

Relations between the European Union and Russia

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Cecilia MALMSTRÖM (ALDE, SE) on relations between the EU and Russia . It called for further integration of Russia into the world economy and closer involvement of the country in European security, while voicing concern over human rights and the development of democracy.

MEPs warned of the "apparent weakening of Russia 's commitment to democracy, the market economy and the protection of human rights". They highlighted reports of discrimination and anti-semitism, restrictions on the media and the use of the judicial system for political goals. However, they also acknowledged Russia's potential as a strategic partner, not only in the economic and trade spheres, but also in fighting international terrorism and trafficking in drugs, arms and people, and addressing environmental and nuclear hazards.

Mentioning Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Georgia, MEPs said they rejected "foreign policies aimed at creating spheres of influence" and asked Russia to see the spread of democracy in neighbouring countries and the development of stronger ties to the EU in these countries not as a threat but as "a chance to renew political and economic cooperation with those countries".

The committee remained deeply concerned about the continuing failure to end lawlessness in Chechnya and the "lack of will to seek a negotiated solution as exemplified by the rejection of the ceasefire proposed by the late President Maskhadov and of his subsequent brutal killing", which it condemned. It urged the Council again to be prepared to give assistance to a peaceful and constructive dialogue.

However, the report underlined the importance of Russia 's support for the ICC and the Kyoto Protocol. MEPs stressed the importance of setting up a common external security area and also called for further cooperation in the field of maritime safety, especially on a ban for single-hull tankers in the Baltic and Black Seas . And they urged the EU to offer Russia help in the dismantling of its nuclear arsenal, while calling on Russia to contribute to worldwide non-proliferation and disarmament, especially concerning Iran . They also advocated the opening of negotiations with Russia on a free trade area as soon as it has joined the WTO.

Finally, MEPs urged the EU and individual Member States to ensure that agreed positions are always fully respected in their contacts with Russia .