

**NATO-RUSSIA
PARLIAMENTARY
COMMITTEE**

236 NRPC 05 E
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NATO Parliamentary Assembly

SUMMARY

of the

meeting of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee
Landstingssalen, Folketing, Copenhagen, Denmark

Friday 11 November 2005

ATTENDANCE LIST

President	Pierre Lellouche (France)
Vice-Presidents	Pierre Claude Nolin (Canada) Jozef Banáš (Slovakia) Vahit Erdem (Turkey)
Treasurer	Lothar Ibrügger (Germany)
Secretary General	Simon Lunn

MEMBERS AND ALTERNATE MEMBERS

Belgium	Théo Kelchtermans
Bulgaria	Nikolai Kamov
Canada	Jane Cordy
Denmark	Helge Adam Møller
	Per Kaalund
Estonia	Sven Mikser
France	Pierre Lellouche
Germany	Markus Meckel
	Karl A. Lamers
Iceland	Ossur Skarphedinsson
Latvia	Guntis Berzins
Luxembourg	Marc Spautz
Netherlands	Jos van Gennip
	Bert Middel
Norway	Per Ove Width
	Marit Nybakk
Poland	Marian Pilka
Romania	Mihail Lupoi
Russian Federation	Victor Ozerov
	Lubov Sliska
Slovakia	Jozef Banáš
Spain	Jordi Marsal
Turkey	Vahit Erdem
United Kingdom	Bruce George
United States	Wayne Allard
	Jeff Sessions
	Gordon Smith
	George Voinovich

Political Committee Chairman	Markus Meckel (Germany)
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SECRETARIES OF DELEGATION

Member Delegations

Belgium	Frans Van Melkebeke
Bulgaria	Borislav Penchev
Canada	Denis Robert
Czech Republic	Olga Bendíková

Denmark	Morten Roland Hansen
Estonia	Tanja Espe
France	Frédéric Taillet
	Etienne Sallenave
Germany	Rainer Büscher
Hungary	Károly Tüzes
Italy	Alessandra Lai
	Mario di Napoli
Iceland	Belinda Theriault
Latvia	Sandra Paura
Lithuania	Andrius Bukauskas
Luxembourg	Tun Figueiredo
Netherlands	Leo van Waasbergen
Norway	Allon Groth
Poland	Natalia Jaskiewicz
	Mikolaj Karlowski
Portugal	Luisa Pinto Basto
Romania	Irina Bojin
	Ioan Ilie
Russian Federation	Oleg Melnikov
	Viacheslav Kolotvin
Slovakia	Jarmila Novakova
Turkey	Yesim Uslu
United Kingdom	Libby Davidson
United States	Julia Reed

International Secretariat

Andrius Avizius
Roberta Calorio
Andrea Cellino
Paul Cook
Christine Heffinck
David Hobbs
Jacqueline Pforr
Ruxandra Popa
Steffen Sachs
Zachary Selden
Svitlana Svyetova

Minutes Writers

Richard Cooke
Sarah Davies

Presidential Adviser

Chris Shaw

The meeting opened on Friday 11 November 2005 at 3:20 pm with Pierre Lellouche (France), President of the NATO PA, in the Chair.

1. Opening of the proceedings

The President welcomed delegates to this important meeting. He thanked the Danish hosts. This was the seventh meeting of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee. The Committee provided parliamentarians with an opportunity to engage in dialogue about matters of common concern.

2. Adoption of the draft agenda [153 NRPC 05 E]

The draft Agenda was adopted.

3. Adoption of the Summary of the meeting of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on Friday, 27 May 2005 [110 NRPC 05 E]

The President thanked all those who had organized the previous meeting held in Slovenia.

The Summary was adopted.

4. Presentation by Mr Robert F. Simmons Jr, Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia and Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Security, Cooperation and Partnership, Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, NATO, on the *Current Situation in the South Caucasus*, followed by discussion

Mr Simmons started by saying that he was honoured to address the Committee. NATO looked to broader partnerships to address the challenges of the new security environment. Already the number and type of its missions had increased. NATO troops were already engaged in the Balkans, the Mediterranean, Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as with assistance following the recent earthquake in Pakistan. Further work was required to develop partnership relations, including with the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

NATO had worked with the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia for some time, initially through the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and later the Partnership for Peace. It respected the fact that these countries had ties with other international organizations, for example, the CIS. Relations with these bodies co-existed with relations with NATO. This was not a zero-sum game.

It was necessary, however, for NATO to work to enhance the Alliance's cooperation with the South Caucasus and Central Asia. A key priority was defence reform. NATO had to support its partners to adapt their military structures to enhance interoperability but also change their own defence forces to structures that were more responsive.

NATO had several tools available to help its partners. The first was the Partnership Action Plan on Defence Institution Building (PAP-DIB), a programme through which NATO could assist in the building of democratically responsible defence institutions. The second was the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), a process to bring greater structure and focus to NATO's bilateral relationships. It was important for goals to be reviewed on a regular basis. The third tool was enhanced liaison arrangements.

Together, the PAP-DIB, the IPAP and enhanced liaison arrangements were important tools. In addition, NATO was active in other areas, for example, technical co-operation through the "Virtual Silk Highway", a NATO-sponsored project that had established Internet connectivity between the countries of Central Asia, the South Caucasus and the rest of the world.

NATO had assisted all the countries of the Caucasus in the elimination of weapons such as mines, funded by Partnership for Peace Trust Funds. NATO was contributing to political dialogue in the Caucasus and Central Asia and Mr Simmons met regularly with the Presidents of the region.

Turning to the general state of relations with partners, Georgia was the most active partner in the South Caucasus through its IPAP. It had also contributed to KFOR.

Azerbaijan had an IPAP. Together with the OSCE, NATO had monitored the recent elections there and was taking forward concerns with the President. Discussions with Azerbaijan and Armenia on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict continued.

Armenia was developing an IPAP and had embarked on defence reform and the forthcoming referendum offered the hope of political reform as well.

NATO was developing ties with countries in Central Asia, particularly Kazakhstan, but also Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Further dialogue was needed. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly had been a good partner throughout these discussions in Central Asia.

On NATO-Russian relations, the political dialogue working towards the removal of Russian bases in the region was important. Russia had been an active partner in missions, meeting the challenges of WMD proliferation and terrorism. NATO was supporting active political dialogue and was not in competition with other partner countries in the region.

The President thanked Mr Simmons and gave some examples of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's own work in the region to resolve conflicts and improve relations.

Mr Erdem (TR) said that the South Caucasus had strategic importance for the whole region. The frozen conflicts hindered development and reform. Turkey was ready to normalize relations with Armenia but that process depended on Armenia's willingness to be a good neighbour and give up claims to Turkish territory. Russia had been instrumental in the past in turning hot conflicts cold. It must now play a role in turning frozen conflicts into solved conflicts.

Mrs Sliska (RU) began by saying that developments in the South Caucasus were of vital importance to Russia. This was a region with which Russia had a common history, language and family ties. Sadly, the history of instability in the region continued to the present day. The energy resources of the South Caucasus contributed to this.

The Russian Federation had an understandable desire for neighbours that were economically and politically stable. It sought deeper relationships with these countries.

One recent development of particular concern was the increased militarization of Georgia. Its defence budget had risen significantly in recent years. Equipment such as fighter planes, tanks and firearms were being purchased or gifted and negotiations on these transactions were ongoing. It was important that the provisions of the CFE Treaty were observed.

Turning to the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, they could be resolved only through dialogue: a comprehensive programme of actions were required. The forthcoming meeting of the Joint Control Commission in Ljubljana would involve discussion of the three-stage settlement plan. This was key in restoring trust. More working group and bilateral talks were needed. Progress had

recently been made in the development of railway transportation through Abkhazia. However, it was a matter of concern that in October the Georgian Parliament had demanded the withdrawal of peacekeepers.

With regard to the region as a whole, Russia, as co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, was contributing to conflict resolution. Russia was concerned about being forced out of the region.

There were some hopeful signs for the situation in the region. The Russian Federation took the view that involvement of all partners in political dialogue was necessary for future stability.

In this context, Russia looked forward to further discussions and in particular the plenary speech by the Turkish Prime minister.

Concluding, Mrs Sliska thanked Mr Simmons for his profound evaluation of the situation and looked forward to a day when the frozen conflicts of the region would be resolved.

Mr Ozerov (RU) echoed the thanks of his colleague to Mr Simmons. He commended the manner in which Mr Simmons visited the region and was open to discussions with the Russian Federation.

It was vital that the sovereignty of the countries in Central Asia be respected. It was not for other countries to impose their own views of the tempo and nature of reforms. Rather, active dialogue and engagement was required.

He agreed with his colleague that the nature of the relationship between these countries and the Russian Federation was a close one, with a long history. The Russian Federation understood that a "one size fits all" approach was not appropriate. Different levels of cooperation, through the Collective Security Treaty, Shanghai Agreement and the Euro-Asia Cooperation Agreement, were essential. This was not a question of establishing hegemony.

Concluding, he welcomed Mr Simmons' comments on increasing security collectively. He observed that attempting this on a bilateral basis was not the most productive way forward. More use should be made of the methods outlined in the Collective Security Treaty.

Efforts to reduce WMDs and drug and human trafficking continued and Russia was ready to cooperate with NATO.

Mr Lamers (DE) asked whether there was any duplication of effort between NATO and EU in the region and whether the two institutions' efforts could be more focused and better harmonised.

Mr Simmons responded first to the comments from the Russian delegation. He appreciated the acknowledgement of NATO's role and agreed with the point made about the importance of discussions in the Russia-NATO Council. He confirmed that NATO was not involved directly in the discussions to resolve the frozen conflicts, however it did follow developments. In Nagorno-Karabakh there was a small window of opportunity in the negotiations during which agreement on a settlement was possible and NATO was ready to play a part if necessary. He welcomed the Georgian proposals in relation to the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which must be solved by peaceful means. He welcomed the joint statement of the Russians and Georgians on the closing of Russians bases. NATO was discussing the tools that it could deploy that would assist defence planning and transparency in defence budgets in Georgia. All purchasing was well below the CFE ceiling but improvements in transparency were still necessary.

Mr Simmons accepted that there were differences between the countries in Central Asia, which had led to NATO's bilateral approach. He highlighted NATO's good working relationship with Russia in its efforts to improve border security and stem the flow of narcotics from Afghanistan. On the

Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), he stressed the importance of a bilateral approach in which all CSTO nations contributed to the discussion rather than just NATO and Russia.

In response to the German delegate's question, he stressed his good relations with the EU's two special representatives. The EU and NATO programmes in the region had different focuses. Although there had been some difficulties between NATO and the EU at political level there was a close working relationship.

The President praised Mr Simmons' work and commented on the more cooperative and positive tone of the meeting. It was a complex region and all parties should encourage peaceful settlement.

Mr Meckel (DE) was concerned that some of the potential problems were being glossed over and questioned whether some countries had sufficient political will to work towards resolutions.

He asked whether there was a timetable for Russian withdrawal from Georgia and why the previous timetable no longer existed. He reminded the meeting that it had been Turkey that had closed the border with Armenia and that although there had been difficulties with the election of the Armenian President, his statement that Armenia had no territorial claims should be accepted.

He referred to the oil interests in the region and other complicating factors, which could have a negative impact on the efforts to resolve the conflicts.

He was sorry to raise concerns but felt this had to be done as part of an open dialogue.

The President said that he agreed with most of the points raised. He suggested that Mr Meckel raised his point on Armenia with the Turkish Prime Minister during the Plenary Session. He hoped that the focus of this meeting could be on the frozen conflicts.

Mr Smith (US) thanked the President for his leadership and Mr Simmons for his service. He sensed a degree of progress and conciliation. This underscored the value of NATO reaching out to its Russian friends. The developments in dialogue matched the important spread of human rights and the rule of law in the region. He hoped this would be matched in due course with both economic inclusion and democratic literacy.

However, there were problems still existing, which could not be glossed over. The elections in Azerbaijan had been judged by both the OSCE and the Council of Europe as not being free and fair. He asked the delegates from the Russian Federation for their response to the suggestion that this had been a stolen election.

The President thanked Mr Smith and asked Mrs Sliska to respond.

Mrs Sliska (RU) reminded colleagues that the Russian Federation was on track to fulfil its commitment to withdraw from Georgian territory by 2008. She observed that the Russian Federation did not always receive cooperation from the Georgian side. An example of this was visas for servicemen not being renewed. She hoped that this source of tension could be taken up by the President in his dealings with Georgian representatives.

Russia had the political will to resolve the conflicts in the region. It was not in the interest of the Russian Federation that the area encounters the same problems as the Balkans. Engagement had to be cautious but progressive.

Responding to the points made by Mr Smith, it was correct that the United States, Council of Europe, OSCE and indeed Russian Federation observers had noted some violations during the elections in Azerbaijan. However, the Russian Federation observers had taken the view that these

violations had not affected the result. New democracies needed a period of probation. She noted that the aftermath of the Georgian and Ukrainian revolutions had been problematic. She concluded that democracy must have clean hands.

The President noted that he supported the peaceful revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine and asked Bruce George to speak.

Mr George (UK) began by commenting that entrants to NATO had to pass a series of tests concerning democracy and civil control of the military. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly was establishing itself as a powerful force for democratization.

He took issue with Mrs Sliska's comments about Georgia. The purchase and acceptance of gifts of military equipment did not amount to a major militarization programme.

The elections in Azerbaijan had been, frankly, dreadful. The observers had hoped for something considerably better. In general, the region suffered from a democratic deficit. It was in this context that the acquisition by Georgia of military equipment should be viewed. The OSCE had been expelled from parts of the Caucasus, there was considerable instability in the region, and he could understand the attitude of the Georgian Government.

The partial withdrawal of Russian troops was indeed welcome, but it was not as fast as similar withdrawals in Central and Eastern Europe. It was certainly true that Russia's links with the region had brought much good. However, there had also been tensions and he hoped that in the long run diplomatic tools, rather than military tools, would be used to solve them.

Concluding, he did not want to sour the mood of the meeting, but it was vital that delegates dealt in facts rather than fiction.

Mrs Sliska (RU) said she was sorry that Mr George did not like Russia. She invited him to come and view the progress that had been made there over the past 15 years. On the matter of Georgia, she took the view that weapons were a bad gift and could only contribute to instability.

Mr Ozerov (RU) responded to Mr George's comments by stressing that he was trying to find a constructive way forward. He agreed with Mrs Sliska that someone who had not visited the region was not well placed to comment and he would rather hear the views of the official representative of the NATO Secretary General. The presentations by Russian delegates had been intended to find constructive solutions and take forward reforms.

Mr George (UK) replied that he was being criticised for words that he had not spoken. He had visited Russia many times since 1960 and criticism of Russian foreign policy should not be confused with criticism of Russia or Russians. He said that he, too, was trying to be constructive by seeking answers to the questions that he had asked. He accepted Mrs Sliska's invitation to visit Russia.

Mr Simmons said that it had been a useful discussion about important issues. It was important that relations between NATO and the two regions were transparent. Georgia, in particular, was making good progress and he looked forward to the ratification of the Russian withdrawal agreement and further improvements in defence planning. He closed by stressing the importance of NATO's values and how those values framed its approach to countries in the region.

The President suggested that a text be prepared for discussion in the Standing Committee that would regret the way in which Azerbaijan's elections had been conducted.

He suggested that some of the delegates could form a monitoring group to observe adherence to the Georgian-Russian withdrawal settlement and timetable.

Mr van Gennip (NL) supported the suggestion of a declaration criticising the elections in Azerbaijan. He reminded the meeting that Azerbaijan had used its associations with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the Council of Europe to claim international recognition.

The President confirmed that there was no opposition to his two proposals in the meeting.

He reminded members of the requirement to deposit candidacies for election to the Bureau during this session.

He suggested that Russian political analyst Sergei Rogov be asked to present to the meeting in Paris in May 2006 the conclusions of his study into the conditions Russia would need to meet for NATO membership in the future.

The meeting was closed at 4.45 p.m.
