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Session document

27.11.2007

B6-0481/2007 }
B6-0482/2007 }
B6-0485/2007 }
B6-0487/2007 }
B6-0492/2007 }
B6-0493/2007 } RC1

JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 103(4) of the Rules of Procedure, by

- José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Michael Gahler, Árpád Duka-Zólyomi, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Karl von Wogau, Stefano Zappalà and Elmar Brok, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group
- Jan Marinus Wiersma, Hannes Swoboda and Alexandra Dobolyi, on behalf of the PSE Group
- Lydie Polfer, on behalf of the ALDE Group
- Adam Bielan, Konrad Szymański, Inese Vaidere, Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis, Hanna Foltyn-Kubicka and Ryszard Czarnecki, on behalf of the UEN Group
- Marie Anne Isler Béguin and Cem Özdemir, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group
- André Brie, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

replacing the motions by the following groups:

- UEN (B6-0481/2007)
- ALDE (B6-0482/2007)
- PPE-DE (B6-0485/2007)
- GUE/NGL (B6-0487/2007)
- PSE (B6-0492/2007)
- Verts/ALE (B6-0493/2007)

on the situation in Georgia

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European Parliament resolution on the situation in Georgia

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Georgia, particularly its resolution of 26 February 2004 with a recommendation to the Council on EU policy towards the South Caucasus¹ and those of those of 14 October 2004² and 26 October 2006,³
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2007 on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP),⁴
 - having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part, which entered into force on 1 July 1999,
 - having regard to the ENP Action Plan endorsed by the EU-Georgia Cooperation Council on 14 November 2006,
 - having regard to the recommendations adopted by the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee on 25-26 June 2007,
 - having regard to the declaration of 8 November 2007 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the current situation in Georgia,
 - having regard to Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the European Union remains committed to further developing and deepening its relations with Georgia and to supporting the country with the necessary political and economic reforms, measures to establish solid and efficient democratic institutions, and efforts to tackle corruption, thereby creating a peaceful and prosperous Georgia that can contribute to stability in the region and the rest of Europe,
- B. acknowledging the political, democratic and economic progress achieved by the present Georgian President and Government,
- C. whereas on 2 November the opposition forces mustered the largest crowd since the Rose Revolution of 2003, with approximately 80 000 people gathering on the capital's main avenue, calling for the president's resignation, early parliamentary elections, changes to the electoral code and the release of people considered political prisoners,
- D. whereas six days of opposition rallies erupted in violence when security forces used excessive force to break up demonstrations, using water cannons, rubber bullets and tear gas,

¹ OJ C 098 E, 23.4.2004, p. 193.

² OJ C 166 E, 7.7.2005, p. 63.

³ Texts adopted: P6_TA(2006)0456.

⁴ Texts adopted: P6_TA-PROV(2007)0538.

leaving up to five hundred protesters injured, including the Georgian Ombudsman, Sozar Subari,

- E. whereas, on 7 November 2007, President Saakashvili declared a 15-day state of emergency in Tbilisi, since lifted on 16 November 2007, which government officials claim was necessary to restore immediate law and order,
- F. whereas, after President Saakashvili imposed the state of emergency, Prime Minister Zurab Nougaideli declared that a coup attempt had been made in the country and that this measure was a reaction to that; whereas in a televised speech President Saakashvili laid responsibility for the events which took place in Tbilisi at the door of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), alleging that he had had advance information that there was a plot to overthrow the Georgian Government by the end of the year, but providing no evidence for his statement,
- G. whereas on the evening of 7 November two opposition TV channels, Imedi and Caucasias, were taken off the air; whereas the buildings of Imedi television and radio were stormed by armed members of security agencies wearing masks before the announcement of the state of emergency and without prior notification, with up to 90% of the station's broadcasting equipment destroyed; whereas a Tbilisi court suspended Imedi's broadcasting license and froze its assets on the grounds that its coverage of the events of 7 November amounted to incitement to overthrow the government; whereas the court notification was handed over to Imedi's director only one week later; whereas the Georgian National Communication Commission (GNCC) has suspended Imedi's TV broadcasting licence for three months, citing the station's violation of the law on broadcasting,
- H. whereas, in a conciliatory move, on 8 November President Saakashvili proposed early presidential elections for 5 January, to be coupled with a referendum on the date of the next parliamentary elections,
- I. whereas on 13 November Russia handed over to Georgia, one year ahead of schedule, its base at Batumi in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, after having completed the withdrawal of its troops from its other base in Georgia, Akhalkalaki, in June,
- J. whereas the Georgian economy is still being seriously harmed by the Russian ban on imports of Georgian wine and agricultural products, which appears to be more and more politically motivated,
- K. whereas the situation in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia is adding to the tension in the region,
 - 1. Expresses its deep concern at recent developments that have taken place in Georgia, with the violent police crackdown on peaceful demonstrations, the closing down of independent media outlets and the declaration of a state of emergency for 15 days as the latest escalations;
 - 2. Calls on the Georgian authorities to respect the principle of freedom of expression, including freedom of assembly and freedom of the media; reminds the Government of its commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law;

3. Calls on all parties to show openness and restraint, tone down statements and engage in a constructive and fruitful dialogue aimed at supporting and consolidating Georgia's fragile democratic institutions;
4. Urges the Council, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and his special envoy for South Caucasus to make every effort to facilitate the dialogue between the parties, defuse tension and contribute to restoring mutual confidence;
5. Calls on the Georgian authorities to carry out a thorough, impartial and independent investigation into the serious violations of human rights and freedom of the media, notably the allegations of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, in order to identify all those responsible, bring them to trial and apply the penal and/or administrative sanctions provided by law;
6. Impresses on the authorities the concern felt by the international community at the recent events in Georgia, which run counter to Euro-Atlantic values; reminds Georgia that democracy, human rights and the rule of law are prerequisites for Euro-Atlantic integration;
7. Calls upon the Council and Commission, the EU Member States, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, NATO and the US to become more active in highlighting political grievances and shortcomings in and around Georgia, including in the implementation of the ENP Action Plan; observes that many allegations of violations of democratic procedures and human rights in Georgia were not followed up in the last few years; is therefore of the opinion that a more open international debate could strengthen pluralistic public discourse and democratic development in Georgia;
8. Notes the decision to hold early presidential elections and asks the Government to ensure that all candidates have equal and impartial access to the media during the election campaign;
9. Calls upon the Georgian authorities to ensure free and fair elections in full accordance with international standards; calls upon the Government to respect the division of powers in the Georgian political system, to refrain from using 'administrative resources' during the election campaign and to guarantee freedom of expression to all candidates; welcomes the readiness of the Georgian authorities to allow international observers to monitor the elections;
10. Calls on the Georgian authorities to ensure that all the media work objectively and in accordance with international journalistic standards and that all parties and candidates are guaranteed fair and balanced access to both public and private media; demands of the Georgian authorities, in particular, that the Imedi TV and Radio Company be allowed to resume broadcasting without further delay and calls upon them to ensure that this company is reimbursed and compensated for the damage to its outlets and the destruction of its equipment;
11. Welcomes the amendments to the electoral code adopted by the Georgian Parliament which will allow opposition parties to appoint six representatives to the Central Election

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Commission and each of the precinct election commissions, as well as the lifting of restrictions on monitoring of elections by international observers;

12. Calls upon all political forces in Georgia to collaborate in drafting a law to regulate audiovisual activity in order to ensure, with the assistance of European experts, that existing regulations which guarantee freedom of expression and fair public debate are further improved and harmonised with European principles;
13. Encourages all Georgian political forces, together with civil society, to engage in a debate about the separation of powers in the political system which could lead to more efficient scrutiny of the actions of the executive and pluralisation of the public debate on many crucial issues, ranging from the social implications of economic reform and the 'Russian factor' in Georgian domestic politics to different approaches to frozen conflicts;
14. Notes with concern the allegations of Russian intelligence involvement in the political process in Georgia and underlines the need for increased transparency in political life, in particular as regards party funding, media access and internal party democracy; stresses that these allegations must be proved in accordance with domestic law and international practice;
15. Reiterates its commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity and calls on the Council and the Commission to make further efforts to support the search for a peaceful negotiated settlement of the South Ossetia and Abkhazia conflicts;
16. Calls for a European Parliament observation mission to be sent to the forthcoming presidential elections;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Member States, the President and the Parliament of Georgia, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the President and Parliament of the Russian Federation.