Three Delegations of European Parliament visiting India this week

A ‘triple bill’ of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are on a visit to India this week from 20-23 February, emphasizing the high level of importance attached by the European Union to the Strategic Partnership with India. This is the first ever joint visit of the Members of the European Parliament in India and the biggest organized so far, with three parliamentary delegations (the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection and the Standing Delegation for relations with India) comprising of over 20 MEPs from diverse background, nationality, political parties visiting India.

The programme, in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore, aims to deepen politicians’ knowledge of India across as many domains as possible in the time available, with a view to strengthening the EU-India Strategic Partnership. During their visit they would be meeting various leaders and representatives of the Indian Government, industry, as well as think tanks. The three delegations are expected to meet the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and parliamentarians along with senior members from the Ministry of External Affairs; Finance; Commerce & Industry; Power, Coal, New and Renewable Energy and Mines; Women and Child Development among others.

While the Delegation for relations with India visits India periodically in order to nurture EU-India parliamentary cooperation, this is the first visit to India of the AFET Committee under the leadership of its new chair, MEP David McAllister, elected to his new role in January 2017. The last visit of the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection to India was 7 years ago.

This unprecedented joint visit is a follow up and deliverable to the EU - India summit of 31st March where Prime Minister Modi along with President Tusk and President Junker had agreed on increasing people to people and parliament to parliament contacts. The former European Parliament President Schulz along with European parliamentarians had also met with Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Shrimati Sumitra Mahajan, June 2015 and with Prime Minister Modi during the summit in March 2016.

European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)

The Delegation visiting India comprises of seven members: Mr. David McAllister (Chair), Mr. Cristian Dan Preda, Ms. Željana Žovko, Ms. Neena Gill, Mr. Jo Leinen, Mr. Amjad Bashir, Mr. Urmas Paet. It is also the first visit abroad of the AFET Committee under the leadership of its new chair, MEP David
AFET contributes towards the definition of the EU's foreign and security policy and scrutinises its implementation, including the anti-piracy mission in the Indian Ocean and off the Somali coast. AFET has two sub-committees, namely on Human Rights and Security Defence. AFET’s support is required for all major international partnership and cooperation agreements signed by the EU. The committee also has budgetary, scrutiny and legislative role with regard to the EU’s external financing instruments, such as the Partnership Instrument, the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, as well as European Human Rights and Democracy Instrument. The EP also has budgetary powers on civilian missions under the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy. The AFET delegation will focus on EU-India relations, including an enhanced foreign policy dialogue on issues of global and regional importance and of mutual interest or concern, such as peace, security, and multilateral cooperation. These include specific topics of regional security, counter-terrorism, the fight against piracy, cybersecurity and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

**European Parliament Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO):**

The European Parliament Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection will be visiting Mumbai and New Delhi from 21-23 February 2017 and will meet ministries, parliamentarians, standardisations authorities and consumer organisations. The Delegation will be composed of six Members: Ms. Vicky Ford (IMCO Chair), Mr. Andreas Schwab, Ms. Evelyne Gebhardt, Ms. Olga Sehnalova, Ms. Marlene Mizzi and Mr. Ivan Stefanec.

The Delegation intends to give a positive sign of commitment to common values and objectives within a revived EU-India strategic partnership. The delegation will mainly cover regulatory issues in areas such as services, standardisation, customs and consumer protection. MEPs are particularly interested in knowing more about the Indian customs priorities (including the management of port controls and relevant customs IT systems). They will visit start-up incubators and Info-tech park which offer key opportunities for unlocking the potential of the digital market and of services; and want to have a better understanding how India ensures safe products, combats counterfeiting, safeguards consumer rights, keeps consumers informed about products/services, cracks down on anti-competitive behaviour and reduces administrative burdens, while sharing experiences about the standardisation process in India and EU.

**European Parliament Delegation for Relations with India**

The European Parliament’s Delegations for relations with non-EU countries maintain relations and exchange information with parliaments in those countries, the Delegation for relations with India was established in 2007 and six of its members visiting India are: Mr Geoffrey Van Orden, (Chair), Ms. Neena Gill (1st Vice-Chair), Ms Cora Van Nieuwenhuizen (2nd Vice-Chair), Mr Alojz Peterle, Mr Jakob Von Weiszacker, Mr Flavio Zanonato. They will be visiting Delhi and Bangalore from 20th – 23rd February, 2017.

During its visit, the Delegation will focus on exploring areas of high tech and high potential. Delegation members are keenly aware of India’s status as the world’s fastest-growing major economy and of the challenges related to rapid growth, where they see opportunities for shared information and collaboration. MEPs are also interested in possibilities for progress in trade and investment negotiations.

In Bangalore the group will meet Karnataka Minister for Industry and representatives of leading Indian and European businesses. Software and aeronautics are among areas of particular interest.