



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



8425/07 (Presse 80)

PRESS RELEASE

2795th/2796th Council meetings

GENERAL AFFAIRS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Luxembourg, 23-24 April 2007

President **Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER**
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 8239 / 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom>

8425/07 (Presse 80)

1
EN

Main results of the Council

The Council adopted a decision on the signing and provisional application of a protocol to the partnership and cooperation agreement with **Russia** in order to take account of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU. The protocol was signed the same day in the margins of the EU-Russia ministerial meeting.

The Council held a first discussion on a draft EU **Central Asia** strategy to be adopted by the European Council in June. It also decided to enter into a regular and result-oriented human rights dialogue with **Uzbekistan**.

The Council approved draft negotiating directives for association agreements with **Central America** and the **Andean Community** and its member countries, as well as for free trade agreements with **ASEAN**, **India** and **South Korea**.

It adopted:

- a joint action to provide for EU assistance to the setting-up of the African Union (AU) mission in **Somalia**;
- a decision on further EU support to the AU mission in **Sudan/Darfur**.

The Council condemned the acts of violent repression against the opposition in **Zimbabwe** and in response to those acts decided to extend the EU's visa ban list.

It also adopted a common position renewing restrictive measures against **Burma/Myanmar** until 30 April 2008 and updating the list of persons subject to those measures.

CONTENTS¹

PARTICIPANTS	5
ITEMS DEBATED	
WORLD TRADE NEGOTIATIONS - DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.....	7
GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL - FREE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS	8
EU-US SUMMIT.....	9
SUDAN - <i>Council conclusions</i>	10
ZIMBABWE - <i>Council conclusions</i>	12
SOMALIA - <i>Council conclusions</i>	13
CENTRAL ASIA - <i>Council conclusions</i>	15
– EU-Uzbekistan human rights dialogue.....	16
MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS - <i>Council conclusions</i>	17
IRAN.....	19
DEATH PENALTY MORATORIUM.....	20
EVENTS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL	21

¹

- 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.
- Documents for which 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 Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED*EXTERNAL RELATIONS*

–	Iran – Restrictive measures.....	22
–	Exchange of classified information with the United States	23
–	Iraq - <i>Council conclusions</i>	23
–	Burma/Myanmar - Restrictive measures - <i>Council conclusions</i>	25
–	EU-Russia partnership and cooperation agreement - EU enlargement.....	27
–	EU/Korea - Cooperation agreement in the area of competition.....	27
–	Non-proliferation treaty preparatory committee - <i>Council conclusions</i>	27
–	International code of conduct against ballistic missile proliferation - <i>Council conclusions</i>	28
–	HIV/AIDS - Recently emerging issues - <i>Council conclusions</i>	28

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

–	Sudan/Darfur - Support to the African Union mission	33
–	Somalia - Assistance to the setting-up of the African Union mission	34

COUNTER-TERRORISM

–	Terrorist list - Review.....	34
---	------------------------------	----

TRADE POLICY

–	ASEAN, India, South Korea, Central America, Andean Community - Negotiating mandates.....	35
–	Negotiations with Russia and Ukraine on trade in services.....	37
–	Anti-dumping - China - Pallet trucks	37
–	Anti-dumping - China and Ukraine - Ironing boards	37

CUSTOMS UNION

–	EU- Switzerland - Simplification of inspections of the carriage of goods	38
---	--	----

ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS

–	Annual report on public access to documents	38
---	---	----

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

Bulgaria:

Mr Ivailo KALFIN

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Czech Republic:

Mr Karel SCHWARZENBERG

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Denmark:

Mr Per Stig MØLLER

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Germany:

Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER
Mr Günter GLOSER

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

Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ireland:

Mr Dermot AHERN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Greece:

Ms Dora BAKOYANNI
Mr Ioannis VALINAKIS

Minister for Foreign Affairs
State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr Miguel Ángel MORATINOS

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

France:

Ms Catherine COLONNA

Minister with responsibility for European Affairs

Italy:

Mr Massimo D'ALEMA

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Cyprus:

Mr Yiorgos LILLIKAS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Latvia:

Mr Eduards STIPRAIS

Permanent Representative

Lithuania:

Mr Petras VAITIEKŪNAS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister with responsibility for
Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Mr Nicolas SCHMIT

Minister with responsibility for Foreign Affairs and
Immigration

Hungary:

Ms Kinga GÖNCZ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr Michael FRENDU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Netherlands:

Mr Maxime VERHAGEN
Mr Franciscus TIMMERMANS

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for European Affairs

Austria:

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

Poland:

Ms Anna Elżbieta FOTYGA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Luís AMADO

Ministro de Estado, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Romania:

Mr Adrian CIOROIANU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovenia:

Mr Andrej ŠTER

State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Slovakia:

Mr Ján KUBIŠ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Finland:

Mr Ilkka KANERVA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Paavo VÄYRYNEN

Minister for Foreign Trade and Development

Sweden:

Mr Carl BILDT

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

United Kingdom:

Ms Margaret BECKETT

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

.....

Commission:

Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER

Member

.....

General Secretariat of the Council:

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

ITEMS DEBATED**WORLD TRADE NEGOTIATIONS - DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

The Council was briefed by the Commission on developments in the current round of trade negotiations under the World Trade Organisation's Doha Development Agenda (DDA). It requested the Commission to inform it in a timely manner of any substantial new developments.

Since the resumption of the DDA negotiating round at the beginning of the year, a number of plurilateral meetings have taken place, most notably amongst the G4 countries (EU, United States, Brazil and India) as well as the G6 (G4 + Australia and Japan). The latest G4 and G6 meetings took place in New Delhi on 11 and 12 April.

Mid-June has been set as the target for reaching sufficient convergence amongst the G4 on the key issues, for which the outcome will be put to the wider WTO membership during the following months with the aim of concluding the DDA negotiations by the end of the year.

GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL - FREE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

The Council was briefed by the Commission on developments in negotiations on a free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates).

It concluded on the necessity to maintain momentum in the negotiations and to underscore political will on this issue at the EU-GCC ministerial meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 8 May.

Negotiations on a free trade agreement began in 1991 but only picked up as from 2001. Outstanding issues include services, procurement, rules of origin, investment and "most favoured nation" trade provisions.

The Council also took note of preparations for the ministerial meeting on 8 May. The meeting will be an opportunity to review a number of international and regional political issues of mutual interest.

EU-US SUMMIT

The Council held an exchange of views on preparations for the EU-United States summit to be held in Washington on 30 April.

The summit is expected to feature agreement on a political declaration, on proposals on strengthening transatlantic economic integration and on energy and climate change, as well as debate on other issues, notably international developments.

The main issues highlighted by the Council include energy and climate change, international issues and visa waiver arrangements. Negotiations will probably continue until the eve of the summit; the permanent representatives committee will review the situation at its meeting on 25 April.

SUDAN - Council conclusions

The Council had an in-depth discussion on the situation in Sudan/Darfur in the presence of UN special envoy Jan Eliasson who briefed ministers on recent developments. After the discussion the Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council remains deeply concerned about the appalling security situation in Darfur which continues to threaten the civilian population and obstructs efforts of humanitarian organisations to provide much needed assistance. Despite a decline in direct military confrontations, there has been no improvement with regard to the overall level of violence and lawlessness. The Council is particularly concerned by the recent series of unprovoked attacks against AMIS, in which nine peacekeepers were killed in the last four weeks alone, and strongly condemns the most recent incident on 14 April in which an AMIS officer was shot in El Fasher. It calls upon all parties to abide by the cease-fire agreements, to respect the neutral role of AMIS and to fully cooperate with a thorough investigation of these heinous acts. Recalling that UN Security Council Resolution 1591 determines that those impeding the peace process shall be held responsible, the Council reiterates its support for urgent consideration by the Security Council of further measures.

2. The Council is further concerned about ongoing violations of human rights in the region. It welcomes in this context the adoption by consensus at the 4th session of the Human Rights Council of a resolution on the situation in Darfur, which highlights the seriousness of the human rights violations committed and sets up an independent group of high-level experts to foster the implementation of recommendations on Darfur. The Council urges the Government of Sudan to fully cooperate with this group. Concerning the humanitarian situation, the Council notes as a positive step the Joint Communiqué of 28 March between the Government of Sudan and the UN on the facilitation of humanitarian activities in Darfur and the creation of a committee to monitor the commitments made. Noting that bureaucratic restrictions are still impeding the humanitarian response, the Council calls upon the Government of Sudan to fully and unconditionally implement the provisions of this Communiqué and will closely follow this process.

3. Stressing the urgent need for an inclusive political agreement to solve the conflict in Darfur, the Council reiterates its strong support for the joint efforts of the AU and UN Special Envoys, Salim Salim and Jan Eliasson, to revitalise the political track and encourages all regional initiatives to closely coordinate their activities within this framework. The Council took note of the report of UN Special Envoy Jan Eliasson on progress in this regard. It calls upon all parties to the conflict to contribute to an atmosphere conducive for negotiations. The Council takes note of the SLM commanders conference at Um Rai/Darfur and in this context underlines the urgent need for rebel movements to step up preparations for an early resumption of political talks by further intensifying their efforts to unite around realistic political objectives.

4. Emphasising the need to enhance the capacities of the AMIS mission in Darfur, the Council welcomes the agreement between the Sudanese government, the UN and the AU on the implementation of all provisions of the Heavy Support Package. The Council recalls that the transition to a full AU-UN hybrid mission in Darfur is urgently required and welcomes the progress achieved in this direction at the meeting between UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and AU Commission President Konaré on 16 April in New York. A clear demonstration of political will is now necessary by all parties to build the confidence that the letter and spirit of the agreements reached will be honoured. The Council reiterates its readiness to consider further measures notably, in the UN framework, against any party which obstructs their implementation.
5. The Council remains worried about the deteriorating effects the Darfur crisis has on existing tensions in neighbouring countries and expresses its particular concern about the recent direct confrontations of Chadian and Sudanese armed forces on 9 April on the Sudanese-Chadian border. The EU calls on both parties to refrain from any further escalation and to fully respect their commitments under the 2006 Tripoli agreement. The latest incidents demonstrate the extent of the crisis' regional dimension and underline the urgency to rapidly deploy the AU-UN hybrid force as well as a UN operation in Eastern Chad and in the North-East of the Central African Republic.
6. The Council reiterates its full support for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement which remains crucial to a sustainable peace across the whole Sudan, including Darfur and the Eastern part of the country. While progress has been made, the implementation of vital provisions has fallen behind schedule. Of particular concern are delays in the delineation of the North-South border, the resolution of the Abyei question and the preparations for the general elections foreseen in 2009. The Council calls upon both parties to the agreement to intensify their efforts and is ready to assist efforts leading towards an accelerated implementation.
7. The EU reiterates its commitment to contributing to a peaceful, prosperous and united Sudan, including through the continuing efforts of the EU Special Representative for Sudan. The Council expresses its full confidence in Ambassador Torben Brylle, who will take over this position on 1 May and wishes to thank the outgoing Special Representative Pekka Haavisto for his outstanding work during his mandate."

See also below decision on support to the AU mission in Sudan/Darfur under "Other items approved".

ZIMBABWE - Council conclusions

The Council discussed recent developments in Zimbabwe and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council joins the UNSG and the AU in expressing strong concern at the rapidly deteriorating human rights, political and economic situation in Zimbabwe. The Council condemns in particular the acts of violent repression against the opposition and calls on all parties to refrain from violence. The Council welcomes the fact that the Human Rights Council has addressed the situation in Zimbabwe.
2. The Council urges the government of Zimbabwe to respect Africa's own commitments and approaches, in particular the NEPAD and the recently adopted African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.
3. With a view to the potentially destabilising impact of the situation in Zimbabwe on the whole region, the Council commends the recent extra-ordinary SADC summit in Dar es Salaam and the SADC initiative in resolving this crisis. It welcomes the mandate given to President Mbeki to facilitate a dialogue between the opposition and the Government, and the engagement of President Kikwete as chair of the SADC organ. The Council stands ready to support the SADC initiative, if called upon to do so. Moreover, the Council urges all parties to engage with civil society, including the churches, to conduct a broad inclusive national dialogue, which is essential to lay the basis for genuine reform and national reconciliation.
4. In response to the acts of violence and abuses of human rights the Council will extend the visa ban list (as agreed by Common Position of 19 February 2007). The EU reiterates that its targeted measures (consisting of a visa ban, an assets freeze and an arms embargo) are exclusively aimed at those leading figures responsible for Zimbabwe's crisis of governance and abuses of human rights.
5. The EU, reaffirming its solidarity with the Zimbabwe people, will continue its contribution to operations of humanitarian nature and projects which are in direct support of the population. Funding activities that in 2006 amounted to EUR 193 million. The EU also wishes to confirm its willingness to continue to make use of the opportunity provided by the ongoing 10th EDF programming exercise to carry on the dialogue and as soon as conditions allow, to make progress towards a situation where the resumption of full cooperation becomes possible.
6. In the meantime, the Council will continue to keep the situation under close observation."

SOMALIA - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council recalls its ongoing concern at the situation in Somalia and stresses the importance of implementing the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1744 (2007) in order to address the political, security and humanitarian challenges faced in Somalia. The Council also welcomes the Communiqué of the International Contact Group on Somalia, dated 3 April 2007.
2. In particular, the Council expresses its grave concern at the escalation of the conflict, the renewed fighting in Somalia and the severe humanitarian suffering it has caused, and deeply deplores the loss of civilian life and particularly the indiscriminate shelling of heavily populated areas of Mogadishu. The EU emphasises the obligation on all parties to comply with international humanitarian law. It also urges them to work actively to guarantee complete, unhindered and safe access for humanitarian relief work. The Council strongly urges all parties to commit to a lasting cessation of hostilities to avoid further bloodshed. It stresses the need to reach an early agreement on comprehensive and permanent ceasefire arrangements, including mechanisms for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration.
3. The Council reconfirms its support to the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs) as the organs mandated by the Transitional Federal Charter (TFC) and the only legitimate authorities to restore peace, stability and governance to Somalia. The EU urges the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to show the leadership and reach out to all parts of Somali society, in launching an inclusive political process, based on the TFC. Particular attention should be given to the need for a broad-based administration of Mogadishu.
4. The Council urges the TFG to convene the National Reconciliation Congress (NRC) as soon as possible. It states its readiness to support the Congress, financially and otherwise, based on the need for it to help deliver lasting agreement on ceasefire arrangements and a sustainable political process. The EU urges all Somali parties to support the early convening of the Congress and to participate in it constructively. The Council expects the Congress to involve all key stakeholders, who should be able to freely choose their representatives to the Congress.

5. The Council reaffirms its support for the Africa Union (AU) Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and welcomes the deployment of the Ugandan contingent. The Council expresses its sympathy for the tragic deaths of the Ugandan soldier and Belarusian aircrew in AMISOM, and strongly condemns any hostility towards AMISOM. The EU considers the deployment of AMISOM as crucial in creating the conditions for the stabilisation of the country and the early withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia, and therefore calls on all Somali actors to work with AMISOM to help achieve these aims.
6. The Council recalls the EU's contribution of EUR 15 million to the financing of AMISOM, and its provision of advisory and planning support to the AU, in addition to bilateral contributions from EU Member States. The Council calls on all international partners to provide further support to AMISOM and on the African troop contributing countries to pursue their deployment as soon as possible."

See also below decision on assistance to the setting-up of the AU mission in Somalia, under "Other items approved".

CENTRAL ASIA - Council conclusions

The Council discussed the future EU Central Asia strategy as well as developments in the region and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council welcomes the successful holding of the first EU Foreign Ministers' Troika Meeting with the five Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in Astana on 28 March 2007. The Council agrees that the meeting was an important further step towards the strengthening of political dialogue with the Central Asian countries. In this context, the Council commends the efforts by the EU Special Representative for Central Asia, Ambassador Pierre Morel.
2. The Council expresses its satisfaction at the agreement by the Foreign Ministers in Astana to intensify cooperation between the EU and the five Central Asian countries.
3. The Council held a first discussion on the draft EU Central Asia Strategy drawing on the results of the Astana meeting, earlier EU discussions and the views put forward by the Central Asian countries. The Council agreed to intensify within the framework of the Central Asia Strategy the Union's cooperation with Central Asian countries on an individual and regional basis, especially in the following fields: rule of law, human rights, and democratisation; education; energy and transport; environment; trade and economic development cooperation; regional security challenges, such as border management, combating drug trafficking and organised crime. The EU will draw upon the experience of the OSCE, the UN, international financial institutions and other regional organisations and will enhance cooperation with them.
4. Recalling the mandate of the European Council in December 2006 the Council agreed to return to the subject in June 2007 with a view to the adoption of the Strategy by the European Council in June 2007.
5. The Council continues to follow closely the situation in the Central Asian countries and in this context the Council takes note of some important recent developments:
 - the Council notes that the second round of experts' talks took place on the Andijan events in Tashkent on 2 and 3 April 2007, recalling its previous Conclusions. The Council has decided to enter into a regular and result-oriented human rights dialogue between the EU and Uzbekistan. The Council looks forward to holding the first round of this dialogue as soon as possible.

- the Council takes note of promising first reform steps taken by the new Turkmen Government in the education and social systems. The EU encourages the Turkmen Government to implement necessary reforms and stands ready to support these efforts particularly in the fields of human rights, the judiciary and the rule of law, education, health and agricultural reform.
- the Council encourages all political forces in the Kyrgyz Republic to pursue a political dialogue that will enable the new Government to meet the high expectations of the Kyrgyz people for fundamental reforms. The EU stands ready to support all efforts which the Government is taking to strengthen the constitutional, legal, judicial and administrative systems in the Kyrgyz Republic in order to uphold the principles of international law and to improve the social situation as well as the investment climate."

*

*

*

– *EU-Uzbekistan human rights dialogue*

The Council approved basic principles for the EU-Uzbekistan human rights dialogue. The principles include modalities, objectives and standing agenda items.

The human rights dialogue will take place within the subcommittee on justice and home affairs established under the EU-Uzbekistan partnership and cooperation agreement with the aim of fostering mutual understanding on the human rights situation in Uzbekistan and the EU.

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS - Council conclusions

Over lunch, ministers discussed the situation in the Middle East.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council welcomes the Arab Peace Initiative as reaffirmed in the declaration of the Arab League Summit of 29 March and supports it as a major element in moving the Middle East Peace Process forward. The Council welcomes the positive reaction of the Israeli Prime Minister and hopes that a constructive dialogue between Israel and the Arab side on the Initiative will start soon. The EU stands ready to work closely with the special committee and working groups to be established by the Arab League.
2. The EU continues to play an active role notably in the framework of increased Quartet engagement. To this end, the Council looks forward to an early Quartet meeting in the region and to close cooperation with regional partners. It invites the Quartet to lead an effort by the international community for successful negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians on the basis of the Road Map and to reach a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict.
3. The Council welcomes the intention of President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert to meet on a regular basis. These meetings should contribute to the effective and sustainable improvement of the living conditions in the Palestinian territories and to security. The EU will continue to work closely with the parties including by practical measures regarding access and movement, governance and the security sector. The Council expresses the hope that the meetings between President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert, in the framework of a renewed political process, will soon lead to meaningful negotiations on the final status. The ultimate goal should be an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and the creation of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state, living side-by-side with Israel and its other neighbours in peace and security.
4. The EU recalls its readiness to work with and to resume its direct assistance to a Palestinian government whose policy and actions reflect the Quartet principles. In that context, it continues to closely evaluate the policy and actions of the new National Unity Government. It has initiated co-operation with members of the government who accept these principles.

5. The EU stresses the importance of strengthening the Palestinian institutions. It commends the Palestinian Minister of Finance Salam Fayyad for re-establishing the Single Treasury Account. It encourages the minister to undertake further measures to ensure budgetary transparency and has offered its support in that respect.
6. Mindful of the continuing needs of the Palestinian people, the Council endorses the extension of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) for a further three months. It reiterates its call on Israel for the immediate resumption of the transfer of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues, directly or through the TIM. The Council recalls the utmost importance of the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access. It urges that Rafah and all other crossing points, notably Karni, be re-opened and remain open.
7. The Council calls on the parties to consolidate the cease-fire in Gaza and to extend it to the West Bank. It condemns the continued firing of rockets into Israeli territory and urges the Palestinian leadership to do everything in its power to put an end to such acts. It reiterates its call on the parties to put an end to all acts of violence, and to all activities which are contrary to international law. The EU remains deeply concerned with the continuation of settlement activities, and the ongoing construction of the barrier on Palestinian land.
8. The Council calls for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier and commends efforts, including by partners in the region, to that effect. It also calls for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators detained by Israel.
9. The Council condemns the kidnapping of BBC journalist Alan Johnston in Gaza on 12 March 2007. The Council demands his unconditional and immediate release."

IRAN

Ministers discussed relations with Iran and the Iranian nuclear programme, on which the EU applies a double-track approach, supporting the UN Security Council process, which has resulted in adoption of resolutions 1737 and 1747 introducing restrictive measures, whilst at the same time supporting efforts to find a negotiated long-term solution.

In this context High Representative Javier Solana briefed ministers ahead of his meeting with Iranian national security advisor Ali Larijani scheduled on 25 April, when he is due to explore the possibility for negotiations.

See also Iran decisions below under "Other items approved".

DEATH PENALTY MORATORIUM

Ministers discussed current activities aimed at bringing forward in the UN General Assembly the issue of abolishing the death penalty, notably on the basis of a briefing by the Presidency.

They noted that the EU would keep this issue high on the EU and the international agenda and would carefully explore prospects for relaunching consideration of this important question in UN fora. The Presidency will actively continue to implement the EU action plan on the death penalty adopted in February, notably to elicit additional support for the UN declaration against the death penalty.

The Council will decide on possible further steps on the basis of an assessment of the outcome of the EU action plan.

EVENTS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL

The following meetings were held in the margins of the Council:

on 23 April:

- Ministerial EU Troika meeting with Russia;
- Signature of the protocol to the partnership and cooperation agreement with Russia to take account of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU (8747/07);

on 24 April:

- EU-Algeria Association Council meeting;
- Signature of the Protocol to the association agreement with Algeria on the accession of the ten new EU Member States which joined in 2004;
- Ministerial EU Troika meeting with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS);
- EU-Lebanon Association Council meeting.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**EXTERNAL RELATIONS****Iran – Restrictive measures**

The Council adopted decisions implementing UN Security Council resolutions 1737 and 1747 on restrictive measures against Iran.

- It adopted a decision implementing its regulation 423/2007¹ of 19 April by drawing up a list of persons and entities subject to a freezing of economic resources, other than those persons and entities included in the UN Security Council's list. The persons and entities concerned are engaged in or provide support for Iran's proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities or for development of nuclear weapon delivery systems. The regulation is aimed at implementing UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1737(2006) adopted on 23 December 2006.

The decision takes effect on the day of its publication in the Official Journal. The list can be found in OJ L 106 of 24.4.2007, p.51.

- The Council also adopted a common position (8132/1/07) amending common position 2007/140/CFSP² with a view to implementing resolution 1747(2007) adopted by the UN Security Council on 24 March and which broadened the scope of the restrictive measures imposed by UNSCR 1737(2006) of 23 December 2007.

UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1747(2007) imposes a ban on the procurement of arms to Iran. It also extends financial and travel sanctions imposed by UNSCR 1737(2006) to additional persons and entities engaged in or providing support for Iran's proliferation sensitive nuclear activities or for the development of nuclear weapon delivery systems. Furthermore it calls upon all states and international financial institutions not to enter into new commitments for grants, financial assistance and concessional loans to the government of Iran, except for humanitarian and developmental purposes.

The common position takes up in one annex the list of persons and entities subject to a visa ban and a freeze on assets as established by the UN Security Council in resolution 1747 and in another annex a list, identical to the list in the above decision, drawn up by the EU on the basis of the criteria defined in the common position. The list can be found in OJ L 106 of 24.4.2007, p.67.

¹ Published in Official Journal of the EU L 103 of 20.4.2007, p. 1.

² Published in Official Journal of the EU L 61 of 28.2.2007, p. 49.

Exchange of classified information with the United States

The Council adopted a decision approving the conclusion of an agreement with the United States . establishing a framework which makes it possible for the EU and the US to exchange classified information (8085/1/07 REV 1).

The agreement will be signed in the margins of the EU-US summit in Washington on 30 April and will enter into force immediately.

The European Union has already concluded a number of such agreements with third states and international organisations (*see doc. 7778/07*).

Iraq - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council reaffirms its support to a secure, stable, democratic, prosperous, and unified Iraq and reiterates its commitment to the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq. It reiterates its support for the democratically elected Government of Iraq and for its efforts to restore public order, promote national reconciliation and rule of law, further economic reconstruction and engage Iraq's neighbouring states and the International Community.

2. The Council condemns in the strongest terms all forms of violence against the Iraqi population, including acts of terrorism, politically motivated or sectarian attacks, and forced displacement. It expresses its deep concern about the humanitarian and human rights situation in parts of Iraq, in particular the situation of internally displaced persons and of Iraqi refugees abroad and urges the government of Iraq to meet its responsibilities towards them. It notes the continued efforts of the multinational force to participate in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in accordance with the mandate renewed by UNSCR 1723.

3. The Council encourages the Government of Iraq to intensify its efforts towards national reconciliation. It hopes that substantial progress will be made on the review of deBaathification and on the disbandment of militias, as well as against terrorism, and that appropriate measures will be taken to promote full inclusiveness. It urges all political and social groups in Iraq to pursue their demands through peaceful means and within Iraq's democratic institutions. The Council believes that fundamental decisions such as on the constitutional review, the federalism law and the status of Kirkuk, must be taken in a spirit of sincere dialogue and consensus-building if they are to serve as the basis for a peaceful and prosperous future for Iraq.
4. The Council welcomes the initiative to convene a conference of Iraq's neighbouring states with international participation in Sharm El Sheikh on 4 May, 2007. The international community, and in particular the States in the region, have a responsibility to support and promote the difficult process of national reconciliation and stabilisation in Iraq, and to prevent outside interference that could undermine this process. The Council expresses its hope that the planned conference give rise to a long-term process of regional confidence building through dialogue and co-operation. The EU stands ready to actively contribute to this endeavour.
5. The Council reiterates its support for the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) and warmly welcomes the launching of the Compact at a ministerial conference in Sharm El Sheikh on 3 May, 2007. It appreciates the ambitious benchmarks set by the Government of Iraq for its economic, political, security and social reform strategies and encourages Iraq to pursue these targets with all determination. Progress towards those targets will help to further enhance the EU's engagement with Iraq. The Council reaffirms its strong support for a central role of the UN in Iraq, especially in the political, human rights and humanitarian sectors, and in facilitating international support to Iraq.
6. The Council warmly welcomes the opening of negotiations for a Trade and Cooperation Agreement with Iraq and hopes for a timely continuation of these negotiations.
7. The EU will continue to work with the Government of Iraq to better align its assistance with the priorities laid down in the ICI. The Council welcomes the decisions by the Donor Committee of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI) at its meeting in Istanbul on 21 March, 2007 to assign the co-chairmanship to Iraq and Italy so as to better reflect Iraqi ownership and enhance donor visibility and to review IRFFI's terms of reference in order to align them with Iraqi priorities. This review should enable IRFFI to act as an important channel for international financial support for Iraq within the framework of the ICI.

8. The Council acknowledges the need to address the humanitarian needs of internally displaced people in Iraq and refugees in the region. It recognises the serious difficulties of effectively delivering humanitarian aid in Iraq given the security situation. The Council encourages the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian agencies to assist the government of Iraq in this respect and welcomes efforts to provide protection and assistance in neighbouring countries. The Council welcomes the international attention to the Iraqi displacement situation afforded by the International Conference on Addressing the Humanitarian Needs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons inside Iraq and in Neighbouring Countries in Geneva on 17/18 April 2007. The Council stresses the need to improve conditions for channelling international support to that end. The Council recognises the solidarity shown by Iraq's neighbouring countries, in particular Jordan and Syria, towards the plight of Iraqi refugees and stresses the importance of furthering the dialogue with countries in the region to create conditions for an appropriate assistance strategy.

9. The Council calls for a comprehensive approach towards the dire situation of refugees in Iraq and in the neighbouring regions. The Council also underlines the importance of ensuring that those seeking safety do not fall into the hands of traffickers and smugglers."

Burma/Myanmar - Restrictive measures - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted a common position renewing restrictive measures against Burma/Myanmar until 30 April 2008 and updating the list of persons subject to these measures (7718/07).

The updated list includes new persons in order to take into account changes in the government, security forces, party hierarchy and administration in Burma/Myanmar as well as in the personal situation of the targeted persons.

The Council adopted in April 2006 common position 2006/318/CFSP, which replaced the previous measures, the first of which were adopted in 1996. The restrictive measures consist of a visa ban and a freezing of assets of members of the military regime and other individuals, groups and undertakings associated with the military regime that impede Burma/Myanmar's transition to democracy. They also include a prohibition on making financial loans or credits available to, and on acquiring or extending a participation in, Burmese state-owned enterprises.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council:

- Reaffirms its commitment to supporting the process of peaceful change and national reconciliation in Burma/Myanmar and renews the common position extending restrictive measures against Burma/Myanmar.
- Expresses deep concern on the lack of tangible progress in the promised transition towards a legitimate civilian government. The Council encourages Burma/Myanmar to make progress towards national reconciliation and to involve constructively all political parties and ethnic groups in an inclusive dialogue. The Council reiterates its call for the early release of all political prisoners and calls for an end to the military campaign against civilians in conflict areas.
- Continues to be concerned by serious violations of human rights, restrictions on domestic human rights organisations and international human rights institutions by the government of Burma/Myanmar.
- Expresses its support for the UN Secretary General's good offices to bring about peaceful political change and welcomes ASEAN's continued efforts to encourage reform and reconciliation.
- Supports the on-going efforts by the international community, the Commission and Member states to address Burma/Myanmar's humanitarian challenges and welcomes the establishment of the Three Diseases Fund to tackle the problems of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.
- Welcomes the Supplementary Understanding agreed between the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the government of Burma/Myanmar on 26 February to enable victims of forced labour to seek redress, and urges the government of Burma/Myanmar to ensure the full implementation of this agreement.
- Reaffirms its willingness to consider the suspension of these restrictive measures and to substantively step up co-operation in response to substantial improvement in the political situation in Burma/Myanmar."

EU-Russia partnership and cooperation agreement - EU enlargement

The Council adopted a decision approving the signing and provisional application of a protocol to the partnership and cooperation agreement with Russia in order to take account of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU (7814/07). The protocol was signed in the margins of the Council's meeting.

EU/Korea - Cooperation agreement in the area of competition

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to negotiate a cooperation agreement in the area of competition with the Republic of Korea.

Non-proliferation treaty preparatory committee - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council reaffirms its support for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which represents the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament under Article VI of the Treaty and also the key element in the further development of the applications of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in accordance with Article IV of the Treaty.

We are firmly committed to strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime as underlined in the EU Common Position of 25 April 2005.

We are committed to contributing to a successful outcome of the Review Process, which will commence with the first session of the Preparatory Committee to be held in Vienna from 30 April to 11 May of this year.

The Council calls on all state parties to the NPT to join the EU in making every effort to ensure a smooth start to the Review Process. We are looking forward to constructive and substantive discussions in the forthcoming session of the Preparatory Committee aimed at maintaining the integrity and enhancing the authority of the NPT."

International code of conduct against ballistic missile proliferation - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council underlined the importance it attaches to the International Code of Conduct against ballistic missile proliferation (HCOC) . In the light of the "List of Priorities" for the implementation of the WMD Strategy adopted by the Council in December 2006 (16801/06), the Council agreed to take action in order to promote the universality of the Code and compliance with its principles. The meeting of State Parties of the HCOC end of May/beginning of June 2007 will be particularly important in that respect.

Therefore the Council decides that, in advance of that meeting, a Conference will be organised in cooperation with the EU Institute of Security Studies (EU ISS), which will address both universalisation and compliance. The organisation of the Conference will take place under the supervision/aegis of the Presidency, assisted by the SG/HR."

HIV/AIDS - Recently emerging issues - *Council conclusions*

The Council and the representatives of the member states adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council recalls the goals and objectives set out in the 2000 UN Millennium Declaration, the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS agreed at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) in 2001, the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS agreed at UNGASS+5 in 2006, the European Programme for Action to Confront HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis through External Action (2007-2011) and the ICPD Cairo Agenda and emphasises the importance of their implementation in order to fight the three diseases successfully and help meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular MDG 6, by 2015.
2. Highlighting the important role the European Union plays in confronting HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, the Council welcomes the Presidency Paper on "*Recently Emerging Issues regarding HIV/AIDS*" that focuses on newly emerging issues and barriers that hinder our progress in tackling HIV/AIDS and the effective implementation of the European Programme of Action. The Council recognises that the fight against HIV/AIDS can only be successful if a comprehensive approach is taken that includes scaling up significantly towards the goal of universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010.

3. To reverse the current trend of feminisation, the Council recognises the need to eliminate gender inequalities, gender-based violence and abuse as well as to increase the capacity of women and girls to protect themselves from HIV infection through the provision of health care and services, including those related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as full access to education and information. The Council recognises women's right to have control over, and decide freely and responsibly on, matters related to their sexuality in order to increase their ability to protect themselves from HIV infection and calls on the Commission and the Member States to take all necessary measures to promote and support an enabling environment for the empowerment of women and their full economic independence.
4. Whilst these Conclusions focus on the recent trend of feminisation, the Council emphasises the need to also focus on young people, especially young women and girls, children infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS, including children orphaned by AIDS and children and infants in need of treatment, women and girls in conflict situations as well as other key populations at particular risk of HIV infection, including men who have sex with men, injecting drug users, sex workers, prison populations, migrants, refugees, trafficking victims and others and to support their inclusion in the planning of strategies and programmes as well as in the decision making process in order to tackle HIV/AIDS successfully.
5. In light of increasing feminisation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the Council strongly reaffirms the linkage between HIV/AIDS policies and programmes and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) policies and services, and their inter-relationships with broader issues of public health, development and human rights, as agreed by the international community as a global effort towards the achievement of the MDGs.
6. The Council recognises the importance of integrating and mainstreaming the fight against HIV/AIDS within national development priorities, plans and programmes, including in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), and in development cooperation programmes of the EC and EU Member States and in donors' recruitment policies when employing local staff. In this context, the Council wishes to recall the commitment in the EU Consensus on Development and the Development Cooperation Instrument to mainstream confronting HIV/AIDS in all activities and recognises the importance of the ongoing programming process for developing countries in providing an opportunity for making the existing commitments operational and responding to emerging issues in all EC Country Strategy Papers (CSPs), National Indicative Programmes (NIPs), annual action programmes and programme preparation.

7. The Council emphasises the importance of achieving sufficient, long-term, predictable, sustainable and increased funding to tackle HIV/AIDS in order to build-up and strengthen health and other social services, including basic health services, and to intensify research and development of new, improved and affordable tools of prevention, treatment and early diagnostics, including vaccines, paediatric drugs and microbicides. In this respect, the EU will continue working in the area of HIV/AIDS through a wide array of existing financing instruments at global and country level including the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). The EU will collectively maintain and increase funding to the GFATM and welcomes also the development and exploration of innovative sources of financing including through such mechanisms as the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID), the International Finance Facility (IFF), Advance Market Commitment for Vaccines (AMC) and others.
8. Recognising that HIV/AIDS is affecting more and more women and girls, the Council calls upon the Commission and the Member States to:
- Support the adoption and strengthening of legal, policy and administrative measures at country level to promote and fully protect women's and girls' rights and reduce their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS through the elimination of all forms of violence, stigma and discrimination as well as all kind of sexual exploitation of women, girls and boys including for commercial reasons.
 - Promote and support the enactment and enforcement of legislation in order to uphold and fully protect women's rights and so reduce their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS through improving the status of women in society and strengthening their economic independence, including through the right to own and inherit property, as well as protect women and girls against violence and abuse, including through empowering women, educating the police, the judiciary, social service providers, civil servants and community leaders and through improvement of legal aid services and other forms of support for women and girls to claim their rights.
 - Confront gender based violence, including female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional and customary practices, through political dialogue at country level and identify and develop social protection mechanisms that benefit households affected by HIV/AIDS and relieve the burden of care for women.
 - Promote and support increased participation of women where AIDS policies are formulated, agreed and implemented, and funds are allocated, with targets that can be measured and for which there is accountability.

- Promote and support the inclusion of the issue of feminisation of HIV/AIDS in education programmes in order to raise awareness among girls and boys as well as young women and men of the threat posed by the pandemic.
- Strengthen women's organisations to play an active role in developing and implementing such policies.
- Reaffirm their commitment to prevention and to focus on aspects of prevention such as SRHR, harm reduction and preventing mother to child transmission (PMTCT), including through actions that support the reversing of the downward trend in financing for SRHR.
- Support programmes that work with men and women to address gender and behaviour norms and norms around sexual relations that make women vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection.
- Promote the collection, analysis and use of age and sex-disaggregated data and their inclusion in reporting.

9. Emphasising the urgent need for much stronger links between HIV/AIDS and SRHR in policies, programmes and services, the Council calls upon the Commission and the Member States to:

- Promote strategies that ensure that HIV/AIDS and SRHR programmes contribute to the overall strengthening and sustainability of health systems including funding and implementation of the European Programme for Action to tackle the critical shortage of health workers in developing countries for the time period 2007-2013.
- Promote universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights and commodities, including male and female condoms as the most efficient means to reduce the sexual transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and to join efforts and explore ways to fill the commodities gap in this regard.
- Promote the greater involvement of potential beneficiaries, including people living with HIV, women and youth groups in the design, programming and implementation of SRHR programmes and HIV/AIDS initiatives.

- Ensure that SRHR and HIV/AIDS policies, programmes and services are built on the fundamental commitment to respect, protect and promote human rights.
- Promote linkages between HIV/AIDS and SRHR within all existing national development plans and budgets, including health sector reforms, PRSPs as well as sector wide approaches and ensure that the linkages are addressed within EC instruments.
- Promote a coordinated and coherent response to HIV/AIDS that builds upon the Three Ones Principles¹ and the harmonisation agenda fully supported by the EU.

10. Emphasising the importance of increasing and improving prevention options and choices of women, the Council calls upon the Commission and the Member States to:

- Working with relevant and interested parties, pursue the dialogue with decision makers in developing countries on the importance of implementing measures to increase and improve affordable prevention options and choices for women, including the female condom and microbicides, and the importance of further research and development of such tools.
- Work with existing organisations that currently support microbicide research in order to broaden the donor base and to enhance wider preparedness at local level aimed at improving trial and production capacity, training for medical staff, and development of national awareness campaigns.
- Sponsor an EU or international Conference at the expert level with a wide group of stakeholders including representatives of the WHO, the European Medicines Agency (EMA), civil society, including the International Partnership for Microbicides and the Association for Microbicide Development, regulatory authorities from developing countries and the pharmaceutical industry, on expanding HIV/AIDS preventive options.

11. Recognising the specific vulnerability of children and especially girls to HIV/AIDS and the need to protect them, the Council calls upon the Commission and the Member States to:

¹ **One** national HIV/AIDS framework, **One** broad-based multi-sectoral HIV/AIDS coordinating body, and **One** agreed country-level monitoring and evaluation system

- Address as a priority the vulnerability of children affected by and living with HIV/AIDS, providing support to them and their families and caregivers, women and the elderly as well as promoting child-oriented HIV/AIDS policies and programmes and increased protection of children orphaned by AIDS through renewed efforts to develop treatment for children.
 - Provide support to awareness campaigns on linkages between HIV/AIDS and education.
 - Support developing countries in developing and improving formal strategies for an education sector response to HIV/AIDS.
 - Support the strengthening of social and legal protection systems as well as the creation of less susceptible livelihoods as an integral part of PRSPs in order to support households caring for orphans and vulnerable children as well as child headed households.
 - Support comprehensive education programmes which address HIV/AIDS systematically, including the gender dimensions of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its spread among young people, and provide young girls and boys with information, life skills and opportunities to protect themselves against HIV infection.
 - Foster the sharing of information and best practices in sectoral approaches to HIV/AIDS.
 - Support capacity building programmes in the education sector.
12. The Council encourages the Commission and Member States to ensure implementation of existing commitments within the EU Programme for Action on HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis and calls on the Commission and Member States to report on progress, including on these emerging issues regarding HIV/AIDS, in the context of the joint monitoring and reporting on the European Programme for Action in 2008 and 2010."

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

Sudan/Darfur - Support to the African Union mission

The Council adopted a decision implementing joint action 2005/557/CFSP on the European Union civilian-military supporting action to the African Union mission in the Darfur region of Sudan (7727/07).

The decision sets at EUR 2,125 million the financial envelope for covering expenditure involved by the EU civilian support action from 1 May until 31 October 2007. This amount will cover the period of the current mandate of AMIS and a subsequent transitional period leading to a possible transition to a UN/AU hybrid operation.

The Council decided to evaluate, no later than 30 June 2007, whether the EU supporting action should be continued.

Somalia - Assistance to the setting-up of the African Union mission

The Council adopted a joint action amending joint action 2005/557/CFSP on the European Union civilian-military supporting action to the African Union mission in the Darfur region of Sudan (AMIS) so as to include a military support element providing assistance to the setting up of the African Union mission in Somalia (AMISOM) (8339/07).

The EU action is aimed at supporting AU efforts in contributing to the initial stabilisation phase in Somalia and will be developed in respect and support of the principle of African ownership.

The new joint action is the EU's response to the request made by the African Union for expertise, on a temporary basis, to assist the AMISOM military planning cell situated at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa.

EU support to AMISOM will be deployed within the framework of the EU supporting action to AMIS in Sudan.

COUNTER-TERRORISM

Terrorist list - Review

The Council, with a view to the next update of the EU terrorist list in line with article 1(6) of common position 2001/931/CFSP, which provides for a regular review, re-examined the list of persons, groups and entities subject to the restrictive measures provided for under Council regulation (EC) 2580/2001.

The parties concerned will be informed that the Council intends to maintain them on the list and will be informed via a "statement of reasons" of the specific information that forms the basis for the Council's decision. The statements of reasons will not be made available to the public unless the Council receives the agreement of the person, group or entity concerned.

For those whose address is unknown, a notice will be published in the Official Journal which will indicate that they may submit a request to the Council to obtain its statement of reasons for maintaining them on the list¹.

The persons, groups and entities concerned will also be informed about the opportunity to make their views known and present observations.

The Council will consider any reaction by the parties concerned before taking a final decision. A consolidated list of persons, groups and entities subject to the restrictive measures provided for under Council regulation 2580/2001 will be published at the end of the review procedure.

It is recalled that Council regulation 2580/2001 provides for a freezing of all funds, other financial assets and economic resources belonging to the persons or entities listed.

TRADE POLICY

ASEAN, India, South Korea, Central America, Andean Community - Negotiating mandates

The Council approved draft negotiating directives for the negotiation of association agreements with Central America and the Andean Community and its member countries, and for the negotiation of free trade agreements with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), India and South Korea.

The Council and the representatives of the member states also adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council reaffirms that the successful conclusion of the Doha Round remains the EU's first priority in the field of trade policy given that the multilateral trade system provides for the most effective removal of trade barriers while improving the inclusion of developing countries in the world trade system.

¹ OJ C 90 of 25.4.2007, p.1.

2. Welcoming the Commission's Communication on the recommendations to open negotiations with the Andean Community, countries of ASEAN, Central America, India and the Republic of Korea, the Council reaffirms that the EU should aim at a new generation of WTO-compatible Free Trade Agreements that extend beyond present agreements and build towards future multilateral negotiations, with the intention to strengthen the multilateral trading system. The new WTO-compatible Free Trade Agreements with emerging countries should contribute to improving competitiveness and growth in Europe and globally and support further integration of partner countries into the international trading system. They should be ambitious and comprehensive and comprise far reaching liberalisation of trade in goods and services, and investment. Special attention will be given to the elimination of non-tariff barriers.
3. The Council supports the Commission's approach for Free Trade Agreements based on economic considerations, especially the market potential of possible partner countries, the current level of trade barriers between them and the EU, and their ongoing or concluded Free Trade Agreement negotiations with EU competitors. While respecting the priority of the multilateral trade negotiations, Free Trade Agreements with countries of ASEAN, India and the Republic of Korea should be taken forward rapidly to improve the external competitiveness and market access conditions of European industries on these important markets vis-à-vis global competitors.
4. The Council welcomes and supports the Commission's analysis and proposals to ensure, in each case, that these agreements will be part of an overall and coherent framework of EU relations with each partner. The Council underlines its interest in also achieving a further strengthening of political ties with ASEAN countries, India and the Republic of Korea through new Partnership- and Cooperation Agreements or an updating of the existing Framework Agreements including the EU political clauses. Thus the Council underlines its interest in moving ahead swiftly with negotiations on new Partnership- and Cooperation Agreements or updated framework agreements with India and the Republic of Korea, and invites the Commission to undertake exploratory talks with the countries concerned and to report back to the Council and to make recommendations as appropriate.
5. Regarding India, the Council underlines the importance it attaches to the ongoing discussions between the EU and India about issues of common concern in the framework of the Joint Action Plan, which contribute to the creation of the basis for a future broad agreement.

6. Regarding the Republic of Korea, the Council underlines its interest in a deepening of relations with the Republic of Korea so as to strengthen political ties through a future broad agreement. Concerning the Free Trade Agreement negotiations, the Council encourages the Commission to strive for a removal of existing non-tariff trade barriers by the Korean government already during the process of negotiations.
7. Regarding ASEAN, the Council warmly welcomes the Enhanced EU-ASEAN-Partnership confirmed at the 16th EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Nuremberg/Germany on 14/15 March and expresses its satisfaction with the ongoing intensification of relations including through the negotiations of Partnership- and Cooperation Agreements with several member states of ASEAN. The Council expresses its intention to conclude a Free Trade Agreement with countries of ASEAN. The conclusion of the Free Trade Agreement will be subject to the conclusion of Partnership- and Cooperation Agreements, thus creating a coherent economic and political framework for relations between the EU and ASEAN."

Negotiations with Russia and Ukraine on trade in services

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations with Russia and Ukraine in order to preserve and supplement commitments on trade in services contained in partnership and cooperation agreements following these countries' accession to the WTO. It also authorised the Commission to negotiate an agreement with Ukraine on export duties.

Anti-dumping - China - Pallet trucks

The Council adopted a regulation terminating the partial interim review of the anti-dumping measures applicable to imports of hand pallet trucks and their essential parts originating in China (7981/07).

Anti-dumping - China and Ukraine - Ironing boards

The Council adopted a regulation imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty and collecting definitively the provisional duty imposed on imports of ironing boards originating in China and Ukraine (8098/07).

CUSTOMS UNION**EU- Switzerland - Simplification of inspections of the carriage of goods**

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to negotiate with Switzerland an agreement to amend an existing agreement on the simplification of inspections and formalities in respect of the carriage of goods.

ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS**Annual report on public access to documents**

The Council adopted its annual report on the implementation of regulation 1049/2001 regarding public access to documents in 2006 (8184/07).

The report indicates, *inter alia*, that

- 65 % of the Council documents produced in 2006 - i.e. 102 087 of the 157 707 new documents listed in the Council's register - were made directly accessible to the public via the register upon circulation.
- As of 31 December 2006, the Council's register referred to 849 117 documents (all language versions taken together), of which 583 905 (68,7 % of those registered) were public documents, i.e. available either in a downloadable format or on request.
- In 2006, 380 349 individual users logged on to the Council's public register (as against 259 106 in 2005), representing a 46,8% increase in the number of users in one year. The total number of visits rose by nearly 61,8 % (1 722 354 visits in 2006 against 1 064 039 in 2005) representing more than 4 780 visits per day.
- The Council received 2 224 requests for access from the public concerning a total of 11 353 documents and gave access (total and partial access taken together) to 9 606 (87,7 %) of the requested documents.

The report highlights the key developments in the fifth year of implementation of the regulation and reviews complaints submitted to the European Ombudsman, rulings given by the Community Courts under Regulation 1049/2001 as well as cases pending before the Community Courts regarding access to Council documents.

In addition, the report presents the regulatory, administrative and practical adaptations made by the Council to comply with the regulation.

In conclusion, the report indicates that, as far as the Council is concerned, the aims set by the Treaties and by regulation 1049/2001 were achieved in 2006.
