

PRESS RELEASE

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Joint press statement following the first Partnership Council meeting between the European Union and Armenia

On 21 June 2018 the European Union and Armenia held the first meeting of the Partnership Council under the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which was signed on 24 November 2017 and entered into provisional application on 1 June 2018. The Council is the highest body established under the CEPA to supervise the implementation of the Agreement and to discuss issues of mutual interest. Armenia and the EU expressed their willingness to expand and deepen cooperation within the framework of this new legal basis, the Eastern Partnership and the reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy.

The Partnership Council welcomed the peaceful nature of the recent protests in Armenia, which led to a democratic change of government in accordance with the Constitutional framework. The EU praised the general restraint exercised by all sides and called for continued, inclusive dialogue among all political stakeholders, including civil society. The EU welcomed the Armenian Government's clear commitment to fight against corruption and the concrete action the Armenian Government has taken in this field. The EU reconfirmed its support, including technical and financial assistance, for reforms to enhance democracy, rule of law and respect of human rights, as well as to increase prosperity and socioeconomic resilience in Armenia.

The Partnership Council highlighted the importance of amending Armenia's electoral code in line with OSCE ODIHR recommendations to build confidence in the electoral process. The EU expressed its readiness to assist Armenia with the organisation and monitoring of new elections. The Partnership Council also stressed that an effective and independent judicial system is essential for the rule of law and an important precondition for economic and social development; indicated the need for swift progress with the development of a new Criminal Code and a new Criminal Procedural Code, and stressed the importance of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation.

In addition, the Partnership Council underlined the need to build further on the CEPA provisions in the field of trade through sustained efforts in order to secure a stable, business-friendly and predictable trading environment in Armenia, including full and timely implementation of the provisions on the protection of geographical indications. The Partnership Council also underlined the importance of good governance in the field of taxation with respect to the Code of Conduct on Business Taxation.

On energy, the Partnership Council underlined the importance of energy security, energy efficiency, renewables and nuclear safety in line with the CEPA and with the EU-Armenia Partnership Priorities signed on 21 February 2018. On transport, the Partnership Council looked forward to the signature of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement, initialled on 24 November 2017, which will improve market access and contribute to the highest safety, environmental and social standards. Furthermore, Armenia expressed its willingness to start a Visa Liberalisation Dialogue if all benchmarks are met.

The Partnership Council recalled that the EU-Armenia Partnership Priorities will shape the EU assistance priorities for Armenia. More than EUR 160 million is earmarked for 2017-2021. The Partnership Council stressed the need to make the best use of these resources, with a view to supporting the implementation of the CEPA and improving the living conditions of the citizens in a visible and tangible manner.

The Partnership Council took note of the European Neighbourhood Policy Country Report on Armenia, issued on 6 June 2018, and highlighted the very significant progress in EU-Armenia relations since the May 2017 EU-Armenia Cooperation Council. The Partnership Council decided that future reports would be titled Partnership Reports and focus on the implementation of the CEPA.

Complementary to bilateral ties under the CEPA, the Partnership Council highlighted Armenia's active participation in the Eastern Partnership as an inclusive multilateral framework. Armenia confirmed its commitment to play an important, dynamic and constructive role in the Eastern Partnership framework. Both Armenia and the EU stressed the importance of achieving the Eastern Partnership 2020 deliverables. The EU underlined its readiness to discuss concrete suggestions on the development of cooperation under the Eastern Partnership in specific sectors.

The EU reiterated its support to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs' efforts aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-

Karabakh conflict.

Furthermore, the Partnership Council underlined that finding a lasting and credible political solution to the conflict in Syria is of utmost importance. To help integrate Syrian refugees in Armenia, the EU mobilised EUR 3 million under the Madad Fund.

The EU reiterated its commitment to support the normalisation of relations between Armenia and Turkey and encouraged both sides to engage in this process without any preconditions.

Both parties confirmed their commitment to their international obligations with regard to Iran.

The Council was chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Federica Mogherini. Foreign Minister Mr Zohrab Mnatsakanyan led the Armenian delegation.

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