



Brussels, 24 July 2009

BACKGROUND¹

GENERAL AFFAIRS and EXTERNAL RELATIONS COUNCIL

Monday 27 July in Brussels

*The Council will start at 10.00 with a session on general affairs, focusing on **EU enlargement** and a Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.*

*A session on external relations will follow, where the Council will discuss the situation in **Somalia, Iran** (lunch item) and **Georgia**.*

A presidency press conference will be held at the end of the general affairs session (+/- 11.30) and at the end of meeting, after lunch (+/- 15.00).

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Meetings in the margins of the Council:

Monday 27 July:

18.00 EU-Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia, to be followed by a press conference, after dinner;

Tuesday 28 July:

12.00 EU Troika meeting with Belarus, to be followed by a press conference (+/-13.30).

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Press conferences and public events can be followed by video streaming:

<http://video.consilium.europa.eu/>

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office

SESSION ON GENERAL AFFAIRS

Enlargement

The Council is expected to request that the Commission give an opinion, as stipulated by article 49 of the EU treaty, on an application by Iceland for membership of the European Union. It is expected to adopt conclusions.

Iceland's application was presented by letter dated 16 July 2009.

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The Council will hear a presentation by the Commission of a communication on the EU's strategy for the Baltic Sea region and have an initial exchange of views.

SESSION ON EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Somalia

The Council will discuss the situation in Somalia, following attacks against the transitional federal government and against the UN and NGOs.

It is expected to highlight the importance of a comprehensive approach to the situation in Somalia, linking security with development, the rule of law and respect for human rights, gender-related aspects and international humanitarian law.

It will also examine the conduct of the EU's military operation off the coast of Somalia (Operation Atalanta), which is playing a leading role in international efforts to combat piracy, as well as the international community's ongoing work to ensure the prosecution of pirates.

In line with High Representative Javier Solana's recommendations, the Council is expected to step up the EU's commitment to promoting peace and development in Somalia. EU efforts will be coordinated with all relevant actors, in particular the International Contact Group on Somalia under the leadership of the special representative of the UN Secretary General.

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions along these lines.

In a letter addressed on 28 May to all EU foreign and defence ministers, Mr Solana called for a "global and determined action" vis-à-vis Somalia. He suggested to "build on the success of the EU naval operation Atalanta" and to "look at longer term durable solutions for stability in Somalia and the region, both at sea and on land".

Georgia

The Council will discuss the situation and the EU's policy vis-à-vis Georgia.

The discussion will focus on the work of the EU's monitoring mission (EUMM) in Georgia established after the conflict between Georgia and Russia of August 2008. In the light of the mission's achievements, in particular as regards stabilisation, normalisation and confidence building, the Council is expected to extend the mandate of EUMM in Georgia for 12 months, until 14 September 2010.

The Council will note that an agreement has not been reached on the future of the UN and OSCE monitoring missions in Georgia, and that this development further underscores the crucial role of the EU's mission there.

It will reaffirm its commitment to talks in Geneva, and reiterate its support for the security and stability of Georgia, on the basis of full respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity recognised by international law.

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions along these lines. The presidency will also brief it on a recent visit to the region by the EU Troika.

Iran

Ministers, over lunch, will discuss Iran. The discussion will encompass developments there following the presidential election, as well as the nuclear dossier and the EU's long-term relations with Iran.

Other items

Under “other business”, the Council will discuss the decision by **Canada** to impose visas on Czech Republic citizens and will be briefed, over lunch, on a recent visit by the Polish foreign minister to the **Republic of Moldova**.

It is also expected to adopt, without discussion, conclusions on **Kenya**.

Finally, it is expected to appoint a new Force Commander for **Operation Atalanta**, the EU's military operation to combat piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia, to agree a revised general concept for **EUSEC DR Congo**, the EU's mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and to adopt restrictive measures against **North Korea** following a recent UN Security Council resolution.
