



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



10191/04 (Presse 196)

PRESS RELEASE

2591st Council Meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

- EXTERNAL RELATIONS -

Luxembourg, 14 June 2004

President **Mr Brian COWEN**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland

* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2590th meeting on General Affairs (10189/04).

P R E S S

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10191/04 (Presse 196)

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Main Results of the Council

The Council reached political agreement on a Joint Action establishing the **European Defence Agency**. This timely agreement should enable the Agency to begin functioning by the end of the year. The Agency is ascribed four functions, relating to: defence capabilities development; armaments co-operation; the European defence technological and industrial base and defence equipment market; research and technology (10450/04).

Also in the context of the European Security and Defence Policy, the Council announced the EU's readiness to launch, by mid-July, an **EU Rule of Law Mission in Georgia**. The first Rule of Law Mission launched in the context of ESDP, it is intended to support the Georgian authorities in addressing urgent challenges in the criminal justice system.

The Council also welcomed the unanimous approval of UN Security Council Resolution 1546 on **Iraq** and welcomed a medium-term strategy for the EU's relations with Iraq.

Finally, the Council welcomed progress made on the implementation of the **EU Strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction** since its adoption last December.

In the margins of the Council meeting, the first meeting of the EU-Egypt Association Council was held on 14 June.

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OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

Please see "General Affairs" press release 10189/04

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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 Jan DE BOCK

Permanent Representative

Czech Republic:

Mr Cyril SVOBODA

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Denmark:

Mr Claus GRUBE

Permanent Representative

Germany:

Mr Wilhelm SCHÖNFELDER

Permanent Representative

Estonia:

Mr Väino REINART

Permanent Representative

Greece:

Mr Petros MOLYVIATIS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr Miguel Angel MORATINOS

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

France:

Ms Claudie HAIGNERÉ

Minister with responsibility for European Affairs, attached to the Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ireland:

Mr Brian COWEN

Mr Dick ROCHE

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach and at the Department of Foreign Affairs with responsibility for European Affairs

Italy:

Mr Roberto ANTONIONE

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Cyprus:

Mr George IACOVOU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Latvia:

Mr Rihards PĪKS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Lithuania:

Mr Antanas VALIONIS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

Mr Nicolas SCHMIT

Permanent Representative

Hungary:

Mr András BÁRSONY

Political State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr John DALLI

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Investment Promotion

Netherlands:

Mr Bernard BOT

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Austria:

Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

Poland:

Mr Jarosław PIETRAS

State Secretary, Office of the Committee for European Integration

Portugal:

Ms Teresa GOUVEIA

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Portuguese Communities Abroad

Slovenia:

Mr Dimitrij RUPEL

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovakia:

Mr Eduard KUKAN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Finland:

Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Sweden:

Ms Laila FREIVALDS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

United Kingdom:

Mr Jack STRAW

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Commission:

Mr Chris PATTEN

Member

Other participants:

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

ITEMS DEBATED**IRAQ - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council welcomed the unanimous approval of UN Security Council Resolution 1546, which reaffirms the right of the Iraqi people to determine their political future and to control their financial and natural resources. The Council looked forward to the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty by 30 June 2004.
2. The Council expressed its full support for the achievement of these goals as endorsed in the Resolution - the formation of a sovereign interim government with the important contribution of the UN, the ending of occupation by 30 June, the reassertion by Iraq of its full sovereignty, the proposed timetable for political transition to democratic government, the role of the UN and the authorisation for a multinational force.
3. The Council reiterated its condemnation of the mistreatment of prisoners and insisted that all prisoners be treated in accordance with international law.
4. The restoration of Iraqi sovereignty and the support of the international community are essential to help stabilise the situation in Iraq. In this context, the role of neighbouring countries will be particularly important, also with a view to regional stability. The Council wished the new government every success in meeting the major challenges which lie ahead, including the preparation of the elections to be held at the latest by 31 January 2005, and confirms the EU's readiness to support the Iraqi government and the Iraqi people.
5. The Council welcomed the medium-term strategy for the EU's relations with Iraq presented by the High Representative and the Commission, and the Commission Communication entitled "The European Union and Iraq - A Framework for Engagement" and recommended their endorsement by the European Council. They noted that this strategy, along with Security Council Resolution 1546, will provide a framework within which the EU can continue to assist the Iraqi people as they enter a new era in the history of their country.

6. The Council expressed its determination to help with the political and economic reconstruction of Iraq and underlined its support for the reintegration of Iraq into the international community as a sovereign, independent democratic country, at peace with itself and with its neighbours and with its territorial integrity preserved.
7. The Council expressed satisfaction at the recent liberation of Italian and Polish hostages by coalition forces. The Council reiterated its condemnation of all violence and terrorist attacks, including kidnappings and the brutal murder of hostages."

BURMA/ASEM

Over lunch, Ministers discussed the issue of ASEM enlargement in the light of current developments in Burma/Myanmar. They noted that the EU would continue to work closely with its Asian partners to ensure that a decision on enlargement can be reached before the Hanoi Summit on 8 and 9 October 2004.

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council noted the new proposals for an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza strip. It welcomed the prospect of this initiative and recalled the Quartet's statement "welcoming and encouraging such a step, which should provide a rare moment of opportunity in the search for peace in the Middle East". Such a proposal could represent a significant step towards the implementation of the Roadmap, provided that it is implemented as rapidly as possible in accordance with the elements identified in the conclusions of the European Council of March 2004. This is an opportunity which the international community led by the Quartet should be ready to seize."

IRAN

The Council noted the report of the IAEA Director General and the ongoing discussion at the IAEA Board of Governors on the Iranian nuclear programme. It recalled that the EU calls on Iran to cooperate proactively with the IAEA in a spirit of full transparency, with a view to resolving all outstanding concerns in relation to its nuclear programme.

EU delegations in Vienna will continue to coordinate closely on this issue. The Council reiterated its full support for the work of the IAEA and for the efforts of its Director General, Dr El Baradei.

WESTERN BALKANS - *Council conclusions*

The Council discussed the situation in the Western Balkans, including after the first round of the Serbian presidential elections and adopted the following conclusions:

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO / KOSOVO

"The Council paid tribute to Harri Holkeri who has resigned as Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Kosovo and head of UNMIK. It thanked him for his determined efforts over the past year and his firm commitment to a multi-ethnic Kosovo and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1244.

STABILITY PACT FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

The Council welcomed the outcome of the Regional Table meeting in Portoroz on 8 June, which marked the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Stability Pact. The Council reaffirmed its strong support for the work of the Stability Pact in promoting regional cooperation, complementing the Stabilisation and Association Process and contributing to the implementation of the Thessaloniki Agenda."

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The Council also adopted the following two items without debate:

– ***European Partnerships***

The Council adopted, without discussion, Decisions on principles, priorities and conditions for the EU's European Partnerships with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro including Kosovo.

Implementation of the European Partnerships will be ensured through the mechanisms established under the Stabilisation and Association Process for the Western Balkans. On the basis of annual reports from the Commission, the aim is to identify priorities for action in order to support efforts to enable the Western Balkan States to move closer to the European Union within a coherent framework. Priorities are adapted to each country's specific needs and state of preparation, and will be updated as necessary. The European Partnerships also provide guidance for financial assistance from the EU to the Western Balkans.

The Decisions are a step in the "*Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans: Moving towards European integration*", which, set in June 2003, emphasised the need to strengthen the Stabilisation and Association Process.

– ***European Security Strategy - Bosnia and Herzegovina***

The Council also approved, without discussion, a comprehensive policy with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina as one of the initial priorities for implementation of the European Security Strategy, as decided by the European Council in December 2003.

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"Presidency Report on ESDP

The Council approved the Presidency report on ESDP and decided to submit it to the European Council.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Council welcomed progress in preparing the ESDP operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina following SFOR. It noted that work has been set in train, on the basis of consideration and conclusions by the PSC, to develop the Joint Action and Initiating Military Directive, based on guidance in the General Concept, taking into account the Strategic Options and the EU Military Committee and CIVCOM advices, and political guidance by the PSC. Other preparatory steps will be taken, including in consultation with NATO, to ensure that the European Union will be in a position to begin operational planning for the EU military force based on the Berlin Plus arrangements and the EU's decisions, following a decision at the Istanbul Summit to terminate the SFOR operation later this year. The Bosnian authorities will be kept fully involved throughout this process.

ESDP Support in Africa

The Council noted that, in addition to and consistent with initiatives under the Peace Facility for Africa, activities within the framework of ESDP can give practical effect to the EU's commitment to peace and security in Africa, on the basis of African needs and taking full account of the principle of African ownership.

The Council noted that the PSC was examining proposals aimed at enabling the EU, through ESDP, to provide support to African organisations in the areas of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR), which are central to post-conflict stabilisation efforts in Africa. The EU is also looking at ways in which ESDP might, taking into account the work of the UN, enable it to provide practical support to the African Union and sub-regional organisations as they develop their conflict prevention tools and peacekeeping capacities. Due account should also be taken of the G8 initiative on Africa.

The Council welcomed the significant work undertaken during the Irish Presidency. It invited the incoming Presidency and relevant EU bodies to take forward further practical work in this area, in close consultation with African organisations and taking full account of other related initiatives.

Rule of Law Mission to Georgia in the context of ESDP

The European Union remains committed to helping Georgia through the full range of EU instruments and policies, including ESDP. In line with the European Security Strategy, and recalling its conclusions of 26 January 2004, the Council announced the EU's readiness to launch, by mid July 2004, an EU Rule of Law Mission to Georgia in the context of ESDP. The mission is anticipated to last twelve months.

As requested by the Georgian government, the EU Rule of Law mission to Georgia will support the authorities in addressing urgent challenges in the judicial system, in particular the criminal justice system. Furthermore, the mission will assist in developing a co-ordinated overall Georgian approach to the legal reform process in full complementarity with current EU assistance, and in line with the mandate of EUSR Heikki Talvitie. It will also, as appropriate, coordinate with other relevant actors of the international community in the area of Rule of Law, including the OSCE, the Council of Europe and bilateral donors. The Council asks the relevant Council bodies to start, as soon as possible, work on the planning and setting up of the mission.

EU-UN relations: Co-operation in Military Crisis Management

The Council welcomed the work undertaken to date on identification of modalities under which the EU could provide military capabilities in support of the UN. This constitutes a significant step towards implementation of the Joint Declaration on EU-UN Co-operation in Crisis Management of 24 September 2003.

Agency in the field of defence capabilities development, research, acquisition and armaments

Recalling the Conclusions of the European Council in Thessaloniki and the Council decision of November 2003, the Council reached political agreement on a Joint Action to establish an agency in the field of defence capabilities development, research, acquisition and armaments – to be known as the European Defence Agency. The Council noted that this timely agreement should enable the Agency, acting in support of the CFSP and the ESDP, to begin functioning by the end of the year.

Rapid Response: Battlegroups Concept

The Council welcomed the progress in the work on the EU battle-group concept and noted the agreement by the EU Military Committee on a military battle-group concept."

EU STRATEGY AGAINST THE PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

The Council took note of the Progress Report on the implementation of the EU strategy against the proliferation of WMD and welcomed the results achieved.

The EU strategy was adopted by the European Council on 12 December 2003.

– ***Criminal sanctions***

The Council also approved, without discussion, a draft declaration on weapons of mass destruction and agreed to forward it to the European Council for adoption. The draft declaration deals with criminal sanctions to be used by the Member States in cases of illegal export, brokering and smuggling of WMD-linked materials.

OTHER BUSINESS

Over lunch, Ministers also discussed the situation in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, on which Minister Michel briefed colleagues following his recent visit, and the situation in **Nepal**.

MEETINGS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL

The first meeting of the EU-Egypt Association Council was held in the margins of the Council on 14 June (10139/04).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

Please see "General Affairs" press release 10189/04
