



Brussels, 13 June 2008

DRAFT

BACKGROUND¹

GENERAL AFFAIRS and EXTERNAL RELATIONS COUNCIL

Monday, 16 June, in Luxembourg

*The Council will start at 10.00 with a session on general affairs, namely with the preparations for the **European Council of 19 and 20 June** and presentation of the 18-month draft programme by the future French, Czech and Swedish presidencies.*

*A session on external relations will follow, focusing on the **Western Balkans, Middle East, Cuba, Burma and Africa** (in particular the Great Lakes region, Sudan and Zimbabwe).*

*Lunch discussion items will among others include **China and Iran**.*

Press conference: *at the end of the Council (as from 16.30).*

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In the margins of the Council:

Monday 16 June:

16.00 Signature of the stabilisation and association agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina;
18.30 EU-Israel Association Council (*to be followed by a press conference at +/-19.30*);

Tuesday 17 June:

09.30 Accession conference with Turkey (*to be followed by a press conference at +/- 11.15*);
11.30 Accession conference with Croatia (*to be followed by a press conference at +/- 12.15*).

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office

SESSION ON GENERAL AFFAIRS

Preparation of the June meeting of the European Council

The Council will examine draft conclusions prepared by the presidency for the European Council to be held in Brussels on 19 and 20 June.

The issues to be addressed by the European Council are:

- the Lisbon Treaty;
- freedom, security and justice;
- policy implications of high food and oil prices;
- economic, social and environmental issues;
- Western Balkans;
- external relations, in particular the UN millennium development goals and European neighbourhood policy.

An annotated draft agenda was discussed by the Council at its meeting on 26 and 27 May; draft conclusions have since been examined by the permanent representatives committee.

18-month programme of the Council

- *public debate*

The future French, Czech and Swedish presidencies will present a draft 18-month programme of the Council for the second half of 2008 and the year 2009.

The document contains a strategic framework, established in consultations by the subsequent three presidencies, a list of specific priorities in each policy area and a comprehensive programme setting out the issues that are expected to be covered during the 18-month period.

Some of the highlighted priorities are:

- preparations for the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty
- reassessment of EU spending and resources;
- climate change;
- ensuring secure, competitive and environmentally sustainable energy;
- implementing the Lisbon strategy for jobs and growth;
- promoting the EU's competitiveness;
- sustainable development;
- review of the common agricultural policy (CAP "health check");
- continued development of an area of freedom, security and justice;
- enlargement of the EU;
- the Western Balkans;
- strengthening the EU's relations with the countries on its eastern and southern frontiers;
- relations with Africa;
- the European security strategy;
- achievement of the UN's millennium development goals.

The three presidencies will finalise the programme in the light of the Council's discussion.

SESSION ON EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Western Balkans

The Council will review the situation in the Western Balkans and is due to adopt conclusions, focusing on:

- Bosnia and Herzegovina, welcoming the signature of a stabilisation and association agreement and an interim agreement, which will take place in the margins of the Council;
- the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, following parliamentary elections held on 1 June and re-runs to be held on 15 June;
- visa liberalisation, welcoming the presentation of "roadmaps" for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Middle East

Ministers will briefly discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the peace process and Lebanon.

A meeting of the EU-Israel Association Council will take place after the Council meeting.

Africa

- *Great Lakes region*

Ministers will discuss the situation in the Great Lakes region. The Council is expected to

- welcome the progress made in the African Great Lakes Region, where the EU is actively engaged, including in the framework of implementation structures of the different peace processes, together with international and African partners, in particular the UN and the AU;
- appeal to the countries of the region to reinforce relations among them and to create a stronger regional cooperation.

Regarding the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Council is notably expected to:

- reiterate the EU's commitment to support efforts by the DRC to provide peace, security, reconstruction and development to its citizens;
- as regards the situation in Eastern DRC, welcome the approach taken by the governments of DRC and Rwanda and all the groups involved in concluding the important recent accords on peace in Eastern DRC;
- recall the EU's continued efforts to contribute to the process of Security Sector reform, including through its two ESDP missions in the DRC (EUSEC RD Congo and EUPOL RD Congo) and the Commission's activities.

The Council should also:

- encourage the parties concerned to remain actively committed to the peace processes in Burundi and in Uganda;
- emphasise the importance of the parliamentary elections due in Rwanda next September and state the EU's readiness to support them, inter alia by sending an EU electoral observation mission.

The Council will adopt conclusions along these lines.

- ***Sudan***

The Council will discuss the situation in Sudan. It will have an exchange of views in the presence of Luis Moreno Ocampo, prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

The Council is likely to express concern over the deterioration of the security situation in Sudan, jeopardising the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Darfur. In this context, it should in particular:

- welcome the Road Map on Abyei agreed on 8 June by the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) following the recent military confrontation there between Sudanese armed forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA);
- reiterate its condemnation of the attack by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) on the government of Sudan in Omdurman in early May, as well as recent bombing of and attacks on civilians in Darfur perpetrated by government forces and their militias;
- emphasise the need to accelerate the UNAMID deployment and for it to be equipped to fulfil its mandate, including the protection of civilians;
- express concern over the continued violence against civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel, as well as the evidence of continued high levels of gender violence and sexual crimes.

The Council will reiterate its support for the International Criminal Court (ICC), deplore the government of Sudan's continued lack of cooperation with the ICC and recall obligations under UN Security Council resolution 1593 on cooperation with the Court.

The Council is also expected to voice concern about the regional ramifications of the crisis in Sudan. It should urge Sudan and Chad to adhere to the 13 March Dakar agreement. The EU operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA is a key contributor, together with the UN mission in Chad (MINURCAT) and the UN/AU mission in Darfur (UNAMID), to bringing security to the region and therefore to the efforts aimed at consolidating peace and reconciliation in the region and improving the humanitarian situation.

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions along these lines.

- ***Somalia***

The Council will discuss the situation in Somalia and is expected to adopt conclusions reaffirming support for a comprehensive approach for a lasting settlement of the Somali crisis and welcoming the unanimous adoption on 2 June of UN Security Council resolution 1816 on acts of piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia.

- ***Zimbabwe***

The Council will have an exchange of views on the situation in Zimbabwe ahead of the 27 June presidential election runoff.

At its meeting on 26 May, the Council condemned the state-sponsored campaign of violence and intimidation against Zimbabweans that has been increasing throughout the prolonged electoral process and called upon the government of Zimbabwe to ensure a level playing field and a secure environment conducive to ensuring that the results of the forthcoming second round will reflect the free and democratic will of the Zimbabwean people.

Cuba

The Council will discuss relations with Cuba, notably in the light of recent changes undertaken by the Cuban government. It should call upon the government to improve effectively the human rights situation by, inter alia, releasing unconditionally all political prisoners, including those who were detained and sentenced in 2003.

It will hold its annual review of the Council Common Position of 1996 and is expected to reconfirm its value and relevance, as well as the EU's determination to pursue a dialogue with the Cuban authorities, the representatives of civil society and the peaceful opposition, in accordance with EU policies, in order to promote respect for human rights and real progress towards a pluralist democracy.

As stated in the Council Conclusions of 18 June 2007, the EU stands ready to resume a comprehensive and open dialogue with the Cuban authorities on all topics of mutual interest. Since June 2007, preliminary discussions on the possibility to launch such a dialogue have taken place at ministerial level between the EU and Cuba and bilaterally.

Ministers will examine:

- ways to pursue this dialogue;
- the situation regarding the already suspended 2003 measures, with a view to facilitating the political dialogue process;
- the future evaluation of the EU's relations with Cuba.

Burma/Myanmar

The Council will review the situation in Burma/Myanmar six weeks after the passage of cyclone Nargis, following discussion by development ministers at its meetings on 13 May and 26 and 27 May.

The scale of the disaster is such that the combined efforts of the UN, of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries, and of international and local agencies and NGOs are required to bring relief. On 13 May, the Council called on the Burmese authorities to offer free and unfettered access to humanitarian workers and to take urgent action to facilitate the flow of aid. On 26 May, it urged them to give the highest priority to overcoming obstacles to the delivery of immediate humanitarian relief to all affected regions of the country.

Iran

At lunch, ministers will discuss Iran and the Iranian nuclear issue. High Representative Javier Solana will brief ministers on his visit to Tehran, scheduled to take place on 14 June with a view to presenting to the Iranian authorities, on behalf of France, Germany, the United Kingdom, China, Russia, the US and the EU, an updated package of proposals designed to be the starting point for negotiations.

China

Over lunch, ministers are expected to discuss China, including the situation in Tibet.

Other items

The Council is expected to adopt a number of other items, including:

- *Russia*

Review of preparations for the EU-Russia summit (Khanty-Mansiisk, 26-27 June).

- *Migration*

Conclusions on enhancing the global approach to migration.
