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Committee on Foreign Affairs

Tbilisi, 25 July 2015

AFET Ad Hoc Delegation to Georgia

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament travelled to Georgia, in the framework of its visit to two Association countries, Ukraine and Georgia.

The eight-Member delegation, led by Mr Elmar BROK (EPP, DE), the Chair of the Committee saw the representation of most political groups in the European Parliament and included Ms Sandra KALNIETE (EPP, LV), Mr Andrej PLENKOVIĆ (EPP, HR), Mr Gabrielius LANDSBERGIS (EPP, LT), Richard HOWITT (S&D, UK), Andrejs MAMIKINS (S&D, LV), Marek JUREK (ECR, PL), and Paavo VÄYRYNEN (ALDE, FI).

The Members met the President of Republic of Georgia, Giorgi Margvelashvili, the Speaker of the Parliament, Mr David Usupashvili, Prime Minister, Mr Irakli Garibashvili, as well as other Members of Government, Members of Parliament, Members of the Parliamentary Opposition, and representatives of the civil society. Members also visited in prison Mr Ivane Merabishvili, Mr Giorgi Ugulava, Mr Bacho Akhalaia. Finally, the Members travelled to the Administrative Boundary Line at Didi Khurvaleti.

The Members expressed condolences for the victims and their families of the recent flooding in Tbilisi, noting that the prompt assistance provided by the EU is a sign of the friendship to Georgian people. They appreciated at the same time the continued very high level of support for the EU within the Georgian society.

The Members welcomed the progress and efforts in the reform processes and in the implementation of the Association Agreement, as well as of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan. The Parliament fully supports Georgia in this process, convinced that visa free travel is the tangible short-term example of what the EU can offer to the population. They consider that the visa free regime should be granted in 2016, once the relevant criteria are fulfilled.

The Members stressed the continued importance of carrying out a swift and thorough reform of the judiciary. They particularly called on the authorities to follow the recommendation of the Venice Commission on the law on the Office of the Prosecutor, to ensure its full independence and de-politicisation.

Furthermore, after the visit to the prison, they reiterated their position that the justice system should be free of political motivation and welcomed the recent presidential pardon. As enshrined in European Convention of Human Rights, all prosecutions must be transparent, proportional and should adhere strictly to investigative procedures and due process and be conducted in full respect of principles of fair trial.

The Members expressed concern about the recent developments along the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) with South Ossetia. They visited the ABL in the area where the signposts

were moved, and saw the dramatic impact borderisation has on the livelihoods of people. The Members stressed the importance of fostering people to people contacts to overcome divisions. They reminded the Georgian authorities that democratic developments and strengthening of democratic institutions is the best defence.

Moreover, the Members reaffirmed their support for the territorial integrity of Georgia and reiterated that the international community will not recognise the recent so-called treaties on alliance and integration signed between Russia and the two occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, which are a de facto annexation of these occupied territories.

The Members stressed the importance of improving the political climate and of respecting and strengthening of independence of the institutions. In that regard, they addressed the ongoing amendments to the legislation regarding the National Bank of Georgia and its financial supervision powers, reminding that that independence of the monetary policy from political influence should be safeguarded.

Finally, the Members reminded that the implementation of Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Area, is essential, and will further strengthen the reforms that are being carried out. The Agreement is a very ambitious one, and its full implementation will bring Georgia closer to and more integrated with the EU. However, they reminded that the Agreement and the reforms should be implemented not for the sake of the EU, but for Georgian society.