



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESS RELEASE

2800th Council meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

External Relations

Brussels, 14-15 May 2007

President **Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER**
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany
Ms Heidemarie WIECZOREK-ZEUL
Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and
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of Germany

* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2799th meeting on General Affairs (9470/07).

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Main results of the Council

The Council renewed visa restrictions against certain individuals in **Uzbekistan** for a period of six months.

It approved draft decisions to allow for additional financial support of EUR 40 million to be granted to the African Union Mission in **Sudan/Darfur** (AMIS) and to create a legal basis for additional bilateral contributions from member states.

In the context of its six-monthly review of developments under the **European Security and Defence Policy** (ESDP) in the presence of defence ministers, the Council:

- welcomed the agreements on the ESDP police mission to Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan) and on the ESDP Security Sector Reform police mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo (EUPOL RD Congo);
- noted with satisfaction the progress made in implementing the qualitative approach to capability planning called for by the Headline Goal 2010;
- welcomed the progress concerning EU battlegroups, in particular member states' confirmed commitments and additional offers allowing the battlegroup schedule to be completed up to the first half of 2010;
- welcomed the endorsement by the European Defence Agency (EDA) Steering Board in defence ministers formation of a European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) strategy;
- tasked the SG/HR to submit a report with recommendations on shortcomings in the EU Military Staff's ability to conduct planning at the strategic level for EU-led operations, for consideration by the Council at its meeting in November 2007;
- adopted recommendations and an action plan aimed at strengthening the partnership between Africa and the EU in the field of African capabilities for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

The Council also held its six-monthly review of development issues, in the presence of development ministers, adopting conclusions aimed in particular at guiding negotiations on **economic partnership agreements** with ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) States.

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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.
- 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.

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OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

See General Affairs press release 9470/07

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Member
Member
Member

.....

General Secretariat of the Council:

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

ITEMS DEBATED**BLACK SEA REGION - *Council conclusions***

The Council held a brief exchange of views on a communication from the Commission on a new regional cooperation initiative for the Black Sea region.

It adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council welcomed the Commission's Communication "Black Sea Synergy – A new Regional Cooperation Initiative". The Council underlined that following the accession of two Black Sea littoral states, Bulgaria and Romania, the EU's interest in furthering stability and prosperity in the Black Sea area has become even greater.

The Council looked forward to further examining the Communication and invited the future Presidencies and the European Commission to continue work on an enhanced and coherent EU engagement in and with the Black Sea area, particularly in the framework of a strengthened European Neighbourhood Policy and building on synergies with regional bodies and initiatives. The aim should be to intensify regional cooperation in sectors of cross-border relevance such as energy, the environment, transport, telecommunications, science and technology, freedom, justice and security, as well as democracy, human rights promotion, respect for international law and civil society cooperation.

Given the strategic importance of the Black Sea area to the EU, the Council invites the Commission to carry out a review during the first half of 2008 of the development of the Black Sea Synergy Initiative, as a basis for further consideration by the Council of its engagement towards the region as a whole."

PREPARATION OF THE EU-RUSSIA SUMMIT

The Council held an exchange of views on preparations for the EU-Russia summit to be held in Volzhskii Utios, near Samara (Russia), on 18 May.

The Summit is expected to address the state of play of EU-Russia relations, as well as topical international issues, notably Kosovo, Iran and the Middle East. The problems surrounding the launch of negotiations on a new EU-Russia agreement will be on the agenda, as will important topics such as energy, climate change, Russia's accession to the WTO, the investment climate, implementation of the visa facilitation and readmission agreements, human rights, democracy and rule of law issues, and cooperation in the area of science, education and culture.

Other issues highlighted by the Council were energy security and the current state of Estonian-Russian relations.

UZBEKISTAN - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted a common position renewing visa restrictions against eight Uzbek officials. Such restrictions were introduced following events at Andijan in May 2005. The restrictions will be reviewed after six months, at the same time as the arms embargo against Uzbekistan.

The EU and Uzbekistan held the first round of a human rights dialogue in Tashkent on 8 and 9 May, following a second round of expert talks on the events at Andijan, held in early April. EU restrictions on technical meetings were lifted in November.

The Council also adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council remains seriously concerned about the human rights situation in Uzbekistan.
2. The Council learnt with great concern of the sentences of imprisonment passed on the human rights defenders Ms Umida Niazova and Ms Gulbahor Turaeva. It took note of the revised verdict against Ms Niazova of 8 May and her release. The Council calls upon the Uzbek authorities to release Ms Turaeva and other detained human rights defenders and to lift restrictions of movement against Ms Niazova. The Council calls upon Uzbekistan to respect fully its commitments to international human rights standards.
3. The Council welcomes the Uzbek confirmation that full cooperation with the ICRC will be resumed soon and expects swift implementation.
4. The EU reiterates its readiness to pursue a comprehensive and regular dialogue with Uzbekistan on human rights. In this context, the Council welcomes the fact that a first round of a human rights dialogue between the EU and Uzbekistan took place in Tashkent on 8-9 May 2007. It appreciates the readiness of the Uzbek side to engage in this dialogue. The EU looks forward to its continuation in an open and constructive manner with a view to achieving concrete and sustained results.

5. The Council also welcomes the holding of a second round of expert talks on the Andijan events in Tashkent on 2 and 3 April 2007. The Council, nonetheless, recalls its position set out in previous Council Conclusions.
6. The Council recalls its Common Position of 13 November 2006, lifting restrictions on technical meetings, and extending the arms embargo for another 12 months and the visa restrictions for another 6 months. The Council decided to renew the visa restrictions for individuals listed in the annex of the relevant Common Position for another 6 months.
7. The Council decided to keep these measures under review on the basis of the criteria set out in previous Council conclusions, taking into account the actions of the Uzbek Government in the area of human rights, including the results of the human rights dialogue. The Council urges Uzbekistan to implement fully its international obligations relating to human rights, rule of law and fundamental freedoms, and stands ready to consider the lifting of restrictions if the Uzbek government engages constructively in this respect."

SUDAN

The Council reviewed the situation in the Darfur region of Sudan and took stock of recent developments, in particular as regards the funding of the African Union mission in Sudan (AMIS).

It approved without discussion a draft decision on the replenishment of the African Peace Facility, using part of the reserve of the ninth European development fund, which should allow for an additional EUR 40 million to be granted to AMIS. It also adopted a draft decision to create the necessary legal basis for EU Member States to make voluntary bilateral contributions in support of the objectives of the Peace Facility. The decisions are due to be adopted by the ACP-EU council of ministers at its meeting in Brussels on 25 May.

Defence ministers also addressed support to AMIS during their working lunch.

SOMALIA - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council remains concerned about the situation in Somalia. In particular, it expresses its dismay over the humanitarian situation in Mogadishu and other parts of South and Central Somalia and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people with limited access to life-saving relief. The Council reiterates the obligation of all parties to comply with international humanitarian law and urges the Somali authorities to do their utmost to remove any obstacle to the free movement of aid and humanitarian relief workers into and throughout the country. It calls upon international donors to provide greater assistance for humanitarian and reconstruction work and upon the wider region to help facilitate the cross-border provision of aid to Somalia. The Council acknowledges the efforts of civil society actors to alleviate the humanitarian crisis. The EU will step up urgent humanitarian assistance to the population, including internally displaced people.
2. The Council welcomes the talks between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), Ethiopia and the Hawiya leadership committee. The Council encourages all parties to show continued restraint and to consolidate the cessation of hostilities, paving the way for comprehensive cease-fire arrangements, including mechanisms for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. The EU remains ready to assist in this process if requested.
3. The Council condemns the use of force by all sides and emphasises that the problems of Somalia can only be solved by political means, building on the Transitional Federal Charter. The EU reiterates the need for a genuine political process, as set out in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1744 (2007). In particular, the EU renews its urgent appeal to the Transitional Federal Institutions to engage in an inclusive, meaningful and consensual dialogue involving all sections of Somali society. The Council expects the Transitional Federal Institutions to convene the National Reconciliation Congress (NRC) as soon as possible. It reiterates its readiness to support the Congress financially and otherwise, provided that the TFG will ensure an all inclusive and transparent process.
4. The Council reaffirms its support for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in creating the conditions for the stabilisation of the country and an early withdrawal of Ethiopian forces. The EU is committed to support AMISOM's planning and operational capacity, including the potential development of its role in the monitoring and verification of a ceasefire. It calls on all Somali actors to work with AMISOM to help achieve these aims. Recalling the EU's and Member States' financial and planning support for AMISOM, the Council calls on all international partners to provide further financial, logistic and technical support for AMISOM and on those African troop-contributing countries not yet on the ground in Somalia to deploy as soon as possible."

IRAQ - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council warmly welcomes the fact that the Iraq conferences in Sharm El Sheikh took place successfully on 3 and 4 May 2007 with very broad international participation. It congratulates all parties that have worked hard to make the conferences a success, in particular Egypt as the host country. The results of the conferences are encouraging and hopefully will contribute to an improvement of the situation in Iraq.
2. The Council commends the Iraqi Government for the ambitious commitments it has made in the "International Compact with Iraq", which was endorsed on 3 May, to promote reforms in the political, security, economic and social fields. The implementation of these commitments will be central in developing co-operation between Iraq and all its international partners. Progress towards these targets will help to further enhance the EU's engagement with Iraq. The Council underlines its appreciation for the UN's continued assistance to Iraq including in the Compact process.
3. The Council welcomes the Ministerial conference of Iraq's Neighbouring Countries with international participation, including the EU. 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 conference give rise to a long-term process of regional confidence building through dialogue and co-operation. It underlines in this context the importance of an effective and result-oriented follow-up mechanism, including the early convening of the agreed working groups on security, refugees and energy. The European Union is ready to assist and provide expertise in this process."

MIDDLE EAST

Ministers, over lunch, had an exchange of views on the Middle East peace process ahead of their meeting with the Arab League.

In a joint informal meeting in the margins of the Council, they met, for the first time, with a delegation of the Arab League composed of the League's Secretary-General, the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, Syria, the Palestinian Authority and Qatar, and a representative from Egypt. The Arab League delegation presented the Arab Peace Initiative to EU foreign ministers. After a discussion, both sides agreed to follow-up the meeting by continuing to work together with a view to supporting efforts towards a settlement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to enhancing cooperation between the EU and the Arab League.

At its 23 April meeting, the Council welcomed the Arab Peace Initiative as reaffirmed in the declaration of the Arab League Summit in Riyadh on 29 March, supported it as a major element in moving the Middle East peace process forward and expressed the EU's readiness to work closely with the Arab League.

DEATH PENALTY MORATORIUM

At lunch, ministers returned to current activities aimed at bringing forward in UN fora the issue of abolishing the death penalty, which the EU aims to keep high on the EU and the international agenda. The Council will come back to this issue at its June meeting following careful exploration of prospects for re-launching consideration of this important question at the UN General Assembly.

The EU actively promotes the abolition of the death penalty on the basis of guidelines established in 1998.

WESTERN BALKANS - *Council conclusions*

Ministers discussed the situation in Serbia following the recent agreement on the formation of a government by democratic parties. The Presidency expressed the hope that on 15 May the Parliament would give its assent to the government, which is expected to act effectively and get to work on necessary reforms. It indicated that the EU stood by its commitments regarding the European perspective for Serbia as expressed in the Council conclusions of 12 February 2007.

The Council also adopted the following conclusions on regional cooperation in the Western Balkans:

"The Council welcomed the results of the Stability Pact's Regional Table meeting and of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) Ministerial and Summit meetings, held in Zagreb on 10 and 11 May 2007. It welcomed the decisions taken which show the firm commitment by the countries of the region of South Eastern Europe gradually to take ownership of and responsibility for regional co-operation. It reconfirmed the European Union's readiness to remain involved, together with other donors and partners, in the forthcoming implementation of the phased evolution of the Stability Pact into the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) as a more regionally owned, streamlined and effective regional co-operation framework, based on the agreed RCC Statute. The Council recalled that regional co-operation is one of the prerequisites for the realisation of the European perspective within the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The Council congratulated the newly appointed Secretary General of the RCC, Mr Hidajet Bišćević, and the city of Sarajevo on its selection as the seat for the RCC Secretariat. It stressed the importance of maintaining the pace of the transformation process and, in this context, called upon all stakeholders to continue their efforts. In particular, the Council called upon the Special Coordinator for the Stability Pact, the new Secretary General and the incoming Bulgarian SEECP Chairmanship to ensure a smooth and timely final hand-over to the new structures, envisaged for February 2008."

IRAN

Ministers briefly discussed relations with Iran and the Iranian nuclear programme, notably following High Representative Javier Solana's meeting with Iranian national security advisor Ali Larijani on 25 April and with a view to possible further contacts.

LIBYA

At lunch, ministers had a further exchange of views about the case of the five Bulgarian nurses and the Palestinian doctor condemned to death, in a retrial, by the Libyan Criminal Court, and about continuing efforts to achieve a fair and positive outcome. The Council will continue to follow the issue closely and will revert to it as necessary.

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY - *Council conclusions*

The Council held its six-monthly review of developments under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), in the presence of defence ministers.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"Military Capabilities

1. The Council noted with satisfaction the progress made in implementing the qualitative approach to capability planning called for by the Headline Goal (HLG) 2010.
2. The Council noted the Assessment of Member States' contributions to the Force Catalogue 07 as another important step within the HLG 2010 process. It welcomed the additional contributions offered by Member States in light of the capability shortfalls identified as a result of the Assessment.
3. The Council further noted that the Evaluation Methodology has been finalised. This will be the basis for the Evaluation process, in which the implications of the remaining capability shortfalls as identified in the Assessment will be analysed to evaluate resulting potential operational risks.
4. The Council encouraged all stakeholders involved to make the necessary efforts in order to complete the Evaluation process within the envisaged timelines and to ensure finalisation of the Progress Catalogue in order to be submitted to the GAERC meeting in November 2007. This catalogue will contain a comprehensive assessment of EU military capabilities needed to fulfil the requirements set out in the Requirements Catalogue. In this context, the Progress Catalogue will identify all military shortfalls, categorise them in terms of their possible implications on ESDP operations (potential operational risk), and serve as a platform for shortfall management and future capability development.
5. The Council noted the Single Progress Report on military capabilities. Concerning the European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP), the Council noted that the migration of ECAP Project Groups (ECAP PGs) within the European Defence Agency's processes has been completed, and looked forward to a possible way-ahead on the future of the remaining ECAP PGs.

6. The Council welcomed the close co-operation between the EU Military Committee and the European Defence Agency (EDA), in particular in the work of Integrated Development Teams and Project Teams and in the development of the Capability Development Plan.
7. The Council welcomed the continued co-operation between the EU and NATO. The EU-NATO Capability Group continued to provide a forum for exchanging information on the development of military capabilities in the EU and NATO where requirements overlap. All EU Member States were informed of these issues.
8. The Council noted the work on Information Exchange Requirements (IER), including a methodology noted by the Political and Security Committee in February 2007, aimed at defining operational requirements for exchanging information between all entities, both civilian and military, that may interact in support of ESDP operations with a view to a comprehensive approach. The Council looked forward to the establishment of an agreed IER which will provide a reference point from which EU Network Enabled Capability (NEC) activities can be built.
9. The Council noted with satisfaction that the EU Operations Centre has reached operational capability, providing the EU with an additional capability to plan and run an autonomous EU military operation, in particular where a joint civil/military response is required and where no national Headquarters has been identified, once a decision on such an operation has been taken.

Rapid Response

10. The Council noted with satisfaction that on 1 January 2007, the EU reached the Full Operational Capability to undertake two Battlegroup (BG) size operations of rapid response, including the ability to launch two such operations nearly simultaneously. The Council welcomed the efforts undertaken by MS to provide a multinational Maritime Task Group in order to make short-notice support to their EU BGs available. The Council welcomed the successful outcome of the six-monthly BG Co-ordination Conference on 3 May, in particular Member States' confirmed commitments and additional offers allowing the BG schedule to be completed up to the first half of 2010.

11. The Council noted the ongoing work on a possible revision of the EU Military Rapid Response Concept, based on a Tri-Presidency (Germany-Portugal-Slovenia) Food-for-Thought paper, in a joint perspective and taking into account the comprehensive approach to crisis management, bearing in mind the EU's level of ambition as laid down in the HLG 2010 process. This paper aims at developing procedures to generate forces rapidly, drawing from the Force Catalogue 2007 and additional voluntary force contributions by Member States. This work, which shall be concluded by mid-2008, will take due account of the results of Rapid Response Air Initiative and Maritime Rapid Response Concept, which should be elaborated by mid-2007. The Council welcomed the results of the first workshops on the Study for the Rapid Response Air Initiative in ESDP held in the first semester of 2007, including a possible mechanism allowing the rapid generation of those (air) capabilities listed in the Requirements Catalogue 2005. It noted that Member States may offer additional voluntary contributions. The Council looked forward to the further refinement of capability packages listed in the Requirements Catalogue, in order to allow Member States to offer interoperable subcomponents to an operation. With regard to the Maritime Dimension in ESDP, the Council welcomed the Maritime Dimension Study as noted by the EUMC in December 2006.

European Defence Agency

12. The Council noted the report submitted by the Head of the Agency on its activities.
13. The Council noted with satisfaction progress made in the development of the three longer-term strategies:
- The Capability Development Plan, based on the HLG 2010 process and the Long Term Vision (LTV), and involving a more precise analysis of future capability needs, in order to identify priorities for capability improvement and to bring out opportunities to pool resources and to cooperate,
 - A European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) strategy with two work strands well on track: identification of key technologies for Europe and definition of policies. The Council welcomed the endorsement of the EDTIB Strategy and the prioritisation of the first steps commitment by the Steering Board in Defence Ministers formation on 14 May.
 - An initial European Defence R&T Strategy in view of the presentation of a first draft document in the Steering Board of the Agency in autumn 2007.

14. In the context of the Capability Development Plan, the Council noted in particular the development of a methodology to be agreed in June 2007, looked forward to the establishment of a roadmap and highlighted the necessary close co-ordination between the EUMC and the EDA.
15. The Council welcomed the successful implementation of the Code of Conduct on Defence Procurement along with the Code of Best Practices for the Supply Chain. In this regard, the Council noted with satisfaction the listing in the Electronic Bulletin Board of opportunities offered by Member States' Ministries of Defence to suppliers in each other's territories and, since March 29, advertising industry-to-industry contracting opportunities. The Council welcomed the decision of Hungary to join the intergovernmental regime on defence procurement on 1 July 2007.
16. The Council welcomed the signature of the Programme Arrangement concerning the Defence R&T Joint Investment Programme on Force Protection. It welcomed the growing number of ad hoc projects under the EDA, including in the area of Software Defined Radio.

Upcoming Civilian Missions

17. The Council welcomed the progress made in planning for new civilian crisis management missions and expressed its appreciation for the performances of the various ongoing missions.
18. The Council welcomed the agreements on the ESDP police mission to Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan) and on the ESDP Security Sector Reform police mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo (EUPOL RD Congo).
19. The Council also noted the progress in planning, assisted by the EU Planning Team (EUPM Kosovo), for a possible ESDP mission in Kosovo in the field of Rule of Law, following the status agreement.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (Operation ALTHEA)

20. The Council reviewed the ongoing reconfiguration of EUFOR in BiH, which is progressive, but reversible until the end of August 2007. Once EUFOR will have been reconfigured by summer 2007, it will consist of some 2 500 troops on the ground, backed up by over-the-horizon reserves, ready to respond to possible security challenges throughout the country and to provide reassurance. Cooperation with NATO in respect of Operation ALTHEA will continue.
21. The Council reiterated that, as part of its overall engagement in BiH, the EU would retain a military presence in the country as long as necessary, in order to continue contributing to the maintenance of a safe and secure environment.

Lessons learned EUFOR RD Congo

22. The Council welcomed the conclusion of the first stage of the Lessons Learned Process following the successful EU-led operation in DRC in 2006. It noted in particular the identification of gaps concerning the ability to conduct early planning in sufficient detail, inter alia, to allow Member states to assess their potential force contributions and to provide appropriate expertise along the decision-making process. The Council requested the SG/HR to address shortcomings in the EU Military Staff's ability to conduct planning at the strategic level for EU-led operations and to submit a report with recommendations, as appropriate, for consideration by the Council at its meeting in November 2007.

African capabilities for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts

23. The Council reaffirmed the importance it attaches to cooperation with African partners in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, and underlined its wish to see its further development in the context of the forthcoming EU-Africa Summit.
24. It welcomed the fact that, in close association with the African partners and in coordination with the other partners involved, and in particular the UN, several concrete proposals have been identified with a view to providing support to the development of the African Peace and Security Architecture, with a particular focus on making the African Standby Force (ASF) operational and enhancing AU and SRO's (Sub-Regional organisations) institutional capacities.

25. The Council adopted PSC (Political and Security Committee) recommendations and action plan aimed at strengthening the partnership between Africa and the EU in the field of African capabilities for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts (doc. 8551/2/07 REV2). The Council looks forward to the swift implementation of the action plan, including the development of RECAMP into a European instrument, in order, inter alia, to support the AU's operational certification of the ASF at the continental level. The Council also encouraged Member States to make available other national programmes, both in Africa and in Europe, in support of the development of the ASF. The Council emphasised the importance of developing options for long-term solutions on funding and operational support for African peace support operations.

Security Sector Reform (SSR) in the Democratic Republic of Congo

26. The Council agreed that progress in SSR remains a key issue to the consolidation of the security and stability in the DRC.
27. The Council welcomed the fact that following the installation of the newly elected government in February 2007, the ESDP mission EUSEC RD Congo has continued to provide advice and assistance to the DRC authorities in carrying out the integration of combatants from former factions, and in reforming the Congolese armed forces, including regarding respect of the international standards of Human Rights. The Council welcomed the progress made by the chain-of-payments project and recalled the adoption of short-term measures for the reinforcement of EUSEC RD Congo. The Council noted preparations for the further reinforcement and expansion of the mission's mandate and welcomed agreement on a new civilian mission in the field of police reform, EUPOL RD Congo, while keeping the perspective of a possible single ESDP mission in the field of SSR in 2008.
28. The Council underlined that co-operation with other international actors, in particular with the UN, in the field of security sector reform is of the utmost importance. It recalled the European Union's readiness to assume a coordinating role in international efforts in security sector reform, in close co-operation with the United Nations, to support the Congolese authorities in this field.

Sudan/Darfur

29. The Council reaffirmed the EU's ongoing support for the African Union mission in the Darfur region of Sudan, AMIS, including through Member States' ongoing contributions of expert military and civilian police personnel and essential strategic airlift, as well as the very substantial financial support provided by the European Development Fund (EDF) and individual Member States. It renewed urgent calls upon other international partners to provide similar support.
30. The Council welcomed the ongoing efforts by the AU and UN jointly to enhance the capacities of the AMIS mission, particularly the agreement between the Sudanese Government, the AU and the UN on the Heavy Support Package, including attack helicopters, and underlined the critical need for the support to be provided by the UN. It noted the urgency of implementing the agreement with the perspective of transitioning to a full AU/UN hybrid mission in Darfur.

Human Rights and Gender

31. Recalling its conclusions of 13 November and 11 December 2006 the Council welcomed the fact that Human Rights and Gender issues have started to be systematically included in the planning and conduct of all ESDP operations, and subsequently evaluated in the lessons learned processes. It underlined the importance of Human Rights and Gender mainstreaming and called for reinforcement of efforts, particularly with a view to achieving more concrete progress in this field on the ground.
32. The Council also called for closer cooperation on these issues with EUSRs, whose mandates now contain specific provisions to address Human Rights and Gender issues. The Council recalled its invitation to Member States in this context to nominate more female candidates for CFSP/ESDP senior management positions, including for EUSRs.
33. The Council welcomed the first training course on Gender and ESDP, organised by Hungary with the support of the Presidency, and called for the course to be standardised and incorporated into the annual EU Training Programme relevant to ESDP. The Council reiterated its view that emphasis should also be put on mission-specific training in this field.

Training activities relevant to ESDP

34. The Council noted the continued efforts in the field of training relevant to ESDP and endorsed the results of the evaluation of the training activities in the Final Training Report 2007. It looked forward to further work in the field of training where shortfalls have been identified.
35. The Council furthermore took note of the 2007 General Annual Report on European Security and Defence College (ESDC) Activities and the successful conclusion of the second ESDP High Level Course and ESDP Orientation Courses.
36. The Council welcomed the fact that in the military field, the catalogue on sharing training facilities in the EU has been established and activated on the Council webpage.
37. The Council noted that many Member States participated actively in the European Community Project on Training for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management, considering it a very valuable additional element in the sense that it creates a European forum for exchange of views and best practices in the field of EU's civilian crisis management.

Exercises

38. The Council underlined the importance of the EU Military Exercise (MILEX 07) which will take place from 7 to 15 June 2007. The focus of this command post exercise is on key military aspects of crisis management. During this exercise, the EU Operations Centre will be activated for the first time. MILEX 07 will concentrate on the interaction between the EU Operations Centre in Brussels, and an EU Force Headquarters (FHQ) provided by Sweden.
39. The Council recalled the importance it attaches, in accordance with the EU exercise policy, to the planning and conduct of regular crisis management exercises, including jointly with NATO and with the participation of all EU Member States.

EU-UN Co-operation

40. The Council emphasised that the recent Operation EUFOR RD Congo in support of the MONUC during the electoral process in the DRC again demonstrated the EU's preparedness and ability to support through concrete action the efforts deployed by the UN to secure peace and stability and to engage in close co-operation with the UN at all levels.
41. Furthermore, the Council welcomed the continued close co-operation between the EU and the UN regarding support to the AU Mission in Darfur, Sudan (AMIS), including the ongoing implementation of the UN support package to AMIS.
42. The Council stressed that the EU is committed to further strengthening co-operation with the UN on crisis management, building in particular on experience gained so far.
43. In this context, the Council welcomed the Presidency's ESDP seminar on "Military aspects of UN-EU co-operation in crisis management operations in the light of EUFOR RD Congo", held in Berlin on 19-21 March 2007, and invited the competent Council bodies to consider its key recommendations."

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Summary of discussions on development issues

The Council dealt with a cluster of related issues concerning trade and development and financing for development, namely: the negotiation of economic partnership agreements with ACP states, "*aid for trade*", financing for development and the effectiveness of development aid.

It took further steps to implement landmark principles on development cooperation agreed in 2005.

As regards the economic partnership agreements (EPAs), the Council confirmed its wish to see the negotiations completed on time. Recalling its belief in these instruments as tools for development, it expressed its support for provisions on trade that would improve access for the ACP states to the EU market. For EU access to ACP markets, the Council believes that there should be as much flexibility as possible in excluding products, safeguard clauses and long transitional periods. The Council emphasised the importance of developing regional integration in the six ACP regions concerned. The joint ACP-EC council of ministers will review progress in the negotiations at its meeting in Brussels on 25 May.

The Council also agreed on the main elements to be included in a joint "*aid for trade*" strategy to be approved before the end of the year. The strategy will take account of needs resulting from the EPAs. The EU has already pledged to provide EUR 2 billion annually by 2010 for trade-related assistance to developing countries. The future strategy will indicate what share of these funds will be available for the ACP states, bearing in mind that it is the ACP states that will assess their own requirements and establish their priorities.

Aid for trade is part of the EU's commitment to increase official development assistance (ODA). The Council examined an annual report from the Commission on progress made towards meeting commitments on ODA announced in 2005. The EU provided EUR 48 billion -- a record sum -- for development cooperation in 2006 and, in doing so, exceeded its target. Some of this amount allowed important support and relief to certain countries in non-recurring circumstances (such as debt relief and tsunami recovery aid). The Council recognised that additional efforts will be required in order to maintain a strong performance.

EU development policy is equally focused on the *quality* and *effectiveness* of aid. The EU has made commitments both internationally and internally to improve these aspects of its policy. The Council agreed a code of conduct, to be applied by the member states and the Commission, on "*complementarity and division of labour*". This will gradually alter the pattern of aid delivery so as to improve its impact in reducing poverty and reducing transaction costs that have no positive impact on development efforts.

The Council also agreed, without discussion, a number of texts concerning:

- Implementation of the tenth European development fund.
- Gender equality.
- The shortage of health workers in developing countries.
- Energy cooperation between Europe and Africa.
- Preparations for the joint ACP-EC council of ministers meeting on 25 May, namely:
 - the draft agenda;
 - the reallocation of funds from the ninth European development fund, including EUR 45 million for the Africa Peace Facility, of which 40 million are granted to replenish the African Union mission in Sudan (*see agenda item on Sudan*);
 - an allocation of EUR 36 million for Somalia;
 - a decision enabling EU member states to make voluntary contributions to the European development fund for additional replenishment of the Africa Peace Facility (also for the AU mission in Sudan);
 - A declaration on drought and desertification.

For details of these decisions, see the press release on the Council meeting on General Affairs.

The Council also recalled conclusions adopted recently on HIV/AIDS (7225/07). These address newly emerging issues, such as the feminization of the AIDS pandemic, the linkage between HIV/AIDS and policies on sexual and reproductive health, the availability of prevention options for women, the relation between education and AIDS, the specific vulnerability of children to HIV/AIDS and the critical shortage of health workers in developing countries.

Under "other business", the Council took note of information regarding:

- the sustainable management of forests in the Democratic Republic of Congo;
- ratification of the revised ACP-EU partnership agreement and an internal agreement on the 10th European development fund;
- preparation of an EU-Africa partnership.

At dinner on 14 May, ministers discussed development in Madagascar and Afghanistan.

Economic partnership agreements (EPAs)

The Council took stock of ongoing negotiations on economic partnership agreements with the ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) group of states and regions.

The negotiations, which have reached a crucial stage, are aimed at replacing trade preferences for ACP states, set down in the Cotonou Agreement, by economic partnership agreements (EPAs) by the end of the year, given that these trade preferences are not compatible with the rules of the World Trade Organisation. In their partnership agreement signed at Cotonou in June 2000, the EU and the ACP states undertook to negotiate WTO-compatible EPAs before the expiry of a WTO derogation on 31 December 2007. The negotiations are conducted for the EU by the Commission under a mandate granted the Council.

The joint ACP-EC council of ministers, at a meeting in Brussels on 25 May, will review progress in the negotiations. With that in view, the Council adopted conclusions.

The Council again confirmed its commitment to the ongoing negotiations with six ACP regions. The EPAs, as development instruments, are aimed at supporting sustainable development and reducing poverty. The Council confirmed the importance of concluding the negotiations on time.

The Council emphasised that the EPAs should support regional integration in the six regions, including regional agricultural markets. It encouraged the ACP states to carry out the necessary reforms at regional level to strengthen the basis for the agreements. The EPAs will liberalise trade so that ACP states have duty- and quota-free access to the EU market after certain transitional periods with special treatment for a restricted number of highly sensitive products. Up to now this concession has been available, since 2001, to only 40 of the 78 ACP states that are recognised as least developed countries. The Council recognised the need for improved rules of origin so that the ACP states can benefit fully from improved access to the EU market.

The Council recognised that access to ACP markets by the EU must be progressive and carefully managed, and that flexibility in favour of ACP states (exclusions of products, long transition periods and safeguard clauses) must be compatible with WTO rules.

The Council recognised the right of ACP states to decide the best policies for their own development, and considered that the EPAs should include provisions on trade in services, on investment and on other trade-related areas because these contribute to growth and competitiveness. It emphasised that the EU should not pursue any particular market access interests. It expressed support for the integration of social and environmental provisions in the EPAs as part of efforts to reduce poverty, improve living conditions and enable sustainable development.

The EU has committed itself to provide EUR 2 billion annually in trade-related assistance to developing countries by 2010. In this connection, an EU strategy on "*aid for trade*" will be agreed before the end of this year. The strategy will ensure that a substantial share of these funds are granted to the ACP states in line with the policy decisions taken by the ACP states themselves. The strategy will also respond to broader *aid for trade* issues such as productive capacities and trade-related infrastructure.

The Council conclusions on the EPAs are linked to conclusions adopted on "*aid for trade*".

Finally, the Council recalled that the EPAs will be directed and managed through specific institutions. Each EPA region will have a joint EPA council within which ACP states and regions, EU member states and the European Commission will be represented. Each EPA council will have a joint implementation committee and will report to the joint ACP-EC council of ministers.

- Link to the full text of the Council's conclusions (9560/07):
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st09/st09560.en07.pdf>

Aid for trade

The Council agreed on the core components of an EU strategy on "*aid for trade*", aimed at enabling all developing countries, particularly the least developed ones, to integrate themselves into the world trade system better and to use trade more effectively in contributing to the eradication of poverty in a context of sustainable development.

In December 2005, the EU pledged collectively to increase its trade-related assistance for developing countries to EUR 2 billion a year from 2010, EUR 1 billion of which would be Community aid and EUR 1 billion bilateral aid from the member states. This commitment on aid volumes was followed in October 2006 by a decision by the Council to prepare an EU *aid for trade* strategy.

With that in view, the Council adopted conclusions.

The Council confirmed that the strategy would indicate the overall share of the EU's increase in trade-related assistance that will be available for needs to be prioritised by ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) partners. It agreed that the strategy would take into account the specific needs of the ACP states under the economic partnership agreements (EPAs) to be concluded with the ACP group of states and regions by the end of the year.

The Council agreed on four core components of the future *aid for trade* strategy. In order to ensure that the EU's financial commitments on trade-related assistance are met, the member states and the Commission will agree later this year on a joint EU strategy on *aid for trade*, indicating short- and medium-term priority actions. The components are:

- increasing collective volumes of EU *aid for trade* to the level that has been pledged;
- focusing on how *aid for trade* can achieve sustainable poverty reduction;
- providing for monitoring and reporting;
- providing for greater effectiveness.

The Council conclusions on *aid for trade* are related to conclusions adopted on the EPAs and on financing for development.

Links:

- Commission communication (8390/07 + ADD 1):
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st08/st08390.en07.pdf>
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st08/st08390-ad01.en07.pdf>
- the full text of the Council's conclusions (9555/07):
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st09/st09555.en07.pdf>
- Financing for development

Ministers, at lunch, reviewed implementation of commitments made by the EU and the member states with regard to increases in their official development assistance.

In the run-up to the 2002 United Nations conference at Monterrey, the EU made commitments on financing for development and the effectiveness of development aid. Each year, the Commission publishes a report monitoring progress in meeting these commitments.

The Council adopted conclusions on the Commission's 2007 progress report, highlighting the fact that the EU had achieved its overall commitment to increase aid in 2006 but that further efforts were needed in order to meet the next targets.

In 2005, the EU committed itself to spending 0.39% of its gross national income (GNI) on development aid in 2006, rising to 0.56% in 2010 and to 0.7% in 2015.

The Council noted with satisfaction that the EU had collectively exceeded, ahead of schedule, its first landmark target. In 2006, the EU reached 0.42% of GNI (target: 0.39%) with a record amount of EUR 48 billion: approaching EUR 1 billion weekly. This aid effort represents about EUR 100 a year for every EU citizen, EUR 40 for every person living in developing countries on less than a dollar a day. And as promised in 2005, Africa is receiving at least half of EU aid.

The Council noted that specific measures such as debt relief and tsunami recovery aid contributed to the record performance and that those measures created room for national budgets to be more targeted towards development in the countries concerned, as well as contributing to economic stabilisation. As those measures are one-off, additional efforts will be needed in order to stay on track for the Monterrey commitments.

The Council confirmed the importance of progressing on both the *quantity* and *quality* of financing for development, given the close link between the scaling-up of aid volumes and the improvement of *aid effectiveness*.

The Council conclusions on financing for development are linked to conclusions adopted on aid effectiveness through "*complementarity and division of labour*" and on "*aid for trade*".

The conclusions also refer to other Monterrey commitments, namely innovative sources of financing, debt reduction, mitigating the impact of exogenous shocks, the "*untying of aid*", reform of the international financial system and international public goods.

Links:

- Commission communication and annual report (8340/07 and 8451/07 + ADD 1):
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st08/st08340.en07.pdf>
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st08/st08451.en07.pdf>
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st08/st08451-ad01.en07.pdf>
- the full text of the Council's conclusions (9556/07):
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st09/st09556.en07.pdf>

The effectiveness of development aid

The Council discussed the effectiveness of development aid as regards "*complementarity and division of labour*", namely the complementarity of aid activities and the division of tasks amongst member states.

The EU has committed itself to improving both the volume and the efficiency of development aid, both internationally, at the 2002 UN conference at Monterrey, and internally, within the "*European consensus on development policy*" adopted by the EU in 2005. In 2006, the Council agreed general principles as a first step towards concrete action aimed at improving the overall impact of aid on development targets, reducing poverty and reducing transaction costs that have no positive impact on development efforts.

The Council adopted conclusions on a voluntary code of conduct, to be applied immediately and progressively by the member states and the Commission, building on existing systems.

The Council agreed that the complementarity of donor actions, together with a better division of labour among donors, would strengthen the ownership of actions by partner countries, as well as their capacity to take over responsibility for coordinating donor activities. It agreed that the EU should be a driving force for these efforts on a global basis and that its approach should be open to all donors.

On the three dimensions to division of labour:

- "in-country complementarity": the code of conduct recommends that donor countries limit their activities to three sectors in each partner country;
- "cross-country complementarity": the code recommends that donors work to correct imbalances between countries that are relatively neglected by aid programmes -- such as fragile states -- and countries that are relatively well-served by aid programmes;
- "cross-sectoral complementarity": the code recommends that donors analyse their strengths and comparative advantages in order to guide future policy.

The code establishes further principles on matters such as how freed-up resources could be redeployed and on how lead donors could coordinate all donor activity in a particular sector. It provides that EU donors should aim at a long-term engagement (of 5 to 7 years) in a particular sector. It also envisages that a donor establishes a delegated cooperation/partnership arrangement with other donors with authority to act in the administration of funds or to conduct sector policy dialogue with the partner government.

In implementing the code, which will be complemented by first experiences in the field, the EU will also promote broad discussions with partner countries and other donors on *complementarity and division of labour*. The outcome of those discussions will feed into the OECD development assistance committee partnership and a high-level forum on aid effectiveness that will take place in Accra in 2008.

Links:

- Commission communication (7124/07 + ADD 1):
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st07/st07124.en07.pdf>
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st07/st07124-ad01.en07.pdf>
- the full text of the Council's conclusions (9558/07):
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st09/st09558.en07.pdf>

OTHER BUSINESS

Ministers heard presentations:

- by the Romanian delegation on Ukrainian plans for the opening of the Bystroe Canal in the Danube Delta;
- by the Hungarian delegation on a Common Visa Application Centre in Chisinau (Moldova);

EU-Africa partnership

The Council was briefed by the presidency on the preparation of an EU-Africa partnership that will serve as the basis and a shared vision for EU-Africa relations for the years to come.

In the margins of the Council meeting, the EU troika met their African Union counterparts to review work done and the next steps.

The aim is to establish the partnership at an EU-Africa summit that is planned in Lisbon for the end of the year. It will have four main objectives:

- strengthening the EU-Africa political partnership in addressing issues of common concern;
- promoting peace, security, development, human rights and regional and continental integration in Africa;
- jointly addressing global challenges;
- promoting a broad-based and wide-ranging people-centred partnership.

Work on the partnership follows on from adoption by the European Council in December 2005 of a strategy for Africa up to 2015. At a ministerial troika meeting in Bamako in December 2005, the African partners expressed their wish to establish a joint strategy.

Sustainable management of forests in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Council was briefed by the Belgian delegation on the role of the international community with regard to the challenges of sustainable management of the forests in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Ratification of the revised ACP-EU partnership agreement

The Council was briefed by the Commission on the state of ratification of the revised ACP-EU partnership agreement and an EU internal agreement on the tenth European development fund.

EVENTS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL

The following events took place in the margins of the Council:

Monday 14 May 2007

- European Defence Agency steering board;
- meeting with representatives of the Arab League;
- Defence ministers' troika meeting with Norway, Turkey, Iceland, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- ministerial troika meeting with South Africa.

Tuesday 15 May 2007

- Troika meeting on the-European Economic Area (EEA)
- EEA joint council
- Ministerial troika meeting with the African Union

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

See General Affairs press release 9470/07
