

European Parliament resolution of 17 January 2008 on a more effective EU policy for the South Caucasus: from promises to actions ([2007/2076\(INI\)](#))

The European Parliament ,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the South Caucasus and, in particular, its resolution of 26 February 2004 with a European Parliament recommendation to the Council on EU policy towards the South Caucasus([1](#)) ,
- having regard to the Commission's communication entitled "Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative" ([COM\(2007\)0160](#)),
- having regard to the Commission's Communication on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy ([COM\(2006\)0726](#)),
- having regard to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plans adopted with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia,
- having regard to the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), closely linked to the implementation of the jointly adopted Action Plans, which replaces technical assistance hitherto provided by TACIS and MEDA,
- having regard to the Commission's Communication entitled "An Energy Policy for Europe" ([COM\(2007\)0001](#)),
- having regard to the Commission's Conference on the European Neighbourhood Policy held on 3 September 2007,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2007 on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy([2](#)) ,
- having regard to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's Recommendation 1771 (2006) and Resolution 1525 (2006) on the establishment of a Stability Pact for the South Caucasus,
- having regard to its resolution of 26 September 2007 on towards a common European foreign policy on energy([3](#)) ,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2008 on a Black Sea Regional Policy Approach([4](#)) ,
- having regard to the Presidency Conclusions of the European Councils of 14-15 December 2006 and 21-22 June 2007, and to the German Presidency Progress Report entitled "Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy" of 15 June 2007,
- having regard to the Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the

Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Security and Development of 19-20 November 2007 and the EU's commitment to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security,

- having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements concluded with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia,
- having regard to the Final Statement and Recommendations of the ninth meeting of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (PCC) of 30 January 2007,
- having regard to the Final Statement and Recommendations of the eighth meeting of the EU-Azerbaijan PCC of 12 September 2007,
- having regard to the Final Statement and Recommendations of the ninth meeting of the EU-Georgia PCC of 26 June 2007,
- having regard to the recent parliamentary elections in Armenia and Azerbaijan and to the OSCE/ODIHR observation reports,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1781 (2007) on the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict and extension of the mandate of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia,
- having regard to Council Presidency Declarations 14818/07 on the current situation in Georgia and 14809/07 on the conviction of Eynulla Fatullayev in Azerbaijan,
- having regard to the Baku Initiative for the development of energy cooperation and to the Memorandum of Understanding between the EU and Azerbaijan on strategic partnership in the energy field, signed in Brussels on 7 November 2006,
- having regard to the EU's commitment to promote the achievement of the UN's Millennium Development Goals and to the European Consensus on Development⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to the European Security Strategy entitled "A Secure Europe in a Better World", approved by the European Council on 12 December 2003,
- having regard to the monitoring reports of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,
- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on International Trade ([A6-0516/2007](#)),

A. whereas at the General Affairs Council of 26 February 2001 the EU stated its willingness to play a more active political role in the South Caucasus region, to look for ways in which to support efforts aimed at the prevention and resolution of conflicts in the

region and to participate in post-conflict rehabilitation,

B. whereas the launch of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway will open a new window between the South Caucasus region, Turkey and Western Europe but is also strengthening the isolation of Armenia and thus breaching the ENP objectives; whereas, nevertheless, the recommendations of the High-Level Group on Transport will be implemented and the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) axis remains the main trans-national axis for the Caucasus, connecting all the countries in the region,

C. whereas the extension of the ENP to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia marks an important step forward in the Union's engagement with the region, creating the necessary premises for proactive EU involvement in the South Caucasus and providing the countries of the region with opportunities for closer cooperation with the EU; whereas more incentives are needed to motivate Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to advance on the path of reforms,

D. whereas the ENP is based on shared values and effective implementation of political, economic and institutional reforms, with the stated aim of creating an area of friendly neighbours with strong democracies based on functional market economies and the rule of law,

E. whereas the ENP needs to be developed in order to achieve a better and more efficient EU policy towards the region and to give the EU the role of security and stability actor that it could play; whereas the EU needs to develop a clear profile and a stronger presence in the region,

F. whereas the inclusion of the South Caucasus countries in the ENP entails increased responsibilities and commitments on the part of those countries also; whereas good-neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are fundamental elements of the ENP,

G. whereas a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict – a conflict which exacerbates relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan –, and of Georgia's internal conflicts in Abkazia and South Ossetia, is essential for stability in the EU neighbourhood, as well as for the economic and social development of the South Caucasus region,

H. whereas the question of the further internationalisation of the unresolved post-Soviet conflicts must be one of the key issues of EU-Russia relations, in order to deal more effectively with the problems of the common neighbouring countries,

I. whereas the significance of the region for the positive involvement of the EU is not only linked to its geographical position as a transit area for energy supplies from Central Asia to Europe but is also based on the mutual interest, shared by all concerned, in the development of the region with a view to enhancing democracy, prosperity and the rule of law and thus creating a viable framework for regional and inter-regional development

and cooperation in the South Caucasus area,

J. whereas the region has become an arena for competition between strategic interests of several big geopolitical players; whereas the Individual Partnership Action Plans which all three countries have with NATO make the alliance a new player in the region,

K. whereas dialogue and coordination between the EU, Russia and the United States could help to promote democracy, to enhance energy security and to strengthen regional security in the South Caucasus region,

L. whereas Georgia and Armenia have experienced strong economic growth in recent years and Azerbaijan ranks among the world's fastest growing economies, with a GNP increase of 34.5% in 2006, mainly due to its gas and oil reserves; whereas, regardless of these growth rates, the societies in the three countries are characterised by levels of poverty and unemployment which are still very high, limited access to basic social services, low income and the unequal distribution of that income,

M. whereas a destabilising arms race is under way in the South Caucasus, characterised by a build-up of military arsenals at an unprecedented rate,

Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the framework of the ENP

1. Welcomes the inclusion of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the ENP and the endorsement of bilateral ENP Action Plans by the relevant Cooperation Councils on 14 November 2006, and expresses its support for the ongoing efforts towards their implementation, which should include all stakeholders in the process;
2. Stresses that a policy approach towards the three countries of the South Caucasus should not ignore the three states' particular characteristics; supports the inbuilt differentiation in the application of the ENP policy towards the countries concerned and underlines the need to strengthen the EU's relations with those countries according to their individual merits in the implementation of their relevant ENP Action Plans;
3. Highlights the geopolitical situation of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan in relation to Russia, Iran and Turkey and the growing interest of other economic powers, such as Russia, the United States and China, in this area; considers it of the utmost importance, therefore, that cooperation with the South Caucasus be given the highest priority, not least in matters relating to energy;
4. Reaffirms that the principal objectives of the EU in the region are to encourage the development of the South Caucasus countries into open, peaceful, secure and stable states, able to contribute to good neighbourly relations in the region and to regional stability and ready to share European values and to develop institutional and legal interoperability among themselves and with the EU; in order to attain these objectives, calls on the EU to develop a regional policy for the South Caucasus to be implemented

jointly with the countries in the region, complemented by individual bilateral policies;

5. Underlines the fact that the ENP was designed to transcend the dividing lines in Europe through gradual extension of the area of democracy, prosperity and security; calls on the EU and the countries of the South Caucasus to take advantage, by means of twinning, secondment and other available assistance programmes, of the extensive knowledge and experience gained by the new Member States in reforming their societies and economies in the EU integration process, in particular as regards strengthening the border guard and customs authorities and developing regional cooperation between them;

6. Stresses that the ENP reviews and funding must be used to promote institution-building, respect for human rights, the rule of law, democratisation and regional cooperation; reaffirms the need for further firm steps on the part of the EU to encourage genuine regional cooperation and integration; calls on the Commission to report regularly on the progress of the regional cooperation process and to adapt its policies and instruments accordingly; looks forward to increasingly constructive relations being developed between the EU and the different stakeholders, particularly civil society, in the partner countries, in order to make the ENP process more dynamic and transparent;

7. Notes that, due to the rapid and strong growth of its GNP, Azerbaijan has become a donor of aid, while international donors have noticeably reduced their activity in the country; proposes that the EU should focus on transfer of know-how and best practices within the framework of Twinning, TAIEX and Sigma programmes (under the ENPI);

8. Considers that trade policy is a key component in ensuring political stability and economic development leading to a reduction in poverty in the South Caucasus, and that it is crucial for further integration between the EU and the South Caucasus; stresses that, in respect of trade policy, the social dimension must be considered;

9. Supports the Commission's initiative to undertake a feasibility study to evaluate the possibility of a free-trade agreement with Georgia and Armenia; believes that such an agreement will benefit all parties; in the meantime, calls on the Commission and the Council to implement measures to ensure that Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan benefit as much as possible from the Generalized System of Preferences, while underlining the importance of Azerbaijani membership of the WTO for further enhancing bilateral trade relations; encourages the Azerbaijani authorities to tackle remaining impediments to its accession to the WTO, such as high customs tariffs, lack of transparency and failure to enforce commercial laws, corruption and failure to enforce intellectual property rights, and calls on the Commission to further support Azerbaijan in its process of accession to the WTO;

10. Notes that Georgia has been under massive pressure as a result of the Russian economic embargo, which was enforced over a year ago, closing traditional markets for Georgian goods and therefore depriving a number of citizens of their livelihoods; stresses that the speedy conclusion of a free-trade agreement with Georgia is equally important in strengthening EU-Georgia relations and relieving the country of the consequences of the

Russian embargo;

11. Stresses that all three states will have to continue their efforts to reduce poverty and adhere to the principle of sustainable development; suggests adopting efficient policies to reduce social polarisation, as well as to ensure access to social security systems; calls on the Commission to further support the three countries in strengthening their national capabilities to improve and implement poverty reduction policies;

12. Believes that the ENP provides an excellent framework for regional and sub-regional cooperation, with a view to creating a genuine space of security, democracy and stability both in the South Caucasus and in the Black Sea region; takes the view that a differentiated bilateral approach towards the three countries of the South Caucasus cannot do without a global multilateral dimension entailing the development of regional cooperation; therefore:

- attaches particular importance to the active participation and inclusion of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the process for the implementation of the Black Sea Synergy and related regional projects;
- advocates the deepening of regular political dialogue between the EU and Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia;
- welcomes the fact that Georgia and Armenia align themselves with most of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy declarations and positions, and supports the decision to involve Azerbaijan in the same way;
- urges the three countries not to hinder or veto EU-funded cross-border programmes and projects aimed at resuming dialogue, building confidence between the parties and tackling regional problems;
- calls for more effective cooperation between the three countries within the framework of the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus;
- calls for enhanced cooperation in the areas of freedom, security and justice, in particular in border management, migration and asylum, the fight against organised crime, trafficking in human beings and drugs, illegal immigration, terrorism and money laundering;
- calls on the Commission to coordinate and support actions of the Member States already involved in regional conflict resolution;

Democracy, human rights and the rule of law

13. Commends the internal political and institutional reforms undertaken by Armenia following the constitutional reform and in the context of implementation of the ENP Action Plan; encourages the Armenian authorities to continue on this path and to make further progress in strengthening democratic structures, the rule of law and protection of human rights; calls, in particular, for further efforts to be made in establishing an independent judiciary, in promoting reforms in the police, the civil service and local government, in fighting corruption and in creating a vibrant civil society; notes the

statement of the International Election Observation Mission that the parliamentary elections held in May 2007 were largely in accordance with international commitments; trusts that the Armenian authorities will work closely with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe to address remaining issues in order to further improve the standards already attained and fully to guarantee the free and fair conduct of the presidential elections to be held on 19 February 2008; encourages, generally, the establishment of a constructive dialogue between the government and the opposition with a view to strengthening pluralism as the core element of democracy; further calls on the Armenian authorities to investigate allegations of violence and ill-treatment in police custody and penitentiary institutions and corruption and breaches of freedom of expression,

14. Reiterates its serious concern about the deterioration of the human rights situation and media freedom in Azerbaijan; calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to ensure freedom of the media; welcomes, in this regard, the presidential pardon of 28 December 2007 as a result of which six journalists have been released from prison, and calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to release immediately all journalists remaining in prison, to stop harassment of journalists, particularly in the form of abusive use of criminal libel laws, and to announce a moratorium on further use of criminal libel laws as steps in demonstrating their commitment to freedom of expression; expects the Azerbaijani authorities to follow the Council of Europe Venice Commission recommendations with a view to ensuring freedom of assembly and an absence of restrictions on the activities of the political parties with a view to the elections in 2008, and to ensure that OSCE standards are fully complied with; also calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to prevent police violence and to investigate all allegations of ill-treatment in custody; reiterates the EU's readiness to assist Azerbaijan in carrying out reforms related to respect for human rights and democracy;

15. Notes the wide-ranging reforms undertaken by the Georgian Government following the Rose Revolution; encourages further progress to be made in pluralistic governance and dialogue between the government and the opposition, the rule of law and compliance with human rights obligations, particularly as regards independence of the judiciary, zero-tolerance of police violence, criminal justice reforms and the improvement of detention conditions; calls on the Georgian authorities to respect property rights, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, minority rights in compliance with the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and freedom of the media; expects Georgia to fulfil ENP Action Plan objectives and Council of Europe recommendations with a view to the long-term sustainability of democratic governance, with particular regard to respect for pluralism and opposition, built-in mechanisms of checks and balances and institutional reform;

16. Reiterates its continuing support for Georgia's efforts to introduce political and economic reforms and to strengthen its democratic institutions, including the reform of the Electoral Code, thereby building a peaceful and prosperous Georgia that can contribute to stability both in the region and in the rest of Europe; expresses deep concern over the political developments in Georgia in November 2007, which escalated into a

violent police crackdown on peaceful demonstrations, the closing-down of independent media outlets and the declaration of the state of emergency; expresses its satisfaction that the overall assessment by the International Election Observation Mission was that the presidential elections held on 5 January 2008 were in essence consistent with most OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections; considers that, although significant challenges were revealed which need to be addressed urgently, this election was the first genuinely competitive presidential election enabling the Georgian people to express their political choice; calls on all political forces in Georgia to strive for a democratic political culture, where political opponents are respected and where a constructive dialogue is aimed at supporting and consolidating Georgia's fragile democratic institutions; calls on the Georgian authorities to address the shortcomings noted in the preliminary report by the International Election Observation Mission before the parliamentary elections to be held in the spring of 2008;

17. Welcomes the peaceful conduct of the presidential elections on 5 January 2008 and regards this as another step forward on the road towards the further democratisation of Georgian society and the building and consolidating of democratic institutions in Georgia; expects the newly elected president to take the necessary steps for constructive dialogue with the opposition to this end; nevertheless, expresses its concern regarding the overall conduct of the election campaign, which took place in a highly polarised environment marked by a lack of trust and pervasive allegations of violations and by the deliberate overlapping of the former president's state activities with his electoral campaign which contributed to an inequitable campaign environment; calls on the Georgia authorities to address adequately and urgently all the complaints about the electoral process; urges the Georgian authorities to take due account of the remarks of the international observers with a view to resolving all the problems pointed out, and to prepare adequately and thoroughly for the upcoming general elections; calls on the opposition forces to act responsibly, respecting the election results, and to engage constructively in the political debate in the Georgian democratic institutions;

18. Stresses that the clear commitment by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms is of paramount importance for determining their future relations with the EU; expects those countries to fulfil ENP Action Plan objectives and Council of Europe recommendations in this regard; asks the Commission to negotiate the setting-up of human rights sub-committees with all three countries;

19. Expects the authorities of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to ensure freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of the media ahead of their respective elections in 2008; underlines that the ability of those countries to allow fair and balanced access to both public and private media and to conduct their elections in accordance with international standards is vital to the further deepening of their relations with the EU;

20. Welcomes the decision to appoint Poland to mediate on behalf of the EU between the Georgian Government and opposition media in the run-up to the January 2008 elections; considers that the engagement of the new Member States, which have close cultural and

historical ties in the region, is of great significance;

21. Underscores the importance of supporting and empowering civil society and developing people-to-people contacts in promoting democracy and the rule of law; encourages the Commission to make full use of the opportunities offered by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights for, inter alia , monitoring the implementation of the ENP; stresses that the ENP process, and particularly the monitoring of its implementation, must be open to cooperation and consultation with civil society; urges the Commission to set an example by establishing concrete mechanisms for civil society consultation; underlines the importance of ensuring that the funds are distributed fairly without politically motivated state interference; calls on the Commission also to develop guidelines for local and regional authorities on their specific role in implementing the ENP Action Plans;

22. Stresses the importance of cooperation in the area of freedom of movement across the borders of the EU and its neighbours; calls on the Commission and the Council to make the EU-Georgia Subcommittee on Justice, Liberty and Security operational as soon as possible and to take the necessary steps for the launch of negotiations on readmission and visa facilitation agreements between the EU and Georgia and for the signature of a mobility partnership agreement with the EU, while underlining the negative effects of delay on the settlement of internal conflicts within Georgia and noting the difficulties caused by the decision of the Russian authorities to grant Russian passports to people living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; supports the commencement of negotiations on the agreements with Armenia and Azerbaijan; encourages Member States to enhance cooperation in order to improve the efficiency of the consular services in the South Caucasus countries and to accelerate the creation of Common Visa Application Centres; supports the exploration of supplementary initiatives within the development of a global approach to migration in eastern and south-eastern Europe;

23. Calls on the Commission also to encourage from a financial standpoint the presence of European NGOs in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, in order to spread their knowledge and experience in creating an organised civil society;

24. Calls on the Commission to make every effort in order to bring together NGOs and representatives of the civil societies of the three countries of the South Caucasus so as to facilitate dialogue, foster mutual understanding and deal thoroughly with the problems of the region; calls on the authorities of the relevant countries not to hinder any such initiative;

25. Underlines the fact that the facilitation of movement of persons is linked to secure borders, and welcomes the Commission's initiative to promote regional cooperation in the South Caucasus in the field of integrated border management; stresses the need to facilitate efficiently the visa requirements for local border traffic; realises that goodwill on both sides is a prerequisite for cooperation along the full length of Georgia's border with Russia; emphasises the importance of budget and revenues transparency in ensuring

that government spending is accountable to ordinary citizens;

26. Calls on all three countries to step up their efforts in the fight against corruption and in the establishment of a favourable investment and business climate; stresses the importance of budget transparency aimed at guaranteeing the government's accountability for public expenditure; underlines that the development of property rights is fundamental to the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises and to sustainable economic development; encourages the promotion of market economy reforms aimed at increasing competitiveness and consolidating the private sector; supports harmonisation and further intensification of liberalisation measures in line with WTO principles; underlines the importance of ensuring that economic reforms are accompanied by adequate social measures;

27. Calls on the authorities of all three countries to ensure that measures taken in the fight against corruption are not used to political ends and that investigations, prosecutions and trials are conducted in a fair and transparent manner;

28. Notes that the unresolved post-Soviet conflicts and the insecurity provoked by them have determined the increase in military spending in the states of the region, thereby negatively affecting their economic and social development; therefore, calls on the states in the region to stop the increase in their military spending;

Peaceful resolution of conflicts

29. Considers that finding a peaceful solution to the unresolved post-Soviet conflicts is the key to achieving political stability and economic development in the South Caucasus, as well as in an extended regional context; underlines the fact that the EU has an important role to play in contributing to the culture of dialogue and understanding in the region and in ensuring the implementation of the above-mentioned UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000); advocates the use of cross-border programmes and dialogue among civil societies as tools for conflict transformation and confidence-building across the division lines; welcomes especially the Commission's efforts to give aid and spread information to Abkhazia and South Ossetia; supports the initiative by the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Mr Peter Semneby, to open Information Offices in both regions; asks the Commission and Mr Semneby to extend the same kind of aid and information dissemination to Nagorno-Karabakh;

30. Rejects all attempts by foreign powers aimed at creating exclusive spheres of influence; calls for constructive engagement with all countries in the shared neighbourhood and urges Russia to not to oppose any engagement by the EU in conflict management and peace-keeping operations in the South Caucasus;

31. Notes that the contradiction between the principles of self-determination and territorial integrity contributes to the perpetuation of the unresolved post-Soviet conflicts in the South Caucasus region; considers that this problem can be overcome only through negotiations on the basis of the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and in the

Helsinki Final Act and within the framework of regional integration; notes that this process cannot take place without the support of the international community, and calls upon the EU to initiate measures to that end; considers, moreover, that the improvement in inter-ethnic relations, on the basis of European standards, and the enhancement of minorities' rights in such a way as to strengthen the civic cohesion of the states in the South Caucasus are essential in bringing about a negotiated solution to the conflicts in the region;

32. Reiterates its unconditional support for the territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognised borders of Georgia, and supports the continuous efforts made by the Georgian authorities to achieve a settlement of its internal conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; regrets, however, the continuing aggressive rhetoric employed by the parties in respect of the disputes and supports the appeal by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, for a redoubling of efforts to avoid action that could lead to a renewal of hostilities in Abkhazia; encourages the parties to make full use of dialogue and negotiation formats in order to achieve a final settlement of the conflict in South Ossetia; calls upon the de facto authorities to provide secure conditions for the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and to respect the inalienability of property rights in the conflict zones in accordance with the above-mentioned UN Security Council 1781 (2007); underscores that finding satisfactory solutions to the fundamental human rights issues, such as the return of IDPs and their property and the proper investigation by all sides of war crimes and cases of missing persons, will play a key role in the achievement of any lasting settlement; calls on all parties to return to the negotiating table; welcomes the first high-level meeting between the Georgian and Abkhaz officials, which took place recently after a long pause;

33. Takes the view that further delay in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will not benefit either of the sides involved but will jeopardise regional stability and hamper regional and economic progress; reiterates its respect and support for the territorial integrity and internationally recognised borders of Azerbaijan, as well as for the right to self-determination, in accordance with the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act; urgently calls on Armenia and Azerbaijan to seize any opportunities for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; reiterates its strong support for the OSCE Minsk Group but regrets the lack of any substantial progress in the negotiations; calls on the parties to apply the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, in particular allowing the return to their homes in safety and dignity of all refugees and IDPs; warns against any militant and provocative rhetoric that could undermine the negotiation process;

34. Regrets that efforts to bring the three countries of the region closer together are hampered by the persistence of unresolved post-Soviet conflicts caused by territorial claims and separatism; underlines that conflict zones are often used as safe havens for organised crime, money laundering, drug trafficking and weapons smuggling;

35. Reminds the authorities concerned that refugees and IDPs should not be used as tools in conflicts; calls for decisive action to improve the living conditions and social situation

of IDPs before they are actually granted their human right to return home;

36. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue to provide financial support for the efforts of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to deal with the situation of refugees and displaced persons, by helping to renovate buildings and build roads, water and electricity supply infrastructure, hospitals and schools, so as to enable these communities to be more effectively integrated, while facilitating the development of the regions in which they live, without forgetting the local population, who are often likewise living below the poverty line; stresses the importance of tackling the problem of the numerous landmines resulting from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which are still injuring and, occasionally, killing people;

37. Calls on key actors in the region to play a constructive role in resolving unresolved post-Soviet conflicts in the region and to take steps to normalise its relations with neighbours; reiterates its call upon Turkey to engage in serious and intensive efforts for the resolution of outstanding disputes with all its neighbours, in accordance with the UN Charter, relevant UN Security Council resolutions and other relevant international conventions, and including a frank and open discussion on past events; reiterates its call on the Turkish and Armenian Governments to start the process of reconciliation for the present and the past, and calls on the Commission to facilitate this process while taking advantage of the regional cooperation realised within the ENP and Black Sea Synergy policy; calls on the Commission and the Council to address the opening of the Turkish border with Armenia with the authorities of those two countries;

38. Suggests the setting-up of a 3+3 Conference on security and cooperation in the South Caucasus, comprising on the one hand the three South Caucasus states and on the other hand the EU, the United States and Russia, to discuss the issue of security and regional cooperation in the South Caucasus, focusing attention on the creation of the proper context in which to resolve the unresolved post-Soviet conflicts in the region;

Energy and transport cooperation

39. Attaches great significance to the opening of the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, and stresses the importance of the Trans-Caspian energy corridor projects, which would contribute to economic and trade development in the region and would enhance the safety and security and diversification of energy supplies and transit systems from Azerbaijan and the Caspian basin to the EU market; however, strongly requests the countries involved and the Commission to include Armenia in the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline and in the Trans-Caspian energy corridor projects, in compliance with the regional cooperation objective promoted by the ENP;

40. Stresses the importance of deepening the EU-Azerbaijani energy partnership as envisaged in the above-mentioned Memorandum of Understanding of 7 November 2006, and welcomes the readiness of the Azerbaijani and Georgian Governments to further play an active role in the promotion of market-based energy supply and transit diversification

in the region, thus substantially contributing to European energy security;

41. Welcomes the Report of the above-mentioned High-Level Group on Transport, entitled "Network for Peace and Development", and the Communication from the Commission entitled "Extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries" ([COM\(2007\)0032](#)); reiterates its support for the creation of new infrastructure and viable transport corridors diversifying both suppliers and routes, such as the Trans-Caspian/trans-Black Sea energy corridor and the Nabucco pipeline, as well as the INOGATE and TRACECA projects connecting the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions;

42. Takes note of the emergence of a new reality in which climate change and security of supply are elements of paramount importance; recognises that generating diversity of supply is vital and can only be attained through enhanced cooperation with neighbouring states, especially those in the South Caucasus and Central Asian regions, and encourages regional and inter-regional development; considers that the realisation of the energy diversification projects should be one of the priorities of the strengthened ENP and calls for enhanced support for improvement of the investment climate and the regulatory framework, based on the principles of the Energy Charter Treaty, in the energy sectors of the producer and transit countries;

43. Notes that Azerbaijan's gas and oil reserves are estimated to be exploitable for the next fifteen to twenty years; notes that, according to recent estimates, the oil fields under the Caspian Sea contain around 14 billion barrels and gas resources amount to around 850 to 1370 billion cubic metres; acknowledges that efforts must be made in order for the country to avoid the pitfalls of the "resource curse"; underlines, therefore, the importance of sustainable alternatives, from both a political and an economic standpoint; calls on the Azerbaijani Government to take the necessary steps to put in place the requisite legislative and operational framework in order to enable EU aid in the area of renewables and energy efficiency to be put to best use;

44. Welcomes with interest the Commission's proposal to draw up a viability study on a possible "Neighbourhood Energy Agreement" and, to that end, encourages the ENP partner countries to respect international law and the commitments entered into on the world markets;

45. Supports the efforts made by the Armenian Government towards the early decommissioning of the current unit of the Medzamor nuclear power plant and towards finding viable alternative solutions for energy supply, as requested by the EU, but expresses its concern about the government's decision to build a new unit in the same power plant, situated as it is in a seismic zone, and encourages the Armenian authorities to find alternative solutions for energy supply;

46. Recommends that energy cooperation should also take into consideration the countries' own energy needs and benefits, notably in terms of access to energy; calls on the Commission to ensure that energy projects financed by official development

assistance under the ENPI have a direct impact on poverty reduction and benefit the local population; calls on the Commission to strengthen its support for the three countries" efforts to combat climate change and explore concrete solutions addressing inefficient energy production and consumption patterns, including through transfer of technologies;

47. Notes inter-regional initiatives such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway project; believes that this initiative opens the way for a better economic and political integration of that part of the world into the European and international economy and that it will contribute to economic and trade development in the region; stresses, however, that the project bypasses the existing and fully operative rail line in Armenia; urges the South Caucasus republics and Turkey to pursue effectively policies of regional economic integration and to refrain from any short-sighted and politically motivated regional energy and transportation projects which violate ENP principles of sound development;

Other remarks

48. Reiterates its call for the regular reports by the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, including the final comprehensive report presented at the end of the mission, to be made available to Parliament;

49. Welcomes the Commission decision of 10 May 2007 to upgrade its delegation in Yerevan and to open a delegation in Baku by the end of 2007; calls on the Commission to ensure that those delegations become operational without further delay;

50. Considers that strengthening the visibility of the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus is highly important in order to improve communication of the EU's approach to the respective countries and their citizens; considers that the active inclusion of civil society is of crucial importance in this respect;

51. Calls on the Commission and the Council, on the basis of the individual achievements of a particular country, to consider new enhanced agreements with the countries concerned;

52. Calls on the parliaments of the respective countries to strengthen the representation of the parliamentary opposition in their delegations to the PCCs, and supports an increase in regional parliamentary cooperation, including the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the South Caucasus Parliamentary Initiative;

53. Stresses the need to use existing multilateral organisations to strengthen interaction between the European Union and the South Caucasus countries;

54. Reaffirms the need for coordination of the EU institutions with other bilateral and multilateral actors, so as to ensure consistency between the Action Plans and the commitments made to the Council of Europe, the OSCE, NATO and the UN;

55. Underlines the importance of the South Caucasus region for the EU and the need for

the implementation of the various ENP Action Plans to be closely followed by Parliament;

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56. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, to the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, to the governments of Turkey, the United States and the Russian Federation, and to the UN Secretary-General.

(1) OJ C 98 E, 23.4.2004, p. 193.

(2) Texts adopted, [P6_TA\(2007\)0538](#).

(3) Texts adopted, [P6_TA\(2007\)0413](#).

(4) Texts adopted, [P6_TA\(2008\)0017](#).

(5) OJ C 46, 24.2.2006, p. 1.

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