



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**29th Quadripartite meeting
between the Council of Europe and the European Union
Luxembourg, 27 October 2009
Conclusions**

The 29th Quadripartite meeting between the Council of Europe and the European Union was held in Luxembourg on 27 October 2009 at the invitation of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

It was attended, on the European Union side, by Ms Cecilia Malmström, Minister for European Affairs of Sweden, and Mr Karel Kovanda, Acting Director General for External Relations in the European Commission, and on the Council of Europe side, by Mr Samuel Žbogar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, and Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

P R E S S

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The participants welcomed the atmosphere of confidence and the excellent level of cooperation developed in the relationship, two years after the signature in 2007 of the Memorandum of Understanding between their organisations. This has translated into enhanced cooperation, through increased contacts at all levels, as well as coordination in the legislative field and joint projects. In presence of the newly elected Secretary General of the Council of Europe, they committed themselves to maintaining this positive trend and to improving it further whenever possible, in particular in the context of the challenges their organisations are facing as far as Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law are concerned.

The participants recalled that ratification of the Lisbon Treaty will make accession by the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights possible. They expressed their support for an early start of the accession process, since accession would represent an important step towards better human rights protection for everyone in Europe.

They noted that the permanent participation of the Council of Europe in two multilateral platforms of the Eastern Partnership also opens new prospects. The participants reaffirmed their intention to continue to strengthen their partnership, and notably in relation to frozen conflicts.

The participants agreed that the situation in **Georgia**, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia, required continued and close attention. The participants underlined the importance of full compliance with the Agreements of 12 August 2008 and 8 September 2008. They underscored the need for further efforts to achieve tangible results in the Geneva discussions. They noted that the Council of Europe could make a useful contribution in this context in the area of its expertise. Reference was made to the regular reports of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on the human rights situation in the areas affected by the conflict in Georgia which are sent to the Co-Chairs of the Geneva discussions.

The participants highlighted the important role played on the ground by the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM), and reiterated the need for full access by the Mission to all areas affected by the conflict. They welcomed the successful cooperation between the Council of Europe and EUMM with regard to the human rights training for the EUMM monitors, and continuation of it as the need arises.

The participants agreed that cooperation between the two organisations to promote confidence building and respect for human rights in Georgia, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia, was important and should continue.

The participants commended the efforts of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to address human rights issues in conflict areas and reiterated their call for all sides to respect his recommendations with regard to the humanitarian situation and the rights of the IDPs in the areas affected by the conflict.

The participants noted all political contributions to the democratic process following the elections in the **Republic of Moldova**. They underscored the need for constructive dialogue and a climate of responsible cooperation between all political forces in the face of the formidable challenges the country faces.

The participants agreed on the need for the Republic of Moldova to make progress in implementing reforms particularly in view of the impact of the global economic and financial crisis in the country. They stressed their readiness to help the Republic of Moldova in these efforts.

The participants welcomed the readiness of the European Union to start negotiations on a new agreement with the Republic of Moldova that will replace, and go beyond, the current Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. They recalled in this context the need for the Republic of Moldova to continue to make progress in the field of respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, including freedom of expression and media freedom, and welcomed early signals from the new Moldovan government to this effect. They welcomed joint Council of Europe-European Union efforts to implement a democracy-support assistance package initiated by the European Commission to underpin government efforts in this regard. They confirmed their intention to cooperate closely in implementing such assistance in the framework of Joint Programmes, including in the specific area of media training for non-biased pre-electoral campaign coverage.

The participants agreed that the resolution of the Transnistrian issue is possible only through peaceful means and transparent negotiations in the 5+2 format. They welcomed the efforts deployed by both organisations to contribute to confidence-building measures in the context of the Transnistrian settlement, in the areas of environment, health, education, media and civil society. They noted the launch of confidence-building projects supported by the EU in the economic and social fields.

The participants also discussed the situation in **Belarus** and reconfirmed their readiness to continue to engage with Belarus to promote democratic development in the country with the instruments at their disposal, including in the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

The participants expressed their concerns about the recent lack of progress with regard to the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Belarus despite some encouraging steps earlier this year. They encouraged Belarus to progress further in adopting the fundamental values of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. They welcomed the opening on 8 June 2009 of the Council of Europe Information Point in Minsk, which serves as a tool in raising awareness on human rights and European values, as illustrated by the recent launching of two Council of Europe campaigns (“Europe Against the Death Penalty” and “Stop Domestic Violence”).

The participants reiterated that a significant move in showing Belarus' commitment to the shared values would be the immediate introduction of a moratorium on the death penalty and its subsequent abolition, as a crucial step forward on its path to joining the Council of Europe. The participants confirmed their intention to further enhance support to civil society and free media and their willingness to pursue their efforts and cooperation to encourage Belarus in moving ahead on all these issues.

