



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESS RELEASE

2824th Council meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

External relations

Luxembourg, 15-16 October 2007

President **Mr Luís AMADO**
Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal

* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2823rd meeting on General Affairs (13900/07).

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

*The Council strongly condemned the brutal crackdown on demonstrators in **Burma/Myanmar**. In view of the seriousness of the current situation and in solidarity with the people of Burma/Myanmar, the Council deemed it necessary to increase direct pressure on the regime through stronger measures as well as additional restrictive measures on exports, imports and investments in the sectors of logs and timber and mining of metals, minerals, precious and semi precious stones. It will therefore adopt a package of measures that do not harm the general population but that target those responsible for the violent crackdown and the overall political stalemate in the country. The EU stands ready to review, amend or reinforce these measures, in the light of developments on the ground and the results of the good offices mission of UN Special Envoy Gambari. The Council requested relevant bodies to elaborate further restrictive measures, including a ban on new investments. The Council expressed its determination to assist the people of Burma/Myanmar further on their path to democracy, security and prosperity.*

*The Council reviewed the human rights situation in **Uzbekistan** and expressed continued serious concern. At the same time it welcomed some positive steps. It decided to renew the arms embargo and visa restrictions for 12 months . With a view to encouraging the Uzbek authorities to take positive steps to improve the human rights situation, the Council decided that the visa restrictions would not apply for a period of six months, at which point the Council will review if the Uzbek authorities have made progress towards meeting a series of conditions in the field of human rights, including full unimpeded access to prisoners, the operation of NGOs without constraints and the release of human rights defenders.*

*The Council decided that the EU will conduct a bridging military operation in **Eastern Chad and North Eastern Central African Republic (EUFOR TCHAD/RCA)** in the framework of the European security and defence policy. This follows the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1778 (2007), which approves the deployment in Chad and the CAR of a multidimensional presence and authorises the EU to provide the military element. By addressing the regional dimension of the Darfur crisis, the deployment of EUFOR TCHAD/RCA and a UN police mission, in parallel to UNAMID in Sudan, is a crucial step to facilitate a long-lasting solution to the conflict in Darfur.*

*The Council welcomed the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and of the Interim Agreement with **Montenegro** as an important step on the country's path towards the EU. The Agreements were signed on 15 October in the margins of the Council meeting.*

*Concerning **Libya**, the Council expressed its satisfaction with the conclusion of the case of the Bulgarian medical personnel in connection with the HIV-AIDS infection in Benghazi. Acknowledging the potential of EU-Libya cooperation in many areas of common interest, it agreed that the EU and Libya should as soon as possible open discussions on an EU-Libya framework agreement which will include areas of mutual interest such as human rights and migration, and invited the Commission to present draft negotiating directives to this effect.*

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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.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

none

PARTICIPANTS

The governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr Karel DE GUCHT Minister for Foreign Affairs

Bulgaria:

Mr Ivailo KALFIN Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Czech Republic:

Mr Alexandr VONDRA Deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for European Affairs

Mr Karel SCHWARZENBERG Minister for Foreign Affairs

Denmark:

Mr. Per Stig MØLLER Minister for Foreign Affairs

Germany:

Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ireland:

Mr Dermot AHERN Minister for Foreign Affairs

Greece:

Ms Dora BAKOYANNI Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Ioannis VALINAKIS State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr Miguel Ángel MORATINOS Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

France:

Mr Bernard KOUCHNER Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

Italy:

Mr Massimo D'ALEMA Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Cyprus:

Ms Erato KOZAKOU-MARCOULLIS Minister for Foreign Affairs

Latvia:

Mr. Artis PABRIKS Minister for Foreign Affairs

Lithuania:

Mr Petras VAITIEKŪNAS Minister for Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN Deputy Prime Minister, Minister with responsibility for Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Hungary:

Ms Kinga GÖNCZ Minister for Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr Richard CACHIA CARUANA Permanent Representative

Netherlands:

Mr Maxime VERHAGEN Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Frans TIMMERMANS Minister for European Affairs

Austria:

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK Federal Minister for European and International Affairs

Poland:

Ms Anna Elżbieta FOTYGA Minister for Foreign Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Luís AMADO Ministro de Estado, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Manuel LOBO ANTUNES

State Secretary for European Affairs, attached to the
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Romania:

Mr Adrian CIOROIANU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovenia:

Mr Dimitrij RUPEL

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovakia:

Mr Ján KUBIŠ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Finland:

Mr Ilkka KANERVA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ms Astrid THORS

Minister for Migration and European Affairs

Sweden:

Mr Carl BILDT

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM

Minister for European Affairs

United Kingdom:

Mr David MILIBAND

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Mr Jim MURPHY

Minister of State for Europe

Commission:

Mr Olli REHN

Member

Mr Louis MICHEL

Member

Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER

Member

General Secretariat of the Council:

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

ITEMS DEBATED**RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA**

The Council discussed preparations for the EU-Russia summit which will take place in Mafra, Portugal on 26 October, the 20th to be held under the EU-Russia partnership and cooperation agreement.

The agenda for the summit is expected to include the situation in the EU and in Russia; progress on the four EU-Russia "common spaces"¹ and future perspectives for EU-Russia relations; and international and regional issues, including Kosovo, the Middle East peace process, Iran, Afghanistan and Moldova.

Discussions are also expected to encourage continued efforts to help find a solution to Russia's bans on Polish imports so as to allow negotiations to start on a new framework agreement for EU-Russia relations.

¹ Common economic space, common space of freedom, security and justice, common space of external security, common space of research and education, including cultural aspects.

UZBEKISTAN - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council remains seriously concerned about the human rights situation in Uzbekistan and recalls its position to that effect set out in previous Council Conclusions.
2. The Council welcomes the increased willingness of the Uzbek authorities to engage in dialogue with the EU, and the positive developments which have occurred in EU-Uzbek relations in the course of this year: the holding of two rounds of experts' talks on the Andijan events and the first round of a human rights dialogue between the EU and Uzbekistan; the engagement by the Uzbek authorities to continue this dialogue on a regular basis; and the conditional release of the human rights defenders Ms. Niazova and Ms. Turaeva. The Council welcomes the recent abolition of the death penalty in Uzbekistan and the introduction of habeas corpus into Uzbek law, and looks forward to the implementation of these measures.
3. The Council reiterates its desire to pursue a comprehensive dialogue with Uzbekistan in a number of areas. It looks forward to further cooperation on the implementation of the EU Strategy on Central Asia, which should provide a new momentum to EU relations with Uzbekistan. The EU is ready to develop substantial political dialogue and to strengthen cooperation with Uzbekistan in all the areas identified in the Strategy, including human rights, judicial and prison reform, education, trade and economic reform, energy, climate change and water management and security, as well as important international issues.
4. The Council calls on the Uzbek authorities to make further progress in the area of human rights. It urges Uzbekistan to implement fully its international obligations relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as rule of law and, in particular, to allow full unimpeded access by relevant international bodies to prisoners; to engage effectively with the UN Special Rapporteurs to Uzbekistan; to let all NGOs, including Human Rights Watch operate without constraints in Uzbekistan; to release human rights defenders from detention and cease their harassment; to engage positively on human rights issues in the context of the forthcoming EU-Uzbekistan Cooperation Committee. The reform of the judiciary, law enforcement and police law should be pursued. Progress towards these goals will be evaluated on the basis of a report by the Heads of Missions, which will include an assessment of the upcoming Presidential elections.

5. The Council decided to renew for a 12 months period the arms embargo set out in the Common Position 2006/787/CFSP and the visa restrictions for individuals listed in the annex of Common Position 2007/338/CFSP. With a view to encouraging the Uzbek authorities to take positive steps to improve the human rights situation and taking into account their commitments, the Council decided that the visa restrictions would not apply for a period of six months, at which point the Council will review if the Uzbek authorities have made progress towards meeting the conditions mentioned in paragraph 4 of these Conclusions. The Council may decide to apply the visa restrictions earlier if necessary, in light of the actions of the Uzbek authorities in the area of human rights. It also stands ready to lift all restrictive measures once Uzbekistan fulfils the conditions set out in these and previous Council conclusions. The Council stands ready to assist Uzbekistan to fulfil these objectives."

CHAD/CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC/SUDAN - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU strongly supports the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) ongoing efforts to solving the conflict in Darfur within a comprehensive and regional approach. Following the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1778 (2007), which approves the deployment in Chad and the Central African Republic of a multidimensional presence and authorizes the EU to provide the military element of it, the EU will conduct a bridging military operation in Eastern Chad and North Eastern Central African Republic (EUFOR TCHAD/RCA) in the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy, for a period of one year from the date that its initial operational capability is declared. This deployment has been welcomed by both the governments of Chad and the Central African Republic. By addressing the regional dimension of the Darfur crisis, the deployment of EUFOR TCHAD/RCA and a UN police mission, in parallel to UNAMID in Sudan, is a crucial step to facilitate a long lasting solution to the conflict in Darfur.
2. The Council welcomes the designation of Lieutenant General (IE) Patrick Nash as the Operation Commander and Brigadier General (FR) Jean-Philippe Ganascia as the Force Commander. The Operation Headquarters of EUFOR TCHAD/RCA will be located at Mont Valérien (France). The Council underlines its determination to commit the necessary means, in order to allow the Operation Commander to fulfil his mandate with the necessary forces and capabilities.
3. The deployment of EUFOR TCHAD/RCA is a concrete expression of the EU's commitment to actively work for the improvement of the security situation in Eastern Chad and North-Eastern Central African Republic, by contributing to the protection of refugees and IDPs, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance, helping to create the conditions for displaced people to return to their places of origin voluntarily, as well as contributing to ensure MINURCAT's security and freedom to operate. EUFOR TCHAD/RCA will be conducted in consultation with the authorities of the countries concerned. The operation will be conducted with full independence, impartiality and neutrality. The planning of the operation will continue to take place in full coordination with the UN and in consultation with African partners. Potential third states contributors are also being consulted.

4. The establishment of EUFOR TCHAD/RCA forms part of a comprehensive EU effort to reinforce support for refugees and displaced people in Chad and the Central African Republic, including through continuing humanitarian assistance to both countries and the financing of substantial rehabilitation and reconstruction work in the zones of return for displaced persons. In this context, the Council welcomes the Commission's intention to implement transitional programmes of recovery and rehabilitation, covering reconciliation oriented activities, support to the voluntary return of IDPs and to the rehabilitation in their places of origin, and support to local governance. In Chad, the Commission will contribute substantially to the UN programme for the establishment of the UN Police force, which will train and equip Chadian police officers as well as deploy them in the refugee and IDP camps in Eastern Chad.
5. The Council urges all states in the region, in particular Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic, to work to promote regional stability and ensure security along their common borders, and in particular to respect their engagement not to support rebel movements operating from their territory against one of the other countries. Similarly, the EU calls on Sudan and Chad to intensify efforts to normalise their relations, in accordance with the Tripoli and Riyadh agreements. The EU welcomes the constructive role played by other regional players, including Libya and Saudi Arabia, and urges them to continue. The Council also calls on the states in the region to promote internal peace and reconciliation. In this regard, it welcomes the recent developments concerning the internal political dialogue in Chad and encourages all parties to pursue the democratic process.
6. The Council recalls that sustainable peace in Darfur is only possible once a widely acceptable political settlement for Sudan has been successfully put in place. In order that Sudan be peaceful and remain united, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) will need to be implemented in full. While taking note of the progress achieved so far, the Council notes with concern that the implementation of some provisions of the CPA have repeatedly been delayed and urges the parties to step efforts to accelerate their implementation. In this respect, the Council is deeply concerned about the recent announcement by SPLM to suspend its participation in the Government of National Unity and calls on all parties to re-engage in the implementation of the CPA, which is of fundamental importance for the future of Sudan.

7. The Council expresses its utmost concern at and firmly condemns the increasing levels of violence in Darfur, and in particular the appalling attack on AU Peacekeepers in Haskanita, which was subsequently burned down and looted. The Council demands all parties to stop all violence and commit themselves to an unconditional, effective and verifiable cessation of hostilities as a necessary condition for the political process to succeed. The Council stands ready to consider further measures, notably in the UN framework, to ensure humanitarian deliveries and protection of civilians. As regards the killings of AU peacekeepers, the Council calls on the Cease Fire Commission to fully investigate the attack and to hold those responsible to account. This incident also stresses the need for the urgent deployment of the UN support package to AMIS and UNAMID. Expressing its appreciation for all contributions that have been pledged to UNAMID, the Council calls for an acceleration of the ongoing efforts to this end, and in particular urges the Sudanese government to give its full collaboration to the UN and the AU to ensure that UNAMID be deployed as early as possible. The Council reiterates its readiness to consider further measures, notably in the UN framework, against any party which obstructs the implementation of the UN support package and the deployment of UNAMID.
8. The Council welcomes the outcome of the High Level meeting on Darfur that took place in New York on 21 September as an expression of the international community's shared commitment to work towards lasting peace in Darfur. It reiterates its support for the mediation under the auspices of the UN and the AU and looks forward to the start of talks on 27 October. The EU confirms its readiness to provide all possible support to the talks, including through contributions to the Trust Fund, and also welcomes the commitments already made by Member States and the Commission. The Council recalls its position that any party failing to constructively engage in the peace process is to be considered as an obstacle to peace and that it will promote appropriate further measures against it, notably in the UN framework, in line with Security Council Resolution 1591."

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The Council adopted a joint action on Operation EUFOR TCHAD/RCA.

The operation will cover a period of one year.

Lt General Patrick NASH (Ireland) has been appointed EU Operation Commander. Brigadier General Jean-Philippe GANASCIA has been appointed EU Force Commander.

The EU Operational Headquarters will be located at Mont Valérien (France).

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Council discussed developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the light of the deteriorating security situation in the east of the country, particularly in North Kivu.

On 15 October, the Presidency, in a declaration on behalf of the EU (see document *13949/07*) voiced grave concern at the continuing violence and instability there. It called on all the parties involved to cease hostilities immediately in order to prevent any military escalation and avert any further deterioration in the humanitarian situation on the ground.

BURMA/MYANMAR - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU strongly condemns the brutal crackdown on demonstrators in Burma/Myanmar. It recalls its earlier declarations in which it urged the Burmese authorities to exercise restraint in the face of peaceful protests. The EU regrets that these calls have gone unheeded and regrets that arrests have continued over the recent days.
2. The EU demands that the authorities immediately cease all violent repression and intimidation and that they release all those arrested since mid-August, as well as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners.
3. The EU welcomes the UN Security Council Presidential statement of 11 October on Burma/Myanmar. The EU strongly supports the actions by the UN, in particular the good offices mission of UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari. The EU backs further active UN engagement, including by the Security Council. The EU looks forward to a new visit by the Special Envoy in the coming weeks.
4. The EU welcomes the special session of the UN Human Rights Council and the adoption by consensus of a Resolution strongly deploring the continued violent repression and urging the authorities of Burma/Myanmar to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
5. The EU also calls upon the government to disclose information about the whereabouts of those arrested since mid-August and to allow international agencies access to them. The EU also calls for a thorough and impartial investigation of the deaths of demonstrators as well as other serious and continuous violations of human rights, and for those liable to be held to account. In this regard, the EU urges the authorities to cooperate fully with UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar, Sergio Pinheiro, including through the urgent facilitation of a visit by him to Burma/Myanmar.

6. In line with the Presidency statement of 25 September and in view of the seriousness of the current situation and in solidarity with the people of Burma/Myanmar, the EU deems it necessary to increase direct pressure on the regime through stronger measures as well as the following additional restrictive measures: an export ban on equipment to the sectors of logs and timber and mining of metals, minerals, precious and semi precious stones; an import ban of products of the sectors mentioned before; and an investment ban in these sectors. It will therefore adopt a package of measures that do not harm the general population but that target those responsible for the violent crackdown and the overall political stalemate in the country. The EU stands ready to review, amend or reinforce these measures, in the light of developments on the ground and the results of the Good Offices Mission of the United Nations Special Envoy to Burma/Myanmar Mr. Ibrahim Gambari. The Council requests relevant bodies to elaborate further restrictive measures, including a ban on new investments.
7. The EU confirms the continuation of its substantial humanitarian aid programmes aimed at the most vulnerable populations of Burma/Myanmar and Burmese refugees in neighbouring countries. The EU stands ready to increase this assistance, subject to further assessments of the humanitarian situation. In this context, the EU urges the government to keep channels for the delivery of assistance open and calls on the authorities to cooperate with international actors in this regard.
8. The EU welcomes the unanimous condemnation of developments and the efforts by ASEAN and neighbours of Burma/Myanmar to positively influence the Burmese authorities. As the situation requires the sustained engagement of the UN and the support of the international community and all regional actors, the EU encourages all of Burma's neighbours to maintain pressure for a credible and fully participatory reform process.
9. The EU urges the Burmese authorities to recognize that a return to the situation before the recent demonstrations is both unacceptable and unsustainable. Only a genuine process of internal reform and reconciliation with the involvement of the opposition will deliver stability, democracy and prosperity to the country. The EU supports steps towards such an inclusive process leading to democracy, full respect for human rights and the rule of law.

10. The EU again expresses its readiness to assist Burma/Myanmar in its process of transition. The EU regrets that the Burmese government has made this impossible so far. Should this situation improve, the EU stands ready to review the restrictive measures, to engage with Burma in its development and to find new areas of cooperation.
11. The EU is determined to assist the people of Burma/Myanmar further on their path to democracy, security and prosperity."

IRAN - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council discussed the situation concerning Iran's nuclear programme. The Council reaffirmed its support for efforts to find a negotiated long-term solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. The Council gave its full backing to the efforts of the High Representative on behalf of the EU and the international community to encourage Iran to return to talks on long-term arrangements.
2. The Council underlined its continuing commitment to the comprehensive package proposed to Iran in June 2006. This package, among many elements, reaffirmed Iran's right to develop nuclear energy in conformity with its obligations under the NPT and included active support to build new Light Water Power Reactors using state of the art technology. Iran still has the option to re-enter negotiations on that basis, in line with the double track approach.
3. The Council welcomed the agreement between Iran and the IAEA to resolve all questions concerning Iran's past nuclear activities and noted that full and timely implementation by Iran of the IAEA work plan, as interpreted by the Director General's report, would constitute a significant step forward. As stated in the IAEA Director General's report, confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme requires that the Agency be able to provide assurances regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities, through the implementation of the Additional Protocol and required transparency measures. The Council urged Iran to fully implement the provisions of the Comprehensive Safeguard Agreement, including its subsidiary arrangements, implement the Additional Protocol pending its ratification, and to provide the Agency all information and cooperation requested. Moreover, the Council expressed its hope that the Director General of the IAEA would be able to show, in his report in November, a positive outcome of his efforts in line with the requirements of the workplan agreed with Iran.

4. The Council regretted that Iran had not complied with the unanimous call of the international community to suspend all enrichment-related activity and had not accepted the offer of negotiation. The Council reaffirmed its support for Security Council Resolutions 1696, 1737 and 1747 and underlined that the Security Council had expressed its intention in Resolutions 1737 and 1747 to adopt further appropriate measures under Article 41, Chapter VII of the UN Charter should Iran further fail to suspend its enrichment activities. The Council welcomed the 28 September statement by the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, the United Kingdom, China, Russia and the United States with the support of the High Representative of the European Union. The Council agreed that the EU will consider what additional measures it might take in order to support the UN process and the shared objectives of the international community, and invited the relevant Council bodies to provide timely advice."

ZIMBABWE

Over lunch, ministers discussed the situation in Zimbabwe, on the basis of a presentation by Minister Luís Amado following his recent visit to Southern Africa. Ministers expressed concern at the deterioration of the situation in both economic and humanitarian terms.

RELATIONS WITH THE WESTERN BALKANS - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"MONTENEGRO

The Council welcomed the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and of the Interim Agreement with Montenegro as an important step on the country's path towards the EU. It looked forward to intensifying cooperation with Montenegro through the comprehensive framework offered by these Agreements and the other mechanisms of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The Council highlighted the importance of Montenegro establishing a sustained and effective track record in implementing these Agreements. It encouraged Montenegro to push ahead with its reform agenda and called on all political forces to unite their efforts to accelerate that process. It urged Montenegro to intensify its efforts on the priorities set out in the European Partnership. In particular, it stressed the importance of further determined action and sustained progress in strengthening administrative capacity and in the area of rule of law, including the fight against organised crime and corruption, as well as the establishment of an independent and accountable judiciary.

The Council also underlined the importance to adopt, in a timely way and in a spirit of consensus, a Constitution that complies with international standards and the recommendations of the Council of Europe and its Venice Commission.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The Council expressed its full support to HR/EUSR Miroslav Lajcak, and his efforts to advance reforms which are essential for Bosnia and Herzegovina to move forward, in particular the police reform. The Council reiterated that agreement on police reform in accordance with the EU's three principles remains the key priority and one of the necessary conditions for further progress towards a Stabilisation and Association Agreement and the European Union.

The Council regretted the fact that not all political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina have shown willingness to come to an agreement on the basis of the three EU principles. The Council noted some recent developments in terms of political engagement and urged the political leaders of the country to show responsibility vis-à-vis the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their desire to advance towards the EU.

The Council took note of the upcoming PIC meeting on 30 and 31 October 2007 as the next opportunity for international community to take stock of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Council reiterated the need for Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet all the four conditions for the conclusion of the negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement as set out in the Council conclusions of 12 December 2005.

The Council reconfirmed its full support to Bosnia and Herzegovina's European perspective. Recalling the European Council conclusions of December 2006, it reaffirmed that the pace of progress on the EU path depends on the country's own merits.

KOSOVO

The Council expressed its full support for the Troika process and for the EU's Representative therein, Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger. The Council welcomed the intense pace of activity and the constructive atmosphere of the first rounds of talks. Noting that the Troika process will be concluded by the Contact Group reporting to the UN Secretary General by 10 December, the Council urged both parties to engage in the remaining negotiations with creativity, boldness and in a spirit of compromise and to make every effort to secure a negotiated settlement of the status of Kosovo."

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Ministers also met Carla del Ponte, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), to discuss cooperation with the ICTY.

LIBYA - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council expressed its satisfaction for the conclusion of the case of the Bulgarian medical personnel in connection with the HIV-AIDS infection in Benghazi.
2. The Council expressed its sincere appreciation for the efforts taken by all those involved in bringing this case to an end and acknowledged the Libyan authorities' constructive attitude.
3. The Council reiterated its solidarity with the Libyan children victims of the HIV-AIDS infection in Benghazi and confirmed the EU's commitment to provide medical assistance and care for them through the HIV Action Plan and the Benghazi International Fund, on the basis of voluntary contributions.
4. The Council acknowledged the importance of Libya in the Mediterranean region and in Africa, as well as the potential of EU-Libya cooperation in many areas of common interest.
5. The Council agreed that the policy of engagement with Libya which it decided in 2004 should be reinforced with a view to enhancing EU-Libya relations. The objective of this policy of engagement will be to set EU-Libya relations into an appropriate, coherent long-term framework that will take into account the interests of Libya and of the EU and its Member States.
6. The Council agreed that the EU and Libya should as soon as possible open discussions on an EU-Libya framework agreement which will include areas of mutual interest, such as human rights, migration among others, and invites the Commission to present draft negotiating directives to this effect according to the fundamental principles inspiring the foreign policy of the European Union."

IRAQ - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Iraq remains a central challenge for the international community. As a major global player, the Council reaffirms the EU's support to a secure, stable, democratic, prosperous and unified Iraq and reiterates its commitment to the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq.
2. The EU will continue to play a major role in supporting the Iraqi government in its work to bring stability, security and prosperity to all of its citizens, including through practical assistance. The EU is committed to enhancing its political engagement with Iraq and with its neighbours, as well as supporting the UN and other international actors in their efforts.
3. The Council warmly welcomes the unanimous adoption on 10 August 2007 of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1770, renewing and extending the mandate of UNAMI. The Council reaffirms its strong support to the central role of the UN in Iraq. In this connection it congratulates Mr. Staffan de Mistura on his appointment as the Secretary General's Special Representative for Iraq and Head of UNAMI and assures him of EU's support in leading UNAMI's work in Iraq to implement the new mandate. This mandate is of utmost importance for the stabilisation of Iraq. In addition to UNAMI's existing mandate in areas such as political dialogue, national reconciliation, economic reform, human rights and the Rule of Law, UNSCR 1770 adds important new fields: notably to advise, support and assist the Government of Iraq in areas such as facilitating the regional dialogue within the framework of the neighbouring countries process, implementing the International Compact with Iraq and strengthening donor coordination including with the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI). The EU is actively engaged in many of these areas and will continue to work closely with the UN. However, further improvement of the security situation will be an essential element in the effective implementation of the UNAMI mandate.

4. The Council trusts that, based on its mandate, UNAMI will continue to contribute to engaging all members of the democratic institutions in Iraq to participate actively and responsibly in an inclusive political process. It calls upon relevant Iraqi institutions to advance in the nomination of governorate election officers on the basis of rules that are in conformity with international best practice for a transparent, inclusive, independent and impartial process. Fundamental decisions regarding the achieving of national reconciliation 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.
5. The Council welcomes the support by the participants at the High Level Meeting on Iraq in New York, on 22 September, for a broader UN role and for the International Compact with Iraq.
6. The Council strongly encourages the Government of Iraq together with all parties to make substantial political progress on the promotion of national reconciliation, which is the key to sustained improvements in security, and to curb the deterioration of the humanitarian conditions in Iraq which has resulted in an estimated 2.2 million internally displaced persons. The Council recognises the heavy burden borne by neighbouring countries, particularly Jordan and Syria, urges the Iraqi Government to undertake appropriate measures to assist Iraqi refugees and those displaced within the country and assures that the EU will continue to play its part. Rapid humanitarian action is required by the international community and the Iraqi Government if the evolving humanitarian crisis is to be contained. The EU recalls the important role of UNHCR, ICRC, IOM, supported by Member States and Community instruments (including ECHO), as well as the need for strong support to the UN/OCHA Strategic Framework for Humanitarian Action in Iraq.
7. The Council calls upon the Iraqi authorities to take the necessary measures to ensure the protection of the civilian population. In this respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Iraqis, including women and persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities, should be protected and promoted. The EU stands ready to continue its support to the Iraqi authorities in the fields of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

8. The Council welcomes the Ministerial Conference of Iraq's Neighbouring Countries to be held in Istanbul in early November. The Council underlines that the dialogue and cooperation between Iraq and its neighbours is crucial to achieve the stabilisation of the region and a peaceful and prosperous future for Iraq. It encourages Iraq and its neighbours to build on the progress made by the working groups on energy, refugees and security. The European Union reiterates its offer to assist and provide expertise in this process. In this connection it welcomes the proposal by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during the meeting on Iraq in New York on 22 September 2007 to create a support mechanism based in Baghdad to enhance regional dialogue. In the regional process as well as in bilateral relations, the EU encourages all neighbouring countries to play a constructive role in contributing to peace and stability in Iraq.
9. The Council reiterates its strong support to the International Compact with Iraq. It believes that the implementation of the ambitious programme set out in the Compact with Iraq demands strong Iraqi leadership and ownership and requires inclusiveness of the Compact process, broad involvement of the international community and active participation of Iraq's neighbours and partners in the region. Efficient co-ordination of donor efforts is of utmost importance. The Council reaffirms EU's readiness to continue developing a close cooperation and partnership with Iraq - also through the IRFFI - in accordance with the priorities indicated in the International Compact and Iraq's National Development Strategy.
10. The Council looks forward to work on this agenda being taken forward with renewed energy and vigour and to further discussions.
11. The Council strongly condemns the attack on 3 October on the Polish ambassador to Iraq, Edward Pietrzyk, which killed at least two people and seriously wounded the ambassador, who is representing the EU Presidency in Iraq."

MIDDLE EAST**Middle East peace process - *Council conclusions***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council warmly welcomes the present opportunity for progress on Israel-Palestinian peace. It commends the efforts of Palestinian President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and encourages them to take courageous steps in their political dialogue. This dialogue must achieve concrete results, leading to meaningful final status negotiations and to their shared goal of a two-state solution with the establishment of a independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours.

2. The Council expresses its full support to the upcoming international meeting as set out in the Quartet statement of 23 September 2007. The Council expects this meeting to provide support to the parties in their bilateral discussions and negotiations in order to move forward urgently on a successful path to a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza that will unite all Palestinians. It is a crucial opportunity for regional and international partners to effectively support a comprehensive Middle East Peace Process. It emphasizes the leading role of the Quartet in the preparation of the meeting and the implementation of its conclusions. Broad and constructive involvement by Arab States will be crucial. In this context, the EU supports the action taken forward on the Arab Peace Initiative. The Council invites the EU High Representative in full association with the Commission to examine, and where necessary, re-focus EU activities with a view to developing an EU action plan in order to further support the parties in their ongoing negotiations and the subsequent implementation period.

3. In order to consolidate the progress achieved so far and to fulfil the potential of the current process, the Council calls upon the parties to desist from any actions that threaten the viability of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement, in conformity with international law. Progress in negotiations, enhanced cooperation on the ground and building Palestinian institutions should be concurrent and mutually-reinforcing processes and lead to improvements in the day to day life of the Palestinian population. The EU urges the parties to take additional steps to meet previous commitments, including those under the Road Map and the Agreement on Movement and Access.

4. The Council reiterates its full support to President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad. The Council endorses the extension of the Temporary International Mechanism until December 31, 2007 and stands ready to maintain its high levels of economic and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians and stresses that for this assistance to be effective in promoting economic development, it should accompany a credible political process. The EU reiterates the Quartet's call upon all countries able to do so to urgently provide financial support to the Palestinian Authority and undertakes to work with partners to facilitate the transition to direct international assistance as soon as possible. The Council underlines the importance of the donors' meeting in December and welcomes the offer of France to host it.
5. The Council supports the work of Quartet Representative Tony Blair in developing with the Palestinian Authority government a multi-year agenda to strengthen institutions, help to create a climate of law and order and promote economic development, and looks forward to his next progress report.
6. The re-engagement and expansion of EUPOL COPPS is an important element in the improvement of security. To this end the Council expects Israel to provide accreditation to the mission without further delay.
7. The Council reiterates its grave concern at the humanitarian situation in Gaza. It underlines the importance of uninterrupted emergency and humanitarian assistance without obstruction and calls for the continued provision of essential services. The Council reiterates its call on all parties to work urgently for the opening of the crossings in and out of Gaza for both humanitarian reasons and commercial flows. This is essential to ensure the viability of the Palestinian economy and to improve living conditions for the Palestinian people."

Lebanon - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council condemns in the strongest terms the car bomb attack perpetrated on 19 September in Beirut, which claimed the life of six people including Member of Parliament Antoine Ghanem. The Council welcomes the Security Council's decision to allow the UNIIIC to assist the Lebanese authorities in investigating Ghanem's case.

2. The Council underlines that this further destabilisation attempt on the eve of Presidential elections should not be allowed to weaken the Lebanese people's resolve to take a firm stand against violence. It urges all Lebanese parties and all actors in the region to refrain from any activities that would further endanger the political stability of Lebanon.
3. The Council is following closely the electoral process in Lebanon and has taken note that the Parliamentary session to elect a new President of the Republic has been adjourned to October 23. The Council calls for the holding of free and fair presidential elections, without foreign interference and in conformity with the deadline set by the Constitution. The Council hopes that in the forthcoming weeks the Lebanese parties will reach a solution through dialogue and in a spirit of consensus and in full respect of the Lebanese democratic institutions and constitutional norms, thus breaking the political deadlock in the country.
4. The Council welcomes the end of the crisis caused by extremist militants entrenched in Nahr el Bared Palestinian refugee camp and reiterates its full support to the Lebanese Government and Armed Forces. The Council also welcomes the formal commitment of the Lebanese Government to rebuild the camp and, in this context, stresses the importance of the conference chaired by Prime Minister Siniora on September 10th on the launching of the relief, recovery and reconstruction project of the camp, underlines its readiness to support those efforts and encourages the continuation of the work of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee. The Council recalls the EU's long-standing support to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.
5. The Council recalls previous statements and remains determined to reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence, according notably to UNSC Resolutions 1559, 1680, 1701 and 1757. The EU commends the prolongation of the UNIFIL which took place last August and in which EU Member States are major contributors. The EU furthermore welcomes the preparatory work for the Special International Tribunal."

OTHER BUSINESS**Trade relations with ACP countries**

The Council was briefed by the Commission on negotiations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of countries and regions on economic partnership agreements (EPAs).

The agreements are intended to replace trade preferences that involve lower customs tariffs granted by the EU to the ACPs. The trade preferences are contrary to the rules of the WTO but are tolerated under a derogation that expires at the end of 2007. Negotiations on the EPAs, which started in 2002, must therefore be concluded by the end of the year.

EVENTS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL

Signature of SAA and of interim agreement with Montenegro

An EU-Montenegro stabilisation and association agreement (SAA) and interim agreement was signed on 15 October in the margins of the Council meeting . The Council welcomed the signature as an important step on the Montenegro's path towards the EU (see Council conclusions on the Western Balkans, page 20.). This step was possible after consultations to overcome difficulties related to the spelling of the euro in the Cyrillic alphabet. On this issue, the Council adopted the following declaration:

"In view of the urgency of signing the SAA between Montenegro and the EU, the Council declares that "EUR" had been used in the Bulgarian version of the Agreement between Montenegro and the European Union because there is still a divergence of views on the way to transliterate the word (in Latin characters) "EURO" in the Cyrillic alphabet. This shall in no way be a precedent for any other legal acts of the European Union. A decision will have to be made as soon as possible in order to solve this technical-linguistic problem, in line with the conclusions of the Madrid European Council of December 1995".

Meetings with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

The following meetings took place:

- 8th meeting of the EU-Armenia cooperation council
- 8th meeting of the EU-Azerbaijan cooperation council
- 8th meeting of the EU-Georgia cooperation council

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

See press release 13900/07.
