



COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

AGENDA OF MAIN ACTIVITIES*

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* This document was prepared under the sole responsibility of the Press Office. Information may be subject to change depending on further developments.

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Sunday 13 July 2008

Paris Summit for the Mediterranean

The Union for the Mediterranean project presented by France will be launched officially on 13 July at the Paris Summit, to which the Heads of State or Government of all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean and of the countries of the European Union will be invited. The aim of the Summit is to give a new drive both to the neighbourhood policy and to the Barcelona Process and to renew their dynamism and scope.

This approach comprises three essential aspects: support at the highest political level, real joint governance by both sides and concrete projects with a regional dimension.

The Presidency proposes that four main topics be addressed:

- *food security, water and energy;*
- *protection of the environment, civil protection and maritime safety;*
- *education, research, culture and mobility;*
- *political dialogue.*

Background

After Italy, Spain and France called in Rome in December 2007 for a Union for the Mediterranean aimed at "linking Europe and Africa around the countries on the Mediterranean and at creating an equal footing partnership between the countries of the Mediterranean basin", the European Council in March 2008 approved the principle of what is to be called "The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean".

The Commission submitted a communication on the subject to the European Council in June 2008 and in particular a proposal for developing the political and institutional dimension of relations between the EU and its Mediterranean partners. On this basis, the EU conducted the necessary consultations with all Euro-Mediterranean partners with a view to preparing a joint declaration to be adopted at the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean.

Further information

- Commission communication "The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean", COM(2008) 319 final
- European Council of 19 and 20 June 2008: Presidency conclusions (11018/08), paragraphs 65-67
- French Presidency Internet site: <http://www.ue2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil>

Event

Meeting of Heads of State or Government, Grand Palais, Paris (15.30). A press conference is scheduled for 18.45. Mr. Javier SOLANA, Secretary-General of the Council, High Representative for the CFSP will attend the meeting.

The Summit will be preceded by a meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs which will also be held in the Grand Palais (9.30).

Contacts

Press Officers:

Nicolas Kerleroux, tel.: +32 2 281 8239, nicolas.kereloux@consilium.europa.eu François Head, tel.: +32 2 281 6083, francois.head@consilium.europa.eu

French Presidency: Marine de Carné, tel.: +32 475 579 095,

Marine.de-carne@diplomatie.gouv.fr.

Spokesperson for Mr. Solana: Cristina Gallach; tel.: +32 476 936 426

Tuesday 15 July 2008

"Health check" of the Common Agricultural Policy

The Agriculture Council will again hold a policy discussion on the set of measures proposed by the Commission in the context of the "health check" of the reformed Common Agricultural Policy currently being conducted by the European Union.

The aim of this legislative package is to introduce the adjustments necessary to simplify the single payment scheme and improve its effectiveness, to bring agricultural production more into line with the reality of global markets and to be able to meet new challenges such as climate change, water management and bioenergies.

Background

Following the conclusions adopted by the Council on 17 March 2008 concerning the Commission communication on "Preparing for the health check of the CAP reform", the Commission submitted its proposals for legislative acts to the Ministers for Agriculture at their informal meeting in Brdo, Slovenia, on 27 May 2008.

The Council (Agriculture) held an initial discussion on the proposed measures at its meeting in Luxembourg on 23 June.

The French Presidency intends to continue this work, in particular in discussions at ministerial level in July and September, in order to reach political agreement on this matter in November 2008.

Further information

- Legislative package put forward by the Commission containing the following proposals (9656/08):
 - a regulation establishing common rules for direct support schemes for farmers under the common agricultural policy and establishing certain support schemes for farmers
 - a regulation on modifications to the common agricultural policy by amending Regulations (EC) No 320/2006, (EC) No 1234/2007, (EC) No 3/2008 and (EC) No [...]/2008
 - a regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)
 - a decision amending Decision 2006/144/EC on the Community strategic guidelines for rural development (programming period 2007 to 2013)
- Commission website: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/healthcheck/index_en.htm

Event

Meeting of the Council (Agriculture) - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (11.00).

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

Please consult the following link for information concerning this Council:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_applications/applications/transparency-council/index.ASP?lang=en&cmsid=1119

Contacts

Press officer: Carole Micmacher, tel.: +32 2 281 53 89,

carole.micmacher@consilium.europa.eu

French Presidency : Michèle-Ann Okolotowicz, tel. +32 476 760 820,

michele-ann.okolotowicz@diplomatie.gouv.fr.

Tuesday 15 July 2008

Genetically modified organisms: soya and cotton

The Agriculture Council is due to decide by qualified majority whether or not it will authorise the marketing of a genetically modified variety of soybean and a genetically modified variety of cotton.

The purpose of the two proposals submitted to the Council is to permit the use of these genetically modified products for the same purposes as any other types of soybean and cotton with the exception of cultivation. The authorisation would apply for a period of ten years.

Background

In April and August 2007 respectively, the European Food Safety Authority gave a favourable opinion on this, stating that it was unlikely that the marketing of these products would have undesirable effects on human or animal health or on the environment.

On 12 February 2008 the Commission consulted the competent regulatory committee (Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health), which was unable to reach the qualified majority required to deliver its opinion on these two matters.

Consequently, on 28 and 30 April 2008 respectively, the Commission submitted the proposals in question to the Council, which must act by qualified majority within a period of three months (by 28 and 30 July respectively). If the Council is unable to reach a qualified majority in favour of or against these proposals the decision will be referred back to the Commission.

Further information

- Proposal for a Council Decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of, or produced from genetically modified soybean A2704-12 (ACS-GH ØØ5-3) pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council (8996/08)
- Proposal for a Council Decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of, or produced from genetically modified LLCotton25 (ACS-GH ØØ1-3) pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council (9070/08)

Event

Meeting of the Agriculture Council - Justus Lipsius building, in Brussels (11.00).

A press conference will be held at the end of the meeting.

Please consult the following link for information concerning this Council:

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carole.micchacher@consilium.europa.eu

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michele-ann.okolotowicz@diplomatie.gouv.fr.

Tuesday 15 July 2008

Free distribution of fruit and vegetables in schools

The Commission will submit to the Agriculture Council a proposal for a Regulation to allow Community co-financing of programmes for free distribution of fruit and vegetables in schools. The programmes would be accompanied by educational measures to be taken by the Member States to make children aware of the importance of a healthy diet. The aim of the proposal is to encourage healthy eating habits among young people.

The Council will have an exchange of views on the subject.

Background

Public health concerns and in particular the alarming rate of obesity among children are the main reasons behind this proposal.

When the common organisation of the markets in fruit and vegetables was reformed in autumn 2007, the Council called on the Commission to submit a proposal in this connection. In its spring 2007 White Paper entitled "A strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity and related health issues", the Commission had also recommended such a measure.

Further information

- Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulations (EC) No 1290/2005 on the financing of the common agricultural policy and (EC) No 1234/2007 establishing a common organisation of agricultural markets and on specific provisions for certain agricultural products (Single CMO Regulation) in order to set up a School Fruit Scheme (COM(2008) 442/3).
- Commission internet site:
http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/markets/fruitveg/sfs/index_en.htm

Event

Meeting of the Agriculture Council - Justus Lipsius building, in Brussels (11.00).

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

Please consult the following link for information concerning this Council:

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carole.micmacher@consilium.europa.eu

French Presidency : Michèle-Ann Okolotowicz, tel. +32 476 760 820,

michele-ann.okolotowicz@diplomatie.gouv.fr.

Tuesday 15 July 2008

Implications of high fuel prices for the fisheries sector

The Agriculture and Fisheries Council will tackle the question of measures to be taken to deal with the implications of the rise in fuel costs for the fisheries sector.

The Commission will submit a series of measures on this subject in the form of a communication explaining the measures to be taken and more specifically a proposal for a regulation amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006 on the European Fisheries Fund. This proposal provides for temporary derogations from certain aspects of this fund and would comprise four types of measure: urgent measures; measures to assist fleets engaged in major restructuring; horizontal support measures not included in fleet adjustment programmes; measures to facilitate use of the fund's resources. Moreover, the Commission, in its communication, recommends market measures in order to increase fishermen's marketing position and the value of fish.

The Council will then hold a policy debate on the measures proposed by the Commission and, if conditions are right, it will endeavour to reach political agreement on the regulation proposal.

Background

High fuel prices are having a major impact on the fisheries sector; in some cases, the ensuing costs represent up to 50% of fishermen's income. Faced with this crisis situation, aggravated by fleet over-capacity, the Agriculture and Fisheries Council held an exchange of views on the subject at its meeting on 23 June 2008 and the Commission announced that it would be submitting a series of measures in response. The European Council on 19 and 20 June also gave attention to the question of the high price of oil.

Further information

- Proposal for a regulation instituting a temporary specific action aiming to promote the restructuring of the European Union fishing fleets affected by the economic crisis (11369/08)
- Communication from the Commission on promoting the adaptation of the European Union fishing fleets to the economic consequences of high fuel prices (11370/08)
- Commission website:
<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1120&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>
- European Council of 19 and 20 June 2008, Presidency conclusions (11018/08)

Event

Meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council - Justus Lipsius building, in Brussels (11.00).

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

Please consult the following link for information concerning this Council:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_applications/applications/transparency-council/index.ASP?lang=fr&cmsid=1119

Contacts

Press Officer:

Carole Micmacher, tel. :+32 2 281 53 89, carole.micmacher@consilium.europa.eu

French Presidency : Michèle-Ann Okolotowicz, tel. +32 476 760 820,

michele-ann.okolotowicz@diplomatie.gouv.fr.

Thursday 17 July 2008

2009 budget

The ECOFIN Council is due to approve, at first reading, the draft general budget for the financial year 2009, after a conciliation meeting with the European Parliament and the Commission.

Background

The Commission submitted a preliminary draft general budget in the Spring of 2008. As is customary, this draft budget will be scrutinised and amended at first reading by the European Parliament in the Autumn of 2008. The Commission will also present in the Autumn, if necessary, a number of letters of amendment before the Council's second reading, which is scheduled for November 2008.

Further information

Preliminary draft general budget 2009: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/budget/www/index-en.htm>

Event

Meeting of the ECOFIN Council - Justus Lipsius building, in Brussels (10.00).
The Presidency will hold a briefing in the Council Press Room a few days before the meeting.
A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.
Please consult the following link for information concerning this Council:
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_applications/applications/transparency-council/index.ASP?lang=en&cmsid=1119

Contacts

Press Officer :
Carole Micmacher, tel.: +32 2 281 53 89,
carole.micmacher@consilium.europa.eu
French Presidency : Marine de Carné, tel. +32 475 579 095,
marine.de-carne@diplomatie.gouv.fr.

Friday 18 July 2008

Negotiations at the World Trade Organisation - Doha Development Agenda

The General Affairs and External Relations Council will meet in extraordinary session, to discuss the proposals tabled during the negotiations currently taking place at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), known as the Doha Development Agenda.

Background

The current round of negotiations at the WTO was launched in 2001 in Doha, in Qatar, focussing on agriculture and industrial tariffs. In the week beginning 21 July, high-level negotiating meetings, with several Ministers in attendance, will take place at WTO headquarters in Geneva to prepare an agreement. The stated aim of the WTO Director-General is to conclude the complete round of negotiations by the end of this year.

It is possible that a meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council will be convened in Geneva itself to follow the negotiations on the spot.

Further information

- WTO Internet site: <http://www.wto.org/indexfr.htm>
- Council Internet site:
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?lang=fr&id=1241&mode=g&name
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Event

Extraordinary meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council - Justus Lipsius building, in Brussels (10.00).

The Presidency will hold a briefing in the Council Press Room a few days before the meeting. A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

Please consult the following link for information concerning this Council:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_applications/applications/transparency-council/index.ASP?lang=en&cmsid=1119

Contacts

Press Officers:

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François Head, tel. +32 2 281 60 83, francois.head@consilium.europa.eu

French Presidency : Marine de Carné, tel. +32 475 579 095,

marine.de-carne@diplomatie.gouv.fr.

Tuesday 22 July 2008

General Affairs / External Relations Council

The agenda for the first General Affairs and External Relations Council under the French Presidency will include a series of international issues. In addition to the WTO (see separate report on Council of 18 July), the Council is due in particular to examine :

- *relations with the Ukraine, including the progress of the preparations for the EU-Ukraine Summit to be held on 9 September in Evian and negotiations on a new strengthened agreement;*
- *the situation in Zimbabwe, in the context of the post-presidential election period and the current discussions in various fora, including the African Union and the UN.*

Other matters such as Iran and Chad are also likely to be discussed in Council. In addition, an EU-Jordan Association Council and an EU-Kirghizstan Cooperation Council are due to be held in the margins of the meeting.

Further information

- Council Internet site : <http://consilium.europa.eu/newsroom>

Event

2885th and 2886th meetings of the General Affairs and External Relations Council. The Council is due to begin at 10.00 on Tuesday 22 July in the Justus Lipsius building in Brussels.

In the context of the WTO negotiations on the Doha Development Agenda, the Council may meet at any time in Geneva up to 25 July depending on the WTO proceedings.

The Presidency will hold a briefing in the Council Press Room a few days before the meeting. A press conference is scheduled at the end of the meeting.

Contacts

Press Officers:

Nicolas Kerleroux, tel. +32 2 281 8239, nicolas.kerleroux@consilium.europa.eu

François Head, tel. +32 2 281 60 83, francois.head@consilium.europa.eu

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marine.de-carne@diplomatie.gouv.fr.

Thursday 24 July 2008

European Pact on Immigration and Asylum

The Justice and Home Affairs Council will take stock of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, presented by the Presidency at the informal meeting on 7 and 8 July in Cannes. At that meeting the Ministers for Immigration gave their broad support to this project, the aim of which is to establish migration policies at national and European Union level, and to define the strategic guidelines to be pursued to flesh them out. The Presidency would like the Pact to be adopted at the European Council on 15 and 16 October 2008.

Background

This Pact will form the basis of a true common European policy on immigration and asylum, given the challenges of the coming years and the necessary solidarity and cooperation in the management of migratory flows.

Further information

- Council conclusions on the strengthening of integration policies in the European Union by promoting unity in diversity (10267/07)
- Communication from the Commission: A Common Immigration Policy for Europe: Principles, actions and tools (11017/08)
- Policy plan on asylum: an integrated approach to protection across the EU (11022/08)
- http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/immigration

Event

Meeting of the JHA Council ("Home Affairs" part) - Justus Lipsius building, in Brussels (10.00). The Presidency will hold a briefing in the Council Press Room a few days before the meeting. A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

Please consult the following link for information concerning this Council:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_applications/applications/transparency-council/index.ASP?lang=en&cmsid=1119

Contacts

Press Officer:

Jesus Carmona, tel. + 32.2.281 95 48,

jesus.carmona@consilium.europa.eu

French Presidency: Marine De Carné, tel. +32 475 579 095,

marine.de-carne@diplomatie.gouv.fr.

Thursday 24 July 2008

Extension of long-term resident status to beneficiaries of international protection

The Justice and Home Affairs Council will consider the proposal amending Directive 2003/109/EC with a view to extending the possibility of obtaining long-term resident status to beneficiaries of international protection.

This text has already been discussed within the Council on several occasions, in particular the scope of the Directive, but it has not yet been possible to obtain the unanimity required for its adoption.

Background

Council Directive 2003/109/EC determines the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents (residing more than five years in a Member State).

At the request of the Council, the Commission tabled in June 2007 a proposal which seeks to amend the Directive to extend the possibility of granting long-term resident status to beneficiaries of international protection as defined by Directive 2004/83/EC, i.e. to third-country nationals or stateless persons who have been granted refugee status or benefit from subsidiary protection (supplementary protection) within the meaning of that Directive.

The prospect of obtaining long-term resident status in a Member State after a certain time is an important aspect of the full integration of the beneficiaries of international protection in the Member State in which they are resident and also helps to promote economic and social cohesion, which is a fundamental goal of the Community, set out in the Treaty.

Further information

- Commission proposal: 10510/07 (<http://consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms>)
- Directives 2003/109/EC, 2004/83/EC (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/index.htm>)
- Convention relating to the status of refugees (www.unhcr.ch/french/)
- http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/immigration

Event

Meeting of the JHA Council ("Home Affairs" part) - Justus Lipsius building, in Brussels (10.00). The Presidency will hold a briefing in the Council Press Room a few days before the meeting. A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

Please consult the following link for information concerning this Council:

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Contacts

Press Officer:

Jesus Carmona, tel. + 32.2.281 95 48,
jesus.carmona@consilium.europa.eu

French Presidency: Marine De Carné, tel. +32 475 579 095,
marine.de-carne@diplomatie.gouv.fr

Friday 25 July 2008

Jurisdiction and applicable law in matrimonial matters (Rome III)

The Justice and Home Affairs Council will discuss the proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 2201/2003 as regards jurisdiction and introducing rules concerning applicable law in matrimonial matters (Rome III).

This text has already been discussed within the Council on several occasions but it has not been possible to obtain the unanimity required for the Regulation's adoption. The Council is also due to examine the conditions under which enhanced cooperation might be established between Member States and the ensuing impact.

Background

The purpose of the Regulation is to provide a clear and comprehensive legal framework (covering both jurisdiction as well as applicable law rules in matrimonial matters) which allows the parties a certain degree of autonomy in choosing the competent court and applicable law in cases of divorce and legal separation. In the absence of a choice of law by the spouses, the text would introduce conflict-of-law rules.

According to the proposal, there is a cascade of connecting factors: the divorce is governed by the law of the country of habitual residence of both spouses, failing that, by the law of the last habitual residence of the spouses if one of them still resides there; failing that, the law of the common nationality of the spouses or, failing that, by the law of the forum.

The conflict-of-law rules of the proposal aim at ensuring that, wherever the spouses lodge their request for divorce, the courts of any Member State would normally apply the same substantive law, (thus avoiding "forum shopping").

Further information

- Presidency compromise text: 9985/08 (<http://consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms>)
- Commission proposal: 11818/06;
- Regulation No 2201/2003 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/index.htm>)
- http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj

Event

Meeting of the JHA Council ("Justice" part) - Justus Lipsius building, in Brussels (10.00).

The Presidency will hold a briefing in the Council Press Room a few days before the meeting.

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

Please consult the following link for information concerning this Council:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_applications/applications/transparency-council/index.ASP?lang=en&cmsid=1119

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marine.de-carne@diplomatie.gouv.fr.