



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



13340/06 (Presse 265)

## **PRESS RELEASE**

2756th Council Meeting

### **General Affairs and External Relations**

### **External Relations**

Luxembourg, 16-17 October 2006

President      **Ms Paula LEHTOMÄKI**, Minister for Foreign  
Trade and Development  
**Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA**, Minister for Foreign Affairs  
of Finland

\* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2755th meeting on General Affairs (13339/06).

# **P R E S S**

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13340/06 (Presse 265)

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**EN**

## Main Results of the Council

*The Council, which placed particular emphasis on trade and development issues, agreed to moving ahead with pledges to provide EUR 2 billion annually in **aid for trade**, irrespective of progress in world trade talks, with the aim of supporting the capacity of developing countries to take advantage of new trade opportunities. The funds come on top of EUR 22,7 billion already agreed on by the Council for the European Development Fund for the 2008-2013 period.*

*The Council agreed to earmark a substantial share of the aid for trade effort to support economic partnership agreements currently being negotiated with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.*

*It also debated the **effectiveness of development aid** and adopted conclusions on **governance** issues in development policy.*

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*The Council considered that **Iran**'s continuation of enrichment related activities has left the EU no choice but to support consultations on appropriate measures under Article 41 of the UN Charter, as envisaged by UN Security Council Resolution 1696. It noted that the door to negotiations nevertheless remained open.*

*The Council strongly condemned the test of a nuclear explosive device proclaimed by **North Korea** on 9 October 2006, which it considered poses a danger to regional stability and represents a clear threat to international peace and security. It indicated that the EU will fully implement the provisions of all relevant UNSC Resolutions and notably of Resolution 1718 and of Resolution 1695.*

*Expressing the EU's grave concern at the recent escalation of tension in **Georgia-Russian Federation** relations, the Council emphasised the importance of toning down public rhetoric and called upon both sides to reopen normal diplomatic dialogue in order to work towards a normalisation of relations.*

*The Council, after holding an EU Troika - **Serbia** meeting was held on 16 October, expressed its readiness to continue enhanced political dialogue with Serbia in order to support its European course, including the resumption of the negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement as soon as full cooperation with ICTY is achieved.*

*After an in-depth discussion on **Kosovo**, the Council urged the parties to engage constructively with the UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari to bridge the gaps between their respective positions and to refrain from unilateral or provocative action. In this context, the Council reiterated its full support for SE Ahtisaari and his efforts in conducting the political process to determine Kosovo's future status. It welcomed his intention to prepare a comprehensive settlement proposal as a basis for*

*moving forward.*

*In its general affairs session, the Council extended the mandates of the EU civilian-military support action for the African Union mission in Sudan/**Darfur** until the end of the year, as well as the mandate of its Rule of Law mission for **Iraq**, EUJUST LEX until the end of next year.*

*More external relations items, including on development, were adopted during the General Affairs session and are reflected in 13339/06.*

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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://www.consilium.europa.eu>.
- 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.

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

*See press release 13339/06 Presse 264.*

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Mr Louis MICHEL

Mr Peter MANDELSON

Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER

Mr Olli REHN

Member  
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 Evgenia KOLDANOVA

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Deputy Foreign Minister

**Romania:**

Mr Mihai-Răzvan UNGUREANU

Mr Iuliu WINKLER

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Minister Delegate for Commerce

## **ITEMS DEBATED**

### **AID FOR TRADE**

The Council held a policy debate on different issues raised under the EU's trade and development agenda.

It agreed that the EU should move ahead with pledges made in 2005 to make available EUR 2 billion annually by 2010 for "aid for trade", in response to recommendations issued in a report by the World Trade Organisation a few days before the Council's meeting. It agreed that delivering this aid should not be linked to progress in negotiations under the WTO's Doha Development Agenda.

The "aid for trade" initiative is aimed at supporting developing countries' capacities for taking advantage of new trade opportunities that result from changes in trade rules and globalisation, given that making trade rules more favourable in theory is insufficient if developing countries are unable to increase trade in practice.

The EU member states collectively and the European Community will each provide EUR 1 billion for trade-related assistance. These funds will be earmarked for projects aimed at strengthening the export capacity of developing countries through trade-related assistance. The member states and the Commission agreed to coordinate their spending in order to have maximum impact. The funds granted by the Member States come on top of the EUR 22,7 billion that the Council agreed on in June 2005 for the European Development Fund for the 2008-2013 period.

An important aspect of the Council's agreement is a commitment to earmark a substantial share of the "aid for trade" effort to support economic partnership agreements currently being negotiated with the 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states with whom the EU has concluded the ACP-EU partnership agreement ("Cotonou agreement") until 2020.

The Council adopted conclusions to be found in document *13882/06*.

**GOVERNANCE ISSUES IN DEVELOPMENT POLICY- Council conclusions**

Over lunch Ministers discussed governance issues in development policy. The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council:

1. WELCOMES the Commission communication on "Governance in the European Consensus on Development– towards a harmonised approach within the European Union", which provides an important step towards a common EU understanding on democratic governance. The Communication acknowledges the multidimensional and holistic nature of governance and is based on an approach respecting national ownership, dialogue and focusing on results and incentives for reform within the overarching objectives of poverty reduction and sustainable development. RECALLS that the common objectives, values and principles in the European Consensus on Development – including good governance – shall be applied in Community assistance in all regions. LOOKS FORWARD to further development of a coherent EU approach to governance that should be based on close consultations between the Member States and the Commission as well as on experiences from all regions;
2. UNDERLINES that a holistic approach on governance also entails mainstreaming of human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance and rule of law to all policy sectors and EMPHASISES the importance of transparent management of public finances and sustainable management of natural resources. These above principles should be equally applied to all regions.
3. EMPHASISES the principles of national ownership, alignment and mutual accountability; STRESSES that democratic governance related reforms cannot be imposed. Countries themselves have to decide upon and implement their own strategies for reform. The pace, schedule and the unique situations of the countries need to be respected. The EU stands ready to continue its support for such reforms and is willing to cooperate with relevant stakeholders;
4. STRESSES the importance of political commitment and dialogue in partner countries and UNDERLINES that national accountability and the responsibility of governments at all their levels towards their people, is a prerequisite for democratic governance processes. This accountability includes the obligation of any government to respect, promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, to respect and promote democratic principles and the rule of law, access to information, access to justice and to ensure a transparent management of resources. The role of national parliaments, local and regional authorities, civil society, human rights defenders and other relevant stakeholders needs to be emphasised;

5. STRESSES the importance of regular political dialogue between the EU and the partner countries in all regions. The dialogue should also be conducted with regional organisations and should cover all aspects of democratic governance in order to facilitate mutual understanding of reforms needed, and also to guide support measures;
6. RECALLS that in line with the harmonisation commitments of the Paris Declaration the EU and other donors need to align their support to national processes and strategies on democratic governance and use country systems and procedures to the maximum extent possible. Harmonisation should also be pursued with emerging donors, including in the framework of bilateral dialogue with those countries. Relevant international and regional systems should also be utilised. Close cooperation under the partner countries' leadership and building on existing mechanisms within the donor community is necessary for effective support. This calls for shared analyses, joint assessment tools, harmonised dialogues and common programming frameworks, including joint identification of objectives for support to the reform processes, with a view to providing coherent, complementary and harmonised support to in-country democratic governance processes;
7. INVITES the Commission and Member States to further deepen the work on common assessment and monitoring tools, including the work in progress at European level to achieve better complementarity among donors. Enhanced EU cooperation should be linked to national processes including PRSPs. Whenever the development of common strategies is already under way, such as Joint Assistance Strategies or similar processes, joint programming should complement, strengthen and, whenever possible, be part of these existing processes, in order to avoid unnecessary parallel processes.
8. TAKES NOTE of the current work of the UN system, the World Bank, the OECD/DAC and other partners in the field of democratic governance and calls for further debate on synergies and co-operation in this field;
9. RECOGNISES that although support to democratic governance is more than tackling corruption and that it must not be addressed in isolation, corruption is a major obstacle to achieving development objectives and a symptom of poor governance. International and regional agreements, *inter alia* on corruption, must be adhered to, ratified and duly implemented by all parties;
10. CONSIDERS gender equality, women's empowerment and social equality as crucial dimensions of democratic governance and central to achieving the MDGs and HIGHLIGHTS the importance of systematic inclusion of the gender and social dimensions in all programming and implementation of governance support;

11. WELCOMES the Governance Initiative for the ACP countries as an important step in the implementation of the EU-Africa Strategy and EMPHASISES the need to ensure coherence between the initiative and ongoing activities in the fields of political dialogue within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, in particular with a view to developing the provisions of Annex VII on political dialogue as regards human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law and also within the framework of the Barcelona process; NOTES the importance of the Governance Initiative in the implementation of the EU- Strategy for the Caribbean and the EU-Strategy for the Pacific.
12. WELCOMES the approach of the Governance Initiative based on incentives for reform; ACKNOWLEDGES that the programming tools that support the programming of the 10<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund (EDF) can facilitate the assessment of the state and trends of governance;
13. STRESSES the need for the programming of the incentive tranches of the Governance Initiative to be inclusive, accountable and implemented with enough time while ensuring aid predictability; INVITES therefore the Commission to apply flexibility within the programming of the incentive tranches of the Governance Initiative on a country-by-country basis in order to take into account differing circumstances at the country-level, ensure proper linkage with nationally owned processes and take into account the work of Member States and other donors;
14. RECALLS that the allocation of incentive tranches of the Governance Initiative should be thoroughly discussed between Member States and the Commission; STRESSES the need for the Commission to involve the relevant bodies of the Council; NOTES that the Commission will present the results of the programming exercise at the EDF Committee in a timely, phased and regular manner, thus ensuring proper exchange of views and a timely conclusion of the programming process;
15. WELCOMES the use of governance profiles based on current situation and on trends; STRESSES however that the profiles should reflect national development plans and indicators; INVITES the Commission and the Member States within their respective competences to actively cooperate in the development of the profiles and assessment criteria both in the headquarters and in the field with a view to their possible use also by the Member States in their bilateral strategies, policies and programmes;
16. WELCOMES the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as a participatory self assessment tool for encouraging reforms, mutual learning and strengthening ownership and CONFIRMS the readiness of the EU to continuing support to the process and the reforms it generates at the national level; INVITES the Commission and Member States to exchange information on financial support provided to the APRM process and requests the Commission to regularly monitor and report on EU support to the APRM;
17. NOTES the growing importance also of other evolving African institutions and initiatives such as the Pan-African Parliament, the African Court of Justice, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Economic Social and Cultural Council of the African Union;

18. REQUESTS the Commission and Member States to engage in a joint review process on the Governance initiative, with regular expert-level cooperation and REQUESTS a report by the Commission to the Council in 2008;

19. NOTES that the Commission Communication has an operational focus on the ACP region; STRESSES the importance of a balance and consistency between geographic regions in addressing democratic governance processes and INVITES the Commission and the Member States to apply good practices and consistent approaches across regions and countries; in this context, LOOKS FORWARD to a concrete proposal for the Neighbourhood Policy by the Commission, in close coordination with Member States, including the relevant bodies of the Council; INVITES the Commission to emphasise governance in programming in all regions;

20. ACKNOWLEDGES that in fragile states a lack of political legitimacy is often compounded by very limited national institutional capacities; UNDERLINES the importance of political commitment to carry out substantial reforms and the importance of ownership as a guiding principle when supporting institution building; EMPHASISES that good governance, observance of the rule of law, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the existence of inclusive political processes, with the participation of civil society, are important elements which mitigate against instability and contribute to improve the situation in fragile states.

21. STRESSES the need to ensure an effective approach to cooperation with fragile states in order to avoid their marginalisation and UNDERLINES the need to address the prevention of state fragility through coherent, complementary and harmonised approaches adapted to each country situation and building on previous experiences and lessons learned."

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DEVELOPMENT AID**

The Council held a policy debate on two issues related to the effectiveness of development aid, namely complementarity and the division of labour.

In establishing guiding principles for tackling these two issues, the EU aims to maximise the impact of its aid to developing countries, to reduce transaction costs - first for partner countries, but gradually also for donors - and to better align support with development strategies set by the EU's member states. The Council's debate in particular examined organisation at country level, as well as how to avoid new transaction costs arising from the harmonisation of organisational efforts amongst various donors (EU, bilateral and multilateral).

The Council adopted conclusions to be found in *13654/06 + COR 1*.

**POLICY COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT**

The Council held a policy debate on the means for enabling development policy to be better supported by other EU policies.

Delegations emphasised the important role of development policy in relation to the EU's interests and its other policies, and highlighted the need and their willingness to further improve policy coherence for development in order to contribute to the achievement of the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

The debate took place in the light of the broader objective of strengthening of EU's external policies. The Council will return to this issue when it discusses a presidency report in December on progress made in increasing the efficiency, coherence and visibility of EU external policy.

The Council adopted conclusions on integrating development concerns in decision-making, to be found in document *13735/06*.

## **THE EU STRATEGY FOR AFRICA**

The Council held an exchange of views on implementation of the EU's strategy for Africa, on the basis of a report by high representative Javier Solana and commissioner Louis Michel. It requested member states to provide input for a comprehensive report to be made, so as to enable the European Council to review the strategy's implementation at its meeting on 14 and 15 December.

Established in December 2005, the strategy has allowed the EU to reaffirm its commitment to peace, stability and development with a comprehensive, integrated and long-term framework for its relations with the whole of Africa. It is the first European policy framework to address Africa as a single entity, also allowing coordination and consistency of the EU's policies and instruments supporting Africa with those of its member states.

Under the strategy, the EU has pledged to concentrate its support in the areas of peace and security and good governance, economic growth, trade and interconnection, as well as social cohesion and the environment.

The European Council agreed to review the strategy's implementation in December 2006 and at least every two years thereafter. Progress is also reviewed at the bi-annual EU/African Union ministerial troika meetings.

At a ministerial EU/Africa troika meeting in Bamako in December 2005, it was agreed to transform the strategy into a joint Africa-EU strategy and to develop an action plan for its implementation.

**SUDAN/DARFUR - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. The Council expressed continuing deep concern at the appalling security, humanitarian and human rights situation in Darfur and called for an immediate end to the ongoing violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, with a special focus on vulnerable groups, including women and children. It fully supports efforts undertaken in this regard by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights as a part of a wider UN effort. The Council strongly condemned all violations of the 2004 N'djamena Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement and of the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1591 (2005). The Council called on all parties in the strongest terms to halt the violence, to protect civilians and to ensure full, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need in Darfur. Continuing hostilities undermine the possibilities of implementing the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) and threaten to further aggravate the already dramatic humanitarian situation in Darfur. The Council once again reminds the leadership of the Sudanese Government of its collective and individual responsibility to protect its citizens from all violence and to guarantee respect for human rights.
2. The Council again called on the non-signatories to the DPA to join in and to commit themselves to the peace process. It also emphasised the need to involve the non-signatories in the effective monitoring of the ceasefire and investigation of violations committed. At the same time, the Council highlighted the importance of the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation process with a view to promoting a forum for dialogue and reconciliation among the different civil society components in Darfur.
3. The Council reconfirmed its full support for UN Security Council Resolution 1706 of 31 August 2006 and again urged the Government of Sudan to give its unambiguous consent to the implementation of that Resolution, in order to ensure the protection of the civilian population and support the implementation of the DPA. The Council emphasised that a UN operation is the only realistic option for a sustainable, long-term peacekeeping operation in Darfur.
4. The Council welcomed the extensive efforts made by various international partners to convince the Government of Sudan of the need for a UN operation in Darfur to secure peace and called for all partners to continue to act together to this end. The Council expressed its support for the decision of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) to continue, together with the UN, consultations with the Government of Sudan on the transition to a UN mission, and hoped for an early positive result of these consultations. Underlining that Resolution 1706 fully respects Sudan's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity, the Council observed the need to address the Sudanese Government's possible concerns in relation to the deployment of a UN mission in Darfur. In this context, the Council took note of the positive attitude towards a UN operation expressed by several key parties in Sudan.

5. The Council welcomed the decision of the AU PSC of 20 September 2006 to extend the mandate of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) until 31 December 2006, underlining the importance of avoiding a security vacuum in Darfur. The Council stressed the need to continue efforts to enhance the operational capabilities of AMIS in order for it to carry out its mandate. It appreciated in particular the assistance to be provided by the UN to this end and welcomed the support by the Sudanese President for this initiative, as expressed in his letter of 3 October 2006 to the UN Secretary-General.
6. The Council welcomed recent statements of the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States urging the members of the organisation to fulfil their pledges of support to AMIS.
7. Reaffirming its strong support to the AU, the Council confirmed the extension of the EU civilian-military supporting action to AMIS until 31 December 2006 and continued close coordination with the UN and other international partners providing support to AMIS.
8. The Council reiterated that the EU is ready to continue the preparation of the reconstruction programme of Darfur, and to contribute further to the reconstruction, once the peace process starts in earnest and the security situation so allows.
9. The Council welcomed the signing of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Eastern Sudan Front on 14 October, 2006, in Asmara, Eritrea, as a positive step towards a just, peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict in Eastern Sudan. The Council encouraged the parties to implement the Agreement fully and without delay, underlining its importance also in relation to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The Council reconfirmed its support for the peace efforts in the whole of Sudan. "

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See General Affairs press release (13339/06) for the decision to extend the mandate of the EU civilian-military support to AMIS.

**ZIMBABWE**

The Council had an exchange of views on Zimbabwe, including on ways to improve the situation for the population in that country. The Presidency noted that the situation in Zimbabwe had not improved since the last discussion in the Council over a year ago. EU policy, including restrictive measures, remained in force. The EU would look to engage further with its African partners to promote reforms in Zimbabwe.

**MIDDLE EAST - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

***- Middle East Peace Process***

The Council welcomed the statement by the Quartet at its meeting in New York on 20 September and, in particular, the Quartet's intention to reinforce its activity, including with the parties and regional partners. The Council recalled the urgent need to make progress towards a comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict, based on relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the Roadmap, and with a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at its core. It welcomed the consensus within the international community to that effect. The Council underlined that the EU would continue actively its efforts to this end.

The Council expressed its support to President Abbas and called on the Palestinians to join his efforts towards national unity and the formation of a government with a platform reflecting the Quartet principles and allowing for early engagement. Such a government would also be a key factor for allowing the EU to pursue its goal of strengthening the capacity of Palestinian institutions. The Council called on all Palestinian factions to end their internal strife.

The Council underlined the importance of an early resumption of dialogue between the two parties with a view to re-launching negotiations on the basis of the Roadmap. The Council recalled the utmost importance of the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access, particularly the permanent opening of the Rafah, Karni and other crossings. The Council reiterated its call for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier. It repeated its call for the immediate release of Palestinian Ministers and legislators in Israeli custody. It called for an end to violence and for restraint on both sides.

The Council welcomed the extension of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) for a further three months and the expansion of this mechanism to an even greater number of vulnerable people. It encouraged other donors to make full use of the mechanism. The Council reiterated its call for an immediate resumption of transfers of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues by Israel. The Council further called on Israel to consider resumption of such transfers via the TIM to alleviate the deteriorating economic and humanitarian conditions in Gaza and the West Bank.

***- LEBANON***

The Council renewed its commitment to support the full implementation of UNSCR 1701. It welcomed the overall deployment in Southern Lebanon of the Lebanese Armed Forces, supported by UNIFIL. It noted the almost complete withdrawal of Israeli troops and called on Israel to withdraw also from the Lebanese part of the town of Ghajar in co-ordination with UNIFIL. The Council stressed that Lebanon's sovereignty over its land, sea and airspace must be respected. The Council called for the immediate release of the two abducted Israeli soldiers.

The Council reiterated the EU's commitment to support the legitimate and democratically elected Lebanese government. The EU will continue to assist the Lebanese government in meeting its humanitarian and environmental needs and in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process. The EU will support the Lebanese government in further extending its authority throughout Lebanese territory, and in taking forward political, security, economic and social reforms. The Council recalled that there will be no weapons without the consent of the government of Lebanon. The Council called on all sides to observe the requirement of authorisation by the Lebanese government of sales and supply of arms. The Council called on all parties and neighbours to support this process.

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The Council reaffirmed its full support for the UN International Investigation Commission into the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and other terrorist attacks as mandated by UNSCR 1595, 1644 and 1686. It commended the professional work made by Mr. Brammertz and his team under difficult circumstances, and welcomed the 5th report by UNIIC. It expressed its confidence that progress will be achieved in bringing the perpetrators of these crimes to justice. It underlined the importance of establishing a tribunal of international character, in conformity with UNSCR 1664.

**WESTERN BALKANS - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

**"Bosnia and Herzegovina**

1. The Council welcomed the peaceful and orderly conduct of the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and the International Election Observation Mission's preliminary assessment that the elections were conducted largely in accordance with international standards. The Council congratulated BiH for the well administered general elections that were entirely managed by its own institutions for the first time after 1995.
2. The Council looked forward to the timely formation of new Governments. The Council stressed the need for the newly elected political institutions quickly to restore momentum on reform and agree and implement all the reforms necessary for the conclusion of the negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement as set out in the Council conclusions of 12 December 2005. The Council expressed particular concern over the lack of progress towards the implementation of the October 2005 agreement on police restructuring, and looked forward to fast removal of this obstacle. The Council reiterated its full support to the European perspective of BiH.
3. The Council emphasized the need for progress on constitutional reform to create more functional state structures that are better able to meet European standards. The Council encouraged the newly elected representatives to make this an early priority.
4. The Council welcomed the joint report by the SG/HR and the EU Commissioner for Enlargement on a reinforced EU Presence in BiH in the context of the envisaged closure of the Office of the High Representative (OHR). The Council also welcomed the recommendations of the report and subsequently tasked relevant Council bodies to take preparatory work forward in order to ensure continuing timely preparation of the future EU role in BiH after the envisaged closure of OHR. International partners will be consulted as necessary.

**Serbia**

5. The Council welcomed the holding of the second EU-Serbia Troika meeting on 16 October. The Council expressed its readiness to continue enhanced political dialogue with Serbia in order to support its European course, including the resumption of the negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement as soon as full cooperation with ICTY is achieved.

**Serbia/Kosovo**

6. The Council urged the parties to engage constructively with the UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari to bridge the gaps between their respective positions and to refrain from unilateral or provocative action. Recalling the statement issued at the Contact Group Ministerial Meeting on 20 September, the Council noted that striving for a negotiated settlement should not obscure the fact that neither party can unilaterally delay or block the status process from advancing. In this context, the Council reiterated its full support for SE Ahtisaari and his efforts in conducting the political process to determine Kosovo's future status. It welcomed his intention to prepare a comprehensive settlement proposal as a basis for moving forward.
7. The Council took note of the report by the SRSG presented to the UN Security Council on 13 September. It noted the positive progress made in implementing the Kosovo Standards while recalling the crucial importance of and the need for further effective implementation of the standards. The Council urged Belgrade to encourage Serbs in Kosovo to participate in Kosovo's institutions, in which they can most effectively advocate their own interests.
8. The Council also welcomed the important preparatory work underway for a possible ESDP mission in the broader field of the rule of law and for the EU component of the future International Civilian Mission in Kosovo. The Council agreed to extend the EU planning team regarding a possible EU crisis management operation in the field of rule of law and possible other areas in Kosovo (EUPT Kosovo) by three months until 31 March 2007. "

**IRAN - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council discussed the situation concerning Iran's nuclear programme. The Council commends the High Representative Solana's intensive efforts since June to encourage Iran to address IAEA Board and Security Council requirements and return to talks on long-term arrangements.

The Council recalled that the proposals presented by the High Representative on 6 June as a basis for a long-term agreement are far-reaching and would give Iran everything it needs to develop a modern civil nuclear power industry while addressing international concerns. They would open the way for a new relationship with Iran based on mutual respect and expanded cooperation in political and economic fields.

The Council expressed deep concern that Iran has not yet suspended its enrichment-related and reprocessing activities as required by the IAEA Board and UNSCR 1696.

The Council recalled its statement on 17 July that if Iran did not comply with the Security Council's requirements, the EU would work for the adoption of measures under Article 41 of the UN Charter. It also recalled that in Resolution 1696 the Security Council expressed its intention to adopt appropriate measures under Article 41 if Iran did not comply. Accordingly, the Council believed that Iran's continuation of enrichment-related activities has left the EU no choice but to support consultations on such measures.

The Council noted that the door to negotiations nevertheless remained open. It reaffirmed its commitment to a negotiated solution, and that such a solution would contribute to the development of the EU's relations with Iran. It urged Iran to take the positive path on offer."

**GEORGIA/RUSSIAN FEDERATION RELATIONS - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council reiterates the European Union's grave concern at the recent escalation of tension in Georgia-Russian Federation relations. The Council emphasises the importance of toning down public rhetoric and calls upon both sides to reopen normal diplomatic dialogue in order to work towards a normalisation of relations.
2. The Council welcomes the useful efforts of the Foreign Ministers' Troika, the High Representative, the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE in helping to facilitate the return of the Russian detainees.
3. The Council expresses its grave concern at the measures adopted by the Russian Federation against Georgia and at their economic, political and humanitarian consequences. The Council urges the Russian Federation not to pursue measures targeting Georgians in the Russian Federation. It calls on both parties to act in a manner consistent with their international commitments and obligations.
4. The Council recalls the European Union's wish to develop further its strategic partnership with the Russian Federation as well as its aim to deepen relations with Georgia in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. In this context, the Council reiterates the EU's willingness to work with Georgia and the Russian Federation to facilitate mutual confidence building and contribute to a peaceful resolution of the crisis. The European Union also looks forward to work closely with Georgia and the Russian Federation in promoting prosperity and stability in the region.
5. The Council calls on both parties to focus on reaching a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia with full respect for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Council calls upon the parties to comply fully with previous agreements and understandings regarding these conflicts, in compliance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1716. "

**NORTH KOREA - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council strongly condemns the test of a nuclear explosive device proclaimed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on 9 October 2006. This test, carried out in disregard of appeals from the international community, poses a danger to regional stability and represents a clear threat to international peace and security. It is a further violation by the DPRK of its non-proliferation obligations. It reinforces the DPRK's isolation and does nothing to help the miserable situation of the North Korean people.

The EU will fully implement the provisions of all relevant UNSC Resolutions and notably of Resolution 1718 adopted on 14 October 2006 and of Resolution 1695 adopted on 15 July 2006. The Council shall immediately take the necessary steps to that end.

The Council strongly urges the DPRK, in compliance with UNSC Resolutions 1718 and 1695, to return immediately to the Six-Party talks, to work towards expeditious implementation of the Joint Statement of September 2005, in particular to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes, and to comply with its obligations under the NPT, which include submitting all its nuclear activities to IAEA verification. The EU further calls on the DPRK to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, to refrain from conducting any further nuclear test or missile launch, and to re-establish its commitments to a moratorium on missile launching.

DPRK's actions add to the risks of proliferation worldwide. The Council calls for redoubling of efforts to strengthen all aspects of the international system against proliferation of WMD."

**OTHER BUSINESS**– ***Reform of the UN development system***

The Council's attention was drawn by the United Kingdom delegation to the importance of development ministers engaging on reform of the United Nations' development system.

The UK delegation emphasised the need for finding a forum for EU development ministers to discuss a forthcoming report from a UN panel in early 2007, with a view to promoting an EU-wide consensus on the report's recommendations.

– ***European Development Days***

The Council was briefed by the Commission on a European Development Days' initiative to be held, at the highest level, in Brussels from 13 to 17 November.

– ***EU-Ukraine relations***

Ministers discussed relations with Ukraine, including in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, ahead of the EU-Ukraine Summit to be held in Helsinki on 27 October.

See also 13339/06 under other items approved.

**EVENTS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL**– ***EU-troika - Turkey***

The EU ministerial troika met with the Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gül.

– ***EU-troika - Serbia***

The EU ministerial troika met with Prime Minister Kostunica of Serbia.

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

**See press release 13339/06 Presse 264.**

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