

Resolution on the EU-Russia summit in Samara on 18 May 2007

2007/2554(RSP) - 10/05/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the EU-Russia summit to be held on 18 May. It recalled that the start of the negotiations on the new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement has been delayed and made conditional upon the Russian Government lifting a ban on Polish imports introduced in 2005, and efforts are being made by the EU to find a compromise on the Polish meat imports issue, in order to end this political impasse. Parliament stressed the importance of strengthening unity and solidarity among the EU Member States in their relations with Russia. It welcomed, therefore, the common line taken by the EU in the negotiations with the Russian Government on the lifting of Russia's ban on imports of Polish agricultural products. Parliament encouraged the German Presidency to continue its efforts to enable the negotiating mandate for a new agreement to be adopted as soon as possible.

With regard to recent events in Tallin, where the normal functioning of the Estonian embassy in Moscow has been blocked and several of its diplomats have been physically attacked by demonstrators surrounding the embassy and burning the Estonian flag, Parliament wanted the EU to speak with one voice, and called on Russia to fully respect its obligations under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations by guaranteeing the protection of foreign diplomats and the normal functioning of foreign embassies.

Parliament felt that the current situation in Russia gives rise to serious concern in terms of respect for human rights, democracy, freedom of expression and the rights of civil society and individuals to challenge authorities and hold them accountable for their actions. A robust defence of human rights and democratic values should be a core principle of any EU engagement with Russia. It urged the Commission to ensure that these values do not have a subsidiary status in the EU-Russia negotiating package. Parliament expressed its deep concern about the use of force by the Russian authorities against peaceful anti-government demonstrators in Moscow and St Petersburg over the past few weeks, as well as the reports about the use of torture and the commission of inhumane and degrading acts in prisons, police stations and secret detention centres in Chechnya. It underlined the fact that the Russian Government has rejected the mandate conferred in October 2006 on the UN Special Rapporteur on torture, who planned to visit prisons in North Caucasus without prior notice.

Parliament expressed its concern about social and political polarisation and the restriction of democratic freedoms in the run-up to the Duma elections in December 2007 and the presidential elections in March 2008. It was also concerned about declarations made by President Putin in reaction to the United States' plans to deploy components of its anti-ballistic missile system in Poland and the Czech Republic, and called on all parties involved to engage in dialogue. It asked the US to increase its efforts to consult and explain its planned missile defence system in order to allow NATO and the EU to remain united. There must be a thorough discussion of these proposals, including the need for them, a threat assessment and the possibility of different areas of security both in the EU and NATO frameworks. Parliament stressed the importance of consulting on the system within the NATO-Russia Council.

Parliament reiterated its support for Russian membership of the WTO, which will help Russia to come to terms with the rules on the global market. WTO accession should lead to deeper economic integration between the EU and Russia. It was important to establish the Common Economic Space (CES) and further developing the objectives agreed upon in the CES Road Map, especially as regards the creation of an open and integrated market between the EU and Russia. Parliament expected that Russia will lift the embargo on some Moldovan and Georgian products.

It welcomed the intensified EU-Russia dialogue on energy issues, and underlined the importance of energy imports for European economies. It advocated the exchange of information on advanced energy technologies and encouraged contacts between EU and Russian energy sector actors, as well the efforts necessary to improve energy efficiency and to develop non-CO₂-emitting technologies, which present significant opportunities for cooperation, particularly industrial cooperation, with the exchange of best practices and technologies between Russian and EU companies.

Lastly, Parliament welcomed the initiatives to achieve visa-free travel between the EU and Russia, holding out the prospect of improved relations. The Council and the Commission must ensure that Russia complies with all the conditions set in any negotiated agreement on the elimination of visas between the two sides, so as to prevent any breach of security and democracy in Europe.