EC/Georgia agreement: partnership and cooperation agreement

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The foundations need to be laid for partnership with Georgia, while ensuring that this Caucasian country respected human rights. This was the position taken by the committee, which proposed that the European Parliament assent (by majority vote) to the partnership and cooperation agreements between the European Communities and their Member States and the three Transcaucasian states. The rapporteur, Mrs Magdalene HOFF (PSE, D) proposed this decision, while highlighting the fact that the situation in the region gave cause for concern and calling on the Union to remain vigilant with regard to respect for human rights in this country. Mrs HOFF considered that the territorial integrity of Georgia should be respected. Having said which, this country should recognize the rights of its minorities, such as the Abkhaz. The rapporteur justified her call for a positive vote on the partnership agreement by stating that it would help these countries implement the political and economic reform needed in order to come into line with European standards. She stressed the need for a European profile in the Transcaucasian countries which, like Russia, provided an element of stability in the region. However, a number of members expressed reservations on a positive vote, citing the problems of the recognition of minorities, human rights, what they consider to be the occupation of part of Azerbaidjan by Armenia and the "lack of democratic legitimacy" of president Chevarnadze.