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Pressure exerted by Russia on Eastern Partnership countries

Greens/EFA motion for resolution

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the third Summit of the Eastern Partnership, which will be held in Vilnius in November 2013,
- having regard to the fact that Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia and Moldova have the prospect of, respectively, signing and initialling Association Agreements with the European Union; having regard in particular to the new, enriched character of association that is at stake, offering a broad and deep relationship with European partners and therefore going well beyond merely economic benefits towards strong political and societal relations,
- having regard to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum concerning Ukrainian nuclear disarmament, which gives Ukraine guarantees against the use or threat of force and provides for support being given to the country should an attempt be made to place pressure on it by economic coercion,
- having regard to the Helsinki Final Act,
- having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements between the EU and Eastern Partnership countries are a commitment by the willing and able to strengthen and successfully pursue cooperation between the parties in many areas;

B. whereas the pressure most recently faced by Eastern Partnership countries progressing on the road to Association Agreements, including trade restrictions and protective measures applied by Russia, has put these countries in a precarious position as a result of geopolitical constraints to which they should not be subject;

C. whereas the type of pressure exerted on Eastern Partnership countries, ranging from current economic and political aspects to the announcement of future economic restrictions, signals Russia's intention to continue to consider the Eastern Partnership region as its sphere of influence and oppose the prospect of these countries' closer integration with the European Union via the Association Agreements;

D. whereas, due to the continuing strong interdependence between the economies of the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia, Moscow's trade sanctions and restrictions have serious repercussions in the countries concerned;

E. whereas the EU and Russia, in spite of the efforts to develop a strategic partnership over the last few years, have shown that they have conflicting views in terms of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, with Russia moving farther away from the values upon which the EU was founded;

F. whereas Eastern Partnership countries have the full sovereign right and freedom to build relations as equal partners with countries of their choice, in line with the Helsinki Final Act;

G. whereas, now more than ever, due attention needs to be paid to increasing pressures in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood and on the Eastern Partnership project itself, which is being challenged and questioned in practice by Russia;

F. whereas Russia holds the key to resolving the frozen conflicts; whereas this power is repeatedly used to weaken or undermine the full sovereignty of some Eastern Partnership countries, according to Moscow's geopolitical and economic interests;

1. Recalls that the principles of equality and respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty, non-intervention in internal affairs, good cooperation among states and the fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law as agreed in the framework of the Helsinki Accords are fundamentals governing international relations among independent states and, as such, should in no way be infringed upon;

2. Deplores the fact that as the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit approaches, different types of pressure are mounting on Eastern Partnership countries reaching the final phase of negotiating the signing or initialling of their Association Agreements; regards this pressure as unacceptable and calls on Russia to refrain from taking any action that does not comply with the above-mentioned Helsinki principles;

3. Strongly underlines the fact that the free choices of the Eastern Partnership countries, which do not have any negative impact whatsoever on trade with Russia, should not make them bear consequences such as trade measures, visa restrictions, worker mobility restrictions and interference in frozen conflicts;

4. Calls for the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to view the deplorable developments as going beyond the purely trade dimension, which is merely a cover for blatant political pressure, and to take action in defence of the Union's partners, sending a strong message of support to all Eastern Partnership countries in their European aspirations and choices;

5. Urges the Commission and the Council, at the same time, to make it clear to Moscow once again that the development of the Eastern Partnership project is not aimed at harming relations between these countries and the Russian Federation, and calls on the Commission, in this connection, to make every effort in order to smooth out and overcome any obstacles so that the new Association Agreements do not have a negative impact on the partner countries in their present relations with Russia;

6. Urges the Commission and the Council to adopt concrete economic and financial measures that will help to stabilise these countries' economies against the expected and already announced financial and economic pressure from Russia after the possible finalisation of Association Agreements in Vilnius;

7. Calls on Eastern Partnership countries to continue and step up their efforts to bring an end to their current difficulties in the run-up to the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, and not succumb to the pressure exerted upon them;

8. Underlines the fact that the conditions set by the Foreign Affairs Council with a view to the possible signing of Association Agreements must be met, especially with regard to the rule of law, democracy and human rights;
9. Recalls that offering and negotiating Association Agreements with our Eastern European Partners has exposed them to Russia's open, alarming and escalating pressures intended to deter them from entering into association with the EU, which in turn gives the EU a responsibility to engage and support them;
10. Asks the Commission and the EEAS to develop in the short term and launch a broad information and public awareness campaign in the partner countries concerned on the nature, benefits and requirements of the Association Agreements;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the EEAS, the Council and the Commission, and to the Presidents, Prime Ministers and Parliaments of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and of the Russian Federation.

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