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Chapter 7

The Impact of Parliamentary Diplomacy, Civil Society and Human Rights Advocacy on EU Strategic Partners: The Case of Mexico

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Introduction

The history of the international relations of the European Parliament (EP) has been intrinsically linked to that of the European Union (EU). The EP expanded its relations with third countries thanks to the EU's practice of including inter-parliamentary contacts as part of its political dialogue with the wider world after the end of the Cold War and the adoption of the Treaty on European Union.² At present, the EP maintains relations with almost all third countries in the world, including EU strategic partners.³

However, the EP's influence on EU external relations remains unclear, especially when acting as a guardian of human rights. Whereas some observers state that the EP's role has been limited to 'little more than a "cleansing of the conscience" of the European institutions',⁴ others have acknowledged the EP's capacity to shape EU external relations.⁵ A major problem in the literature is the lack of empirical data⁶ and the fact that the EP delegations' contribution to

¹ The author thanks the National Research Fund of Luxembourg for its financial support to the research project IMPACT on which this chapter is based.

² Enrique González Sánchez, 'El Diálogo Político de la Unión Europea con terceros países', *Revista de Derecho Comunitario Europeo*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January-July 1997), pp. 71-74.

³ At present, the EU has ten strategic partners: the United States of America, Canada, Japan, China, Russia, India, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico and South Korea.

⁴ Laura Feliu and Francesc Serra, 'The European Union as a 'normative power' and the normative voice of the European Parliament', in Stelios Stavridis and Daniela Irrera (eds.), *The European Parliament and its International Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 30.

⁵ Christopher Piening, 'The European Parliament: Influencing the EU's External Relations', *ECSA Conference*, Seattle (29 May–1 June 1997), pp. 6-10; José Javier Fernández, 'La contribución del Parlamento Europeo a la proyección exterior de la UE', in María Esther Barbé and Anna Herranz (eds.), *Política Exterior y Parlamento Europeo: hacia el equilibrio entre eficiencia y democracia* (Barcelona: EP Office, 2007), pp. 145-146.

⁶ Since 1989 the literature has referred to the same examples about the EP's influence on EU external relations based on human rights concerns. See: Richard Corbett, 'Testing the New Procedures: The European Parliament's First Experiences with its New 'Single Act' Powers', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 28, no. 4 (June 1989), p. 360; Anna Herranz, 'The Inter-parliamentary Delegations of the European Parliament: National and European Priorities at Work', in María Esther Barbé and Anna Herranz (eds.), *The Role of Parliament in European Foreign Policy: Debating on Accountability and Legitimacy* (Barcelona: EP Office, 2005), p. 86; Richard Corbett, Francis Jacobs and Michael Shackleton, *The European Parliament*, 8th edition (London: John Harper, 2011), p. 180; Laura Feliu and Francesc Serra, 'The European Union as a 'normative power' and the normative voice of the European Parliament', p. 23.

promoting human rights in third countries is under-researched.⁷ This deficiency becomes more serious regarding the literature on EU strategic partnerships, which is almost exclusively focused on inter-governmental ties,⁸ thus neglecting the fact that the EP has formalised inter-parliamentary relations with all EU strategic partners.

In order to fill this gap, this chapter inquires whether the EP has influenced EU external relations towards strategic partners while fulfilling its role of promoting human rights worldwide, and if so, how EP delegations have contributed to such influence. The EP's influence is measured against: (a) the reactions of other EU institutions (the European Commission [EC], the Council of the EU, and the European External Action Service [EEAS]) and of the strategic partner's government to the EP's work on human rights; and (b) more specifically, the change in the EU-Mexico relations⁹ resulting from these authorities' decisions.¹⁰ This approach is consistent with the literature analysing the impact of EP activities in the field of human rights in third countries. In addition, the chapter examines the contribution of civil society organisations (CSOs) to the shaping of the EP's influence.¹¹

To answer these questions, the chapter analyses above all primary sources (notably EP documents) and focuses on three major case studies of human rights abuse in Mexico. This country has been selected because it is an EU strategic partner¹² and because the EP has strongly responded to these abuses through a wide range of means, including the consent procedure (known as the assent procedure until the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009), resolutions, public hearings, the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, and parliamentary diplomacy. This makes the EU-Mexico strategic partnership (SP) conducive to yielding valuable insights on the diplomatic efforts of the EP.

The three case studies are analysed individually and in chronological order so as to gain an in-depth understanding of the performance of the EP, its delegations and CSOs over time (1995-2016) as well as to compare this performance before and after the establishment of the SP. The first section examines the 1994 Chiapas conflict and the human rights violations against indigenous populations. The second section addresses femicide (killings of women and girls) particularly in *Ciudad Juárez* (State of Chihuahua) over the 1990s and 2000s. The third section covers the disappearance of 43 Mexican students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College (State of Guerrero) in 2014. The chapter then concludes that the EP has exerted influence on EU external relations. Its delegations as well as CSOs have contributed to this influence through different means, such as information provision and joint advocacy. These findings are particularly timely and relevant in light of the ongoing process of modernising the

⁷ See a few exceptions in: Reinhard Rack and Stefan Laussegger, 'The Role of the European Parliament: Past and Future', in Philip Alston (ed.), *The EU and Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 822; EIUC (European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation), *The impact of the resolutions and other activities of the European Parliament in the field of human rights outside the EU* (Brussels: European Parliament, 2006), pp. 14-16, 105-117.

⁸ See among others: Bart Gaens, Juha Jokela and Eija Linnell (eds.), *The Role of the European Union in Asia: China and India as Strategic Partners* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Hiski Haukkala, *The EU-Russia Strategic Partnership: The Limits of Post-Sovereignty in International Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010); Antoine Sautenet, 'The EU's Strategic Partnerships with Emerging Powers: Institutional, Legal, Economic and Political Perspectives', in Thomas Renard and Sven Biscop (eds.), *The European Union and Emerging Powers in the 21st Century: How Europe Can Shape a New Global Order* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 123-145.

⁹ These relations are underpinned by an international agreement, the so-called Global Agreement, and the EU-Mexico Strategic Partnership. See EC, *Communication Towards and EU-Mexico Strategic Partnership*, 15 July 2008, COM(2008) 447.

¹⁰ See EIUC, *The impact of the resolutions and other activities of the European Parliament in the field of human rights outside the EU*, pp. 72, 89.

¹¹ See Stelios Stavridis, 'Conclusions: The European Parliament as an International Actor', in Stelios Stavridis and Daniela Irrera (eds.), *The European Parliament and its International Relations*.

¹² Council of the EU, 2896th General Affairs Council meeting, 13 October 2008, doc. no. 14136/08, pp. 10-12.

EU-Mexico international agreement known as the Global Agreement (GA),¹³ and the EP's power of consent over the outcome of this modernisation.¹⁴

The Chiapas conflict: enforcing human rights through binding powers

On 1 January 1994, the Zapatista National Liberation Army, including several thousand indigenous peasants, rose up in the State of Chiapas demanding cultural and collective rights and calling for Mexico to withdraw from the North American Free Trade Agreement, which entered into force on the day of the uprising.¹⁵ The conflict quickly attracted worldwide attention. On 2 May 1995,¹⁶ with the conflict still ongoing, the EU and Mexico agreed on establish even closer relations and replace their 1991 Framework Agreement for Cooperation¹⁷ with a more comprehensive agreement – the GA – which sought to include a human rights clause (sometimes also referred to as the democratic clause).¹⁸ Mexico agreed to negotiate the GA, but opposed the human rights clause as proposed by the EC and the Council, because it was considered a unilateral imposition that contradicted Mexico's foreign policy principle of non-intervention.¹⁹ However, the EP made the inclusion of the clause a *sine qua non* condition for giving its assent to the GA.²⁰ In addition to trying to exert its influence to ensure that Mexico completed its transition to full democracy,²¹ the EP was concerned about the Chiapas conflict and the human rights situation of the indigenous people living there and in other regions of Mexico. Around the time that the EC adopted the proposal on the GA,²² the EP had passed three urgent resolutions to condemn the human rights situation in Mexico and asked for

¹³ [2000] OJ L 276/45. See EC, *Impact Assessment Accompanying the document Recommendation for a Council Decision authorising to open negotiations and to negotiate with Mexico a modernised Global Agreement*, 16 December 2015, SWD(2015) 289.

¹⁴ Article 218(6)(a)(v) of TFEU.

¹⁵ Shannan Mattiace, 'Social and Indigenous movements in Mexico's transition to democracy', in Roderic Ai Camp (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Mexican Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 400-401.

¹⁶ *Déclaration conjointe solennelle entre le Conseil et la Commission d'une part, et le Mexique, d'autre part*, 2 May 1995, point 1.4.104.

¹⁷ [1991] OJ L 340/2.

¹⁸ See on this clause: EC, *Communication on the inclusion for respect of democratic principles and human rights in agreements between the community and third countries*, 23 May 1995, COM(95)216; Council of the EU, *1847e session du Conseil Affaires Generales*, 29 May 1995, doc. no. 95-152. See also: Lorand Bartels, *Human rights conditionality in the EU's International Agreements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁹ Judith Arrieta Munguía, 'La Política Exterior de México hacia la Unión Europea, 1990-1995', *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior*, no. 49 (Winter 1995-1996), pp. 141, 147; José Antonio Sanahuja, 'Trade, Politics, and Democratization: The 1997 Global Agreement between the European Union and Mexico', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 42, no. 2 (Summer 2000), p. 49; Marcela Szymanski and Michael E. Smith, 'Coherence and Conditionality in European Foreign Policy: Negotiating the EU-Mexico Global Agreement', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1 (March 2005), pp. 181-183; Jaime Zabudovsky K. and Sergio Gómez Lora, *The European Window: Challenges in the Negotiation of Mexico's Free Trade Agreement with the EU*, Institute for the Integration of Latin America and the Caribbean and Integration, Trade and Hemispheric Issues Division of the Inter-American Development Bank, Working paper no. 9 (July 2005), pp. 15-16.

²⁰ EP Committee on External Economic Relations, *Recommendation on the proposal for a Council decision concerning the conclusion of the Economic Partnership, Political Co-ordination and Co-operation Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, on the one part, and the United Mexican States, on the other part*, 22 April 1999, [1999] OJ C 279/6, explanatory statement, para. 11; EP debates on the EC-Mexico Partnership Agreement, 5 May 1999, [1999] OJ C 279/169, annex 4-539/257, 259.

²¹ EP Committee on External Economic Relations, *Recommendation on the proposal for a Council decision concerning the conclusion of the interim agreement on trade and trade-related matters between the European Community, on the one part, and the United Mexican States, on the other part*, 27 April 1998, [1998] OJ C 167/3, explanatory statement, para. 5.

²² EC, *Communication Towards closer relations between the EU and Mexico*, 8 February 1995, COM(95) 3.

a peaceful settlement of the conflict.²³ The EP Committee on Foreign Affairs also included the Mexican Bishop Samuel Ruiz among the three nominees for the 1996 Sakharov Prize for his role as a mediator in the conflict and defending the dignity of Mexican indigenous people.²⁴

The then Delegation for Relations with the countries of Central America and Mexico (DCAM) played an important role in following up the conflict *in situ* and informing the EP as its ‘eyes on the ground’. DCAM visited Mexico twice (1995 and 1997) during the GA assent procedure. In Chiapas and Mexico City, the delegation met with different parties involved in efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, such as government representatives and human rights CSOs.²⁵ Importantly, Mexico opened doors to DCAM at a time when the country was closed to international scrutiny. Although it has not been recognised in the literature on the human rights situation in Mexico during that period,²⁶ the 1995 DCAM visit to Chiapas to inquire about the human rights situation preceded international visits for the same purposes that were authorised by the Mexican Government as of 1996, including those of representatives of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the United Nations (UN) and Amnesty International. The human rights clause dominated the DCAM’s discussions on the GA and generated strong expectations from it in both Mexico and Europe due to the fact that the Mexican Government had already ignored such a provision in the 1991 Framework Agreement with the EU. Mexico was the only country in Latin America with this type of agreement that did not include a human rights clause.²⁷ During the 1997 visit, the Chairman of DCAM, José Ignacio Salafranca (Group of the European People’s Party [EPP], Spain), explained that:

From the moment we arrived in Mexico, the subject of human rights aroused the greatest interest in the press and the other media, with our visit at one point being compared to that of a Committee to verify respect for human rights in Mexico, in direct connection with the democratic clause in the new EU-Mexican agreement.²⁸

In 1997, during its second visit to Mexico, DCAM even met with the Mexican President, Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000), expressing the EP’s concerns regarding Mexico’s respect for human rights and insisting on finding a negotiated settlement to the Chiapas conflict.²⁹ During this visit, DCAM also initiated an institutionalised dialogue with the Mexican Congress and the situation in Chiapas continued to be discussed within the framework of this new dialogue during the period 1998-2003.³⁰

²³ EP Resolution of 20 January 1994 on the peasant uprising in Chiapas, [1994] OJ C 44/158; EP Resolution of 19 January 1995 on the situation in the Mexican State of Chiapas, [1995] OJ C 43/87; EP Resolution of 16 February 1995 on the situation in Chiapas, [1995] OJ C 56/109.

²⁴ MEPs of the Greens group had also nominated him in 1994, but that year the Committee on Foreign Affairs did not retain him as a nominee. Although Samuel Ruiz was not the 1996 laureate, he has been the only Mexican ever to be nominated for the Sakharov Prize. EP Archive and Documentation Centre, *25 Years of the Sakharov Prize* (Luxembourg: Publication Office of the EU, 2013), pp. 75, 88.

²⁵ DCAM, *Informe sobre la visita a México del 3-9 de diciembre de 1995*, doc. no. PE215.699, pp. 4-5; DCAM, *Report on the visit to Panama and Mexico on 22-29 November 1997*, doc. no. PE225.396, p. 9.

²⁶ See in particular: Ana Covarrubias Velasco, ‘El Problema de los Derechos Humanos y los Cambios en la Política Exterior’, *Foro Internacional*, vol. 39, no. 4 (October-December 1999), pp. 439-444; Alejandro Anaya Muñoz, *El país bajo presión: debatiendo el papel del escrutinio internacional de derechos humanos sobre México* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Docencia Económicas, 2012), pp. 58-59.

²⁷ DCAM, *Informe sobre la visita a México del 3-9 de diciembre de 1995*, p. 4.

²⁸ DCAM, *Report on the visit to Panama and Mexico on 22-29 November 1997*, p. 5.

²⁹ DCAM, *Report on the visit to Panama and Mexico on 22-29 November 1997*, pp. 6, 20-21. DCAM was again received by President Ernesto Zedillo in 2000 and by President Vicente Fox (2000-2006) in 2003. However, this was the last time that an EP delegation had been received by a Mexican President.

³⁰ Mónica Velasco Pufleau, *La Diplomacia Parlamentaria Euro-mexicana: Trabajos de la Comisión Parlamentaria Mixta UE-México 2005-2011*, PhD dissertation, University of Barcelona, 2012, pp. 264-276.

Mexican, European and international CSOs were key to the internationalisation of the Mexican human rights situation in the mid-1990s.³¹ The EP invited CSO representatives and victims of human rights violations twice for a debriefing about this situation and the Chiapas conflict. A public hearing on the occasion of the EP's assent to the GA and the so-called Interim Agreement³² was held in Brussels in March 1998,³³ following the so-called Acteal massacre,³⁴ which sparked international outrage and took place in Chiapas less than three weeks after the GA had been signed. This was the first time that CSOs participated alongside Mexican Government representatives as equal partners with the EP.³⁵ For the CSOs, the hearing was an opportunity to be heard, challenge the position of the Mexican Government and put forward their own views before the conclusion of the GA.³⁶ In this way the EP, in particular the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA), began forging a collaborative relationship with CSOs,³⁷ which remains valid today.³⁸

By 1998, the EP had adopted two more urgent resolutions on the situation in Chiapas,³⁹ the last one being on the Acteal massacre. This massacre, which had also been condemned by the EU Presidency,⁴⁰ marked a turning point in the Mexican Government's attitude towards the EP. Before the massacre, the government was rather defensive, as it considered the situation to be an internal Mexican issue and the EP statements foreign interference. However, after the massacre, the government showed greater openness to the EP, being aware of the fact that the GA still needed the EP's assent in order to be concluded.⁴¹ Although largest groups in the EP – the EPP and the Socialist and Democrats (S&D), supported the assent; MEPs from the Greens and the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) stood up for 'freezing' the ratification process in light of the Acteal massacre.⁴² Accordingly, as part of an official visit, the then Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rosario Green, appeared in

³¹ Ana Covarrubias Velasco, 'El Problema de los Derechos Humanos y los Cambios en la Política Exterior'; Alejandro Anaya Muñoz, *El país bajo presión: debatiendo el papel del escrutinio internacional de derechos humanos sobre México*, pp. 48-51.

³² [1998] OJ L 226/25. The conclusion of this Interim Agreement aimed at applying provisions on trade and trade-related matters during the GA's ratification process by the EP and the parliaments of the EU Member States. Once the GA was ratified, the Interim Agreement would expire. Council of the EU, *Signing of agreements between Mexico and the European Union*, 8 December 1997, doc. no. 12891/97, pp. 3, 6.

³³ Previously, the EP Subcommittee on Human Rights had invited the president of the Mexican Academy of Human Rights in September 1997 for a debriefing about the Mexican Government's position towards CSOs in the country. *Proceso*, 'Desde Europa, Fernando Mejía, de la FIDH: "Hay una verdadera degradación de la situación de los derechos humanos en México"', 27 September 1997.

³⁴ See *The Economist*, 'Massacre in Mexico', 1 January 1998.

³⁵ *La Jornada*, 'Duró dos horas y media más de lo programado la audiencia con los legisladores, señalan', 7 March 1998.

³⁶ *La Jornada*, 'Cita el Parlamento Europeo a Green y a ONG sobre Chiapas', 3 March 1998; *La Jornada*, 7 March 1998; Ana Covarrubias Velasco, 'El Problema de los Derechos Humanos y los Cambios en la Política Exterior', p. 447.

³⁷ Marcela Szymanski and Michael E. Smith, 'Coherence and Conditionality in European Foreign Policy: Negotiating the EU-Mexico Global Agreement', p. 24.

³⁸ See more on the diplomatic role of EP political groups in the chapter by Yoav Shemer-Kunz in this volume.

³⁹ EP Resolution of 13 July 1995 on the situation in Mexico, [1995] OJ C 249/159; EP Resolution of 15 January 1998 on the murder of 45 indigenous peasants in the Mexican State of Chiapas, Mexico [1998] OJ C 34/161. A last urgent resolution related to Chiapas was passed by the EP in 2001, see EP Resolution of 5 April 2001 on the situation in Mexico, [2002] OJ C 21 E/356.

⁴⁰ EU Presidency Declaration on the massacre of civilians in Mexico, 24 December 1997.

⁴¹ *Inter Press Service*, 'Diplomacia da giro por Chiapas', 16 January 1998.

⁴² Greens group, *Motion for a resolution on the situation in Chiapas (Mexico)*, 12 January 1998, doc. no. B4-0095/98, point 12; GUE/NGL, *Motion for a resolution on the situation in Chiapas (Mexico)*, 12 January 1998, doc. no. B4-0085/98, points 9-10. See also: *Proceso*, 'El PE estará atento para que el gobierno mexicano cumpla con las recomendaciones de su resolución sobre Chiapas', 17 January 1998.

the EP hearing of March 1998 to promote ratification of the GA.⁴³ This Minister's appearance was viewed as a decisive test for the Mexican Government to publicly recognise the human rights clause before the conclusion of the GA.⁴⁴ After this hearing, the EP gave assent to the Interim Agreement, which already included the human rights clause. It has been argued that the EP was required to do so by the EC in order to put additional pressure on the Mexican Government to accept the clause.⁴⁵

The human rights clause was then reproduced in Article 1 of the GA in the terms proposed by the EU, allowing the EP to give its assent in May 1999.⁴⁶ Both the EP and the EC publicly acknowledged the EP's influence on the final text of the GA.⁴⁷ International CSOs that were very active in criticising the situation in Chiapas, such as the Human Rights Watch, also recognised the important role of the EP in using the GA to promote human rights in Mexico.⁴⁸

In this case, the EP exercised its influence in cooperation with other EU institutions to pressure a third country to accept EU standards. It could do so thanks to the binding powers it possesses in the process of conclusion of EU international agreements. However, the EP may also take action independently from the other EU institutions when defending human rights – for instance, to influence the EU political agenda. This type of influence may affect EU relations towards a country or a whole region, which is exemplified in the following section.

Femicides: participating in EU agenda setting

As a deliberative assembly, the EP distinguishes itself by raising issues of specific concern within the context of EU relations with third countries regardless of whether the Council and the EC have agreed on the issue and on the appropriate time to address it.⁴⁹ In other words, the EP 'considers itself free to take an often independent line in exerting pressure directly on third countries while at the same time urging the other Community institutions to adopt policies that reflect its thinking'.⁵⁰

Based on this practice, the EP expressed new concerns about human rights abuses in Mexico in October 2007 by passing a resolution on femicide in Mexico and Central America, requesting all EU institutions, Member States and Mexican and Central American governments to take action in order to tackle violence and discrimination against women and promote gender equality.⁵¹ As with the Chiapas conflict, femicide in Mexico has been the subject of wide international attention, particularly due to the killings of many women and girls in *Ciudad Juárez*, which started in the early 1990s. In fact, the EP followed in the footsteps of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which adopted a resolution on femicide in Mexico in June 2005.⁵²

⁴³ *La Jornada*, 3 March 1998; *Proceso*, 'En el PE, dos visiones encontradas de México', 7 March 1998.

⁴⁴ Ana Covarrubias Velasco, 'El Problema de los Derechos Humanos y los Cambios en la Política Exterior', p. 446.

⁴⁵ Marcela Szymanski and Michael E. Smith, 'Coherence and Conditionality in European Foreign Policy: Negotiating the EU-Mexico Global Agreement', p. 24.

⁴⁶ EP, *Decision on the proposal for a Council Decision concerning the conclusion of the Economic Partnership, Political Co-ordination and Co-operation Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, on the one part, and the United Mexican States, on the other part*, 6 May 1999, [1999] OJ C 279/404.

⁴⁷ EP debates on the EC-Mexico Partnership Agreement.

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1999: Events of December 1997-November 1998* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1998), p. 136.

⁴⁹ José Javier Fernández, 'La contribución del Parlamento Europeo a la proyección exterior de la UE', p. 148; Araceli Mangas Martín and Diego Liñán Noguera, *Instituciones y derecho de la Unión Europea* (Madrid: Tecnos, 2010), p. 246.

⁵⁰ Christopher Piening, 'The European Parliament: Influencing the EU's External Relations', p. 9.

⁵¹ EP, *Resolution on the murder of women (femicide) in Mexico and Central America and the role of the EU in fighting the phenomenon*, 11 October 2007, [2008] OJ C E 227/140.

⁵² PACE, *Disappearance and murder of a great number of women and girls in Mexico*, 21 June 2005, doc. no. 1454.

Some months after the PACE resolution, the Bureau of the EP delegation in the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), established in 2004,⁵³ inquired about feminicide with Mexican representatives in Mexico⁵⁴ and the JPC discussed the topic of feminicide during its 1st meeting (Strasbourg, September 2005). The rapporteur for the PACE resolution was invited to speak.⁵⁵ Members of the EP delegation in the JPC also met with Mexico-based CSOs to exchange views on feminicide, taking advantage of the fact that the 2nd JPC meeting was held in Mexico (Mexico City and Monterrey, January 2006).⁵⁶ During the plenary debate on the EP's resolution on feminicide, two of the five MEPs speaking on behalf of their groups (one from S&D and the other from the Greens/EFA) expressly linked their statements to information obtained through their work in the EP delegations for relations with Mexico and with the countries of Central America, in particular through discussions with parliamentary counterparts and CSOs.⁵⁷ In addition, the EP delegation in the EU-Mexico JPC supported the EP's rapporteur, Raúl Romeva (Greens/EFA, Spain), in his work to follow up on the resolution. Romeva joined this delegation soon after being appointed rapporteur and spoke on the topics of human rights and gender equality at the JPC meeting that followed the adoption of the resolution (5th meeting, Brussels, November 2007). Furthermore, he visited *Ciudad Juárez* during the 7th JPC meeting (Mexico, October 2008) in order to meet with local CSOs, women's networks and victims and ask the EU and Mexico to commit to resolving the problem of feminicide within their then recently approved SP.⁵⁸

Mexican and European-based CSOs also participated in a joint public hearing on feminicide in Mexico and Guatemala, organised by the EP Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) and the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI); and in two discussion sessions that followed the joint hearing, which were organised by Romeva and Elena Valenciano (S&D, Spain) on the EP's premises in April 2006. This was the first time that a reference to feminicide was made in official EU documents.⁵⁹ These events were used to denounce feminicide and discuss it with MEPs, Mexican and other Latin American parliamentarians and representatives, and officials of PACE and the UN, such as Yakin Ertürk, Special UN Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences. The gatherings ended with CSOs calling on MEPs to approve an urgent resolution on the issue.⁶⁰ The resolution was finally the outcome of a report completed on FEMM's own initiative, for which Romeva was appointed rapporteur in February 2007.

At the beginning, not many MEPs supported Romeva's proposal for a resolution on feminicide because the Mexican Government did not feel comfortable with addressing this problem and because of the strong pressure that Mexico's Mission to the EU put on the EP.⁶¹ Indeed, this Mission intensely lobbied MEPs to affect the resolution's content in support of

⁵³ See Mónica Velasco Pufleau, 'Parliamentary dialogue and the role of the Joint Parliamentary Committee', in EU (ed.), *The Modernisation of the European Union-Mexico 'Global Agreement'* (Brussels: EU, 2015), pp. 37-38.

⁵⁴ *Proceso*, 'Condena PE los feminicidios en Juárez', 16 July 2005.

⁵⁵ EP Delegation to the EU-Mexico JPC, *Report on the 1st meeting of the EU-Mexico JPC*, 10 October 2005, doc. no. PE365.425, p. 4.

⁵⁶ EP Delegation to the EU-Mexico JPC, *Report on the 2nd meeting of the EU-Mexico JPC*, 16 January 2006, doc. no. PE369.052, p. 13.

⁵⁷ EP debates on the Murder of women in Mexico and Central America, 10 October 2007, [2008] OJ C E 227/1.

⁵⁸ Mónica Velasco Pufleau, *La Diplomacia Parlamentaria Euro-mexicana: Trabajos de la Comisión Parlamentaria Mixta UE-México 2005-2011*, pp. 105-107.

⁵⁹ UN Office on Drugs and Crime Expert Group on gender-related killing of women and girls, *Information on gender-related killing of women and girls provided by civil society organisations and academia*, 3 November 2014, point 7.

⁶⁰ FEMM and DROI, *Joint Public Hearing: Feminicide the case of Mexico and Guatemala*, 19 April 2006; Greens/EFA, '*Ni una muerta más*': *Jornadas contra los feminicidios en Guatemala y México*, 20 April 2006.

⁶¹ *Proceso*, 'México-Europa: tensión por los derechos humanos', 25 September 2010; Arsène van Nierop-Seipgens, *Un grito de socorro desde Juárez: Crónica de un asesinato impune*, (Mexico: Grijalbo, 2014), Annex.

Mexico and it managed to have its points of view endorsed by some of them.⁶² MEPs' positions were divided between those seeking a more supportive approach towards the Mexican Government, which included highlighting Mexico's progress on human rights (EPP and S&D), and those pressing the EC and the Council to adopt a more paternalistic approach, which even called for the suspension of the GA in accordance with the human rights clause until the murders stopped (Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL).⁶³ Officials from the State of Chihuahua also came to Brussels to discuss the issue with FEMM ahead of the adoption of the resolution, while in Mexico, Chihuahua's governor called on local businessmen, politicians, academics and media representatives to join the common effort to change the 'bad image of *Ciudad Juárez*'.⁶⁴ Immediate reactions from EU institutions to the EP resolution consisted of the then Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, attending the resolution's plenary debate to explain the actions that the EC had taken to prevent violence against women and girls and promote gender equality in Mexico, and outlining the progress achieved. Ferrero-Waldner was of the idea that femicide was a global problem and did not only affect the countries targeted by the resolution. However, she stated that she was most certainly on the EP's side on the matter.⁶⁵

For the EP rapporteur, the most important intended effect of the resolution was to place the topic of femicide on the EU's international political agenda and particularly on those concerning Mexico and the Central American countries.⁶⁶ Although there were other factors,⁶⁷ the resolution was successful in shaping EU-Mexico relations because the topic of gender, including gender-based violence, was addressed at the ministerial level immediately after the adoption of the resolution,⁶⁸ where Mexican officials highlighted measures already adopted, such as the 2007 General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence.⁶⁹ Moreover, bilateral cooperation on eradicating gender-based violence in Mexico increased following the adoption of the resolution⁷⁰ and the topic is now a recurrent part of the bilateral human rights dialogue.⁷¹ For Romeva, the EC started to address issues that used to be taboo.⁷²

However, it is worth saying that the fact that the EP raised international awareness of the problem of femicide in Mexico at plenary level seemed to have had negative consequences for the bilateral EU-Mexico inter-parliamentary dialogue, because other human rights topics were left out from the agenda of the JPC for more than four years (from 2008-2012). The last time a human rights topic was discussed within this JPC was during the 5th meeting, which followed the adoption of the EP resolution. After this, human rights were not debated until the 14th JPC meeting (Strasbourg, May 2012). These topics were omitted despite the fact that the resolution on femicide asked the JPC to continue discussing gender-based

⁶² *Proceso*, "'Parches" para una resolución sobre los feminicidios en México', 30 July 2007; *Proceso*, 'Condena a la impunidad', 16 September 2007; *Proceso*, 'Condena formal contra México', 14 October 2007.

⁶³ FEMM, *Amendments 1-101 Draft report Raúl Romeva*, 16 July 2007, doc. no. PE392.138; EP debates on the Murder of women in Mexico and Central America, 10 October 2007, [2008] OJ C E 227/1.

⁶⁴ FEMM, *Minutes of Meeting of 25 June 2007*, doc. no. PE391.980, p. 3; *La Jornada*, 8 September 2007, 'Decide gobierno de Chihuahua dar a conocer cifras reales de *feminicidios*'.

⁶⁵ EP debates on the Murder of women in Mexico and Central America, 10 October 2007, [2008] OJ C E 227/1.

⁶⁶ *Análisis a Fondo*, 'Insta Parlamento Europeo a luchar contra la impunidad que permite los feminicidios', 12 October 2007.

⁶⁷ Such as the adoption of EU guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them in December 2008, which provide in point 3.2.1. that: 'The EU will regularly raise the issue of combating violence against women and girls and the types of discrimination from which such violence originates in its relations with third countries and regional organisations'.

⁶⁸ EU-Mexico Joint Committee, *7th meeting of the Joint Committee*, 27 November 2007, p. 3.

⁶⁹ *Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia* (in Spanish).

⁷⁰ Council of the EU, *8th meeting of the EU-Mexico Joint Committee*, 20 October 2008, doc. no. 14478/08, point 21.

⁷¹ See among others: EU, *EU-Mexico Human Rights Dialogue*, 3 March 2011, doc. no. 7236/11, p. 1.

⁷² Arsène van Nierop-Seipgens, *Un grito de socorro desde Juárez: Crónica de un asesinato impune*, Annex.

violence and that the EP's rules on delegations provide that human rights issues should be addressed in their relations with third countries.⁷³

Since 2006, the Greens/EFA group, led by Raül Romeva and supported by the Heinrich Böll Foundation,⁷⁴ along with a group of CSOs – including those that have been closely working with the Greens/EFA since the 1990s –⁷⁵ also mobilised in the EP for this topic to be addressed in the EU's political agenda towards Latin America. In parallel, they started to monitor government action on the issue.⁷⁶ The condemning sentence passed in November 2009 by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights against Mexico on some cases of murdered women and girls in *Ciudad Juárez* crucially contributed to finally addressing femicide at the bi-regional level.⁷⁷ Following this judgment, the then High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR), Catherine Ashton, adopted a declaration on femicide in June 2010 to show the EU's concern over the rise of gender-based violence in Latin America.⁷⁸ From then on, the 2013 and 2015 EU-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Summits committed to eradicate gender-based killings against women, agreeing to incorporate gender as a key area of their bi-annual action plans to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. For this purpose, the heads of state and government created a bi-regional dialogue on gender issues and engaged in various cooperative initiatives.⁷⁹ It is worth noting that by the time of the 2013 Summit, some EU Member States had adopted the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence as members of the Council of Europe, which is the first European instrument that paved a path for a legal framework on the protection of women against all forms of violence.⁸⁰ As in the EU-Mexico case, executive developments in bi-regional relations on gender issues to eliminate violence against women and girls led to the strengthening of the political dialogue and cooperation between the parties. The Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly complemented the bi-regional executive work on gender issues by passing a resolution on femicide in the EU and Latin America in 2014.⁸¹ Raül Romeva was the EP rapporteur of this resolution too.

This second case study shows that the EP was influential in placing sensitive human rights issues on the EU's and Member States' political agendas both at bilateral and inter-regional levels. Mexico managed to influence the EP's work on human rights as well. When not using binding powers, the EP is more likely to exert influence within the broader human rights initiatives undertaken by the EU, its Member States and other global and regional institutions and organisations. This influence seems also to be more effective when the human rights issue is widely supported by CSOs. Finally, the EP's actorness on human rights resembles that of a moral tribune⁸² and aims to influence EU external relations in support of victims, as shown below.

⁷³ EP, *Resolution on the murder of women (femicide) in Mexico and Central America and the role of the EU in fighting the phenomenon*, point. 23.

⁷⁴ A think tank closely affiliated to the German Green Party.

⁷⁵ Such as the Copenhagen Initiative for Central America (CIFCA) and the Mexican Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights (CMDPDH according to its Spanish language acronym).

⁷⁶ To this end, among other activities, they organised a set of conferences on femicide under the heading '*Ni una muerta más*' (No more killing of women).

⁷⁷ Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Case of González et al. ('Cotton Field') v. Mexico*, 16 November 2009.

⁷⁸ Declaration by the HR Catherine Ashton on Femicide, 30 June 2010.

⁷⁹ Council of the EU, *Santiago Declaration*, 27 January 2013, doc. no 5747/13, point 38; Council of the EU, *EU-CELAC Action Plan 2013-2015*, 27 January 2013, doc. no. 5748/13, point 7; EU-CELAC Summit 2015, *Brussels Declaration*, 11 June 2015, point 71; EU-CELAC Summit 2015, *EU-CELAC Action Plan*, 11 June 2015, point 7.

⁸⁰ See <http://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/home> (last accessed in February 2016).

⁸¹ EUROLAT, *Urgent Resolution on Femicide in the EU and Latin America*, 29 March 2014, doc. no. AP101.579.

⁸² Andrés Malamud and Stelios Stavridis, 'Parliaments and Parliamentarians as International Actors', in Bob Reinalda (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Non-State Actors*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 105-106.

The Ayotzinapa crimes: supporting victims of human rights violations

In September 2014, 43 students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College were abducted and appear to have been killed in Iguala by local police and gang members under orders from (relatives of) local authorities.⁸³ Together with German MPs, MEPs from the Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL political groups, were the first to raise concerns about these crimes and ask the outgoing and incoming EU HRs and the President of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto, to take action, including notably the suspension of the ongoing negotiations to modernise the GA until the human rights situation in Mexico improved.⁸⁴ Following this statement, the Delegation of the EU in Mexico, in agreement with the EU Member States' embassies in Mexico, adopted a local statement but using a very different tone from that of the parliamentarians: it welcomed the actions undertaken by the Mexican Federal Government and expressed confidence that a detailed investigation and adequate punishment of the perpetrators would take place.⁸⁵ Unlike in the case of the Acteal massacre and feminicides in Latin America, the HR had not issued any statement condemning the Ayotzinapa crimes.⁸⁶ On the part of the EU, it was the EP that condemned the crimes by adopting an urgent resolution on 23 October 2014.⁸⁷ The resolution was the result of negotiations between political groups divided again into two camps: on the one hand, supporters of the Mexican Government and of extending assistance to Mexico on human rights grounds (EPP, S&D, European Conservatives and Reformists [ECR], and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe [ALDE]);⁸⁸ and on the other hand, the advocates of penalising the Mexican Government for human rights violations, including the suspension of the modernisation of the GA (Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL).⁸⁹ Ultimately, the resolution did not demand the latter, but it still condemned the crimes and urged the Mexican Government fully to investigate and prevent this type of crime from occurring again.⁹⁰

Compared to the other two case studies of human rights violations in Mexico analysed above, the case of the Ayotzinapa crimes occurred in a new political context – that of the full implementation of the EU-Mexico SP. Namely, the member of the EC who attended the plenary debate on the said resolution – Tonio Borg, the then European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety – used the SP, especially the results of the EU-Mexico High-Level Dialogue on Human Rights started in 2010 within the framework of the SP⁹¹ as the only argument to defend Mexico and strengthen EU relations with it:

Mexico is a close and valued strategic partner of the EU. The EU and Mexico have a strong convergence of views on human rights issues, both in multilateral human rights forums and also bilaterally. Mexico, belonging to the same group of like-minded partners as the EU, has been a strong supporter of many EU initiatives and resolutions in Geneva and in New York. Our regular High-Level Dialogue on Human Rights has

⁸³ *The Guardian*, 'One year ago, 43 Mexican students were killed. Still, there are no answers for their families', 20 September 2015.

⁸⁴ See the full text of the letter at <http://www.dw.com/popups/pdf/39125580/141010-letter-def-es-meps-iguala-guerrero-students-2pdf.pdf> (last accessed in March 2016).

⁸⁵ Local statement of the EU concerning the events in Iguala and Tlatlaya, 12 October 2014. http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/mexico/documents/news/2014/20141012com_ue_tlatlaya_iguala_en.pdf (last accessed in March 2016). A 'local statement' is adopted by the EU Delegation in a given country. This term is used to differentiate such statements from those made by the HR.

⁸⁶ Only a statement on the work of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts was made by the EEAS in April 2016. See https://eeas.europa.eu/node/14226_en (last accessed in June 2016).

⁸⁷ EP, *Resolution on the disappearance of 43 teaching students in Mexico*, 23 October 2014, [2015] OJ C 424/191.

⁸⁸ EPP, ECR, S&D and ALDE, *Joint motion for a resolution on the disappearance of 43 teaching students in Mexico*, 22 October 2014, doc. no. RC-B8-0161/2014, points 4, 5, 7, 9.

⁸⁹ GUE/NGL, *Proposition de résolution sur disparition de 43 étudiants enseignants au Mexique*, 21 October 2014, doc. no. B8-0167/2014, point 7; Greens/EFA, *Motion for a resolution on the abduction of 43 students in Guerrero/Mexico*, 21 October 2014, doc. no. B8-0175/2014, points 9, 15.

⁹⁰ EP, *Resolution on the disappearance of 43 teaching students in Mexico*, point 6.

⁹¹ See on the scope of this Dialogue: Council of the EU, *Mexico-EU Strategic Partnership Joint Executive Plan*, 16 May 2010, doc. no. 9820/10, point 3.4.

allowed for several open and frank discussions on core human rights issues, including the fight against organised crime and reform of criminal justice.

The international community should join forces with Mexico to support it in facing this difficult and complex challenge: the fight against organised crime and impunity. It is in this spirit that the EU supports the efforts of the federal government.⁹²

The EP's resolution on the Ayotzinapa crimes highlighted Mexico's status as a strategic partner of the EU. However, it also urged the Mexican Government to continue with its efforts to address structural problems that were at the root of these human rights violations.⁹³

In this case, victims have become the focal point of the EP's activity following the adoption of the Ayotzinapa resolution. Among other activities,⁹⁴ the parents and colleagues of the missing students were invited to the plenary session on the resolution and two parents met with members of DROI in Brussels in February 2015, which led DROI to ask for EU funding to carry out an independent investigation on the crimes.⁹⁵ Moreover, the parents of the missing students visited various EU Member States thanks to the support of CSOs, which addressed letters to MEPs and EU officials to protest against the crimes.⁹⁶ Members of the EP delegation to the EU-Mexico JPC meeting in Mexico met with the parents of the missing students, CSOs and Mexican officials to express support for victims and inquire about the matter before intensely discussing it during the human rights dialogue included on the agenda of its 18th JPC meeting (Mexico, February 2015). In this JPC meeting and the joint press conference afterwards, MEPs spoke on behalf of the victims *inter alia* asking the Mexican Government to continue with the investigation until it found and condemned the perpetrators.⁹⁷ The parents of the missing students and CSO representatives told MEPs that the EP's political messages and support were very important for them because, together with the international pressure, they influenced Mexican authorities.⁹⁸ This also raised the hope and 'boosted morale'⁹⁹ among the victims. Indeed, one parent stated the following about the meeting with the EP delegation:

[It] was successful because they told us [the MEPs] that our suffering is their suffering and we noticed that we have their support on human rights issues. It was agreed that they will request the Mexican government to clarify everything until finding the 43 (young people who have disappeared), because they are human beings and we must find them.¹⁰⁰

It is not a coincidence that the local and international media have reported on the EP's work after the 18th JPC meeting, emphasising its role as a watchdog overseeing the Mexican Government's activities and looking out for the victims.¹⁰¹ In the same vein, two MEPs from the Greens/EFA group visited the State of Oaxaca during their work in Mexico to follow up on

⁹² EP debates on the disappearance of 43 teaching students in Mexico, 23 October 2014, [2015] OJ C 424/188.

⁹³ EP, *Resolution on the disappearance of 43 teaching students in Mexico*, points C, 8.

⁹⁴ See *Proceso*, 'Los 43 de Ayotzinapa toman asiento en el PE', 12 December 2014.

⁹⁵ *Deutsche Welle*, 'Parlamento Europeo: Apoyo para Ayotzinapa', 5 February 2015.

⁹⁶ CIFCA, 'Organizaciones Internacionales de la sociedad civil reclaman a la UE una firme condena de los actos violentos ocurridos recientemente en Guerrero', 14 October 2014, *La Jornada*, 'Padres de normalistas de Ayotzinapa inician gira por 12 países de Europa', 17 April 2015.

⁹⁷ EU-Mexico JPC, *Draft minutes 18th meeting of the JPC*, 2015, doc. no. PE503.036, pp. 2-3, 8, 13-18.

⁹⁸ EU-Mexico JPC, *Draft minutes 18th meeting of the JPC*, p. 2; *La Jornada*, 'Parlamento Europeo ofrece apoyo a padres de normalistas de Ayotzinapa', 18 February 2015.

⁹⁹ EIUC, *The impact of the resolutions and other activities of the European Parliament in the field of human rights outside the EU*, pp. 98, 107.

¹⁰⁰ *La Jornada*, 18 February 2015 (author's translation).

¹⁰¹ See, among others: *Deutsche Welle*, 5 February 2015; *La Jornada*, 18 February 2015; *La Jornada*, 'Eurodiputados confrontan a legisladores del PRI por caso Ayotzinapa', 19 February 2015; *El Financiero*, 'Eurodiputados cuestionan a senadores por Ayotzinapa', 19 February 2015.

the investigation of two other victims of human rights violations: Finnish citizen Jiri Jaakkola and Mexican activist Bety Cariño, who were murdered in that State in 2010.¹⁰² The JPC resumed discussion on the Ayotzinapa case in Mexico during its 20th meeting (Mexico City and San Miguel de Allende, February 2016), when the EP delegation again met with officials from the Mexican Government and Mexico-based CSOs.¹⁰³ An *ad hoc* DROI delegation joined these EP delegation's meetings with authorities and CSO representatives and met also with the missing students' parents as part of a fact-finding mission sent to Mexico and Guatemala around the same dates as the 20th JPC meeting *inter alia* to follow up on the Ayotzinapa case. This latter delegation endorsed the content of the EP's resolution, highlighting that Mexico is an important partner for the EU, calling on Mexico to implement reforms, and urging the EU and its Member States to continue their support.¹⁰⁴

Reactions from the EC and the EEAS have been rather vague. When questioned by MEPs about the EU's action pursuant to the Ayotzinapa resolution, HR Federica Mogherini, stated that such action had been principally undertaken within the 5th EU-Mexico High-Level Dialogue on Human Rights (Mexico City, April 2015).¹⁰⁵ In the framework of this Dialogue, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights (a position created in the EU in 2012), Stavros Lambrinidis, and officials from the EU Delegation in Mexico, met with the parents of the missing students and with human rights organisations, which supported them, as well as with members of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI, according to the Spanish language acronym) of the IACHR, to talk about the Ayotzinapa case.¹⁰⁶ The Dialogue concluded with the EU and Mexico agreeing to work together on various projects aimed at capacity building in Mexico, but no reference to the missing students was made in the resulting joint communiqué.¹⁰⁷

Mexico's reaction to the EP's Ayotzinapa resolution encompassed lobbying and providing MEPs with information about the case and measures taken to enhance human rights protection in the country.¹⁰⁸ Yet the Mexico's Mission to the EU was more receptive of this resolution than of that on feminicide. The then Ambassador of Mexico to the EU, Juan José Gómez Camacho, traveled to Strasbourg twice¹⁰⁹ for debriefings about the case with the EP delegation in the EU-Mexico JPC and other MEPs and acknowledged that the 'Parliament's initiative would encourage Mexico to keep working towards justice and safety for its citizens and chimed with the government's determination to investigate the Iguala crimes and punish

¹⁰² The case has been particularly followed by ex-MEP Satu Hassi and MEPs Franziska Keller and Heidi Hantala. *La Jornada*, 'Eurodiputadas exigen avance en caso Jaakkola', 22 February 2015. A DROI delegation also visited Oaxaca in May 2011 to monitor the cases of Jaakkola and Cariño, following a hearing on the murders hosted by DROI in November 2010.

¹⁰³ EP Delegation in the EU-Mexico JPC, *Draft Agenda of the 20th JPC meeting and of the joint meeting with the DROI delegation and the Mexican authorities*, 18 February 2016, doc. no. PE543.309v02-00, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁴ DROI, *Presse Release on the Human Rights Delegation to Mexico and Guatemala*, 12 February 2016, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Enrico Gasbarra (S&D), *Question for written answer to the Commission*, 25 February 2015; EC, *Answer given by Vice-President Mogherini on behalf of the Commission*, 4 June 2015, doc. no. E-002914-15; Marietje Schaake et al. (ALDE), *Question for written answer to the Commission*, 17 September 2015; EC, *Answer given by HR/Vice-President Mogherini*, 24 November 2015, doc. no. E-012906-15.

¹⁰⁶ *La Jornada*, 'Padres de normalistas exigen facilitar el trabajo de la CIDH', 16 April 2015; *El Universal*, 'Piden crear plan global de búsqueda de desaparecidos', 17 April 2015. The GIEI was created in November 2014 in light of a technical assistance agreement concluded by the IACHR, the Mexico's Government and representatives of the missing students. See <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/activities/giei.asp> (last accessed in March 2016).

¹⁰⁷ Mexican Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the EU, *México y la UE fortalecen su cooperación en materia de derechos humanos*, 16 April 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Mexican Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 23 October 2014, press release no. 474; *Proceso*, 'La diplomacia peñanietista infectó al Parlamento Europeo', 26 October 2014; Mexican Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 27 November 2014, press release no. 544.

¹⁰⁹ On the morning of the debate and vote on the resolution and on 27 November 2014.

the culprits'.¹¹⁰ In the same vein, he invited DROI to visit Mexico.¹¹¹ Ambassador Gómez Camacho also recognised that the EU partners had shown great solidarity with the Mexican Government regarding the Ayotzinapa crimes and supported the modernisation of the GA as a means to tackle the country's challenges.¹¹² The Ayotzinapa resolution also triggered further reactions from the Mexican Government at the federal level, which had also happened in the context of the EP assent procedure on the GA after the Acteal massacre, but not in the context of the EP resolution on feminicide. In this case, following the Ayotzinapa resolution, the Mexican Ministry for Foreign Affairs issued a press release welcoming it and thanking the EP for acknowledging the Mexican Government's efforts to resolve the case.¹¹³ Moreover, the then Mexican Deputy Foreign Minister for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights, Juan Manuel Gómez Robledo, paid official visits to the EEAS and several EU Member States (France, Germany, and the United Kingdom) in November and December 2014, where he met *inter alia* with government officials and parliamentarians.¹¹⁴ As in the case of the GA, along with the EP, national parliaments of Member States must ratify the eventually modernised GA in order for it to enter into force.

The latest EP engagement on the Ayotzinapa case includes DROI inviting members of the GIEI to present progress on their work in Brussels in March 2016 – again at the initiative of MEPs from the Greens/EFA group – and their final conclusions on the case in September 2016.¹¹⁵

In this third and last case study, the EP acted as a moral tribunal rather than as influencing other EU institutions in support of the victims of human rights abuses. The EP's action was directed particularly towards the Mexican Government with the aim of pressuring it to uncover and prosecute the perpetrators of the crimes and prevent them from happening again.

Conclusion

The chapter covers two decades of EU-Mexico relations, from start of the GA negotiations in 1995 up to 2016. It traces the action of the EP, its delegations and CSOs in the field of human rights protection concerning three major cases of human rights abuses in Mexico. The chapter confirms that the EP has influenced EU institutions and the Mexican Government regardless of whether it possessed binding powers and regardless of whether its demands were in line with those of other EU institutions. It therefore may be argued that the EP can act as an independent and influential international actor when human rights are at stake. However, such EP actorness is not free from influence from governments of third countries, such as strategic partners, either. In all three cases reviewed, EU institutions reacted to the EP's work on human rights by strengthening the political dialogue and cooperation with Mexico instead of penalising these relations on the basis of the human rights clause. The establishment of the EU-Mexico SP reinforced this EU approach, which is also predominant among EP political groups other than the Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL. As with most EP initiatives on human rights,¹¹⁶ these two political groups have been dominant in raising concerns about human rights violations in Mexico.

¹¹⁰ EP Delegation in the EU-Mexico JPC, *Minutes of meeting of 23 October 2014*, doc. no. PE503.039, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Mexican Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 8 December 2014, press release no. 568.

¹¹² *Deutsche Welle*, 'UE-México: Ayotzinapa, ¿nunca más?', 5 December 2014.

¹¹³ Mexican Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 23 October 2014.

¹¹⁴ Mexican Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 13 November 2014, press release no. 514; Mexican Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 28 November 2014, press release no. 547; Mexican Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 4 December 2014, press release no. 554; Mexican Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 8 December 2014.

¹¹⁵ *Proceso*, 'GIEI presentará al Parlamento Europeo reporte del caso Ayotzinapa', 29 October 2015; *Proceso*, 'Pide el GIEI a Eurocámara incluir derechos humanos en acuerdo comercial con México', 26 September 2016.

¹¹⁶ Laura Feliu and Francesc Serra, 'The European Union as a 'normative power' and the normative voice of the European Parliament', pp. 24-25.

Indeed, EP delegations have positively contributed to the EP's overall influence. First, they were particularly effective in gathering first-hand information on human rights violations from a wide range of government and non-government sources outside Europe, even in times when other international visits to scrutinise the human rights situation were not welcome. Second, they conveyed the EP's concerns to local communities and representatives, including from the highest political level, and mediated between the EU and domestic authorities on behalf of the victims, who highly appreciated the support of MEPs. Third, they assisted EP committees and MEPs' activities on human rights and engaged in discussions on human rights violations with their non-EU parliamentary counterparts, although the EP's work on human rights advocacy could have an impact on the ability of delegations to effectively carry out this dialogue because, in the case of the EU-Mexico JPC, the discussion of human rights topics was temporarily interrupted after the EP resolution on femicide was passed in 2007. Fourth, they addressed human rights concerns raised by other global and regional human rights initiatives, such as the work of Special UN Rapporteurs and PACE resolutions, in their relations with other parliaments.

These findings provide insights for parliamentary diplomacy in general. They show that diplomatic activities of parliaments can be more than merely *langue du bois* or parliamentary tourism, which are the two usual criticisms.¹¹⁷ In fact, these activities may support parliaments' efforts to democratise international relations. These efforts include addressing sensitive issues that traditional diplomacy prefers to avoid, participating in conflict resolution and political agenda setting, and acting as watchdog institutions and moral tribunals.

Finally, this chapter demonstrates that parliaments work together with CSOs to accomplish common goals in the field of human rights. The chapter therefore confirms that CSOs act as diplomatic actors in their own right in the international arena while performing roles of what has been called 'modern diplomacy'.¹¹⁸ In particular, CSOs started reporting human rights violations to the EP in the mid-1990s and provided it with information about these violations in order to strengthen their claims domestically. They then moved to engage also in more complex political activities, such as advocating, lobbying and monitoring, especially in cooperation with the Greens/EFA political group; trying to influence the EP's and other EU institutions' work on human rights. CSOs and victims of human rights violations acknowledge that such work may have a real influence on governments beyond the EU.

¹¹⁷ See for example: Federico Trillo-Figueroa *El País*, 'La diplomacia parlamentaria', 2 April 1997; Michel Vauzelle, 'Les parlementaires, la démocratie et les affaires internationales', in French National Assembly and Senate (eds.), *Colloque La diplomatie parlementaire*, (Paris: French National Assembly and Senate, 2001); Andrés Malamud and Stelios Stavridis, 'Parliaments and Parliamentarians as International Actors', p. 106; *Proceso*, 8 February 2016.

¹¹⁸ Kathryn Hochstetler, 'Civil Society', in Andrew F. Cooper, Jorge Heine, and Ramesh Thakur (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 182.