

Press release AFET delegation to Iran

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament (AFET) sent a delegation to Iran from 6-7 June. The delegation was led by Mr Elmar Brok (EPP, Germany), Chair of AFET, and included representatives of a broad range of political groups in the European Parliament: Andrej Plenkovic (EPP, Croatia), Richard Howitt (S&D, UK), Josef Weidenholzer (S&D, Austria), Marietje Schaake (ALDE, The Netherlands), Urmas Paet (ALDE, Estonia) and Klaus Buchner (Greens, Germany).

The EP delegation held meetings with senior Iranian politicians both in the Iranian parliament (Majlis) and the executive, including Vice President Dr. Ebtekar, Foreign Affairs Minister Zarif and Dr. Larijani, Speaker of the Majlis. The delegation also met with Deputy Foreign Minister Dr. Ravanchi, as well as with Mr Boroujerdi, Chairman of the Majles Foreign Policy and National Security Commission, and with Dr Kazem Jalali, leader of the conservative faction in the Majlis and Head of the parliamentary research centre.

Chairman Brok outlined that "with this visit, the EP wants to give a strong signal of its commitment to building trust in this key moment in EU-Iran relations".

Members discussed EU-Iran relations, the regional instability in the Middle East, including in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, as well as issues of common concern such as drug smuggling from Afghanistan, climate change and the protection of the environment as well as the situation of human rights.

Both the EP delegation and Speaker Larijani expressed their strong commitment and the support of their respective Parliaments to reach a comprehensive and credible nuclear deal. They agreed that this will create the conditions for building up further trust and developing cooperation in other areas of mutual interest. Once a final deal is signed and implemented, the EU will stand by all its commitments, which includes the prospect of increased economic ties, especially for trade, investments and energy. Parliamentarians also reiterated the call of the European Parliament to establish a EU Delegation in Iran in the future.

On the regional situation, the EP and its Iranian counterparts expressed concern at the rise of Da'esh in Iraq and Syria and its catastrophic security and humanitarian consequences in the region and beyond. This was identified as yet another proof of the need to enhance cooperation between Iran and the EU in the region, together with a shared commitment to fight terrorism from all sides. Both parliaments agree to follow-up on this through a joint seminar.

Both MEPs and Iranian authorities saw this official visit as a first step in a new era of cooperation and renewed parliamentary dialogue between Iran and the EU at a crucial

moment of the nuclear negotiations. It was also stated that any disagreements should not prevent both sides from reaching a mutually acceptable solution to the nuclear issue within the agreed deadline.

The delegation is pleased to report that Foreign Minister Zarif accepted to visit the European Parliament in the near future.