



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on Developments in the Southern Neighbourhood

*3069th FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 21 February 2011*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Europe and the Mediterranean region share a common history and cultural heritage. The Council expresses its support to the peoples of the South Mediterranean and their legitimate hopes and aspirations for democratic change, social justice and economic development. The EU stands ready for a new partnership in its relations with the countries of the region to support the process towards democracy, rule of law, socio-economic development and strengthened regional stability, on the basis of shared principles, cooperation and local ownership. It is for the people of these countries to choose their future.
2. The Council continues to follow closely the very important developments in the region. Events differ in each country but it condemns all acts of violence against peaceful demonstrators. The voices calling for the full respect of political, social and economic rights should be listened to carefully.
3. In particular, the Council condemns the ongoing repression against demonstrators in Libya and deplors the violence and the death of civilians. The Council calls for an immediate end to the use of force against protesters, and for all parties to show restraint. Freedom of expression and the right to assemble peacefully are human rights and fundamental freedoms of every human being which must be respected and protected. The legitimate aspirations and demands of people for reform must be addressed through open, inclusive, meaningful and national Libyan-led dialogue, that would bring a constructive future for the country and for the people. We strongly encourage all sides in this respect.
4. The Council welcomes the decision of Bahrain's authorities to open a national dialogue.

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5. The Council urges the Yemeni authorities to reach out to the people through a comprehensive national dialogue.
6. The Council confirms its solidarity with the Tunisian people and the EU's engagement in support of their efforts to establish a stable democracy, based on the rule of law and pluralism, with full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to contribute to socio-economic development and institution-building. Therefore, it remains committed to mobilising appropriate means and instruments in this regard. The EU welcomes the decision by Tunisia to hold an international conference on support to political and economic reforms. The Council reiterates its readiness to resume talks on the advanced status that shall be concluded with the government that will emerge from democratic elections. The Council calls on the Tunisian authorities to protect all people living in their jurisdiction without discrimination.
7. The Council salutes the courage of the Egyptian people in their peaceful and dignified mobilisation for democratic change. The EU stands ready to support the peaceful and orderly transition to a civilian and democratic government based on the rule of law, with full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms and to substantively support efforts to create an economy which enhances social cohesion and promotes growth. The rule of law should be respected and applied to all, including EU citizens.
8. The Council encourages the transitional leadership in Egypt to set a clear timetable and steps for constitutional reform, which will pave the way for free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections. The Council welcomes the intention of the transitional authorities to lift the state of emergency and encourages them to continue taking further steps towards a broad-based and genuinely inclusive dialogue while calling for a constructive approach of all parties. It expects the immediate release of all political prisoners.
9. The Council is committed to a new partnership involving more effective support to those countries in the Southern Neighbourhood which are pursuing political and economic reforms while drawing, where appropriate, on European experience of transition, including support to civil society, youth and enhanced economic cooperation. In this context, it is committed to respond to democratic transformation processes with specific political initiatives and support packages, building on existing and relevant programmes. It will review, adapt and mobilise appropriate support. As these countries strive towards democratic transition, full local ownership needs to be ensured.
10. The Council stresses the importance of strengthened cooperation with Mediterranean countries to address illegal immigration, in accordance with the principles of international law. JHA Ministers meeting later this week in the Council will pursue detailed work on this issue.
11. The Council welcomes the work already undertaken by the High Representative and the European Commission to follow-up the European Council of 4 February 2011 to prepare a package of measures and adapt the EU instruments in support of the region. The Council welcomes the recent visit to the region by the High Representative, her intention to visit Egypt and the dialogue with the authorities and other relevant interlocutors in these countries. It highlights the importance of the forthcoming high-level meeting on Egypt and Tunisia. It reiterates the need for a comprehensive approach across all fields of EU engagement building upon the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean with a view to lending more effective support reflecting partners' commitment for reform."