the European Union. Considered an instrument of foreign policy, it should pave the way for a most-favoured-nation agreement and should subsequently lead to the setting up of a free-trade area. Against this background the agreement focuses on: * the respect for human rights and the principles of democracy and the market economy. These provisions are supported by a democracy clause which makes it possible to operate in the manner indicated by the rapporteur above. * the opening of a political dialogue. * finally, the aims of the agreement are: - to support Russia's efforts towards the consolidation of democracy; - to develop its economy and to complete the process of establishing a market economy. This will enable Russia to integrate with the political and economic structures of the West. - to maintain and develop regional cooperation between the independent States and the former USSR.