

JOINT STATEMENT
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE EU - RUSSIA PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE
AS ADOPTED BY MRS RIA OOMEN-RUIJTEN AND MR OLEG
MOROZOV, CO-CHAIRS OF THE EU-RUSSIA PCC

MARKING the decade of the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee activities,

HAVING a common notion of the EU and Russia being important geopolitical centres, both with unique historic experiences but building their cooperation based on common values of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights, with the goal to increase the stability, security and prosperity of the whole of Europe,

WHEREAS there is a need to develop a strategic partnership between Russia and the European Union and to search consistently for mutual solutions to pressing problems and effective answers to common challenges,

ACKNOWLEDGING the need to continue and to develop interparliamentary cooperation as an important component of the EU-Russia relations, whose special role consists of dialogue between direct representatives of our peoples,

CONSIDERING the crucially important role the parliaments should play in a democratic political system,

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the recent political and economic changes in both the EU and Russia and the evolution in the relations between the two parties,

HAVING REGARD TO the tenth anniversary since entering into force on 1 December 1997 of the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) which has established this Committee,

IN VIEW of the expiration of the initial term of the PCA and of the prospects of adopting a new EU- Russia fundamental agreement,

BASING UPON the common democratic values and the principles of transparency, openness and mutual respect between the parties,

1. The EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement of 1994 has established an effective special mechanism for interparliamentary cooperation of the parties in the form of the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, vested with special rights and responsibilities. Within its framework the European Parliament and the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation have a possibility to conduct direct regular dialogue over the whole spectrum of issues of common interest. Complemented by the mechanism of the Committee's Working Groups it permits real cooperation in order to reach understanding of each other's positions on the parliamentary level and to promote and strengthen cooperation between Russia and the EU in general.

2. The significance of the work of the Committee has substantially increased during the last ten years. Meetings regularly take place during the sessions of the Committee and its Working groups with representatives of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, the Government of the Russian Federation, the Council of the EU, the Commission of the European Communities, EU Member States, regional authorities and major businesses, where specific issues of EU-Russia cooperation are discussed.

3. Within the last ten years the Committee has accumulated vast experience in conducting dialogue over a continuously expanding set of issues from internal developments in both Russia and the EU and bilateral cooperation to global issues and international problems. Today any issue of interest to the parties is open for discussion while our dialogue becomes increasingly substantive and confidence-based.

Having begun by considering primarily security issues and issues of EU-Russia trade and economic cooperation with a focus on reforms in Russia, the Committee moved to work onto topics concerning strategic development of EU-Russia cooperation and joint response to challenges of the modern world such as environmental and energy security, combating terrorism and illegal drug trafficking as well as on specific and regional issues in the sphere of mutual interests of the parties.

Within the last ten years a set of topics for repeated consideration by the Committee has taken shape. These are establishment and adding substance to the four EU-Russia Common Spaces, respect and protection of human rights, economic and energy cooperation, EU assistance for the development and facilitating transit of the Kaliningrad Region following the 2004 EU

enlargement, cross-border cooperation, establishment of the Northern Dimension policy, prospects of the visa-free regime between the EU and Russia, harmonization of the procedures and technical standards of both parties, cooperation in the fields of transport and R&D, Russia's membership in the WTO.

Mutual understanding has been achieved in the Committee on many of these issues and Russia and the EU have been able to significantly move forward. It is the parliamentary component of the cooperation between the parties which has played an important part in it.

The Committee expresses interest to continue actively cooperating in the future in order to come to a united, prosperous and democratic Europe without dividing lines, where the four EU-Russia Common Spaces and principles of the "four freedoms" – movement of goods, services, capital and people – will have been effectively implemented, allowing our citizens to feel real benefits of our partnership.

The Committee will continue to work on its contribution to shaping a common response from Russia and the EU to such global problems as climate change, environment protection, aging population, immigration, fighting contagious diseases and pandemics, as well as eradication of poverty. Particular attention will be paid to the EU-Russia energy relations, aiming at increasing transparency, interdependence and reciprocity in terms of access to markets, infrastructure and investments and enhancing the security of energy supply.

4. Meetings of the Committee's Working Groups, which are established depending on the current agenda in the relations between the EU and Russia, have proved themselves to be an effective and flexible form of our cooperation. Occasionally the Committee travels to various regions of Russia and the EU and assist in examining the situation on the ground, contribute to better understanding of the processes in place and to rapprochement of positions on pressing issues.

Within ten years the Working Groups of the Committee met in Samara (April 1997 and April 2002), Irkutsk and Ulan-Ude (June 1998), Kaliningrad (April 2001), Murmansk (October 2002), North Siberia (July 2003), Russian-Finnish border (April 2005), the Kaliningrad Region (October 2005), Riga (June 2006) and, repeatedly, Moscow and Saint-Petersburg. It is necessary to further expand the scope of the Working Groups by visiting regions which the Committee members would benefit from a more in depth knowledge.

5. The Committee is not just working over solutions of the problems of today, but is also looking into the future. Prospects of modernization of the legal basis of EU-Russia relations have become one of the main issues in the current agenda of the Committee. The Committee expresses its view that the dimension of the parliamentary cooperation should be strengthened and reinforced in the future draft text of the new fundamental agreement between the EU and Russia.

We agree that the PCA, despite having proven to be useful, is losing comprehensiveness and effectiveness. We see the main objective of the future agreement on strategic partnership in securing the new quality of cooperation between the European Union and Russia, in relaying our relations on a more long-term basis and in providing legal basis for those areas of cooperation which are not reflected in the current PCA.

The Committee would like to contribute to the process of reviewing a new Agreement and:

- believes that the future agreement between the EU and Russia should reflect mutual interest based on the common values of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights ;
- believes it is of the utmost importance to reinforce and strengthen role of the Parliamentary Cooperation Committee in the new agreement;
- proposes the involvement of the European Parliament and the Federal Assembly in preparations of future EU-Russia Summits.

6. The parties believe that the Committee could be used as an effective platform to address common challenges, the existing differences and emerging concerns. Despite current disagreements on a number of issues, we believe that there are no fundamental or insurmountable difficulties in the relations between the EU and Russia which could overshadow the prospects of developing our long-term cooperation and achieving our large-scale and far-reaching common goals. By means of open, free and fair dialogue partners in the Committee will aim to contribute to a balanced and constructive approach to the cooperation between the European Union and Russia. We assign a significant part in achieving this goal to regular exchanges of opinions and to the analysis of objective, free and complete information on the issues of mutual interest for both parties.

7. We will continue making every effort in the future to work successfully and to strengthen the role of the Committee in developing relations between the EU and Russia, including by conveying our position and by cooperating with the Council of the EU and the European Commission on behalf of the European Parliament and with the Government of the Russian Federation on behalf of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation.

We regard our contribution to practical implementation of the high-level agreements on EU-Russia cooperation as a priority, ensuring success and preservation of positive experience gained while cooperating within the Committee in order to contribute to stable and sustainable development of our common European continent.

9. The Committee addresses this statement to the Council, the Commission, the Governments and Parliaments of the Member States and of the Russian Federation.

Adopted on 30 November 2007