

La situation en Ukraine vue par le Parlement Européen

Plenary Session of the European Parliament Speech from Benita Ferrero-Waldner 01/12/2004

Mr President,

I would like to follow on from what Minister Nicolai has just said about the situation in the Ukraine.

The Commission is also very concerned at the significant breaches of fundamental democratic principles in the recent presidential elections.

In the light of reports of serious and systematic irregularities from the OSCE election observation mission, it is clear that the official published results do not reflect the will of the Ukrainian voters.

The EU cannot therefore accept the election results.

The Ukrainian parliament has taken the same position with an overwhelming majority. The EU's message to the Ukrainian leadership is unequivocal. The democratic decision of Ukrainians must be respected. At the same time, we are conducting active crisis management in order to secure a peaceful solution to this problem.

The Dutch Presidency has sent a special envoy, Ambassador Biegman, to the Ukraine, who held talks with President Kutchma, Parliament president Lytvyn and Prime Minister Yanukovytsch. The European Commission and the Council Secretariat were closely involved in this.

Building on that, President Kwasniewski of Poland, President Adamkus of Lithuania and Javier Solana, High Representative of the EU, undertook a fact-finding mission to the Ukraine. The OSCE was also present in the form of General Secretary Kubis. Javier Solana returned to Ukraine for further talks yesterday evening.

In the framework of these discussions alternative solutions are being discussed. The likely outcome that would be acceptable to all may be a rerun of the ballot. The Ukrainian parliament has also voted for a re-run of the second round. Furthermore, Yushchenko has lodged an appeal against the election results with the Ukrainian Supreme Court.

This difficult situation proves that this problem can only be solved politically. A political solution is, however, not yet emerging at this point because those involved do not agree on whether an entirely new second vote should take place, or if it should be restricted to reruns in certain districts. Support for Yanukovytsch is receding, as demonstrated just this morning in the Ukrainian Parliament which carried by an overwhelming majority (228 for, 1 against, 3 abstentions) a vote of no-confidence in the government of Prime Minister Yanukovytsch.

Two fundamental principles are essential for a solution:

First, Democracy should be protected. Ukraine must be in a position to freely decide the future of their country. This is not about taking sides with a particular candidate, nor is it about "interfering" in a concrete electoral process. It is about protecting accepted democratic principles.

Second: We need stability, in the Ukraine itself and regarding her territorial integrity. The Ukraine must remain intact as a functioning state. Splitting the country would lead to a serious crisis. To this end, the EU will continue to help the Ukrainians to find a peaceful political solution to the

crisis themselves.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me go into two questions which have been posed in recent days.

Have we sufficiently supported the Ukraine in its transition to democracy and a market economy?

In my opinion, we have done what we can.

1. Firstly, the EU is not only the largest donor to the Ukraine. Since 1991 we have allocated more than €1 billion through the TACIS framework and other programmes, of which the majority has been used and is being used to strengthen democratisation, to aid institutional reform and to further human rights initiatives.

2. Furthermore, we have always offered Ukraine a clear perspective. Since 1991 and particularly since the entry into force of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement in 1998, we have intensified our cooperation in a large number of areas, paying particular attention to supporting economic and social reforms. The dialogue between the European Parliament and the Ukrainian Parliament also belongs to this area of co-operation.

3. In future, we want to deepen this partnership through the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy: we want to create a "Ring of Friends" around the European Union. The Action Plans which have been drafted under this initiative offer each partner an ambitious and above all, tailored package. They include, for example, joint actions in the fields of Justice, Energy and Environmental questions, deepened trade relations and eventually the partial integration of our partners into the EU Internal Market, a gradual participation in the so-called "four freedoms of the EU".

The question of Ukrainian entry into the EU is not on the agenda. But it is clear that we are not closing any doors.

Of course, the quality of our partnership is also dependent on the quality of democracy in the Ukraine. Precisely because the EU has a strong interest in relations with the Ukraine, we expect Ukraine to progress towards European values.

We discussed this issue this morning in the College. The Action Plan for the Ukraine remains on the agenda of the next Commission meeting along with the other Action Plans. We will closely follow the developments in the Ukraine that are changing by the hour, and will come to a decision next week.

We will of course include the views of the European Parliament in our considerations. I am therefore interested to hear your views on this matter.

The Commission will persist with existing measures for democratisation and support of civil society, from which the Ukrainian people reap the greatest benefits. I believe that this is the right signal to send, to support the population in their courageous fight for strengthening fundamental democratic values.

As soon as the decision is taken to hold a re-run of the elections which satisfies the democratic criteria, we will provide European support for this ballot. Of course the responsibility for organising and holding the ballot lies with the Ukraine. But at the same time, it is clear that the recommendations of the OSCE must be taken on board in order to prevent further irregularities occurring.

In particular, this means that both the laws underpinning the election, as well as the practical execution of the ballot must be massively improved. In addition, we must ensure that the media report fairly, to which end we are already seeing some improvements in the reporting of the broadcast media.

The Commission is currently examining to what extent this ballot can be supported through our rapid reaction mechanism and other means, just as we supported the Georgian election authorities in January 2004.

The pictures from all parts of the Ukraine show that millions of Ukrainians are actively living out their fundamental democratic freedoms under difficult and dramatic conditions. The pictures remind many of us of the peaceful protests of 1989, through which we were able to overcome the division of the European continent. The Ukraine has the firm sympathy of the European Union and European citizens.

In this spirit, we will support the Ukraine further in their historical transformation, and will also work closely with you. Precisely these events in the Ukraine prove that the European Union has to be active in its Neighbourhood and that others expect this of us. The European Neighbourhood Policy will therefore be an important vehicle to promote stability and fundamental European principles.

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