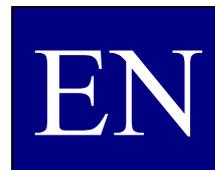




**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



9098/09 (Presse 98)

PRESS RELEASE

2939th Council meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

External relations

Luxembourg, 27 and 28 April 2009

President **Mr Karel SCHWARZENBERG**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2938th meeting on General Affairs (9097/09).

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9098/09 (Presse 98)

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Main results of the Council

*The Council expressed concern at the continuing conflict in **Sri Lanka** and at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the north of the country. It called for an immediate ceasefire so as to allow for a UN-assisted evacuation of civilians still trapped in the conflict zone.*

The Council urged the government of Sri Lanka to cooperate fully with the mission led by the UN commissioner for humanitarian affairs, to release UN workers detained in camps and to allow international oversight of all internally displaced persons as soon as they have left the conflict zone.

It reiterated its call for the government to proceed urgently towards an inclusive and peaceful political process, encouraged all stakeholders to engage urgently and repeated its earlier calls for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to renounce terrorism and violence.

*The Council also adopted conclusions on **Burma/Myanmar**. In particular, it agreed to extend the EU's current common position for another year, including the restrictive measures. It noted that the authorities of Burma/Myanmar still have to take the necessary steps to make the planned elections in 2010 a credible, transparent and inclusive process.*

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OTHER ITEMS APPROVED*none*

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

Belgium:

Mr Karel DE GUCHT
Mr Olivier CHASTEL

Minister for Foreign Affairs
State Secretary for Foreign Affairs with responsibility for preparing for the EU Presidency, attached to the Minister for Foreign Affairs

Bulgaria:

Mr Ivailo Georgiev KALFIN

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Czech Republic:

Mr Alexandr VONDRA

Deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for European Affairs

Mr Karel SCHWARZENBERG

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Denmark:

Mr Michael ZILMER-JOHNS

State Secretary for Foreign and Security Policy, EU Policy and EU Coordination

Germany:

Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER
Mr Günter GLOSER

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

Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ireland:

Micheál MARTIN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Greece:

Mr Ioannis VALINAKIS

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr Diego LÓPEZ GARRIDO

State Secretary for the European Union

France:

Mr Bruno LE MAIRE

Minister of State with responsibility for European Affairs

Italy:

Mr Franco FRATTINI

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Cyprus:

Mr. Andreas MAVROYIANNIS

Permanent Representative

Latvia:

Mr Māris RIEKSTIŅŠ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Lithuania:

Mr Vygaudas UŠACKAS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Hungary:

Mr Péter BALÁZS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr Tonio BORG

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Netherlands:

Mr Maxime VERHAGEN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Austria:

Mr Michael SPINDELEGGER

Federal Minister for European and International Affairs

Poland:

Mr Radosław SIKORSKI

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Mikołaj DOWGIELEWICZ	State Secretary, Office of the Committee for European Integration
<u>Portugal:</u> Mr. Luis AMADO Ms Teresa RIBEIRO	State Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs State Secretary for European Affairs
<u>Romania:</u> Mr Cristian DIACONESCU	Minister for Foreign Affairs
<u>Slovenia:</u> Mr Samuel ŽBOGAR	Minister for Foreign Affairs
<u>Slovakia:</u> Mr Miroslav LAJČÁK	Minister for Foreign Affairs
<u>Finland:</u> Mr Alexander STUBB	Minister for Foreign Affairs
<u>Sweden:</u> Mr Carl BILDT Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM	Minister for Foreign Affairs Minister for European Affairs
<u>United Kingdom:</u> Mr David MILIBAND	Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
<u>Commission:</u> Mr Olli REHN Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER	Member Member
<u>General Secretariat of the Council:</u> Mr Javier SOLANA	Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

ITEMS DEBATED

EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

The Council took note of the presentation by commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner of a communication from the Commission on implementation of the EU's European neighbourhood policy (ENP) in 2008 and ENP country-specific and sectoral progress reports.

BURMA/MYANMAR

The Council took note of the situation in Burma/Myanmar.

It adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council reaffirms the European Union's unwavering commitment to the people of Burma/Myanmar in achieving a peaceful transition to a legitimate civilian system of government, to fight poverty and to improve their social and economic conditions. The Council recognises that the political and socio-economic challenges facing the country can only be addressed through genuine dialogue with all stakeholders, including those from ethnic groups. The Council notes, however, that the authorities of Burma/Myanmar have still to take the steps necessary to make the planned 2010 elections a credible, transparent and inclusive process, based on international standards. It calls for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners and detainees.
2. In these circumstances, the Council deems it necessary to extend the current EU Common Position by another year, including the restrictive measures. The Council underlines its readiness to revise, amend or reinforce the measures it has already adopted in light of developments on the ground. The Council reiterates that the EU stands ready to respond positively to genuine progress in Burma/Myanmar. The EU remains open to dialogue with the authorities of Burma/Myanmar and is willing to meet them at ministerial level in the margins of the ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting in Hanoi in May 2009.
3. The Council urges the government of Burma/Myanmar to engage more with the international community, to work towards a peaceful transition to democracy. It reaffirms the EU's support for the Good Offices Mission of the UN Secretary General and his Special Advisor, Mr Gambari, and welcomes their continued personal commitment to further the political process. The EU will continue to promote the action of the Group of Friends of the SG and step up its dialogue on this issue, and on its implications for regional stability, with key actors, including ASEAN and its Member States, the United States, China, India and Japan. The EU encourages the authorities of Burma/Myanmar to engage the UN in a meaningful manner. In this context, the Council expresses its full support for the continued work of EU Special Envoy Piero Fassino in support of UN efforts, as well as coordinating with Asian partners, and in this context invites the Burma/Myanmar authorities to cooperate with him.

4. The Council welcomes the adoption of the Resolution 10/27 of the UN Human Rights Council and urges the authorities of Burma/Myanmar to comply with it, in full cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, Mr Quintana, whose extended mandate the Council welcomes. The Council is concerned by the deprivation of fundamental rights of ethnic minorities in Burma/Myanmar, in particular over the situation of the Rohingya ethnic minority in Northern Rakhin State, and urges the authorities to recognize their right to citizenship, and to protect all their human rights.

5. The Council welcomes the extension of the mandate of the Tripartite Core Group in coordinating post-Cyclone Nargis rehabilitation efforts, and hopes that the TCG will be able to continue its effective role in facilitating the flow of international assistance. In this context, it is critical that unfettered access by humanitarian agencies continues to be ensured. The EU recalls its large and growing role as a donor to the country and stands ready to increase its assistance to the people of Burma/Myanmar further."

MIDDLE EAST

The Council took stock of developments regarding the Middle East peace process. It was briefed by the presidency on a visit toby Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek Jerusalem and Ramallah on 23 April.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Council took stock of the situation regarding illegal immigration in the Mediterranean and reviewed EU actions underway to tackle the phenomenon.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INFORMAL SUMMIT WITH THE UNITED STATES

Ministers, over lunch, discussed relations with the United States in the light of the informal summit held in Prague on 5 April, including as regards Iran, Afghanistan and procedural issues.

UKRAINE

Ministers, over lunch, assessed the situation in Ukraine, taking stock of the current political impasse in the country and of the economic consequences.

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Ministers, over lunch, discussed the situation in the Republic of Moldova following parliamentary elections on 5 April. They welcomed the activity led in this regard by the presidency, by High Representative Javier Solana and by EU special representative Kalman Mizsei, expressing the hope that this will help re-establish stability in Moldova.

Ministers underscored the importance of maintaining strong relations with the Republic of Moldova.

SRI LANKA

The Council expressed concern at the continuing conflict in Sri Lanka.

It adopted the following conclusions.

"The EU reaffirms its statement of 24 April 2009 expressing deep concern about the mass civilian casualties and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Northern Sri Lanka.

The Council reiterates its concern for the civilians in the conflict zone who are in extreme peril. While reaffirming its policy towards the LTTE, it notes the LTTE's announcement of a unilateral cease-fire. It urges an immediate humanitarian cease-fire to allow for a UN-assisted evacuation of those still trapped in the conflict zone. In this context, the Council welcomes the reported announcement by the Government of Sri Lanka of an end to heavy military operations as a first step.

The EU welcomes the visit to Sri Lanka by Sir John Holmes, UN Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs. The Council urges the Government of Sri Lanka to cooperate fully with the mission, to release UN staff members detained in the camps and to allow international oversight of all Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as soon as they have left the conflict zone. It should also fulfil the commitments it has made to improve the condition in the IDP camps including: better access to medical facilities; transparent registration processes; international monitoring; and freedom of movement in and out of the camps.

The EU repeats its call on the Government of Sri Lanka to proceed urgently towards an inclusive and peaceful political process. The EU believes this is the only way in which lasting peace in Sri Lanka will be achieved. It encourages all stakeholders in Sri Lanka to urgently engage in a responsible way to enable progress to be made in finding a lasting political solution to the concerns of all communities in Sri Lanka. The EU also repeats its earlier calls for the LTTE to renounce terrorism and violence."

OTHER BUSINESS

- Eastern Partnership summit

The Council took note of preparations for the summit to be held in Prague on 7 May to launch the EU's Eastern Partnership with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

- World conference against racism - "Durban II"

Ministers, over lunch, discussed the outcome of the conference held in Geneva, from 20 to 24 April, to review the 2001 world conference against racism, held in Durban, South Africa.

They took note of a letter on the subject received from UN High Commissioner for human rights Navi Pillay.

- Somalia

The Council took note of the situation in Somalia and briefly discussed EU NAVFOR Somalia, the EU's military operation off the coast of Somalia.

MEETINGS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL

The following meetings took place in the margins of the Council:

- EU-Egypt Association Council
- 5th meeting of the EU-Croatia Stabilisation and Association Council
- EU-Troika with African Union
- Permanent Partnership Council with Russia

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED
