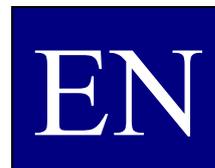




**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



6039/07 (Presse 18)

PRESS RELEASE

2780th Council Meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

External relations

Brussels, 12 February 2007

President **Mr Frank-Walter Steinmeier**
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany

* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2779th meeting on General Affairs (6033/07).

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6039/07 (Presse 18)

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Main Results of the Council

*The Council called upon political leaders in **Serbia** to form quickly a government committed to reform and a European future. It underlined that it remained fully committed to Serbia's EU perspective and was ready to work with such a new government towards this goal. It welcomed the Commission's readiness to resume negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with a new government in Belgrade provided it showed clear commitment and took concrete and effective action for full cooperation with the ICTY.*

*The Council expressed its full support for UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari and his efforts in conducting the political process to determine **Kosovo's** future status. It welcomed Mr Ahtisaari's intention to engage the parties in a period of intensive consultations with a view to achieving further progress in a spirit of compromise on the basis of his proposals. It strongly urged Belgrade and Pristina to participate actively and constructively in these consultations. Underlining that the EU stood ready to play a significant role in the implementation of the status settlement, the Council decided to intensify preparations for a future EU and international presence in Kosovo in coordination with other international actors.*

*The Council, confirming the EU's strong long-term commitment to **Afghanistan**, agreed on the principle of a mission to Afghanistan in the field of policing with linkages to the wider rule of law under European Security and Defence Policy and approved the crisis management concept for such a mission.*

*The Council reached political agreement on a draft common position concerning restrictive measures against **Iran**, with a view to implementing UN Security Council resolution 1737. The common position is aimed at imposing at EU level restrictive measures against Iran, namely a ban on the supply of goods and technology related to Iran's nuclear and missile programmes; a visa ban against persons and a freeze of assets against persons and entities listed in resolution 1737 and other persons or entities associated with these programmes; and steps to prevent specialised teaching or training of Iranian nationals in disciplines related to these fields.*

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OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

See General Affairs press release 6033/07.

¹

- 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.

PARTICIPANTS

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

Belgium:

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Mr Didier DONFUT

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

Bulgaria:

Mr Ivailo KALFIN

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Czech Republic:

Mr Tomáš POJAR

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs

Denmark:

Mr Per Stig MØLLER

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Germany:

Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER
Mr Günter GLOSER

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Estonia:

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Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ireland:

Mr Dermot AHERN
Mr Michael AHERN

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade
and Employment (with special responsibility for Trade
and Commerce)

Greece:

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State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr Alberto NAVARRO GONZÁLEZ

State Secretary for the European Union

France:

Mr Philippe DOUSTE-BLAZY
Ms Catherine COLONNA
Ms Christine LAGARDE

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister with responsibility for European Affairs
Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade

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Cyprus:

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Mr Artis PABRIKS

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Lithuania:

Mr Zygimantas PAVILIONIS

Under-Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister with responsibility for
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Mr Nicolas SCHMIT

Minister with responsibility for Foreign Affairs and
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Hungary:

Ms Kinga GÖNCZ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr Michael FRENDU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Netherlands:

Mr Bernard BOT

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Austria:

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

Poland:

Ms Anna Elżbieta FOTYGA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Luís AMADO

Mr Manuel LOBO ANTUNES

Ministro de Estado, Minister for Foreign Affairs
Secretary of State for European Affairs**Romania:**

Mr Mihai-Răzvan UNGUREANU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovenia:

Mr Dimitrij RUPEL

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovakia:

Mr Ján KUBIŠ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

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Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA

Ms Paula LEHTOMÄKI

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Foreign Trade and Development**Sweden:**

Mr Carl BILDT

Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM

Mr Sten TOLGFORS

Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Minister for European Affairs
Minister for Trade**United Kingdom:**

Ms Margaret BECKETT

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Commission:

Mr Olli REHN

Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER

Mr Peter MANDELSON

Member

Member

Member

General Secretariat of the Council:

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

ITEMS DEBATED

WORLD TRADE

– *Doha Development Agenda*

Trade ministers held a working dinner on 11 February to discuss developments regarding negotiations under the World Trade Organisation's Doha Development Agenda. The Council, on the basis of a briefing by commissioner Peter Mandelson, held an exchange of views on prospects for a relaunch of the negotiations.

– *Revision of the WTO government procurement agreement - Council conclusions*

The Council, without discussion, adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council reiterates that the effective access of SMEs to public contracts is of crucial importance. It therefore invites the Advisory Committee on Public Procurement to explore all means of improving SMEs' access to public contracts in the EU and around the world.

In this context the Council stresses the need for open and transparent procurement markets. The Council underlines the importance of a successful and quick conclusion to the ongoing revision of the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA). This revision should lead to an overall improvement of access to the procurement markets among GPA Members, removing the existing imbalance. The Council regrets that the level of ambition among some of our GPA partners does not correspond to the commitments the EC is willing to undertake. The Council also points to the need to reconsider the EC's level of ambition if no balanced access to the public procurement markets among other GPA members can otherwise be achieved.

A number of our GPA partners are maintaining derogations for preferential treatment of their SMEs in the area of public procurement. The Council calls upon our GPA partners to substantially improve their offers in the ongoing negotiations in the GPA context for the sake of better and balanced access to public procurement markets.

The Council invites the Commission to keep it informed of the progress of the negotiations on the revised GPA and agrees to return to the matter when necessary, at a later stage."

SUDAN - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU is alarmed by the impact of the deteriorating security situation on the humanitarian and human rights situation in Darfur and strongly condemns the killing of an AMIS police officer in Kutum on 1 February as well as the arrest and abuse of international humanitarian aid workers by Sudanese police forces in Nyala on 19 January. In this context the Council notes with concern the first case of a complete withdrawal by a humanitarian NGO from Darfur for security reasons, as well as the 17 January statement by the UN and NGOs that their operations may be unsustainable if the current situation persists. The Council reiterates its demand that all parties refrain from any form of violence against civilians and organisations providing humanitarian assistance. The Council urges all parties to respect their ceasefire commitments, recalling that UN Security Council Resolution 1591 (2005) determines that those impeding the peace process shall be held responsible and appropriate measures shall be taken accordingly.
2. The Council remains gravely concerned about the security situation in Darfur and condemns continued ceasefire violations by all parties. It denounces in particular the bombing of areas in Northern Darfur by the Sudanese Air Force, which disrupted the preparations for a meeting of Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) commanders despite the fact that the Sudanese government had earlier declared its consent to the meeting.
3. The Council is very concerned about the most recent findings by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on the situation in Darfur. It welcomes the final establishment of the UN Human Rights Council High-Level Assessment Mission to Darfur, which has taken up its work on 9 February. The EU appreciates the important work of the mission. It urges the government of Sudan not to prevent the mission from fulfilling its crucial task and to issue the necessary visas as soon as possible.
4. The Council emphasises the need for an inclusive political process to solve the conflict in Darfur and confirms its support for the joint initiative of the AU and UN Special envoys to start negotiations between the parties as soon as possible. It expresses its expectation that SLM and other movements will prepare for early talks aiming at sustainable peace in Darfur, and welcomes recent initiatives in this respect.

5. The EU welcomes the agreement between the AU and UN on the details of the Heavy Support Package for AMIS. It encourages them to work jointly for its speedy implementation and to finalise the plans for the agreed hybrid force as soon as possible. The EU calls on the Sudanese government to cooperate in full with the preparations for and the deployment of the hybrid force. The Council reiterates its readiness to consider further measures, notably in the UN framework, against any party which obstructs its implementation. The EU remains committed to supporting AMIS in the transition period to the hybrid force. The Council will remain seized of this matter. At the same time, it encourages other donors to make additional contributions.
6. The destabilising effects of the Darfur conflict in the wider region, in particular in Chad and in the Central African Republic, are of continuing concern to the Council. The Council calls on governments and other parties to cease all support for rebel movements active in the territory of another country.
7. The Council also expresses its deep concern about the deteriorating security situation in Southern Sudan and in this context strongly condemns the attack on an UNMIS escort near Magwe on 26 January in which an UNMIS soldier was killed. The Council further calls on the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to refrain from violence and to renew their efforts to fully implement the CPA."

SOMALIA - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Recalling its conclusions of 22 January 2007, the Council reaffirms its support for the implementation of the Transitional Federal Charter (TFC) through the consolidation of broad-based and inclusive Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs) and the reestablishment of effective and representative governance. It emphasises that a comprehensive and inclusive political process, reaching out to all sectors of Somali society, is a necessary precondition for the achievement of lasting stability and reconciliation.
2. The Council therefore welcomes President Abdullahi Yusuf's commitment announced at the AU Summit in Addis Ababa to launch a national, broad-based process of inter-Somali dialogue, involving representatives of clans, civil society, business community, religious and political groups. The EU hopes that this process will start as early as possible and is ready to assist in this dialogue.
3. The Council reaffirms the EU's willingness to assist efforts to bring about genuine and credible dialogue for reconciliation, including through support for reconciliation conferences and capacity building for administrative and political institutions, on the basis of concrete and monitorable steps. It looks forward to continuing contacts with representatives from the TFIs on the necessary steps towards towards reconciliation and the reconstruction of Somalia.
4. The Council calls on the Somali government to lift the state of emergency as soon as possible. In particular, the Council looks forward to the early establishment of conditions that would allow the Transitional Federal Parliament to fully assume the role entrusted to it by the TFC and to convene in Mogadishu as soon as possible, with all its members present.

5. The Council welcomes current efforts to establish the Africa Union (AU) Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in order to support political dialogue and create conditions for the stabilisation of the country and the withdrawal of foreign forces from Somalia. It stresses the EU's will to contribute to the financing of AMISOM through the African Peace Facility, as soon as the necessary requirements have been met, including a relevant UN Security Council resolution. The EU will consider possible logistical and technical support for AMISOM, as appropriate.

6. The Council underlines the vital role of the UN in contributing to the longer-term stability of Somalia. The EU underscores the importance to promote regional confidence building and that stabilisation in Somalia facilitates broader stability in the Horn of Africa region. The Council welcomes the outcome of the Somalia International Contact Group meeting in Dar-es-Salaam on 9 February."

AFGHANISTAN - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council confirmed the EU's strong long-term commitment to Afghanistan, as expressed by the European Council on 14 December 2006.

Following on from its conclusions of 11 December 2006, the Council approved the Crisis Management Concept (CMC) for an ESDP mission to Afghanistan in the field of policing with linkages to the wider rule of law. A Concept of Operations for the mission is now to be developed on this basis. The Council agreed that the ESDP mission to Afghanistan would provide added-value. The mission will work towards an Afghan police force in local ownership, that respects human rights and operates within the framework of the rule of law. The mission should build on current efforts, and follow a comprehensive and strategic approach, in line with the CMC. In doing so, the mission should address issues of police reform at central, regional and provincial level, as appropriate. Close coordination with partners should be ensured, and the International Police Coordination Board (IPCB) and its Secretariat should be a key mechanism for such cooperation. As part of an overall and coordinated European approach, the EU special representative has an important role to play, also with regard to the ESDP mission. The ESDP mission should comprise an element to assist coordination of contributions, both equipment and rehabilitation of police infrastructure.

Particular attention should be paid to ensuring complementarity and mutual reinforcement with actions of the European Community, especially its proposed engagement with reform of the justice sector. This justice programme will aim to professionalise the judicial and public prosecution service eg through reforms to pay, grading and recruitment, as well as the establishment of a code of ethics. The programme could also assist in the development of a new national legal aid system and thus improve citizens' access to justice. This work is being designed to dovetail with the ESDP mission.

In the same spirit, the Council welcomed the holding of a meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) at Political Director level, in Berlin on 30 January 2007. This was an important contribution to enhancing the coordination of the international community's efforts in Afghanistan. The Council underlined its appreciation for the central role of the JCMB as the main coordination body, both within the international community and with the Government of Afghanistan, and recognised the important work being done in this framework. The Council underlined the importance of strengthened coordination taking place in Kabul.

Finally, the Council welcomed the holding in Berlin of the second EU ministerial Troika meeting with Afghanistan, which took place on Monday 29 January 2007. This was the occasion to send the clear message that the EU stands by Afghanistan. The Council agreed that the EU would continue to work together with the Government of Afghanistan to stabilise and rebuild that country, by addressing issues of both security and development."

WESTERN BALKANS - Council conclusions

The Council discussed the situation following recent elections in Serbia and, in the presence of UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, the state of play regarding the status of Kosovo, following the presentation of his proposals. It adopted the following conclusions:

"SERBIA

The Council welcomed the visit of the EU Troika to Belgrade on 7 February. It called upon the political leaders in Serbia quickly to form a government committed to reform and a European future. The Council remains fully committed to Serbia's EU perspective and is ready to work with such a new government towards this goal. Serbia remains welcome to join the European Union. Recalling its conclusions of 3 October 2005, the Council welcomed the Commission's readiness to resume negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with a new government in Belgrade provided it shows clear commitment and takes concrete and effective action for full cooperation with the ICTY. In addition, the EU welcomes the significant progress achieved in the negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission and looks forward to concluding them soon. The EU is ready to consider other concrete measures which would help Serbia to integrate swiftly into the family of European nations.

SERBIA/KOSOVO

The Council expressed its full support for the UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari and his efforts in conducting the political process to determine Kosovo's future status. His proposals presented to both parties on 2 February provide comprehensive arrangements designed to promote in Kosovo a multi-ethnic and democratic society based on the rule of law. They include extensive measures to safeguard the future of all communities living in Kosovo, especially the Kosovo Serbs. The Council believes that the proposals create the basis for Kosovo's sustainable economic and political development and for strengthening the stability of the entire region. The proposals represent the result of one year of intensive negotiations including direct talks between the two sides. The status process has now entered its decisive stage. The Council welcomed Martti Ahtisaari's intention to engage the parties in a period of intensive consultations with a view to achieving further progress in a spirit of compromise on the basis of his proposals. It strongly urged Belgrade and Pristina to participate actively and constructively in these consultations.

The EU stands ready to play a significant role in the implementation of the status settlement. The final decision on the status of Kosovo should be endorsed by the UN Security Council. The Council decided to intensify the preparation for a future EU and international presence in Kosovo in coordination with other international actors. It invited the HR/SG and the Commission to submit a further report on the state of these preparations."

IRAN

Over lunch, ministers held an exchange of views on the EU's Iran policy and registered continued support for the two-track approach as outlined in the Council's conclusions on 22 January. The EU implements the measures in UN Security Council Resolution 1737, which are targeted against the most sensitive parts of the Iranian nuclear and missile programmes (see below). At the same time, it continues to support efforts to find a negotiated long-term solution, which would open the way for a new relationship with Iran based on mutual respect and expanded cooperation. In this context the President of the Council and the High Representative briefed partners on their informal contacts with Iran's national security adviser, Ali Larijani, in Munich on 11 February. The Council will return to the issue of relations with Iran at a forthcoming meeting.

* * *

The Council reached political agreement on a draft common position concerning restrictive measures against Iran, with a view to implementing UN Security Council resolution 1737. The common position is aimed at imposing at EU level restrictive measures against Iran, namely a ban on the supply of goods and technology related to Iran's nuclear and missile programmes; a visa ban against persons and a freeze of assets against persons and entities listed in resolution 1737 and other persons or entities associated with these programmes; and steps to prevent specialised teaching or training of Iranian nationals in disciplines related to these fields. (see details in General Affairs press release, 6033/07).

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council welcomed the fact that an agreement has been reached in Mecca on 8 February on the formation of a Palestinian national unity government. It paid tribute to the sustained efforts of President Abbas to form a government of national unity and expressed its appreciation for the role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Arab leaders in bringing about Palestinian reconciliation. The EU stands ready to work with a legitimate Palestinian government that adopts a platform reflecting the Quartet principles and welcomed the Quartet statement of 9 February.

The Council also welcomed the statement by the Quartet at its meeting in Washington on 2 February, in particular its intention to give active follow-up to meetings between Israeli and Palestinian leaders and to remain closely engaged at this moment of increased activity and dialogue. The Council looks forward to early and regular meetings of the Quartet at Principals' and envoys' level on the basis of an agreed calendar, including meetings with the parties and other regional parties. It welcomes the Quartet's commitment to monitor developments and actions taken by the parties and to discuss the way ahead.

The Council expressed its full support for the forthcoming meeting between Prime Minister Olmert, President Abbas and Secretary of State Rice, and encouraged the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to launch a process with the goal of ending the occupation that began in 1967 and creating an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state, living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel.

The Council looks forward to the next Quartet meeting at Principals' level on 21 February in Berlin to further discuss the way forward.

Reiterating its position, as set out in the European Council Declaration of 14 and 15 December 2006 and the General Affairs and External Relations Council Conclusions of 22 January 2007, the EU underlines its determination to pursue its practical measures and to continue playing an active political role, notably in the framework of increased Quartet engagement."

LEBANON - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council welcomes the success of the international conference in support of Lebanon held in Paris on 25 January 2007. By pledging more than USD 7.6 billion in aid, the international community has sent a strong message of support to the people of Lebanon and its legitimate and democratically elected government.
2. The EU and its Member States contributed more than 40 % of the total aid pledged at the Paris Conference. These resources will contribute to meeting the challenges of reconstruction and macroeconomic stabilization, to the benefit of the entire Lebanese population. In this respect, the Council commends the ambitious Programme on Recovery, Reconstruction and Reform adopted by the government of Lebanon on 4 January 2007, notably its social component, as well as the commitment in principle to the signing of a post-conflict agreement with the IMF. The adoption of the EU-Lebanon Action Plan in the context of the Neighbourhood Policy will enable further deepening of our existing cooperation within the framework of the Association Agreement and of the Barcelona Process.
3. The Council expresses great concern about the renewed violent clashes of the past weeks in Lebanon. It urges all parties to refrain from all forms of violence and to do everything possible to prevent an escalation of the situation. A solution to the current political deadlock should be sought only through dialogue and with full respect for the democratic institutions of the country. The Council urges all Lebanese actors to actively engage in such a dialogue. It reiterates its appreciation for all constructive international mediation efforts, in particular those by the Secretary General of the Arab League, to facilitate an intra-Lebanese agreement.
4. The Council recalls its commitment to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Lebanon. It renews its call for the full and speedy implementation of Resolution 1701, 1664 and all other relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and reminds all parties in the region of their obligations thereunder. The Council reiterates its call on Syria and other countries in the region to refrain from interfering in the domestic affairs of Lebanon. They must actively engage in the stabilisation of Lebanon."

OTHER BUSINESS

– *Libya*

The Council, following the adoption of conclusions at its meeting on 22 January, held a further exchange of views on the death sentence passed on five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor following the infection by HIV/AIDS of children in a Libyan hospital.

The matter remains of great concern to the EU and the Council will continue to follow it very closely.

EVENTS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL

The following meetings were held in the margins of the Council:

- EU-Western Balkans foreign ministers' meeting;
- Quadripartite meeting with the Council of Europe;
- EU-Kazakhstan cooperation council;
- EU-Kyrgyzstan cooperation council.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

See General Affairs press release 6033/07.
