



The President

Mr Martin Schulz
President of the European Parliament

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Subject: Conduct of MEPs travelling abroad

Dear President,

I am writing to ask the Conference of Presidents to address the issue of the conduct of MEPs travelling outside the EU. In three recent cases – involving both official EP visits and visits undertaken by MEPs on their own initiative during sensitive electoral periods – the statements of certain MEPs may have undermined the position and standing of the European Parliament.

In a letter dated 19 November 2015 (ref. 319032) co-signed by Elmar Brok and me, I previously addressed the issue of “friendship groups” of MEPS organising unofficial missions in third countries. The recent events add to the difficulties that I evoked in that letter.

The three cases, discussed during the last conference of delegation chairs in Strasbourg, are the following:

- **Speaker at inter-parliamentary meeting (Norway, March 2015):**

As a member of the EP Delegation, MEP Olaf Stuger (non-attached, NL) was the first speaker to address climate and energy policy at the EP-Norway interparliamentary meeting held in Oslo in March 2015. Although the background material provided to MEP Stuger clearly outlined the EU and the EP positions and the stakes with Norway of EU policy, his speech exclusively reflected his own views – which were at odds with those of the Union. He urged Norway not to cooperate with the EU, but rather to maintain a focus on its national interests.

- **Unofficial electoral observation (Kazakhstan, April 2015):**

Three MEPS – Vice-President of the European Parliament Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR, PL), Chair of the Delegation for relations with Central Asia Iveta Grigule (ALDE, LV) and Andrejs Mamikins (S&D, LV) – acted as (unauthorised) “observers” during Kazakhstan’s recent presidential elections, held on 26 April 2015. All released declarations that could instil legitimate doubts about the unofficial nature of their

visit¹. This case is, in my opinion, particularly unfortunate because it involved an EP Vice-President and the Chair of the Delegation handling relations with Kazakhstan.

- **Declarations released during official EP visit (Kyrgyzstan PCC, April 2015):**

A delegation chaired by MEP Iveta Grigule (ALDE, LV) travelled to Kyrgyzstan to participate in the 10th EP-Kyrgyz Republic Parliamentary Cooperation Committee meeting held in Bishkek on 8-10 April 2015. During the press conference that followed the meeting, MEP Grigule was asked about the potential impact of the adoption by the Kyrgyz National Assembly of the "Homosexual Propaganda Bill" (which restricts LGBT rights in Kyrgyzstan) on EU-Kyrgyz relations. Although an EP resolution has clearly stated that the law could affect relations with the EU – in line with terms of PCA² – MEP Grigule reportedly declared that the EP resolution was of a recommendatory nature and was only intended to encourage discussions in Kyrgyzstan. According to local news outlets, Ms Grigule further asserted that "there will be no consequences. The EU conducts its relations on a pragmatic basis."³

As Chair of the CDC, I strongly believe that the Conference of Presidents should address these issues without delay in order to avoid further cases that could damage the image and the credibility of our institution in third countries.

All MEPs should be reminded, possibly via a communication by yourself, of their obligations and responsibilities, especially when travelling abroad. While it goes without saying that MEPs have the full right to express their personal views, they are also under the obligation to make it clear when they deviate from the official EP position.

I would also ask that particular care should be applied when MEPs travel on their own initiative to countries holding elections, as this directly reflects on the European Parliament's efforts in the field of electoral and democratic support. In addition to possible changes that could be instituted, our existing rules on funding and conflicts of interest should be applied in a coherent and transparent manner.

Yours sincerely,



Pier Antonio Panzeri

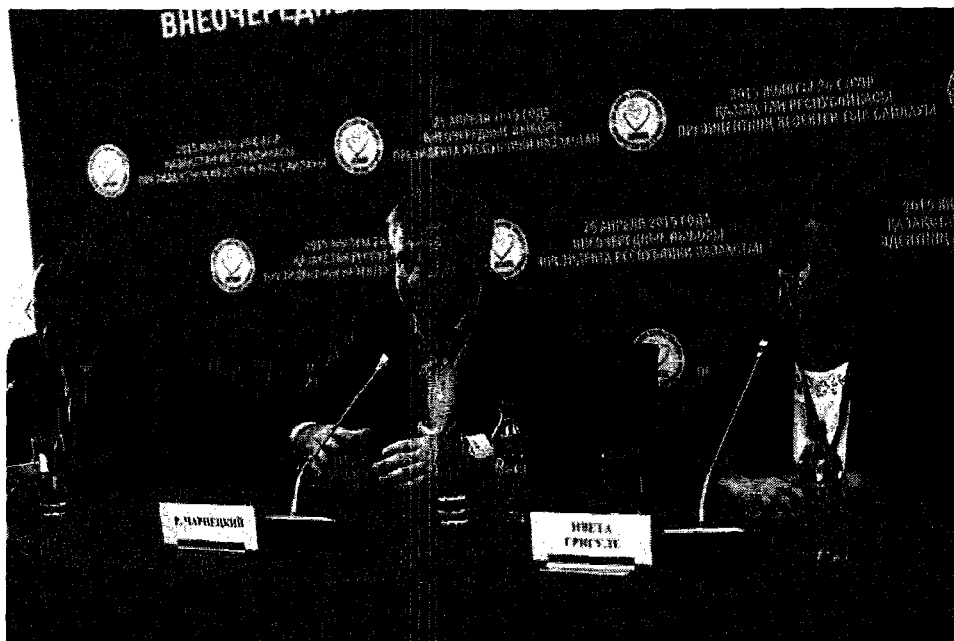
¹ Central Information Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Observers from the EU, "Large voter turnout shows a high level of the development of Kazakhstan", 26 April 2015.

² See on the EP at: Resolution on Kyrgyzstan: homosexual propaganda bill (15 January 2015)

³ See at News Agency 24, Head of delegation of European Parliament ensures that adoption of anti-gay law doesn't imply any consequences for Kyrgyzstan (9 April 2015)

OBSERVERS FROM THE EU, “LARGE VOTER TURNOUT SHOWS A HIGH LEVEL OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF KAZAKHSTAN”

26 april 2015



In the information center for foreign observers was held the press conference with the participation of observers from the European Union - the Vice-President of the European Parliament Richard Czarnecki, the deputies of European Parliament from Latvia Iveta Grigule and Andrew Mamykin. During the press conference speakers shared their impressions of the ongoing presidential election.

Richard Czarnecki noted the great progress in building the institution of elections, which carried out the Kazakhstan over the past 20 years. "I envy the number of voting for you, because we have in Europe with this problem. Here, in Astana, at the polling stations are long queues. I can congratulate you, people of Kazakhstan, with the achievement of such a serious attitude towards democracy and elections," - said Mr. Czarnecki.

In turn, Iveta Grigule reported that this is not her first visit to Kazakhstan as an international observer. "In 2011 in Almaty, I was an observer at the presidential elections. From that moment was not much time, but I can say that people are more open. Kazakh society comes to openness and democracy. For example, yesterday we met with community organizations, and we had a very active discussion. This is a good indicator of the development of the country", - said the Deputy of European Parliament.

She added that the European observers wonder a large voter turnout. "I believe that every citizen must do his duty at an important moment for the country. In Kazakhstan, we see that people are worried about the future of their country, it is important that there will be stability and development. This shows that over 20 years Kazakhstan has been able to do something that Europe was made or centuries" - summarized Ms. Grigule.

Her colleague, Andrew Mamykin also noted the high turnout of Kazakhstani people to the polls. "We have already visited three electoral areas, where we saw a large number of voters. In addition, we are impressed by the patience and tolerance of people in the queues - all quietly expecting no one left, and not waiting for their turn. It is a measure of the true will of the people to cast their votes worthy candidates," - said Mr. Mamykin.

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Procedure : 2015/2505(RSP)

Document stages in plenary

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Texts tabled :
RC-B8-0054/2015

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Texts adopted

Thursday, 15 January 2015 -
Strasbourg

Provisional edition

Kyrgyzstan: homosexual
propaganda bill

[P8_TA-PROV\(2015\)0008](#)

[B8-0054, 0056, 0061, 0063, 0064 and 0065/2015](#)

► European Parliament resolution of 15 January 2015 on Kyrgyzstan, homosexual propaganda bill (2015/2505(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Kyrgyzstan and Central Asian republics, in particular that of 15 December 2011 on the state of implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Kyrgyzstan's constitution, and in particular to Articles 16, 31, 33 and 34 thereof,
- having regard to the international human rights obligations and instruments, including those contained in the UN conventions on human rights and in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, guaranteeing human rights and fundamental freedoms and prohibiting discrimination,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, the right to respect for the personal, private and family lives of individuals and the right to equality, and bans discrimination in the enjoyment of those rights,
- having regard to UN Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/17/19 of 17 June 2011 and UN Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/27/32 of 24 September 2014 on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity,
- having regard to the statement by the spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on Kyrgyzstan of 24 October 2014,
- having regard to the Kyrgyz Parliament's 'Partner for democracy' status at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE),
- having regard to PACE resolution 1984 (2014) of 8 April 2014 on the Request for Partner for Democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly submitted by the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, in particular paragraphs 15.24, 15.25 and 15.26 thereof,
- having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Kyrgyz Republic, of the other part, in particular Articles 2 and 92 thereof,
- having regard to the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, adopted in June 2004 and reviewed in 2008, and to the Guidelines to Promote and Protect the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Persons, adopted by the Council on 24 June 2013,

8. Is deeply concerned about the negative consequences of the discussion and potential adoption of this bill, which are further increasing stigmatisation, discrimination and violence against LGBTI individuals; calls on politicians and religious leaders to refrain from anti-LGBTI rhetoric, including hate speech and incitement to hatred;
9. Is concerned about the possible effects of such legislation on international donors, non-governmental organisations and humanitarian organisations working on LGBTI issues and HIV prevention;
10. Calls on the UN Human Rights Council to take into consideration, as part of the upcoming Universal Periodic Review of Kyrgyzstan, the disregard for the principles of equality and non-discrimination represented by this draft law;
11. Calls on the Kyrgyz authorities to take all the measures needed to ensure that human rights defenders can carry on their work of promoting and protecting human rights without hindrance;
12. Urges Kyrgyzstan, in the period leading to the fourteenth meeting of the Cooperation Council between the EU and the Kyrgyz Republic, to continue with reforms leading to transparency, independence of the judiciary, inter-ethnic reconciliation and respect for human rights, as these are key factors for the long-term sustainable development of the country;
13. Welcomes the progress made by the Kyrgyz authorities in the domain of human rights in the period between the fourth and fifth rounds of the EU-Kyrgyz Republic Human Rights Dialogue; strongly urges the Kyrgyz authorities to *continue progress in this field*;
14. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the External Action Service to make clear to the Kyrgyz authorities that the eventual adoption of this bill could affect relations with the EU in line with Article 92 (2) of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement; further calls on the Council and the External Action Service to raise this issue in the relevant international fora, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the United Nations;
15. Calls on the Kyrgyz authorities to ensure that allegations of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment are investigated promptly and efficiently and that perpetrators are brought to justice; *calls, furthermore, for the release of all prisoners of conscience, with regard in particular to Azimjon Askarov pending a full, impartial and fair investigation, including into his allegations of torture and ill-treatment*;
16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan and the President of Kyrgyzstan.

(1) OJ C 168 E, 14.6.2013, p. 91.

Head of delegation of European Parliament ensures that adoption of anti-gay law doesn't imply any consequences for Kyrgyzstan

09/04/15 11:04, Bishkek – 24.kg news agency, by Aizada KUTUEVA

Head of delegation of the European Parliament ensures that the adoption of anti-gay law doesn't imply any consequences for Kyrgyzstan, Iveta Grigule said at a press conference.

On the question of what are the consequences for the KR after adoption of the law, banning promotion of homosexuality, Iveta Grigule said: "this is misunderstanding."

"We know that the parliament is currently considering this bill, there is a discussion with the public, NGOs, provide clarification and listen to opinions of different groups. Of course, Parliament will vote by democratic majority or a minority - is up to you. But we highlighted the fact that there was a discussion on this issue. We assess how it goes. About the consequences - I think it's some kind of misunderstanding, there will be no consequences. The EU conducts its relations on a pragmatic basis. Like your country, the EU has a multi-vector foreign policy," she concluded.

URL: <http://www.eng.24.kg/community/175258-news24.html>