



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



13622/05 (Presse 274)

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2687th Council Meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

External Relations

Brussels, 7 November 2005

President

Mr Jack Straw

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of
the United Kingdom

* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the meeting on General Affairs (13621/05 Presse 273).

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Main Results of the Council

Concerning the **Middle East**, the Council:

- decided to launch a **police mission in the Palestinian territories** under the European Security and Defence Policy. The mission, which will have a long-term reform focus, will provide enhanced support to the Palestinian Authority in establishing sustainable and effective policing arrangements;
- noted the EU's willingness in principle to provide assistance with the operation of **crossings at Gaza's borders** on the basis of an agreement between the parties. This followed a request by Quartet envoy James Wolfensohn on behalf of the parties that the EU consider playing a third party monitoring role at the **Rafah** crossing point on the Gaza-Egypt border.

Concerning the **Western Balkans**, the Council:

- expressed its full support for the UN Secretary General's intention to start a political process to determine **Kosovo's future status**. Reaffirming the EU's determination to participate fully in the definition of this status, it endorsed HR Solana's nomination of Mr Stefan Lehne as EU representative to the Kosovo future status process, to support the UN Status Envoy in the implementation of his mandate;
- invited the relevant Council bodies to examine negotiating directives with a view to opening negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with **Bosnia and Herzegovina** as soon as possible.

The Council reviewed its overall approach to **Iran**. It notably condemned in the strongest terms the comments in respect of Israel made by President Ahmedinejad. On the nuclear issue, it urged Tehran to implement all measures requested by the 24 September IAEA Board of Governors Resolution. It also expressed its deep concern at the serious violations of human rights which continue to occur in Iran.

The Council examined the EU's policy towards **Belarus**. It expressed its deep concern at the deteriorating situation of human rights and political freedoms in Belarus and called on the Government to ensure that the upcoming electoral process is free and fair. It confirmed its determination to intensify the EU's support for democracy and human rights in Belarus and stated its readiness to take further appropriate restrictive measures against the responsible individuals in the event of failure to uphold international standards.

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- The documents whose references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site <http://ue.eu.int>.
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the abovementioned Council Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

PARTICIPANTS

The Governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr Karel DE GUCHT
Mr Didier DONFUT

Minister for Foreign Affairs
State Secretary for European Affairs, attached to the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Czech Republic:

Mr Cyril SVOBODA
Mr Vladimír MÜLLER

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs with responsibility for
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Denmark:

Mr Per Stig MØLLER

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Germany:

Mr Klaus SCHARIOTH

State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Greece:

Mr Petros MOLYVIATIS
Mr Ioannis VALINAKIS

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State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

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Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
State Secretary for the European Union

France:

Mr Philippe DOUSTE-BLAZY
Ms Catherine COLONNA

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister with responsibility for European Affairs

Ireland:

Mr Dermot AHERN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Italy:

Mr Gianfranco FINI

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Cyprus:

Mr George IACOVOU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Latvia:

Mr Artis PABRIKS

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Lithuania:

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Minister for Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

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Deputy Prime Minister, Minister with responsibility for
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Minister with responsibility for Foreign Affairs and
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Mr Nicolas SCHMIT

Hungary:

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Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister without portfolio responsible for European
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Malta:

Mr Richard CACHIA-CARUANA

Permanent Representative

Netherlands:

Mr Bernard BOT
Mr Atzo NICOLAÏ

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for European Affairs

Austria:

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK
Mr Hans WINKLER

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Poland:

Mr Stefan MELLER
Mr Jaroslaw PIETRAS

Minister for Foreign Affairs
State Secretary, Head of the Office of the Committee for
European Integration

Portugal:

Mr Fernando DE OLIVEIRA NEVES

State Secretary for European Affairs

Slovenia:

Mr Dimitrij RUPEL
Mr Marcel Koprol

Minister for Foreign Affairs
State Secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister

Slovakia:

Mr Eduard KUKAN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Finland:

Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA
Ms Mari KIVINIEMI

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Foreign Trade and Development

Sweden:

Mr Lars DANIELSSON
Mr Hans DAHLGREN

State Secretary to the Prime Minister
State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

United Kingdom:

Mr Jack STRAW
Mr Douglas ALEXANDER

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Minister of State for Europe

Commission:

Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER
Mr Olli REHN
Mr Peter MANDELSON

Member
Member
Member

General Secretariat of the Council:

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

The Governments of the Acceding States were represented as follows:

Bulgaria:

Mr Ivailo KALFIN
Ms Meglena KUNEVA

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for European Affairs

Romania:

Mr Mihai-Razvan UNGUREANU
Ms Anca BOAGIU

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for European Integration

ITEMS DEBATED**WESTERN BALKANS - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

1. The Council welcomed the Commission's communication on the state of preparations in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the negotiations of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union. The Council expressed its agreement with the Commission's conclusions and invited the relevant Council bodies to examine the Commission's proposed negotiating directives with a view to opening the negotiations as soon as possible.
2. The Council welcomed the significant progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina with its reform agenda, and encouraged it to take full account of the points raised in the Commission's communication, the upcoming progress report and the European Partnership. The Council welcomed in particular the recent political agreement on police reform and called for its implementation to begin without delay. It also stressed the importance of the adoption and implementation of all necessary public broadcasting legislation.
3. The Council reaffirmed that the speed at which Bosnia and Herzegovina, like all the countries in the Western Balkans, moves closer to the European Union will depend on how quickly it adopts and implements the necessary reforms for it to become a fully functioning and viable State and conforms to the Copenhagen criteria and to the requirements of the Stabilisation and Association process, including full cooperation with the ICTY.
4. In this context, the Council, recalling United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1503 and 1534, expects co-operation with the ICTY to be strengthened until all those accused who continue to evade international justice are brought before the Tribunal.

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO/KOSOVO

5. The Council welcomed Ambassador Kai Eide's Comprehensive Review of the situation in Kosovo and expressed its full support for the UN Secretary General's intention to start a political process to determine Kosovo's future status.
6. The Council welcomed the UN Secretary General's intention to appoint Mr Martti Ahtisaari as UN Status Envoy, and Mr Albert Rohan as his deputy, and underlined the EU's support for his mandate and its intention to work closely with him.
7. The Council called on both Pristina and Belgrade to engage in good faith and constructively in this process to determine Kosovo's future status. All communities in Kosovo, including minorities notably Serbs, should play their part in this process.
8. The Council underlined the paramount importance of the ongoing implementation of Standards now and in the future. Of particular importance is the protection of minorities. The Council expressed its appreciation for the work of Mr Søren Jessen-Petersen, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General.
9. Recalling the EU's Thessaloniki agenda and the European Council's Declaration on Kosovo of 17 June 2005, the Council reaffirmed the European Union's determination to participate fully in the definition of the status of Kosovo and readiness to be closely involved in the negotiations and implementation of its future status. In this context, the Council reaffirmed its willingness to cooperate closely with relevant partners and other international organisations, including the OSCE which through its field presence plays an important role in Kosovo.
10. The Council welcomed Mr Martti Ahtisaari's readiness to cooperate closely with the EU. The Council endorsed the SG/HR's nomination of Mr Stefan Lehne as EU representative to the Kosovo future status process. Under the guidance of the SG/HR and the Council, the EU representative will support the UN Status Envoy in the implementation of his mandate and will provide regular and timely reports to the SG/HR and the relevant bodies of the Council. He will also contribute, under guidance of the Council and in close cooperation with the Commission, to preparations for the EU's future role in Kosovo.

11. In view of the possibility of the EU enhancing its engagement in Kosovo, the Council invited the SG/HR together with the Commission to continue their work in identifying the possible future EU role and contribution, including in the areas of police, rule of law and the economy, and to submit joint proposals to the Council in the near future.
12. The Council also welcomed the Commission's co-operation with UNMIK and the PISG to promote the progressive alignment of the Kosovo Standards and the priorities identified in the European Partnership with a view to fostering progress towards EU standards.
13. The Council reaffirmed that Kosovo's future status must be fully compatible with European values and norms, comply with international legal instruments and obligations and the United Nations Charter. The status settlement should aim at a Kosovo, where all – regardless of ethnic background - are free to live, work and travel without fear, hostility or danger and all citizens are treated equally and different cultures are respected. The settlement should protect the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return safely. It should also include specific safeguards to protect cultural heritage and religious sites. At the same time, agreement on status should ensure that Kosovo does not return to the pre-March 1999 situation. Any solution which was unilateral or resulted from the use of force, as well as any changes to the current territory of Kosovo would be unacceptable. There can also be no partition of Kosovo, nor any union of Kosovo with another country or with part of another country following the resolution of the status of Kosovo. The territorial integrity and the internal stability of neighbouring countries must be fully respected. Likewise, Kosovo's future status should enable it to develop in a way which is both economically and politically sustainable and ensure it does not constitute a military or security threat to its neighbours. The resolution of Kosovo's future status must enable both Belgrade and Pristina to make progress towards the European Union."

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council underlined the need to maintain forward momentum towards full implementation of the Roadmap and of the commitments made at Sharm el Sheikh. It reiterated its commitment to the goal of the coexistence of two States, by the creation of an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel and its other neighbours in peace and security. It recalled that the EU will not recognise any change to the pre-1967 borders other than those arrived at by agreement between the parties.
2. The Council condemned unreservedly the recent terrorist attacks on Israel that have resulted in a number of Israeli fatalities and injuries. The Council also condemned the further violence perpetrated by Palestinian militants. While recognising Israel's right to protect its citizens against terrorist attacks, the Council called on Israel to act with restraint and to refrain from all extra-judicial killings, which are contrary to international law.
3. The Council expressed its grave concern at continued violence in Gaza and the West Bank. It underlined the need for the Palestinian Authority to take full control of law and order in the Occupied Territories. The Council also stressed the importance of the Palestinian Authority taking urgent action against Palestinian militants and to dismantle terrorist capabilities and infrastructure.
4. The Council underlined the importance of the forthcoming elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council as an essential element for progress in the peace process. The Council emphasised that violence and terror are incompatible with democratic processes and urged all factions, including Hamas, to renounce violence, recognise Israel's right to exist, and disarm. The Council urged Israel to facilitate the preparations and conduct of the elections, including in occupied East Jerusalem.

5. The Council reiterated its support for the work of James Wolfensohn, the Quartet Special Envoy for Disengagement, and welcomed his recent report to the members of the Quartet. It urged the parties to reach rapid agreement on the issues contained in the Rapid Action Plan, including arrangements for Gaza's borders and crossings, the Gaza seaport and airport, movement of goods and people between Gaza and the West Bank, and freedom of movement in the West Bank. The Council called on both Israel and the Palestinians to work with equal determination towards resolution of the outstanding issues. It underlined the importance of progress on these points for the growth of the Palestinian economy, including support to the private sector and in particular SMEs. The Council noted James Wolfensohn's letter of 2 November in which he requested on behalf of the parties that the EU consider playing a third party monitoring role at the Rafah crossing point on the Gaza-Egypt border. The Council noted the EU's willingness in principle to provide assistance with the operation of crossings at Gaza's borders on the basis of an agreement between the parties. It looked forward to receiving a full report from the scoping mission visiting the region, as the basis for an early decision on EU involvement and timely planning.
6. The Council urged the Israeli government to cease all activities in the Palestinian territories, including settlement building, the construction of the separation barrier as well as the demolition of Palestinian homes, which are contrary to international law and threaten to make any solution based on the co-existence of two states physically impossible. The Council was particularly concerned about the implementation of these policies in and around East Jerusalem. The Council called for the re-opening of Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem in accordance with the Roadmap, in particular the Orient House and the Chamber of Commerce. It called on the Israeli government to cease all discriminatory treatment of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, especially concerning work permits, access to education and health services, building permits, house demolitions, taxation and expenditure.

7. The Council underlined the important role played by EU COPPS (EU Co-ordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support) and by US Security Co-ordinator General Ward in the reform and strengthening of Palestinian security and police structures. In this regard, the Council decided to launch an ESDP Police Mission in the Palestinian Territories to build on the work of EU COPPS. This mission will have a long term reform focus and will provide enhanced support to the Palestinian Authority in establishing sustainable and effective policing arrangements. The new mission, which will have a three-year mandate, will assist in the implementation of the Palestinian Civil Police Development Plan, advise and mentor senior members of the Palestinian Civil Police and criminal justice system and co-ordinate EU and, where requested, international assistance to the Palestinian Civil Police. The mission will act in close co-operation with the European Commission's institution building as well as other international efforts in the security sector and judicial reform.
8. The Council welcomed the Commission's detailed Communication entitled "EU-Palestinian co-operation beyond disengagement – towards a two-state solution" and the comprehensive medium term strategy and suggested priorities it sets out for EU engagement with the Palestinians. The Council welcomed the Commission's proposal to consider ways in which EU assistance to the Palestinians could be more effective and co-ordinated and looked forward to further discussion of this issue."

SYRIA AND LEBANON - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council welcomes the unanimous adoption by the United Nations Security Council of Resolution 1636, acknowledging the report of the UN International Investigation Commission under Mr. Detlev Mehlis. The report's conclusions are very serious. The Council takes note with extreme concern of the report's conclusions that there is converging evidence pointing at the involvement of both Lebanese and Syrian officials in the assassination of Rafic Hariri.
2. The Council deplores the clear indication that Syria has not co-operated fully with the investigating team and calls upon Syria to co-operate unconditionally with the investigators as they continue their efforts to shed light on these appalling crimes and to bring about justice. The Council takes note of recent statements and steps made by Syria regarding its intention to co-operate with the UN Commission and expects all Syrian bodies to act fully in accordance with this intention.
3. The Council welcomes the Secretary-General's report on UNSCR 1559. The report notes that considerable progress has been made towards the implementation of 1559, in particular through the efforts of the Government of Lebanon.
4. The Council underlines the importance it attaches to the full implementation of 1559, including disbanding and disarming of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, and strict respect of the sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon. The Council underlines the importance of reinforcing the Lebanese Armed Forces. It notes the report's conclusion that more needs to be done by the Government of Lebanon to extend its control over all Lebanese territory.
5. The Council further calls on Syria to take immediate action to promote regional stability, including by engaging and working with the legitimate and sovereign Government of Lebanon to take forward the co-operation identified by the Secretary General's report as necessary for the full implementation of 1559; and by ending support for groups that oppose the Middle East Peace Process and taking steps to require such groups with headquarters or representatives in Syria to abstain from the use of violence."

IRAN - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council reviewed its overall approach to Iran.
2. The Council condemns in the strongest terms the comments in respect of the State of Israel made by President Ahmedinejad. It deplores calls for violence and for the destruction of any state. These comments cause concern about Iran's role in the region and its future intentions.
3. The Council reiterates its grave concern at Iran's resumption of activity at the Uranium Conversion Facility in Esfahan. The Council urges Iran to implement all measures requested by the IAEA Board of Governors in its Resolution on 24 September, including reinstating a full suspension of all fuel cycle activities, thus allowing negotiations with the European side to resume before the IAEA Board meets again in November. The Council underlines the EU's continued support for a diplomatic solution to international concerns over Iran's nuclear programme.
4. The Council underlines the long-standing importance it attaches to sustainable political and economic reform in Iran. In this regard, the Council agreed on the importance of the Comprehensive Dialogue. The Council agreed that the Comprehensive Dialogue is an appropriate framework for discussing issues of mutual interest and concern. These include not only areas such as counter-narcotics but also areas of long-standing concern to the EU: terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, Iran's approach to the Middle East peace process, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and regional issues. While noting progress in the co-operation between Iran and Europe in the field of counter-narcotics, the Council reiterates that the evolution of the long-term relationship, avoiding a deterioration, between Iran and Europe will depend on action by Iran to address effectively all the EU's areas of concern. The Council reiterates that it is up to Iran to determine, through its actions, whether its long-term relationship with the EU will improve or deteriorate.

5. The Council expresses its deep concern at the serious violations of human rights which continue to occur in Iran. It urges Iran to strengthen respect for human rights and the rule of law. The Council is disappointed that the EU-Iran Human Rights Dialogue has not been held since June 2004, despite repeated attempts on the EU's part to agree dates for the next round. The Council urges Iran to take steps to resume substantive discussions under the Dialogue and to demonstrate by its actions that it is willing to improve respect for human rights including by fulfilling its obligations and earlier commitments in relation to juvenile executions and by permanently releasing Akbar Ganji and other prisoners of conscience.
6. The Council stresses that discrimination between EU Member States by Iran in any field is unacceptable and contrary to EU principles of solidarity. It calls on Iran to lift all discriminatory restrictions against individual Member States, which could impact negatively on Iran's stated desire to pursue greater co-operation with the EU.
7. The Council agrees to keep the EU's approach to Iran under close review in light of progress on the nuclear file and other issues of concern."

IRAQ - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council welcomes the 15 October referendum on the Iraqi Constitution as part of Iraq's continuing political transition leading to a constitutionally elected government based on UNSCR 1546. The referendum on the Constitution marks an important stage in the process of political transition and a further step by the Iraqi people on the road to democracy, freedom and peace, which will continue beyond the transition period. The high turnout of voters from all communities and across the country bears testament to the Iraqi people's commitment to a process aiming at building a peaceful and democratic Iraq. The Council pays tribute to the courage and determination of those who took part in the voting, braving difficult conditions and the threat of violence. The Council congratulates the Independent Electoral Commission for Iraq and the Iraqi authorities on the smooth running of the referendum. It welcomes the support given to the process by the UN.
2. Although a large majority of voters voted in favour of the Constitution, the Council notes that the results of the referendum show there are still substantial divisions to be overcome. In this regard, it looks forward to the implementation of the review mechanism contained in the Constitution after the December elections. The Council believes this offers an important opportunity for the Iraqis to forge a broader consensus on the future of their country and will assist the creation of an inclusive political system. The EU stands ready to support actively in these important efforts. The Council also welcomes the Arab League's suggestion to work with Iraq in holding a National Dialogue Conference.
3. The Council stresses the importance the EU attaches to the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and encourages all members of the international community to support the consolidation of democracy in Iraq. The Council welcomes the visit by Amr Moussa, the Secretary General of the Arab League, to Iraq on 20-24 October. The Council encourages Iraq's neighbours and other countries in the region to re-establish or strengthen diplomatic relations with Iraq at the earliest possibility. It strongly urges regional states, in particular Syria, to support the political process in Iraq, including by co-operating with Iraq to prevent cross-border transit and support for terrorists and insurgents.

4. The Council looks forward to the elections planned for December and urges all Iraqis across the country to participate in them. It encourages the IECI to continue its excellent work in preparing for the December elections, with the support of the UN and including the contribution made by the EU. The EU will provide support to the monitoring process for the December elections, including through supporting the work of domestic election observers.
5. The Council condemns the terrorist acts, murders and hostage-takings which have been committed in Iraq. The Council deplores the campaign of terrorist violence in Iraq which is prolonging the suffering of the Iraqi people and hampering political progress and reconstruction.
6. The Council welcomes the signature of the Joint EU-Iraq Political Declaration during the EU-Iraq Ministerial Troika meeting in New York on 21 September. The Declaration and the regular political dialogue which will now be taken forward under it represent an important step towards closer partnership between the EU and Iraq. In this regard, the Council welcomes the EU Political Directors Troika visit to Baghdad on 24-26 October, during which the first formal dialogue meeting was held.
7. The Council welcomes the improvement in the human rights situation since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime and condemns the atrocities committed by terrorists since then. The Council emphasises the importance of full respect for human rights in Iraq. It underlines the EU's strong opposition to the use of the death penalty. It notes with concern recent reports, including by the UN, of human rights violations by the Iraqi Security Forces. It urges the Iraqi Transitional Government to address all allegations of human rights abuses in a decisive and transparent manner. The EU stands ready to offer further support in this area, noting the contributions already being made by the Member States and the Commission to strengthening human rights and the Rule of Law in Iraq.

8. The Council commends the ongoing work of the EU's Rule of Law mission for Iraq (EUJUST LEX), and the training it is providing for over 700 Iraqi judicial, police and prison personnel. The Council notes the ITG's request to extend the mission beyond the end of its current mandate and to expand the scope of the training provided, and invites relevant Council bodies to consider this. The Council reiterates its support for the Commission's preparations to undertake complementary work in this field.
9. The Council reaffirms the EU's continuing support to the reconstruction of Iraq. The Council welcomes the Commission's ongoing work to assist in capacity building in Iraq's administration and institutions as well as the provision of further assistance in the field of basic services. The Council notes the progress towards the establishment of a Commission office in Baghdad. The Council welcomes the establishment of the Sector Working Groups by the ITG, with the support of the UN, and notes the positive contribution they are making to the co-ordination of donor activity. The Council notes the leading role being played by the EU in the Rule of Law Sector Working Group.
10. The Council reaffirms the importance of creating the conditions for socio-economic development that can benefit all Iraqis. To this end, it welcomes that the process of Iraq's WTO accession is underway and looks forward to the establishment of contractual trade and co-operation relations between the EU and Iraq."

BELARUS - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Recalling its conclusions of 15 September 1997 and 22-23 November 2004, the Council expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation of human rights and political freedoms in Belarus, in particular the harassment of political parties, independent media and NGOs and the reluctance to conduct independent investigations into disappearances of prominent opponents of President Lukashenko.
2. The EU wishes to see a stable, prosperous and democratic Belarus, respecting human rights and the rule of law. Underlining that the Belarusian people's sovereign right to decide their own country's future should be realised in a democratic way, the Council notes the importance of the Presidential election in 2006, and in particular:
 - Calls on the Belarusian Government to reverse the current deteriorating trend in respect of democracy and human rights, to ensure that the electoral process is conducted in a free and fair manner in accordance with international standards, and to abide by its commitments in the OSCE and the UN;
 - Calls on the Belarusian Government to issue an early invitation to a full OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission, in accordance with the 1990 Copenhagen document, and to allow it to operate unimpeded; and notes the willingness of EU Member States to contribute to that mission;
 - Calls on the Belarusian Government to ensure that all eligible candidates are allowed to register for the elections, to campaign freely and to enjoy equal access to state-controlled media;
 - Notes that the 17 October 2004 parliamentary elections and referendum in Belarus were not conducted in a free and fair manner; and recalls its lack of confidence that the results truly reflected the will of the Belarusian people. The Council notes the view of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission that the referendum was unlawful; expresses its concern that the 2006 Presidential election should be conducted on a legal and democratic basis. The Council, therefore, calls on the Belarusian Government to fully implement the recommendations of the respective reports of the OSCE/ODIHR in time for the Presidential election of 2006.

3. The Council confirms its determination to intensify the EU's support for democracy and human rights in Belarus. In this context, the Council:
 - Notes the importance of political pluralism and in this regard encourages the EU's political parties to strengthen links with their counterparts in Belarus, and welcomes the selection of a united opposition candidate;
 - Confirms its willingness to continue to work through a range of channels to support Belarusian civil society, and welcomes the Commission's significant allocation for support for independent media in Belarus and its commitment to designate Belarus a priority country for the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights and Decentralised Cooperation Instruments in 2005-2006. On support for independent media in particular, the Council requests the Commission - on the basis of experience gained - to consider taking further action. The Council also stresses the importance of a flexible use of existing instruments and of the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI) serving as a more flexible source of funding for building and promoting democracy from 2007-2013;
 - Underlines the willingness of Member States and the institutions of the EU to promote shared democratic values between the people of the EU and Belarus by intensifying people-to-people contacts and by strengthening good neighbourly relations across borders (e.g. through student and scientific exchanges, scholarships, youth travel, contacts between small- and medium-sized enterprises , training local authority officials, etc.)
4. In seeking to convey its positions clearly to the Belarusian authorities and maximise the impact of its policies, the Council:
 - Reaffirms its policy on limited ministerial contact agreed on 22-23 November 2004 but highlights its willingness to engage with Belarusian officials;
 - Welcomes the decision of the Secretary General/High Representative to nominate, for his part, a point of contact under his authority on Belarus; and his decision to send his Personal Representative for Human Rights to Belarus before the end of the year to engage with civil society and to express EU concerns to President Lukashenko's Government;

- Welcomes the Commission's decision to open a regionalised delegation in Minsk by the end of the year;
 - States its willingness to maintain and intensify engagement, cooperation and coordination with international partners in order to promote democratisation in Belarus.
5. The Council will continue to monitor the situation in Belarus closely and will revert to it in January 2006. It also underlines its concern at the harassment of civil society organisations, including the Union of Poles of Belarus. The Council states its readiness to take further appropriate restrictive measures against the responsible individuals in the event of failure to uphold international standards, in particular commitments made in the OSCE context.
6. At the same time, the Council reiterates its willingness to have closer and better relations with Belarus - including within the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and the European Neighbourhood Policy - once the Belarusian authorities clearly demonstrate their willingness to respect democratic values and the rule of law. In this context, the EU will seek to communicate and demonstrate the benefits of the ENP to the Belarusian population at large."

The Council also had a forward looking and strategic discussion on the basis of three questions. On the first, a number of delegations stressed the need for a credible EU response in the case of failure to uphold international standards in the conduct of the 2006 presidential elections. Examples given included visa bans and assets freezes. On the second, a number of delegations stressed the importance of working with international partners, including the US and Russia. On the third, a number of delegations stressed the importance of support for civil society and people to people contacts as ways of encouraging reform in Belarus.

WTO/DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The Council was briefed by the Commission on the state of play in the current round of trade negotiations under the World Trade Organisation's Doha Development Agenda, in the light of its recent conditional offer and ahead of forthcoming meetings among WTO members.

In the light of the Council's conclusions of 18 October, the Commission will continue to ensure that the Council is fully informed of new developments in the run-up to the scheduled sixth WTO ministerial conference in Hong Kong from 13 to 18 December.

The Council agreed to return to the matter for a fuller discussion in the presence of trade ministers at its meeting on 21 and 22 November.

On 28 October the Commission submitted a contribution containing a new EU offer on agricultural market access as well as requests in other areas including non-agricultural market access, services, rules and development; the agricultural offer is conditional on progress in these other areas.

At its meeting on 18 October, the Council emphasised the need for a balanced outcome to all the main items on the Doha agenda, with specific focus on the needs of developing countries and for all partners to make their contributions commensurate with their level of development.

UN WORLD SUMMIT FOLLOW-UP - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council welcomes the agreement reached at the UN World Summit on a balanced and extensive package of UN reforms. The EU played a critical and constructive role in securing this outcome.

The Council reaffirms that the EU is committed to playing an active role in ensuring that the reforms agreed at the Summit are fully and urgently implemented. The Council will also continue to work towards achieving important reforms in the UN system on issues not covered at the Summit. The EU's priorities in this regard are outlined in the attached Annex "UN World Summit follow-up: EU Priorities".

If fully implemented, the reforms will result in a stronger and more effective UN, better able to meet today's challenges in areas of development, peace and security, and human rights. Full implementation of these reforms represents a vital part of the EU's goal of the development of an international order based on effective multilateralism and the rule of law.

Work is already underway in New York and in relevant EU working groups on implementation. This will guide the EU's input into the detailed follow-up action, which will be led from New York.

The Council pays tribute to the outstanding efforts of the Secretary-General Kofi Annan and former General Assembly President Ping in successfully managing a difficult and complex negotiating process. The Council also thanks Foreign Minister Ahern and President Vike-Freiberga for their work towards the Summit as envoys of the Secretary-General.

The Council commits the EU's full support to Secretary General Annan and General Assembly President Eliasson in this crucial implementation phase. The EU will engage actively in outreach activities to secure implementation of the reforms agreed at the Summit, including on the Peacebuilding Commission, Human Rights Council and management reform."

For further details, see 13737/1/05 REV 1 containing the annex to the Council conclusions.

OTHER BUSINESS**– *Colombia***

The Netherlands minister shared his impressions with colleagues following his recent visit to Colombia, including on President Uribe's efforts in the context of peace process. The Presidency recalled that in conclusions adopted by the Council on 3 October, the EU had confirmed its readiness to assist the Colombian government and civil society in a number of areas. EU Heads of Mission in Bogotá were taking work forward on the basis of these conclusions.

– *Cuba*

The Council took note of a report by the Czech delegation on the problems related to the celebration of the Czech national day in Havana.

IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL

– *EU-South-Africa Joint Cooperation Council*

(see press release 14067/05 Presse 285).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

None
