

## European Parliament resolution of 7 July 2011 on the preparations for the Russian State Duma elections in December 2011

*The European Parliament*,

- having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the Russian Federation, which entered into force in 1997 and has been extended pending its replacement by a new agreement,
- having regard to the ongoing negotiations for a new agreement providing a new comprehensive framework for EU-Russia relations, as well as to the 'Partnership for Modernisation' initiated in 2010,
- having regard to its previous reports and resolutions on Russia and on EU-Russia relations, in particular its resolutions of 9 June 2011 on the EU-Russia Summit<sup>(1)</sup>, of 17 February 2011 on the rule of law in Russia<sup>(2)</sup>, of 17 June 2010 on the conclusions of the EU/Russia Summit<sup>(3)</sup>, of 12 November 2009<sup>(4)</sup> prior to the EU-Russia Summit held in Stockholm on 18 November 2009, and its resolutions of 17 September 2009 on the murder of human rights activists in Russia<sup>(5)</sup> and on external aspects of energy security<sup>(6)</sup>,
- having regard to the EU-Russia human rights consultations, particularly the latest meeting held in this context on the 4 May 2011,
- having regard to the decision of the Russian Ministry of Justice on 22 June 2011 to refuse the application for official registration of the People's Freedom Party (PARNAS), and to previous similar cases, which will make it impossible for these parties to participate in the elections,
- having regard to the statement by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP), Catherine Ashton, of 22 June 2011 on party registration in Russia,
- having regard to the obligation to uphold democratic principles entailed by Russia's membership in the Council of Europe and as a signatory of the European Convention of Human Rights,
- having regard to the outcome of the EU-Russia Summit held in Nizhny Novgorod on 9-10 June 2011,
- having regard to Rule 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas political pluralism is a cornerstone of democracy and modern society, and a source of political legitimacy,

B. whereas on 12 April 2011 the European Court of Human Rights expressed its criticism over the cumbersome registration procedures for political parties in Russia, which do not comply with the European Convention on Human Rights,

C. whereas ODIHR observers visited Russia during the 2003 parliamentary election and advised that a standard OSCE mission should start work six weeks before the elections and comprise 60 long-term and 400 short-term observers,

D. whereas there remains concern about developments in the Russian Federation with regard to respect for and the protection of human rights and respect for commonly agreed democratic principles, rules and procedures; whereas the Russian Federation is a full member of the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the UN, and has therefore committed itself to the principles of democracy and respect for human rights as promoted by these organisations,

1. Reaffirms its belief that Russia remains one of European Union's most important partners in building strategic cooperation, sharing not only economic and trade interests but also the objective of acting closely together in the common neighbourhood, as well as at global level;

2. Reconfirms its resolution of 9 June 2011 on the EU-Russia Summit in Nizhny Novgorod;

3. Deplores the decision by the Russian authorities to reject the registration of the People's Freedom Party (PARNAS) for the forthcoming Duma elections in December 2011; calls on the Russian authorities to guarantee free and fair elections and to withdraw all decisions and rules that oppose this principle;

4. Reaffirms its concerns regarding the difficulties faced by the political parties in registering for elections, which effectively constrain political competition in Russia, reduce the choice available to its

electorate and show that there are still real obstacles to political pluralism in the country;

5. Emphasises that the State Duma elections should be based on the implementation of election standards set by the Council of Europe and the OSCE; urges the Russian authorities to allow the OSCE/Council of Europe long-term election observation mission and to cooperate fully with it from its earliest stage, and calls on the HR/VP to insist on the establishment of a mission for this purpose; calls for close cooperation by said observation mission with civil society and the monitoring groups;

6. Deplores the six-month travel ban imposed on Boris Nemtsov on 5 July 2011 and calls for it to be lifted immediately;

7. Expresses its concern about the proposal of a draft law, to be discussed in the Duma, which would enable Russian courts to ignore the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights in some areas, such as an initiative contradicting the basic principles of the European Convention on Human Rights; welcomes the recent decision of the Russian Duma not to consider the draft law for the time being and hopes it will finally renounce that initiative;

8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the President, Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation.