



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESS RELEASE

2748th/2749th Council Meetings

GENERAL AFFAIRS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Brussels, 15 September 2006

President **Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

P R E S S

Main Results of the Council

The Council underlined its commitment to promoting tangible progress towards a resolution of the **Israeli-Palestinian conflict**. It welcomed the announcement by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on an agreement to form a government of national unity and expressed the hope that its political platform will reflect the Quartet principles and allow for early engagement.

It agreed that the operation of the Temporary International Mechanism, by which the EU and its Member States have already channelled substantial resources directly to the Palestinian people, should be extended for a further three months.

The Council stressed its commitment to support full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 on **Lebanon**. It welcomed the early deployment of the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon and the substantial contribution by EU Member States to the reinforced UNIFIL. It asked for a report on a possible European contribution to the implementation of Resolution 1701 on the Lebanese-Syrian border. It also underlined the EU's commitment to assist the Lebanese government in meeting needs and taking forward reforms in a number of areas, including security.

On **Iran's** nuclear programme, ministers welcomed High Representative Solana's consultations with the Secretary-General of the Iranian Supreme National Security Council, Dr Ali Larijani, to explore the possibility of opening negotiations with Iran and supported these efforts.

The Council expressed its deep concern about the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in **Darfur**. It strongly supported UN Security Council Resolution 1706 which expands the mandate of the UN Mission in Sudan to Darfur and reiterated the EU's readiness to support the efforts of the UN and others in the planning for transition from the African Union mission (AMIS) to the UN. It strongly called on the Sudanese Government to give its consent to the deployment of the UN operation and to extend its full cooperation to the UN. It called on the non-signatories to join in and commit themselves to the implementation of the Darfur peace agreement.

The Council welcomed the meeting of **Democratic Republic of Congo** President Kabila and Vice-President Bemba on 13 September as an encouraging sign and commended the efforts undertaken by HR Solana in facilitating these developments. It noted that cooperation between the EU military operation EUFOR RD Congo and MONUC, together with the EU's reinforced police mission in Kinshasa (EUPOL Kinshasa), has so far proved instrumental in maintaining stability during the electoral process.

The Council established an EU team to contribute to the preparation of an international civilian mission in **Kosovo**.

Finally, the Council adopted a decision amending its **rules of procedure**, primarily with a view to increasing the openness and transparency of its work on EU legislative acts.

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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.
- The documents whose 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 abovementioned Council Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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PARTICIPANTS

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

Belgium:

Mr Karel DE GUCHT
Mr Didier DONFUT

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

Czech Republic:

Mr Tomáš POJAR

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs with responsibility for
Bilateral Relations

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

Greece:

Ms Dora BAKOYANNIS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr Miguel Ángel MORATINOS CUYAUBÉ

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

France:

Ms Catherine COLONNA

Minister with responsibility for European Affairs

Ireland:

Mr Dermot AHERN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Italy:

Mr Massimo D'ALEMA

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Cyprus:

Mr Yiorgos LILLIKAS

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 for Foreign Affairs and
Immigration

Hungary:

Ms Kinga GÖNCZ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr Richard CACHIA CARUANA

Permanent Representative

Netherlands:

Mr Bernard Rudolf BOT

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Austria:

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

Poland:

Mr Stanisław KOMOROWSKI

Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Luís AMADO

Ministro de Estado, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovenia:

Mr Dimitrij RUPEL

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovakia:

Mr Ján KUBIŠ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Finland:Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA
Ms Paula LEHTOMÄKIMinister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Foreign Trade and Development**Sweden:**

Mr Hans DAHLGREN

State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

United Kingdom:

Mr Geoff HOON

Minister of State for Europe

Commission:Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER
Mr Olli REHN
Mr Louis MICHELMember
Member
Member**General Secretariat of the Council:**

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

The Governments of the Acceding States were represented as follows:

Bulgaria:Mr Ivailo KALFIN
Ms Meglena KUNEVADeputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for European Affairs**Romania:**

Mr Mihai-Răzvan UNGUREANU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED**WESTERN BALKANS - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. The Council expressed concern at recent cases of inflammatory rhetoric used during the election campaign. In this context, the Council reaffirmed its unequivocal commitment to the Dayton-Paris Peace Agreement and the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).
2. The Council emphasised that the elections scheduled for 1 October should be conducted in accordance with international standards. In the light of the envisaged closure of OHR, these elections will be particularly significant as the leaders chosen will have to take greater responsibility for the realisation of BiH's European perspective.
3. While welcoming the progress made on the negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement, the Council regretted that many key reforms had been delayed in 2006. It called upon the relevant authorities to agree and implement as soon as possible the reforms necessary for the conclusion of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement as set out in the General Affairs and External Relations Council conclusions of 12 December 2005. In particular, the Council expressed concern over the lack of progress towards the implementation of the October 2005 agreement on police restructuring, and looked forward to the swift removal of this obstacle.

Montenegro

4. The Council welcomed the peaceful and orderly conduct of the elections in the Republic of Montenegro on 10 September and the International Election Observation Mission's preliminary assessment that the elections were conducted largely in accordance with international standards. The Council called upon authorities in Podgorica to address the remaining challenges listed in the IEOM assessment.

5. The Council looked forward to the smooth formation of a new Government and a swift agreement in the Parliament on the procedures for adoption of a new Constitution, fulfilling European standards, and its subsequent adoption. In this respect, the Council stressed that a continuous dialogue between the new government and the opposition will be necessary. The Council expects that the new Government, once it is formed, will continue to work resolutely on the European reform agenda in line with the European Partnership. In particular, the Council underlined the importance of reforms in the area of freedom, justice and security and building up the administrative capacity. The Council welcomed the Commission's intention to re-launch shortly the SAA negotiations with the Republic of Montenegro while emphasizing that the pace and conclusion of these negotiations will depend on Montenegro's progress in relevant reforms. The EU remains committed to supporting the Republic of Montenegro on its European course.

Serbia

6. The Council recalled that a peaceful and prosperous Serbia fully integrated into the family of European nations is very important for stability in the region. The EU is ready to resume negotiations with Serbia on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement as soon as full cooperation of Serbia with the ICTY is achieved. The Council urged the Serbian authorities to step up their efforts in implementing their Action Plan in order to meet this criterion."

The Council also adopted:

- a joint action establishing an EU team to contribute to the preparation of a future international civilian mission in Kosovo;
- a joint declaration on political dialogue with Montenegro (*see p.20*).

SUDAN/DARFUR - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council expresses its deep concern about the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur. The Council condemns the continuing violations of the cease-fire by all parties, particularly the violence directed at the civilian population and the targeting of humanitarian assistance. It reiterates the obligation of all parties to permit the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance. The Council reminds the leadership of the Sudanese Government of its collective and individual responsibility to protect its citizens from all violence and to guarantee respect for human rights. The EU strongly endorses the statement by the UN Secretary General to the UN Security Council on 11 September, including his urging of the Government of Sudan to embrace the spirit of UN Security Council Resolution 1706 and his warning that those who decide and carry out policies leading to death and suffering in Darfur will be held accountable.
2. The Council is alarmed by the renewed fighting in areas of North Darfur, the recent military build-up in Darfur and the reinforcement of the government forces. It condemns the reported military attacks by both the Sudanese government and the rebel groups and stresses that any military action will only further aggravate the already alarming humanitarian situation. The Council stresses that the Sudanese Government should stop their military action in Darfur, abide by the ceasefire agreement and respect their commitments under the DPA. The Council recalls the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1591 asserting that those individuals impeding the peace process or threatening the stability in Darfur shall be held responsible.
3. The Council strongly supports the UN Security Council Resolution 1706 of 31 August 2006 which expands the mandate of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) to Darfur and strengthens its military and civilian components in support of the early and effective implementation of the DPA and the 2004 N'djamena Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement. The Council reiterates the readiness of the EU to support the efforts of the UN and other partners in the planning for transition from AMIS to UN.
4. The Council strongly calls upon the Sudanese Government to give its consent to the deployment of the UN operation and to extend its full cooperation to the UN in preparing for the implementation of the extended mandate of UNMIS.

5. The EU reaffirms its strong support to the AU. Until transition to the UN is completed, the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and the effective and impartial implementation of its mandate will continue to be of critical importance for the peace process in Darfur. The Council stresses the need to continue efforts to enhance the operational capabilities of the mission, particularly regarding the tasks related to the protection of the civilian population and humanitarian access, and reiterates the EU's support to that end in view of the AU PSC meeting on 18 September.
6. The Council reiterates that a broadly based and inclusive implementation of the DPA, signed in Abuja on 5 May 2006, remains the basis for stability, peace and reconciliation in Darfur. It calls on the non-signatories to join in and commit themselves to the implementation of the agreement. In this regard, the Council urges the signatories to the DPA to continue working to find ways to address the concerns of the non-signatories, allowing them to adhere to the agreement.
7. The Council in particular emphasises the need to involve the non-signatories in the effective monitoring of the cease-fire and the investigation of violations committed. The non-signatories should be held fully responsible for the fulfilment of their commitments set out in the N'djamena Agreement. The Council thus urges the DPA signatories to accept the participation of the non-signatories in the mechanisms set up by the existing cease-fire agreements and to facilitate a swift resumption of their work. The Council also suggests considering confidence-building measures such as inviting the non-signatories to participate in the Core Coordination Group (CCG) and take immediate steps to better involve civil society through an inclusive Darfur-Darfur dialogue.
8. The Council underlines its deep concern at the potential negative impact of a continuing conflict in Darfur on the rest of Sudan and in the wider region. The Council is particularly attentive to the situation of the refugee camps in Chad and it welcomes both the recent indications of an improvement in the relations between Sudan and Chad and the on-going talks in Asmara between the Sudanese Government and the Eastern Front.
9. The EU calls on the international community to combine its efforts and to work with the parties to the conflict to improve the humanitarian situation and to build a sustainable peace in Darfur."

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union looks forward to the orderly and peaceful conclusion of the ongoing electoral process in the DRC, allowing for legitimate and democratically elected institutions in expression of the full sovereignty of the Congolese people. The Council has noted the results of the legislative elections published by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) which mark another important step in this direction.
2. The Council commends all efforts undertaken by the Congolese transitional authorities, and in particular the IEC, the United Nations and the international community to prepare the upcoming second round of presidential elections as well as the provincial elections. The Council notes the Supreme Court ruling on the period in which the second round of the presidential elections takes place. In this context, the Council calls upon all parties and candidates to support and to respect the IEC, recalling its central role in organizing and overseeing the electoral process.
3. In line with its recent Council Conclusions on the DRC of 17 July and 25 August, the Council welcomes the progress made in confidence building and in reducing the tensions between the two presidential candidates and urges them to abstain from any acts of violence. The Council welcomes the meeting of President Kabila and Vice-president Bemba in the margins of the 'Conseil Supérieur de la Défense' on 13 September which is an encouraging sign. It appreciates the role of MONUC and the Comité International d'Accompagnement de la Transition (CIAT) and commends the efforts undertaken by SG/HR Solana in facilitating these developments.
4. The Council welcomes the signature of an acte d'engagement on the use of the media and stresses that media channels should remain operational and that no material should be broadcast that could incite violence or ethnic hatred. Both sides should abide by the decision of the Haute Autorité des Medias.
5. The EU will continue to actively support the electoral process. This support will include continuing the close and effective cooperation between the EU military operation EUFOR RD Congo and MONUC, which, together with the EU's reinforced police mission in Kinshasa (EUPOL Kinshasa), has so far proven instrumental in maintaining the stability during the electoral process. Furthermore, the EU has provided additional funding for the election preparations and continues to conduct an Electoral Observation Mission.

6. On the basis of a successful conclusion of the electoral process, the EU remains committed to cooperating with the newly-elected government in promoting projects to assist immediate reconstruction and rehabilitation, to be followed by a long-term effort for sustainable development and taking into account the principles of good governance.
7. Following the conclusion of the electoral process, it is of crucial importance that the Congolese authorities show strong commitment to good governance and remain committed to strengthening the rule of law as well as security and stability in the DRC. The Council underlines the importance of the DRC authorities continuing the reforms in the security sector. In this context, the Council underlines the role played by EUSEC RD Congo, EUPOL Kinshasa as well as the EC and Member States activities. The EU will pursue its ongoing efforts in order to support the Congolese authorities in this field, building on its experience and that of its Member States. In view of the need for a comprehensive approach combining the different initiatives underway, the EU would be ready to assume a coordinating role in international efforts in the security sector, in close cooperation with the United Nations, to support the Congolese authorities in this field."

The Council also adopted a common position on restrictive measures against certain individuals in the DRC amending a 2005 common position to reflect amendments introduced by the UN Security Council. The Council common positions implement UNSC resolution 1596 as modified by resolutions 1649 and 1698 (*see p. 22*).

IRAQ - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU welcomes the progress made in developing the International Compact with Iraq since the launch of the Compact process on 27 July 2006. It appreciates the efforts of the Iraqi government in preparing the draft outline for the Compact, which was presented at the meeting of the Preparatory Group of the Compact in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 10 September 2006.
2. The EU confirms its support for the purpose of the Compact, which is to bring together the international community to support Iraq in achieving its National Vision of building a "secure, unified, federal and democratic nation, founded on the principles of freedom and equality, and providing peace and prosperity for its people".
3. The EU reaffirms its readiness to participate actively in the Compact process, and encourages Iraq to further develop a balanced Compact in all its dimensions through an inclusive consultative process at the national, regional and international levels. Domestic consensus-building will assist in ensuring that the Compact responds to the needs of the Iraqi people, and help to secure commitment to its implementation by the Iraqi government and throughout Iraqi society.
4. The EU underlines the importance it attaches to Iraqi ownership and inclusiveness of the Compact process, and to the broad involvement of the international community, including the active participation of Iraq's neighbours and partners in the region. Furthermore the EU stresses the importance of ensuring coordination with existing reconstruction assistance, notably the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI). The EU continues to support the central role of the UN as co-chair of the Preparatory Group of the Compact and as advisor to Iraq. It encourages the Executive Committee of the Compact to ensure transparency in the process of developing all aspects of the Compact, as a means to achieving full support of the Iraqi people and of the international community.
5. The EU looks forward to further discussions with the Iraqi government and other partners during the ministerial meetings on the Compact in New York and Singapore on 18 September 2006 and beyond."

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council discussed the situation in the Middle East. It underlined that lasting peace and security in the region can only be ensured by a comprehensive settlement with a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at its core. The Council underlined the importance of reinvigorating the Peace Process and requested the High Representative to pursue his efforts to this end.

2. The Council stressed its commitment to support the full implementation of UNSCR 1701, welcomed the declared commitment of all regional parties to this end, and commended the efforts of UNSG Annan. It welcomed the early deployment of the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon and the substantial contribution by EU Member States to the reinforced UNIFIL mission. It appreciated the significant contributions pledged by other countries. The Council called for a full and speedy implementation of UNSCR 1701, including the withdrawal of Israeli troops in parallel with the deployment of UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Council welcomed the lifting of the Israeli air and sea blockade, which will ease the delivery of humanitarian aid and facilitate economic recovery, and the instrumental role played by EU Member States. The EU reiterated its call for the immediate release of the two abducted Israeli soldiers.
The Council invites the Presidency, the High Representative and the Commission to draw up a report on a possible European contribution to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 on the Lebanese-Syrian border.

3. The Council underlined the EU's commitment to assist the Lebanese government in meeting emergency, humanitarian and environmental needs, launching the rehabilitation and reconstruction process, extending its authority throughout Lebanese territory and taking forward political, security, economic and social reforms. It called on all outside actors and neighbours to support this process. The Council welcomed the Stockholm Conference for Lebanon's Early Recovery on 31 August. It noted that the EU/Lebanon ENP Action Plan provides an agreed framework through which the EU can assist the Government in implementing its reform agenda.

4. The Council underlined its commitment to promoting tangible progress towards a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It welcomed the announcement by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on an agreement to form a government of national unity and expressed the hope that its political platform will reflect the Quartet principles and allow for early engagement. The Council welcomed the prospect of a meeting between PM Olmert and President Abbas in the near future with a view to re-launching negotiations. It called for an immediate end to violence by Palestinian factions as well as to Israeli military activity in the Palestinian territories. The Council reiterated its call for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier. It further repeated its call for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators in Israeli custody. The Council reiterated the need for all parties to respect their Roadmap obligations. It renewed its call on the Israeli Government to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth of settlements. Ministers reiterated that the EU will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties.

5. The Council expressed deep concern at the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories. In this context the Council recalled the strong EU commitment made at the Stockholm International Donor Conference on 1 September. It welcomed the expansion of the Temporary International Mechanism, by which the EU and its Member States have already channelled substantial resources directly to the Palestinian people, and agreed that its operation should be extended for a further three months. It encouraged donors and others in the region to make full use of the mechanism. The Council repeated its call on Israel to resume transfers of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues. The Council called for the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access and, in this regard, reiterated its continued commitment to EU Border Assistance Mission in Rafah. It urged that Rafah and all other border-crossings be re-opened and remain open."

The Council also adopted a common position imposing an arms embargo in Lebanon in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 1701 (*see p. 23*).

IRAN

Ministers discussed the situation regarding the Iranian nuclear programme on the basis of a briefing by High Representative Javier Solana on his meetings with the Secretary-General of the Iranian Supreme National Security Council, Dr Ali Larijani, on 9-10 September, and subsequent meetings at senior representative level.

They took note of the report by IAEA Director-General El Baradei dated 31 August 2006, which concludes that Iran has not acted in conformity with UN Security Council resolution 1696, and agreed that it was now appropriate to work to follow up this resolution.

Ministers welcomed the High Representative's consultations with Dr Larijani to explore the possibility of opening negotiations with Iran. They supported these efforts and stressed the importance of reaching an early conclusion.

OTHER BUSINESS

– Fight against terrorism - Secret detention facilities

Ministers reiterated their commitment to combating terrorism effectively, using all legal means and instruments available. Terrorism is itself a threat to a system of values based on the rule of law.

They reiterated that, in combating terrorism, human rights and humanitarian standards have to be maintained. Accordingly, they acknowledged the intention of the United States administration to treat all detainees in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Convention and the assurances about ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) access.

The existence of secret detention facilities where detained persons are kept in a legal vacuum is not in conformity with international humanitarian law and international criminal law.

Ministers noted that they would continue their dialogue with the US focusing on safeguarding human rights in the fight against terrorism.

– Black Sea regional cooperation

The Council took note of a request by the Greek delegation, supported by certain other delegations, for the EU to strengthen its relations with the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and to develop a comprehensive policy towards the Black Sea region, so as to act more effectively at a regional level.

The Commission indicated that it would present, before the end of the year, a new communication on the European Neighbourhood Policy which would address the Black Sea region.

EVENTS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL

A meeting of the EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council took place in the margins of the Council (*see press release 12778/06*).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

As part of its meeting on "General Affairs", the Council adopted the following items.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS**Somalia - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council welcomes the conclusions of the second round of the Khartoum based inter-Somali dialogue, held on 2-4 September 2006, between the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFI) and the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), and the agreed communiqué as a positive step towards peace and reconciliation. The EU encourages the TFIs and the UIC to sustain the momentum of the talks, *inter alia* through the Joint Committee agreed in Khartoum, and enter into substantive negotiations, including on power sharing and security, on the basis of the Khartoum communiqué.
2. The Council reaffirms the commitment of the EU to assist and engage in the process. It urges the international community, particularly regional actors, to support the dialogue sponsored by the League of Arab States.
3. The Council expresses its deep concern about the continuing tensions in Somalia between the UIC and the TFIs. The Council reconfirms its support to the TFIs as the only legitimate political representation in Somalia as defined in the Transitional Federal Charter (TFC).
4. The Council urges all Somali parties to exercise maximum restraint and to take immediate steps to reduce tension. Similarly, it urges all states in the region to support the Somali transition and to avoid interfering in the situation.
5. The Council recalls the UN Security Council Resolution 733 of 1992 and the ensuing decision and presidential statements on this matter by the Security Council concerning the arms embargo on Somalia and urges all actors in and outside the region to adhere to it fully. The Council emphasizes the necessity of continuing to monitor the arms embargo closely.

6. The Council takes note of the readiness of the AU and IGAD to deploy a regional peace support mission in Somalia. Recalling the Statement by the President of the UN Security Council of 13 July 2006 and its balanced approach to the TFIs and the UIC, the Council encourages all parties to work for a broad consensus in Somalia in support of peace and reconciliation. Once consensus on the peace support mission is achieved, the deployment of such a mission would necessitate a limited adjustment of the arms embargo.
7. The Council welcomes the establishment of the International Contact Group (ICG) on Somalia in order to support the peace and reconciliation process. The Council emphasises that the Somali peace process can only become a reality with the will and effort of the Somali people itself, including through the active involvement of civil society, women's groups and the diaspora."

Human Rights Council - Council conclusions

At the start of the second session of the newly established Human Rights Council (HRC), the Council adopted the following conclusions.

- "1. The EU strongly supports the mission of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The EU remains committed to work, together with others, to enable the HRC to fulfil all aspects of its mandate.
2. The EU welcomed the establishment of the Human Rights Council last March. The EU expects the Council to become an efficient and effective body that will make a genuine contribution to the protection and promotion of human rights around the world. The EU is committed to dialogue and genuine cooperation with others in order to achieve this objective.
3. The Council welcomes the important steps taken since the establishment of the HRC in terms of standard setting in the area of human rights, in particular the adoption - at the first HRC session - of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The EU further considers that reaching an agreement on the draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in August was a major step forward in promoting the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities. The EU hopes that these instruments will be adopted by the UN General Assembly this autumn.

4. The Council expects that the HRC will cover, in accordance with its mandate, thematic issues - civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights - and country specific issues, addressing situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations and make recommendations thereon. The HRC also has an important preventive mandate, which - if used effectively- can play a crucial role in helping to avoid situations of violation. In addition the Council's regular sessions should enable it to react to situations in a timely manner.
5. With regard to the second session, the EU underlines that this session is a key opportunity for all to set the future tone and scope of the HRC's work. The EU will therefore seek constructive cooperation with others, in order to secure a meaningful debate, and practical and effective results. During the forthcoming session, the consideration of the reports by the special procedures will be in focus. The EU will strive to achieve a genuine dialogue with the special procedures, and secure adequate operational follow-up to the recommendations made in the relevant reports, and it encourages others to do likewise. The HRC must, according to its mandate, always have an opportunity to also address urgent situations and issues, and the EU will consider appropriate ways to raise such topical issues.
6. The EU places great importance on the system of special procedures, including thematic and country mandates. In the context of the review, the system should be further strengthened and its independence and integrity fully secured. The EU also emphasizes the duty of all Governments to cooperate with these mechanisms. The EU expects the new universal periodic review to develop into a meaningful, balanced and effective mechanism complementing other forms of activity of the HRC. The EU will continue to play an active role to this effect.
7. The Council emphasizes the important contribution of NGOs to the HRC's work. Human rights defenders, national human rights institutions and civil society representatives play a key role in conveying the voices of those the HRC seeks to protect. It is important that their role is further strengthened over time.
8. The Council reaffirms the firm support of the EU for the work of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs Louise Arbour, and her Office. Apart from other important functions, an active role of the High Commissioner in building an effective and operational Human Rights Council will be crucial."

EU monitoring mission in Aceh

The Council adopted a decision extending an agreement between the EU and the government of Indonesia on the tasks, status, privileges and immunities of the EU monitoring mission in Aceh (Indonesia) and its personnel until 15 December 2006 (12166/06).

This follows the adoption on 7 September 2006 of a joint action amending and extending joint action 2005/643/CFSP on the EU monitoring mission in Aceh for a final period of three months until 15 December 2006 (*see press release 12555/06*).

Kosovo - EU team for future international mission

The Council approved the establishment of an EU team to contribute to the preparation of a possible international civilian mission in Kosovo (12159/06).

The team will work together with the international community and Kosovo institutions, in close coordination with the UN mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

The Council's decision complements a joint action (2006/304/CFSP) of 10 April 2006 on the establishment of an EU planning team regarding a possible EU crisis management operation in the field of rule of law in Kosovo (EUPT Kosovo).

Montenegro - Political dialogue

The Council approved a joint declaration on political dialogue with Montenegro in line with the stabilisation and association process and the 2003 Thessaloniki agenda for the Western Balkans (12477/06).

The declaration sets out conditions under which the Parties agree to a regular political dialogue. This will in particular support the political and economic changes underway in Montenegro and contribute to establishing new forms of cooperation, in particular taking into account Montenegro's status as a potential candidate for EU membership.

The political dialogue is aimed at:

- reinforcing democratic principles and institutions as well as rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;

- promoting regional cooperation, development of good neighbourly relations and fulfilment of obligations under international law;
- facilitating the integration of Montenegro to the fullest possible extent into the political and economic mainstream of Europe.

The political dialogue will take place through consultations and contacts at high-level meetings between representatives of Montenegro on the one hand and representatives of the EU in troika format on the other, at parliamentary level, as well as in the framework of the EU-Western Balkans forum established at the EU-Western Balkans summit held in Thessaloniki in 2003.

Democratic Republic of the Congo - restrictive measures

The Council adopted a common position amending common position 2005/440/CFSP on restrictive measures against the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (12256/06).

Common position 2005/440/CFSP is aimed at implementing UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1596(2005) by imposing a visa ban to prevent entry into or transit through the EU, and a freeze of funds and economic resources for persons who act in violation of the arms embargo in the DRC. It also contains a list of persons and entities concerned.

The common position is amended further to the adoption on 21 December 2005 of UNSCR 1649(2005) extending the measures imposed by UNSCR 1596(2005) to political and military leaders of foreign armed groups operating in the DRC who impede the disarmament and the voluntary repatriation or resettlement of combatants belonging to those groups, and to political and military leaders of Congolese militias receiving support from outside the DRC and in particular those operating in Ituri, who impede the participation of their combatants in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes.

In addition, it is amended further to the adoption on 31 July 2006 of UNSCR 1698(2006) extending the measures imposed by UNSCR 1596(2005) to political and military leaders recruiting or using children in armed conflicts and to individuals committing serious violations of international law involving the targeting of children in situations of armed conflict.

Lebanon - Arms embargo

The Council adopted a common position imposing an arms embargo in Lebanon in accordance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1701(2006) (12257/06).

The UNSC adopted last August resolution 1701 introducing a ban on the supply of arms to entities or individuals in Lebanon unless authorised by the Government of Lebanon or by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Action by the European Community is needed in order to implement certain measures of the UNSC resolution at EU level.

TRADE POLICY**EC/Belarus - Agreement on trade in textile products**

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations with Belarus with a view to renewing an agreement on trade in textile products.

Euro-Mediterranean conference on industry

The Council approved an EU common position on draft conclusions for the 6th Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference on industry, to be held in Rhodes on 21 and 22 September.

The conference will take stock of political and technical progress achieved and a number of political initiatives and actions to be taken against the background of the challenges engendered by globalisation. The new perspectives provided for by the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, by the EU's neighbourhood policy, the extension of cooperation to the field of innovation, and industrial dialogue focusing on the textile sector figure among the main points on the agenda.

The Euro-Mediterranean partnership was launched at Barcelona in 1995 in order to intensify the relationship between the EU and the Mediterranean partner countries (the "Barcelona process"). One of the key objectives of the partnership is the creation, by 2010, of an area of free trade of shared prosperity. The Euro-Mediterranean industrial partnership was launched in June 1996.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation

The Council approved draft decisions of the ACP-EU Committee of Ambassadors concerning:

- the statute and rules of procedure and the financial regulation of the ACP-EU Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA) (11435/06)
- the staff regulations of the CTA (11438/06).

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Council rules of procedure

The Council adopted a decision amending its rules of procedure with a view to increasing the openness and transparency of the Council's work on the EU's legislative acts, in accordance with the policy set out by the European Council at its meeting on 15 and 16 June (11423/06).

The decision is aimed at enabling citizens to acquire first-hand insight into the Council's activities, in particular when the Council deliberates on legislative acts under the Council - Parliament co-decision procedure. Under the new measures, Council public deliberations and debates will be broadcast on the internet in all EU official languages¹.

Moreover, amendments to the Council's rules of procedure seek to streamline the programming of its activities by introducing an 18-month programme, to be submitted for the Council's endorsement by the three EU presidencies due to hold office during that given period.

The decision will also contribute to improving the functioning of the written procedure for decision-making, and accelerating the approval of replies to questions from members of the European Parliament, as well as the appointment of members of the Economic and Social Committee and of the Committee of the Regions.

¹ Other public events, such as Council press conferences and press briefings by the high representative, can be followed live at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/videostreaming>.

The Council will review in December the implementation of the measures with a view to assessing their impact on the effectiveness of the Council's work.

(More details can be found in the information sheet related to the June 2006 European Council presidency conclusions on transparency:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/misc/90112.pdf .

Proceedings in the Council's different configurations

The Council took note of a presidency report on proceedings in the Council's different configurations (12590/06).

TRANSPORT

EC-Switzerland air transport agreement - Incorporation of new legislation

The Council approved draft Community positions on amendments to the agreement with Switzerland on air transport , to be adopted by the EU/Switzerland air transport committee(11846/06, 11898/06).

Since the agreement's entry into force in June 2002, a range of new legislation has been introduced within the Community in the field of air traffic management and aviation safety. The annexes to the agreement are therefore amended in order to incorporate, in particular, legislation related to the EU's "Single European Sky" initiative and creation of the European Aviation Safety Agency.

In consequence, since Switzerland has accepted that the EU's institutions will have direct authority on its territory in relation to the Single European Sky and to air safety legislation, Switzerland will participate in the relevant committees established under that legislation as an observer.

FISHERIES

North-West Atlantic Fisheries Convention

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations on amendments to the Convention on multilateral cooperation under the North-West Atlantic Fisheries Convention (NAFO).

APPOINTMENTS**Committee of the Regions**

The Council adopted Decisions appointing to the Committee of the Regions (10836/06, 11784/06):

a) as members:

Ms Stasė Skutulienė, member of Šilutė District Municipality Council, as member of the Committee of the Regions in place of Ms Virginija Lukošienė,

Mr Per Bødker ANDERSEN, Borgmester, Kolding Kommune, in place of Mr Laust Grove VEJLSTRUP,

Mr Bo ANDERSEN, Borgmester, Ringe Kommune, in place of Mr Johnny SØTRUP,

Mrs Eva NEJSTGAARD, Borgmester, Allerød Kommune, in place of Mrs Tove LARSEN;

b) as alternate members:

Mrs Anna Margrethe KAALUND, Borgmester, Tjele Kommune, in place of Mr Sonny BERTHOLD,

Mrs Mona HEIBERG, Medlem af Københavns Borgerrepræsentation, in place of Mr Per Bødker ANDERSEN,

Mr Jens Christian GJESSING, Borgmester, Haderslev Kommune, in place of Mrs Eva NEJSTGAARD,

Mr Jens Arne HEDEGAARD, Borgmester, Brønderslev Kommune, in place of Mr Niels LARSEN,

Mr Bjørn DAHL, Borgmester, Roskilde Kommune, in place of Mr Mads LEBECH.

for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January 2010.

Economic and Social Committee

The Council adopted a Decision appointing Belgian, Greek, Irish, Cypriot, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese, Finnish, Swedish, United Kingdom and Italian members of the European Economic and Social Committee for the period from 21 September 2006 to 20 September 2010.

The complete list can be found in *11545/06*.

DECISIONS TAKEN BY WRITTEN PROCEDURE**Anti-dumping measures - China - chamois leather**

The Council adopted on 8 September a Regulation imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty and collecting definitively the provisional duty imposed on imports of chamois leather originating in China (*12202/06*).
