



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



6739/10 (Presse 38)

PRESS RELEASE

2996th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 22 February 2010

President

Ms Catherine Ashton

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and
Security Policy

P R E S S

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Main results of the Council

*The Council, chaired by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, began its meeting with an expression of condolences and support for the government and people of Portugal, following the floods and mudslides in **Madeira** which have claimed at least 40 victims.*

*The Council discussed the state of play in **Haiti** and the EU's continued coordinated response to the earthquake, focusing on the need for shelter as the hurricane season approaches and looking ahead to the donors conference in March in New York. The High Representative announced that she will visit Haiti in the near future.*

*Under **other business**, the Council assessed the diplomatic efforts under way to settle the dispute between **Libya** and **Switzerland**, which has led to the suspension by Libya of visas for nationals from the Schengen area. It also discussed the killing of Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in **Dubai** and issued a statement condemning the fraudulent use of EU Member States' passports and credit cards in the operation.*

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

PARTICIPANTS

The meeting was chaired by Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

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

<u>Belgium:</u> Mr Steven VANACKERE	Minister for Foreign Affairs
<u>Bulgaria:</u> Mr Nickolay MLADENOV	Minister for Foreign Affairs
<u>Czech Republic:</u> Mr Jan KOHOUT	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs
<u>Denmark:</u> Mr Per Stig MØLLER Mr Michael ZILMER-JOHNS	Minister for Foreign Affairs State Secretary
<u>Germany:</u> Mr Werner HOYER	Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<u>Estonia:</u> Mr Urmas PAET	Minister for Foreign Affairs
<u>Ireland:</u> Mr Micheál MARTIN Mr Dick ROCHE	Minister for Foreign Affairs Minister of State for European Affairs
<u>Greece:</u> Mr Dimitris DROUTSAS	Alternate Minister for Foreign Affairs
<u>Spain:</u> Mr Miguel Ángel MORATINOS CUYAUBÉ	Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
<u>France:</u> Mr Pierre LELLOUCHE	State Secretary with responsibility for European affairs
<u>Italy:</u> Mr Franco FRATTINI	Minister for Foreign Affairs
<u>Cyprus:</u> Mr Nicholas EMILIOU	Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<u>Latvia:</u> Mr Māris RIEKSTIŅŠ	Minister for Foreign Affairs
<u>Lithuania:</u> Mr Audronius AŽUBALIS	Minister for Foreign Affairs
<u>Luxembourg:</u> Mr Jean ASSELBORN	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration
<u>Hungary:</u> Mr Péter BALÁZS	Minister for Foreign Affairs
<u>Malta:</u> Mr Tonio BORG	Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
<u>Netherlands:</u> Mr Thom de BRUIJN	Permanent Representative
<u>Austria:</u> Mr Michael SPINDELEGGER	Federal Minister for European and International Affairs
<u>Poland:</u> Mr Radosław SIKORSKI	Minister for Foreign Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Pedro LOURTIE

Secretary of State for European Affairs

Romania:

Mr Teodor BACONSCHI

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovenia:

Mr Samuel ŽBOGAR

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovakia:

Mr Miroslav LAJČÁK

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Finland:

Mr Alexander STUBB

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Sweden:

Mr Carl BILDT

Minister for Foreign Affairs

United Kingdom:

Mr David MILIBAND

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Commission:

Ms Kristalina GEORGIEVA

Member

Mr. Andris PIEBALGS

Member

ITEMS DEBATED**EU RESPONSE TO EARTHQUAKE IN HAITI**

The Council discussed the state of play in Haiti and the EU's continued coordinated response to the earthquake. Commissioners Piebalgs and Georgieva briefed the Council on the developments on the ground and on their plans for further assistance. The High Representative announced that she would visit Haiti in the near future.

The High Representative stressed in particular the need to shift to the provision of shelter, with the approach of the rainy season, followed by the hurricane season. A million Haitians are still homeless, of whom 100 000 are in urgent need of shelter. Looking ahead to the international donors conference to be held at the end of March in New York, the Council stressed the need for a comprehensive EU response in support of the reconstruction and development effort in Haiti - over which the Haitian government must have full ownership - and the High Representative spoke of the need for "something like a Marshall Plan".

When the earthquake struck on 12 January the EU immediately mobilised search and rescue teams and earmarked some EUR 400 million for urgent humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and longer-term development. At the 25 January Council, the EU set up a coordination cell - EUCO Haiti - to coordinate the EU Member States' provision of military and security assets for the relief and reconstruction effort in Haiti. Some 1 600 troops from a number of EU Member States, including Italy, Spain and France, are now on the ground in Haiti, helping with tasks such as clearing rubble, distributing drinking water, providing transport, and, in particular, providing shelter.

The 25 January Council also announced that the EU Member States would collectively contribute some 300 police personnel to reinforce the UN Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Most of them have already arrived and are helping to keep public order in Haiti.

IRAN

Ministers held a discussion on the political and human rights situation in Iran and on the Iranian nuclear issue, against the background of President Ahmadinejad's recent announcement that Iran would further enrich uranium to the level of 20 per cent, which would be a significant step towards producing weapons-grade uranium.

The Union remains committed to the international community's dual-track approach of considering further restrictive measures against Iran unless it responds favourably to the international community's offer of engagement, whilst at the same time being ready to seek a negotiated solution with Iran.

In line with the December 2009 European Council declaration and given the lack of a satisfactory response by Iran to the international community's offer of engagement and its failure to respect its international obligations, the Council is reflecting on the measures that could be taken to accompany the UN-led process of moving towards additional measures.

UKRAINE

Over lunch, the Council held a forward-looking decision on the outcome of the Ukrainian presidential election and the EU's future relations with Ukraine. Ministers agreed that the EU should engage with President Yanukovich and the new administration in Kiev and underlined the need for political and economic reform in Ukraine.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Under other business, the Council assessed, against the background of the unfolding events on the ground, the diplomatic efforts under way to settle the dispute between **Libya** and Switzerland, involving the refusal by Switzerland of Schengen visas for certain Libyan nationals and the refusal by Libya of visas for citizens of the Schengen area. The Spanish and German ministers briefed the Council on the mediation efforts of their countries and the Spanish minister expressed hope that an agreement could be announced in the near future.
- The Council had an exchange of views on the killing of **Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in Dubai** on 20 January and agreed to issue the following statement condemning the fact that those involved in the operation had fraudulently used passports and credit cards acquired through the theft of EU citizens' identities (6753/10):

“The killing of Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in Dubai on 20 January raises issues which are profoundly disturbing to the European Union.

This was an action which cannot be conducive to peace and stability in the Middle East. The EU strongly condemns the fact that those involved in this action have used fraudulent EU Member States' passports and credit cards acquired through the theft of EU citizens' identities.

The EU welcomes the investigation by the Dubai authorities and calls on all countries to cooperate with it. The countries concerned in the EU are themselves carrying out full investigations into the fraudulent use of their passports.

The EU is committed to ensuring that both EU citizens and countries around the world continue to have confidence in the integrity of EU Member States' passports. It believes that its passports remain among the most secure in the world fully meeting all international standards. EU Member States' passports include a range of physical security measures to prevent forgery and abuse.”

- Ministers also discussed the recent **human rights violations** in the **Republic of Belarus**, against members of civil society, including members of the Union of Poles, and stressed the need for Belarus to abide by its OSCE and international commitments.
- On the subject of **Niger** and the coup d'etat on 19 February, the Council stressed that democracy and constitutional order must be restored swiftly. The High Representative said that she would continue to follow the situation, in close contact with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**FOREIGN AFFAIRS****Zimbabwe - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions (6819/10):

- “1. The Council emphasises its readiness to work closely with the Government of National Unity in Zimbabwe in addressing the challenges the country faces and in the implementation of its commitments as set out in the Global Political Agreement of September 2008.
2. The Council recognises the Government of Zimbabwe's ongoing efforts to implement the GPA, and the progress achieved after one year in office, in particular in the economic sphere. The Council welcomes agreement on 21 December 2009 by the signatories of the GPA to establish the Commissions on Human Rights, Electoral Affairs and Constitutional Reform. The EU is actively supporting the GPA implementation through a specific cooperation programme.
3. Nevertheless, the Council notes with concern insufficient progress with regard to the rule of law, respect for human rights, constitutional reforms, power sharing on equal terms, national reconciliation, security sector reform and the protection of investors.
4. In light of the above, the Council has decided to revise and extend for another year appropriate and restrictive measures. Nevertheless, it stands ready to keep them under constant review and to revoke them in response to further concrete developments in the implementation of the GPA.
5. The Council reaffirms its commitment to a successful political dialogue. The launch of the Article 8 Political Dialogue in Brussels on 18 June 2009 and the EU troika visit to Zimbabwe in September 2009 were important steps in the process of normalisation of EU-Zimbabwe relations. The Council calls for regular and timely continuation.
6. The Council welcomes the recent handing over of the Global Political Agreement Commitment Plan by the Government of Zimbabwe as it constitutes a basis for a continued Political Dialogue.

7. The Council also welcomes the intensified regional diplomacy and encourages the SADC, the AU and States in the region to continue to make all efforts to create a constructive environment in which issues outstanding can be resolved.
8. The European Union remains the largest provider of assistance to Zimbabwe in particular through its transitional support for agriculture and food security, social sectors, including health and education, and for GPA implementation. The EU disbursed 274 million Euros in Zimbabwe in 2009.”

Republic of Moldova -Visa ban on the leadership of the Transnistrian region -Council conclusions

The Council adopted a decision (5934/10) extending restrictive measures against the leadership of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova by twelve months until 27 February 2011. The decision, however, provides for the suspension of the visa ban until 30 September 2010 in order to encourage progress towards a political settlement to the Transnistrian conflict, to address remaining problems in Latin-script schools and to restore the free movement of persons; at the end of the suspension period, the Council will review the visa ban in the light of developments.

The decision includes also an amendment of the list of persons to whom the visa ban applies.

The Council also adopted the following conclusions (6329/10):

- “1. The Council welcomes the cautious positive developments in the Transnistrian settlement process in recent months. It notes in particular an increased openness of the new government of the Republic of Moldova and the *de facto* Transnistrian leadership to engage in dialogue. The Council also welcomes the Moldovan government’s efforts to address the Transnistrian issue, its expression of a firm commitment to the 5+2 process and its support of confidence-building measures.
2. At the same time, the Council regrets the fact that no substantial progress has been made towards a political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict; that the situation of some Latin-script Moldovan schools in the Transnistrian region remains problematic and that the *de facto* Transnistrian authorities continue to place obstacles on the free movement of persons.

3. The Council has therefore decided to extend the restrictive measures (provided for by Common Position 2008/160/CFSP and extended by Common Position 2009/139/CFSP) against certain members of the *de facto* Transnistrian authorities for a further period of 12 months. However, in order to encourage progress, the Council has decided at the same time to suspend the implementation of the restrictive measures until the end of September 2010. The Council has also decided that it is appropriate to delete 3 names from the list of targeted persons.

The Council calls on the *de facto* Transnistrian authorities strongly to engage in constructive efforts to reach a political settlement to the Transnistrian conflict, to address the remaining problems of the Latin-script schools, and to restore free movement of persons.

By the end of September 2010, the Council will review the suspension of the restrictive measures and the visa ban list in the light of the developments, notably in the areas mentioned above. The Council may decide to re-apply or lift the travel restrictions at any time.

4. The Council reaffirms the commitment of the European Union to the Transnistrian settlement efforts, notably by participation in the 5+2 process and by supporting confidence-building measures. The Council recalls the importance of resuming the 5+2 talks as soon as possible in order to achieve a sustainable settlement to the Transnistrian conflict, in full respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova.
5. The Council reaffirms its firm commitment to continue strengthening the political association and economic integration of the Republic of Moldova with the EU. In this context, the Council recalls the joint statement of the Cooperation Council between the EU and the Republic of Moldova on 21 December 2009, and welcomes the start of negotiations on an Association Agreement on 12 January 2010.”

EU special representatives - Extension of mandates

The Council adopted decisions extending the mandates of EU special representatives (EUSRs).

Their mandates will be extended from 1 March to 31 August 2010, or until the entry into force of the decision establishing the European External Action Service, whichever is sooner. The decisions follow proposals by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

The mandates of the EUSRs extended are:

- for the South Caucasus, Mr Peter Semneby (6107/10)
- for Republic of Moldova, Mr Kálmán Mizsei (6084/10)
- for the Middle East peace process, Mr Marc Otte (6083/10)
- for the crisis in Georgia, Mr Pierre Morel (6080/10)
- for the African Great Lakes region, Mr Roeland van de Geer (6189/10)
- for Central Asia, Mr Pierre Morel (6159/10)
- for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr Valentin Inzko (6121/10)
- for Sudan, Mr Torben Brylle (6109/10)

EU-Morocco summit

The Council took note of preparations for an EU-Morocco summit that is due to take place in Granada, Spain, on 7 March.

TRADE POLICY

Anti-dumping - Tungsten electrodes - Ring binder mechanisms - China

The Council adopted two regulations:

- terminating the partial interim review of the anti-dumping measures applicable to imports of certain tungsten electrodes originating in China ([5941/10](#)); and
- imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of certain ring binder mechanisms originating in China following an expiry review pursuant to regulation 384/96 ([5921/10](#)).

CULTURE

Participation of Switzerland in programme MEDIA 2007

The Council decided to ask the European Parliament's consent to a draft decision on the conclusion of an agreement between the EU and Switzerland in the audiovisual field, establishing the terms and conditions for the participation of Switzerland in the EU programme MEDIA 2007 ([5131/10](#)).
