



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



10726/08 (Presse 177)

PRESS RELEASE

2879th Council meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

External Relations

Luxembourg, 16 June 2008

President **Mr Dimitrij RUPEL**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia

* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2878th meeting on General Affairs (10725/08).

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

*The Council welcomed the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and of the interim agreement with **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, which took place in the margins of the meeting, as an important step on the country's path towards the EU. It looked forward to intensifying cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina through the comprehensive framework offered by these agreements and the other mechanisms of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

*The Council emphasised that the European Union remained firmly committed to the European perspective for the **Western Balkans** and encouraged the countries of the region to meet the necessary conditions.*

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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:

Ms Gergana GRANCHAROVA

Minister for European Affairs

Czech Republic:

Mr Karel SCHWARZENBERG

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Denmark:

Mr Per Stig MØLLER

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Germany:

Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER

Deputy Federal Chancellor and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Günter GLOSER

Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ireland:

Mr Micheál MARTIN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Greece:

Ms Dora BAKOYANNIS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr Miguel Ángel MORATINOS CUYAUBÉ

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

France:

Mr Bernard KOUCHNER

Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

Italy:

Mr Franco FRATTINI

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Cyprus:

Mr Markos KYPRIANOU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Latvia:

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Minister for Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr Tonio BORG

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Netherlands:

Mr Maxime VERHAGEN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Frans TIMMERMANS

Minister for European Affairs

Austria:

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK

Federal Minister for European and International Affairs

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Mr Radosław SIKORSKI

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Luís AMADO

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State Secretary for European Affairs, attached to the
Minister for Foreign Affairs**Romania:**

Mr Lazăr COMĂNESCU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovenia:

Mr Dimitrij RUPEL

Mr Janez LENARČIČ

Minister for Foreign Affairs
State Secretary at the Government Office for European
Affairs**Slovakia:**

Mr Ján KUBIŠ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Finland:

Mr Alexander STUBB

Ms Astrid THORS

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Migration and European Affairs**Sweden:**

Mr Carl BILDT

Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for European Affairs**United Kingdom:**

Mr David MILIBAND

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Commission:

Mr Olli REHN

Mr Louis MICHEL

Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER

Member

Member

Member

General Secretariat of the Council:

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

ITEMS DEBATED**WESTERN BALKANS - Council conclusions**

The Council discussed the situation in the Western Balkans and EU-Western Balkans relations and adopted the following conclusions:

"The European Union remains firmly committed to the European perspective for the Western Balkans and encourages the countries of the region to meet the necessary conditions.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Council took note of the parliamentary elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on 1 June 2008. It condemned the violent incidents and regretted other serious shortcomings, as identified by the OSCE/ODIHR. The Council noted the measures taken by the authorities following 1 June including the organisation of re-runs on 15 June in all places where serious irregularities occurred. It called upon the authorities to investigate all reported incidents and take appropriate action in line with the recommendations from the OSCE/ODIHR. In this context it welcomed the commitment of the authorities to address these issues without delay.

The Council expects the new Parliament and Government to be established soon and to achieve sustainable progress in reforms. It called on all political parties to promote and participate in a constructive and inclusive dialogue and to implement the priorities identified in the Accession Partnership.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Council welcomed the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and of the Interim Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina as an important step on the country's path towards the EU. It looked forward to intensifying cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina through the comprehensive framework offered by these Agreements and the other mechanisms of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The Council highlighted the importance of Bosnia and Herzegovina establishing a sustained and effective track record in implementing these Agreements. The Council encouraged all the political forces of BiH to unite their efforts to pursue with strong determination its reform agenda including the priorities set out in the European Partnership.

Roadmaps for visa liberalisation

The Council welcomed the presentation of the roadmaps for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, in order to gradually advance towards visa liberalisation and as a clear sign of the political commitment of the EU for the visa free travel for the citizens of the Western Balkans. It called on these countries to focus now on the full implementation of the requirements contained in the roadmaps. The Council and the Commission will closely monitor the process."

AFRICA

Sudan - Council conclusions

Ministers welcomed a presentation by the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Mr Luis Moreno Ocampo. On the basis of his briefing ministers had an in-depth discussion on the consequences of the main findings of his latest report on the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1593 (2005).

Commissioner Louis Michel reported on his meetings with African leaders in the margins of the IGAD summit in Addis Ababa on 13 June 2008.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council expresses its deep concern over the deterioration of the security situation in Sudan seriously jeopardising the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Darfur. The Council calls on all parties to abide by their commitments to a political process and obligations by international law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeepers, and re-commit themselves to a viable political solution of all outstanding problems.

2. While deploring the recent military confrontation in Abyei between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the Council welcomes the Road Map on Abyei agreed on 8 June 2008 by the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). The Council hopes that this agreement will provide the basis for resolving the dispute and finding a lasting solution to the implementation of the Abyei Protocol. It urges the parties to fully respect the provisions of this new agreement, particularly the security arrangements including an effective Joint Integrated Unit (JIU), so that the population can voluntarily return to their former homesteads. The Council calls on both parties to grant unhindered access to UNMIS and to humanitarian organisations, including facilitating an independent investigation into the recent events in the entire Abyei area. Increased UNMIS presence in Abyei is required to effectively fulfil its mandate. All efforts should be made to prevent a recurrence of incidents that may undermine the effective implementation of the CPA. The EU stands ready to assist in meeting the humanitarian needs of the people displaced from Abyei and the recovery of Abyei town to allow for a return in safety and dignity. The Council supports the efforts by the Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC), in its crucial role of monitoring the CPA implementation, to pay particular attention to the alarming situation in Abyei.

3. The Council recognises the CPA and the interim national constitution as the basis for a democratic transformation, peace and stability in the whole of Sudan, and for making unity attractive. The Council welcomes the progress on the census and calls on all parties throughout Sudan to constructively engage in the preparations for the elections scheduled for 2009, in particular the approval of the electoral law. The Council urges the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to improve their cooperation in good faith and to fully assume their obligations according to the CPA. A successful implementation of CPA will create a conducive climate for a negotiated settlement of the Darfur conflict and would have a stabilising effect on the whole region.
4. The EU reiterates its strong condemnation, together with the UN and AU, of the attack by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) on the Government of Sudan (GoS) in Omdurman in early May, as well as recent bombing of and attacks on civilians in Darfur perpetrated by Government forces and their militias. The Council calls on the parties to commit to immediate cease-fire and underlines the urgency of reactivating the political process in Darfur under the UN/AU facilitation and strongly urges rebel movements to enter into negotiations with a common approach. The Council recognises the significant contribution to confidence and peace-building in Darfur that can be played by the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC). The Council reiterates the need for an inclusive peace process and urges all parties to provide access and free movement for this grass root dialogue and consultation to take place.
5. The Council emphasises the need to accelerate the UNAMID deployment and for it to be equipped to fulfil the mandate given to it by UNSC Resolution 1769 (2007), including the protection of civilians. The Council condemns the recent attacks on UNAMID. The Council once again calls on the GoS to fully implement its responsibilities under the Status of Force Agreement (SOFA), particularly in regard to UNAMID's freedom of movement, and make all technical and administrative efforts to facilitate swift deployment of UNAMID troops and police selected by the UN and AU. UN member states capable of providing logistical and other military equipment necessary for the effectiveness of UNAMID, according to the Enhanced Deployment Plan, are invited to do so.

6. The Council remains concerned by the continued violence against civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel, as well as the evidence of continued high levels of gender violence and sexual crimes. Perpetrators of such crimes and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law cannot go unpunished. The Council recalls the importance of UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.
7. The Council also reiterates its readiness to take further measures, notably in the UN framework, against any party failing to engage constructively in the peace process in Darfur, against any party that impedes the establishment of an effective UNAMID force and against any party that undermines peace and security in Darfur and the region by committing acts of violence and especially against any party that obstructs humanitarian access to those in need.
8. The Council reiterates its support for the International Criminal Court (ICC). It deeply deplores the continued failure of the GoS to cooperate with the ICC and underlines that the GoS has an obligation, and the capacity, to cooperate. Any arrest warrant issued by the ICC should be respected. The individuals Ahmad Harun and Ali Kushayb should be surrendered to the ICC and the GoS should demonstrate its commitment to end impunity for the planners and perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Council stands ready to consider measures against individuals responsible for not-cooperating with the ICC, should the obligation under the UNSC Resolution 1593 on cooperation with the ICC continue to be disregarded. The Council calls upon all parties to use their constructive leverage to ensure that the GoS fully cooperates with the ICC and pursue effective investigations and prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur and ultimately ratify the Statute of the ICC.
9. The Council appreciates the 7th report of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) presented to the UN Security Council on 5 June 2008. It is particularly concerned by the Prosecutor's report that the decisions to commit, to deny and to disguise such crimes are being taken at the highest level.

10. The Council is concerned about the regional ramifications of the crisis in Sudan. In view of diffusion of the ongoing tensions between Sudan and Chad the Council urges both countries to adhere to the 13 March 2008 Dakar Agreement and to fully cooperate with the Contact Group, of which the EU is an observer. The Council welcomes the ongoing diplomatic efforts carried out by the AU and calls on the regional partners to maximise their leverage on all parties to attain a lasting stability for the region.
11. The Council recalls that 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, by consequence, contributes to the efforts to consolidate peace and reconciliation in the region, including an improvement of the humanitarian situation."

Somalia - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council recalls its conclusions of 26 May 2008 and reaffirms its commitment to a comprehensive approach for a lasting settlement of the Somali crisis, covering its political, security and humanitarian aspects.
2. The Council welcomes the agreement reached on 9 June 2008 by the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia, at the Inter-Somali talks that resumed in Djibouti early this month, with the facilitation of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General Ould-Abdallah and the support of the EU and other international partners. The Council reiterates the urgent need to keep up the momentum of an inclusive dialogue for a sustained political solution to the dire situation in Somalia.
3. The Council welcomes the unanimous adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1816 of 2 June 2008 on acts of piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia.
4. The Council requests the Council General Secretariat and the Commission to study possible options on implementing all commitments contained in its conclusions of 26 May, as well as on how to best contribute to the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1816 of 2 June."

Great Lakes Region - *Council conclusions*

The Council discussed the situation in the Great Lakes Region and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council welcomes the progress made in the African Great Lakes Region, where the EU is actively engaged, including in the framework of the implementation structures of the different Peace Processes, together with international and African partners, in particular the UN and the AU. The Council underlines the importance of a regional approach in order to provide a comprehensive response to the interlinked problems of the region. The Council also stresses the importance of implementing commitments to normalise diplomatic relations made by the governments of DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda at their regional meeting in September 2007.
2. The Council launches an appeal to reinforce relations between the countries of the region through existing structures and to create a stronger regional cooperation, including on economic aspects and with a focus on reducing the wide-spread cross-border criminal activities. The Council calls upon countries in the region to cooperate fully with the Committee established pursuant to UNSCR 1533 in carrying out its mandate.
3. The Council reiterates the EU's commitment to support efforts by the DRC to provide peace, security, reconstruction and development for its citizens, in full respect of human rights, good governance and the rule of law, in line with the principles enshrined in the Cotonou Agreement and in the EU-Africa Strategy.

As regards the situation in Eastern DRC, the Council welcomes the approach taken by the government of DRC and Rwanda and all the groups involved in concluding the important recent accords on peace in eastern DRC. The Council underlines that the Nairobi Communiqué of 9 November 2007 and the results of the Goma Conference (Kivus Conference for Peace, Security and Development) of 23 January 2008 provide an opportunity for a political solution of the crisis in the Kivus. It is now essential that all parties equally and fully implement the commitments, ensuring substantial progress on both tracks, preventing the peace processes underway in the region becoming stalled. The Council stresses the need to refrain from providing support to armed movements in the DRC or the region. The EU underlines the importance of the implementation structures and programmes, in particular the Amani programme and the Technical Joint Committee for Peace and Security.

4. The Council condemns the recent attack by FDLR at the Kinyandoni camp against internally displaced people. The Council stresses the need to accelerate the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation/resettlement and reintegration (DDR/RR) process and the need for all armed groups to constructively engage in the process launched in Nairobi and Goma. The Council takes note of the conference on FDLR disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation and relocation that took place in Kisangani on May 26. The EU welcomes this initiative as a step to make further progress in the Nairobi peace process. In this context, the EU calls on all signatories of the Nairobi communiqué to take their responsibilities in making sure all conditions are in place to allow for this process to advance.
5. The Council welcomes UNSCR 1804 and 1807. In accordance with their provisions, EU Member States will take all appropriate measures to prevent the provision by their nationals or from their territories of any support for the FDLR or ex-FAR/Interahamwe and other armed groups in the DRC. The Council stresses the need to bring an immediate end to the suffering of the population, in particular women and children and to put an end to all forms of sexual violence. The Council condemns the ongoing violations of human rights and international humanitarian and criminal law, in particular in the Eastern DRC and calls on the Government of DRC to ensure that those committing these violations are held responsible. The EU will continue its support for the reform of the justice sector and the fight against impunity. The Council reiterates its full support for the International Criminal Court's (ICC) activities in the region.
6. The EU continues 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. A sustainable reform of the entire Security Sector, with due emphasis on the rule of law, accountability and respect for human rights, coordinated with civil society and other relevant stakeholders and with support from the international community, will greatly help to end the climate of impunity and provide the security that DRC citizens deserve. The Council welcomes the organisation of the SSR meeting in Kinshasa on 25-26 February 2008 and encourages the government of the DRC and international partners to further enhance their commitment to this process.

7. The EU deplores the decision by the DRC government to close two Belgian consulates in Bukavu and Lubumbashi, as they provided an important and useful EU diplomatic and consular presence in the East of the country.
8. Regarding the peace process in Burundi, the Council congratulates the Government of Burundi, the Regional Initiative and the South African facilitation for the progress achieved. The Council welcomes the return of the PALIPEHUTU-FNL leadership to the country. The EU will remain committed to supporting the peace process, in particular through the participation of the EU in the Political Directorate. The Council encourages the parties to remain actively committed to the peace process and calls upon the PALIPEHUTU-FNL and the Government of Burundi to refrain from the use of armed force, to implement the cease-fire agreement and to work towards a comprehensive peace agreement. The EU strongly encourages the institutions in Burundi to resume their work and engage in a constructive way, in order to improve the living conditions of the Burundian population.
9. Regarding the peace process in Uganda, the EU welcomes the facilitation efforts of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for LRA-affected areas, Joaquim Chissano, and of the vice-President of South Sudan, Riek Machar, and encourages them to continue. The Council strongly deplores the fact that the LRA has not honoured its previously declared commitment to sign the Final Peace Agreement. The EU condemns the recent abductions and demands that these and other serious breaches of international humanitarian and criminal law by the LRA come to an end. All abducted persons should immediately and unconditionally be released. The EU compliments the Government of Uganda on having constructively carried out the peace negotiations in Juba with the LRA. The Council encourages the Government of Uganda to honour the implementation of all applicable provisions of the agreements, in particular the Comprehensive Solutions and Accountability and Reconciliation, in order to stabilize the situation, ensure durable peace, respect international law and achieve full respect for human rights in Northern Uganda. The Council welcomes the new High Court division to deal with serious war crimes, on the understanding, however, that its functioning will be in line with the provisions of the Rome Statute, establishing the ICC. The Council reiterates that the EU will remain committed to supporting the peace process and fully upholding international law in full compliance with the mandate of the ICC.

10. As regards Rwanda, the Council has noted the preparations made for the parliamentary elections to be held next September. The Council emphasises the importance of these elections for the country and states the EU's readiness to support them, *inter alia*, by sending an EU electoral observation mission to Rwanda. The EU reiterates its full support for the activities of the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda (ICTR).
11. The Council has noted MONUC's special report on the Bas Congo events of February and March 2008. It regrets that the police used force in an excessive and/or unwarranted manner, including arbitrary executions. It requests the Congolese government to take urgent action to implement the recommendations of the report."

MIDDLE EAST

Ministers discussed the situation in the Middle East peace process, in particular in preparation for the meeting with Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, on the occasion of the EU-Israel Association Council meeting.

CHINA

As a follow-up to their informal meeting on 29 March, ministers had a brief exchange of views on the subject of China, and in particular the dialogue between the Chinese authorities and the Dalai Lama's envoys.

IRAN

High Representative Javier Solana briefed ministers on his visit to Tehran on 14 and 15 June during which he presented to the Iranian authorities, on behalf of France, Germany, the United Kingdom, China, Russia, the US and the EU, an updated package of proposals intended as to be the starting point for negotiations.

OTHER ITEMS**Georgia**

High Representative Javier Solana briefed ministers on his recent visit to Georgia, including Abkhazia, on 5 and 6 June.

Note: At its general affairs meeting, the Council adopted a joint action providing for a further EU contribution to the conflict settlement process in Georgia/South Ossetia (see general affairs press release *10725/08*).

EVENTS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL

- Signing of the EU-Bosnia and Herzegovina Stabilisation and association agreement and of an interim agreement (see press release [10748/08](#)).
- 8th meeting of the EU-Israel Association Council.
- 5th meeting of the Accession Conference at ministerial level with Turkey (see press release [10727/08](#)).
- 6th meeting of the Accession Conference at ministerial level with Croatia (see press release [10814/08](#)).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

None.
