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**Address**  
**By Javier SOLANA,**  
**EU High Representative for the CFSP**  
**to the Committee on Foreign Affairs**  
**of the European Parliament**

Javier SOLANA briefed the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament today on recent developments with the main issues on the international agenda and took part in the ensuing debate with MEPs. The following is an edited summary of Mr SOLANA's introductory statement and of his replies to questions from MEPs:

**Introductory statement**

*"Mr. President thank you for inviting me again. I will try as always to be brief.*

*Let me start by saying that this year 2008 will be a important year for us. I hope that the ratification of the Treaty will allow us to move on in the field of foreign and security policy, in a much more coherent manner, in co-operation with the Parliament, and to see how we can move forward, as I think we have an obligation to do, and with high expectations, not only among our own citizens but also in the world at large.*

*Let me say a few things about the most important matters on the international agenda today.*

*I will start by talking about the Western Balkans. This is the most important topic on the agenda. I would like to comment on the situation in Kosovo, after the unilateral declaration of independence, the reaction of Serbia, and the deployment of the European mission on the ground.*

*11 May is a very important date. As you know, elections have been called in Serbia and for the first time presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections will be held together. I underline in particular the municipal elections because it is the first time that municipal elections will take place and we have to see how this is handled by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in the northern part of Kosovo, that is the part of Kosovo north of the River Iber, where the situation is still not completely stabilised.*

*We have to see how we can go from here to the elections on the 11th of May in trying to see if the response of the Serbian people is the one that we would like to see, namely a majority vote for the pro-European forces in Serbia. We want Serbia to be a close cooperative partner of the European Union and to come closer to the European Union and I would like every thing that can be done on our side up to the 10th of May to be done. We have to do the utmost to take measures, if possible, that would send a very clear signal to the Serbian people that we care about them.*

*Firstly, there is the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. There are still difficulties but I think every effort should be made to finalise it by the 11th of May. Secondly, as you know, the Commission is continuing to work very constructively – Commissioner Rehn is making a substantive effort– to see if something can be done on the visa issue. These are two of the most important issues that we have to consider before the elections on the 11th of May. I would like to see an agreement on them in the Council and all the help from the European Parliament would be very welcome.*

*The decision to deploy the EULEX mission in Kosovo was taken by all 27 Member States and we very much hope to see it deployed at the pace agreed in the mission's operational plan. Small problems are still emerging, in particular as regards relations with UNMIK and the definition of roles, as some changes have taken place on the ground, particularly north of the river, and some adjustments have to be made in our relations with the UN.*

*As you know, UNMIK is still deployed across Kosovo, in particular in the northern part, and with responsibilities on the crossing line, at the river. You will remember the tensions at the two most important gates on the border, gate number 1 and gate number 31, the two main crossing points between Serbia proper and the northern part of Kosovo. We hope very much that the cooperation between the EU and UNMIK will continue.*

*I had a good meeting with the UN Secretary General in the margins of the meeting in Bucharest last Thursday and Friday. We will maintain that relationship to see if EULEX can be fully deployed and if UNMIK has the mandate and capacity to perform all its duties while it remains there.*

*As you know, Kosovo's new constitution was presented to the Parliament yesterday and will be approved on the 15th of June. So between the 11th of May and the 15th of June we have to be very attentive to see how the situation evolves.*

*I would like to stress once again that we must make every effort to reach out to the Serbian people and to continue telling them clearly, not only with words but also with deeds, that we want them to be part of the European family. In Bucharest, we also met the Serbian Foreign Minister and continued the conversation of the previous Saturday at the Gymnich over breakfast in Ljubljana.*

*Let me now move on to the second big issue that we have which is Afghanistan.*

*There was a very important meeting on Afghanistan in Bucharest last Thursday. President Karzai was there as were the most important donors from the international community – not only from the European Union but also from many other countries that are not members of the European Union or NATO: Australia, New Zealand, Japan and many others. In addition to the commitment to keep on helping the government of Afghanistan we also secured a set of benchmarks to assess progress and we agreed that the meeting on Afghanistan in Paris in June will be a political conference as well as a pledging conference. I think that was a good idea and, as you know, new pledges and new commitments were made in Bucharest, at the economic and political levels and also on forces on the ground.*

*Let me also say that we, collectively as Europeans, are maintaining our ESDP police mission. It is now deployed across almost the whole of Afghanistan. We have agreements for the majority of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). We still have two that are not finalised – with the United States and with Turkey – but on the rest we are working very hard. By the end of the spring we will be fully deployed and we are already present across the country.*

*Let me remind you that the objective of the mission is not to train the police but to train the trainers, to organise a system, a police concept, that really is long lasting and benefits the*

*people of Afghanistan. This cannot be done overnight. It will take time and it will require the tenacity of the Member States of the European Union in order to continue to produce results in the very difficult field of security-sector reform with the police.*

*Now let me move on to the Middle East. The last time I was with you - in the plenary session - it was a very bad week, with violence in Gaza, and I had the opportunity to explain to you what was going on, what we were doing in cooperation with the Egyptians to restore calm in Gaza and in the zone in general.*

*Since then, the situation has calmed down but the issues have not been resolved. A solution has not been found for the Rafah crossing point or for the other two crossing points. But, politically, I think an important meeting took place yesterday. For the first time there was a meeting between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas together with Foreign Minister Livni and Abu Ala, the Palestinian negotiator. I do think that we still have a chance to move the process to a settlement before the end of 2008. I don't want to sound too optimistic, I want to sound realistic at this point in time, and hope that still we have a chance to move the process forward.*

*The situation is not resolved as far as Gaza is concerned but I think it is more relaxed than it was and I believe and very much hope that with all our efforts, including with our Egyptian friends, we can have a period of calm in Gaza which could also help move forward the bilateral negotiations which, as you know, have been stuck. I will be going to the region again soon and I look forward to reporting back to you on the progress there.*

*The 2nd of May is an important date as the Ad-hoc Liaison Committee and the Quartet will meet in London. I will be very happy to return around the middle of May and give you my impression of how we approach the summer period. I think we have still a window of opportunity until, let us say, the end the summer but if we are not able to move the process forward in a dynamic manner by then maybe we will have to begin to think that the possibility of an agreement in 2008 will be farther away from our hopes.*

*Let me say a word about Lebanon. As you know, the Arab League Summit was held last Sunday. It was not a summit that we can call a success. It was not a failure either, but I think it was a failure as far as Lebanon is concerned. The president has still not been elected and the situation continues to be very difficult. We must make every effort on our side to continue to*

*push for the presidential election in Lebanon to be held. It has been postponed for the 17th time. This cannot continue and I would very much like your support on that situation also.*

*A few words about Africa. Deployment of our ESDP mission in Chad continues as normal. We already have 1 500 people on the ground and before the rainy season the full 3 700 will be deployed. The situation at this point is satisfactory for the mission. There have been no big problems on the ground and we are continuing to make the contribution the UN asked us for.*

*Zimbabwe is a very important issue on our agenda. Today is important because the court should reach a decision concerning the election results. I spoke yesterday to the Foreign Minister of Tanzania, currently the chair of the African Union. The situation is of great concern to the African Union whose leaders, particularly the President of the African Union, have not been able to contact President Mugabe. All the efforts to do so have failed. On Saturday I met President Mbeki who, as you know, has played a very important role and today I will meet the designated Chairman of the African Union for the first time for a working lunch and Zimbabwe will be one of the most important issues that we will discuss, as well as Chad and Sudan. So we have to watch carefully how the situation evolves, particularly over the next few hours.*

*In conclusion, let me say a word on the paper on the security implications of climate change that I presented, with the Commission, to the European Council. It is a very important issue on which I hope we will continue to work in close contact with the Parliament. It involves growing tensions surrounding resources, including energy, but also food production and prices. You saw at the weekend and last week a lot of problems in many countries, poor countries, arising because of the prices of agricultural products. All these issues are fundamental. We have to look at them in a comprehensive manner and see how can we help to resolve them. The same can be said about large-scale migration as a consequence of climate change. This is an issue that is of great concern to the people and the leaders of the EU.*

*These are to my mind the hottest issues facing us today. As far as Tibet is concerned, as you know an important statement was made in Ljubljana at the Gymnich meeting by the foreign ministers and I know that you having a big debate on it. I hope very much that the EU's demands will be heeded by the Chinese authorities. We have to continue the pressure. There will be a human rights dialogue meeting with China on the 15th of May. Let us see how we*

*can also put those issues on the table and how we can also find solutions moving in the right direction.*

*Before I finish let me tell you about the NATO summit meeting in Bucharest last week. I think that, seen together with the meeting at the weekend in Sochi between President Bush and President Putin, it gives us grounds for, if not optimism, a sense of constructive realism on the big strategic issues that are important for us as well as for NATO. With the difficulties that we may be facing in 2009 and 2010 when all the major agreements on disarmament will come up for renewal it will be important for the EU and its citizens to have the possibility of avoiding a vacuum between now and then. So, I very much hope that our efforts to that end will bear fruit and will allow us to enter the period 2009-2010 with the feeling that the very important agreements that were reached in 1999, 2000 and 2001 with President Yeltsin will be maintained and that we will not be moving into a vacuum where these major agreements, which have been the fundamental pillars of our strategic security, are concerned."*

#### Summary of answers to questions

#### WESTERN BALKANS

On the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia name issue, Mr SOLANA said the UN Secretary-General's envoy was in the lead on finding a solution to the problem and he hoped that it would be settled in the near future. As far as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's relations with the EU were concerned, it was one of the most advanced countries in the region, he said. It was a candidate country, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) was already implemented and "*we expect a potential good result will take place before the end of the year.*" He added that the government might decide to call elections, following the disappointment at the Bucharest meeting, but he hoped that any decision on this would not be made as a result of frustration.

In exchanges on the conditions for signing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Serbia, Mr SOLANA appealed to everyone to focus on how best to help the Serbian people move forward and draw closer to the EU and to show flexibility in order to achieve this. "*I would very much prefer, on the 10th of May, to go to sleep with my conscience relaxed that all the efforts that were in our hands have been made.*" We want Serbia to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), he said.

On the subject of Kosovo's status, the High Representative underlined that the operational decision of the EU to deploy a rule-of-law mission to Kosovo was a collective, unanimous decision. The Member States had agreed that they would decide on a national basis, at their own pace, on the issue of recognising Kosovo's declaration of independence. He hoped that the situation would be resolved over time and that all the Balkan countries would draw closer to the EU, stabilising the whole region.

Bosnia and Herzegovina was top of our agenda, said Mr SOLANA. The SAA had been initialled some months ago but its signature depended on the finalisation of the police reform which was long overdue. We were, he said, only "*inches away*" and he hoped the difficulties could be overcome very soon.

#### AFRICA

Mr SOLANA said that since last Saturday he had been following the situation in Zimbabwe extremely closely. He underlined the role of President M'beki of South Africa in the international efforts to broker a solution and stressed the very grave concern of the African Union leaders. The question of whether a second round of the presidential election would be held was very important and he would discuss the situation with Jean Ping, the designated chairman of the African Union Commission, at lunch.

#### TURKEY

Asked in the first round of questions for his views on the case in the Turkish Supreme Court against the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and Turkey's president and prime minister, Mr SOLANA said that a ruling declaring the party illegal would cause a constitutional crisis in Turkey, with serious consequences. "*If the court determines the illegality of a party like the AKP, that won democratic elections recognised by us and of which the president and the prime minister are members, we would be in a serious situation from a constitutional point of view.*" He hoped that the Court would reach a reasonable decision and said that failure to do so would be a severe blow for Turkey and for its relations with the EU

#### TIBET and the OLYMPIC GAMES

Mr SOLANA called for dialogue and for a political solution to the problem of Tibet: "*The important thing is that the Tibet question is solved, and that it is solved in a solid manner, that there is a dialogue, that there is a political solution and that human rights are respected,*

*as we have always defended in our relations with China, where we also defend the territorial integrity of China."*

On the question of whether or not to boycott the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Beijing, Mr SOLANA cautioned against mixing sport and politics. He stated his personal interest in the Olympic Games, as a member of the Olympic family and having been responsible for organising the Barcelona Olympics in 1992. He said he would like to be in Beijing but he assured the MEPs that if the EU decided to boycott the ceremony he would respect its position.

#### **AFGHANISTAN**

Asked about the EU's state-building role in Afghanistan, Mr SOLANA said that the meeting in Bucharest, attended by President Karzai and the most important donor countries, had been very serious and constructive, with frank discussions and important decisions, including the agreement to hold a "*political pledging meeting*" in Paris. He announced that he would visit Kabul and Islamabad the week after next. The EU's "*military and political theatres*" in the region and cooperation over the Pakistan-Afghanistan border were very important. The EU's relationship with the new government of Pakistan was a high priority.

#### **MIDDLE EAST**

The EU's engagement in Iraq continued to grow, Mr SOLANA stressed, the EU's rule-of-law mission - EUJUST LEX - was doing an excellent job and the EU must help as much as possible with the forthcoming municipal elections in Iraq. Mr SOLANA said he would be meeting Prime Minister Maliki and hoped to visit Iraq in the near future.

On Iran, the only new development since the High Representative had last reported to the European Parliament was the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1803 (with just one abstention) on Iran's nuclear programme. The international community remained united and the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany would meet again soon, during the 90-day period preceding implementation of the Resolution.

Mr SOLANA assured the committee that the EU mission to monitor the border between Gaza and Egypt at Rafah was still in the region, ready to deploy immediately if called upon: "*We have not left.*" An agreement that built on the 2005 Agreement on Access and Movement was



under discussion and a new "2005 Plus" agreement, that included Egypt as a signatory, was essential as the role of Egypt was very important.

#### **EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY AND RELATIONS WITH NATO**

Mr SOLANA hoped very much that ratification of the Lisbon Treaty would help speed the development of the ESDP. The development of a new strategic concept by NATO would also, he thought, enable the two organisations to move forward in the area of security, developing complementary roles.

The US President's statement on the ESDP and the French President's statement on NATO at the NATO Summit in Bucharest were very important, said Mr SOLANA. He looked forward to deeper cooperation with NATO and to the EU being able to develop its own capabilities in security and defence policy. He hoped that preparatory work would be done on this in the second half of this year.

On the EU's relations with NATO, the High Representative emphasized that cooperation within the "Berlin Plus" framework for EU operations using NATO assets, such as the very successful operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, worked very smoothly. Where relations outside the "Berlin Plus" arrangements were concerned, there were problems of interpretation by some NATO countries, which made aspects of practical cooperation on the ground difficult in some cases, for example in Afghanistan and in Kosovo. This was a matter that must be resolved, said Mr SOLANA.

#### **STRATEGIC ISSUES**

Several MEPS asked about non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. MR SOLANA said disarmament would be at the core of important debates coming up both within and beyond the EU in 2009 and 2010. The Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and crucial US-Russia agreements on disarmament were coming up for renewal and it was vital, Mr SOLANA said, to continue to fight proliferation and to achieve a deep consensus among the international community. He hoped that it would be possible to move in the field of disarmament.