



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESS RELEASE

2878th Council meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

General Affairs

Luxembourg, 16 June 2008

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

* The 2879th meeting on External Relations is the subject of a separate press release (10726/08).

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

*The Council adopted a regulation amending the regime for goods, services and persons crossing the so-called **Green Line in Cyprus**, in order to enhance trade and economic integration on the island on the basis of experience gained. The green line separates those areas in which the government of the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control and those in which it does.*

*It also approved the conclusion of a stabilisation and association agreement with **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, as well as an interim agreement on trade and trade-related matters. Both agreements were signed in the margins of the Council.*

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- 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.

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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 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:

Mr Māris RIEKSTIŅŠ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Lithuania:

Mr Petras VAITIEKŪNAS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Mr Nicolas SCHMIT

Minister with responsibility for Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Hungary:

Ms Kinga GÖNCZ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr Tonio BORG

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Netherlands:

Mr Maxime VERHAGEN
Mr Frans TIMMERMANS

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for European Affairs

Austria:

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK

Federal Minister for European and International Affairs

Poland:

Mr Radosław SIKORSKI

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Luís AMADO
Mr Manuel LOBO ANTUNES

Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs
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

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Commission:

Ms Margot WALLSTRÖM
Mr Olli REHN

Vice President
Member

.....

General Secretariat of the Council:

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

ITEMS DEBATED**PREPARATION OF THE JUNE EUROPEAN COUNCIL**

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

The issues to be addressed by the European Council are as follows:

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

Over lunch, ministers discussed the follow-up to be given to the referendum in Ireland on 12 June on the Lisbon Treaty.

Foreign ministers will discuss a number of issues at their working dinner on 19 June, including Cuba.

EIGHTEEN-MONTH PROGRAMME OF THE COUNCIL

The Council endorsed the 18-month programme of the Council's activities under the future French, Czech and Swedish presidencies ([10684/08](#)).

Taking account of the comments made by delegations and of the outcome of the European Council, the future three presidencies will draw up the final version of the programme.

The document contains a strategic framework, established in consultation with 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:

- 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.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**EXTERNAL RELATIONS****Stabilisation and association agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The Council concluded a stabilisation and association agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), following the completion of negotiations launched in 2005 ([8226/08](#)), as well as an interim agreement with BiH on trade and trade-related matters ([8229/08](#), [8229/08 COR 1](#)).

The stabilisation and association agreement is aimed at:

- supporting efforts to strengthen democracy and the rule of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- contributing to political, economic and institutional stability in BiH and the wider region;
- providing a framework for political dialogue, allowing for the development of close political relations between the EU and BiH;
- supporting the development of economic cooperation and international cooperation in BiH, including through the approximation of its legislation to that of the Community;
- supporting efforts to complete the transition to a market economy;
- promoting economic relations and developing gradually a free trade area between BiH and the Community ;
- fostering regional cooperation in all fields covered by the agreement.

The agreement is an important step in the establishment of a stable order based on cooperation, within the framework of the EU's stabilisation and association process with the countries of south-eastern Europe, as well as within that of the stability pact for south-eastern Europe.

The interim agreement is aimed at implementing as rapidly as possible provisions of the stabilisation and association agreement dealing with the free movement of goods, on the basis of reciprocity and mutual interest. An interim committee will be established with a view to ensuring the correct implementation of the agreements.

The Council also adopted a decision establishing the position to be adopted by the EU within the EU-BiH interim committee as regards its rules of procedure, including the terms of reference and structure of EU-BiH sub-committees ([9163/08](#)).

The Council adopted a regulation laying down procedures for the adoption of detailed rules for the implementation of certain provisions of both agreements ([9160/08](#)).

Preparation of the EU-Russia summit

The Council took note of progress in preparations for the EU-Russia summit to be held in Khanty-Mansiisk, Russia, on 26 and 27 June, the 21st to be held under the EU-Russia partnership and cooperation agreement.

The summit will be an opportunity to exchange views on the prospects for EU-Russia relations, including the start of negotiations on a new framework agreement and implementation of the four EU-Russia "common spaces", as well as global economic challenges and international and regional issues.

Georgia/South Ossetia - Further assistance to the conflict-settlement process

The Council adopted a joint action providing for a further EU contribution to the conflict-settlement process in Georgia/South Ossetia ([8539/08](#)).

Following an appeal by the OSCE for further assistance, the EU agreed to offer additional financial assistance of EUR 223 000 to the conflict settlement process for a period of 12 months. The additional assistance will be focused on support for joint control commission meetings, steering committee meetings on an economic rehabilitation programme and related newsletter, as well as a confidence-building workshop and a meeting of representatives of law enforcement bodies.

EU assistance is complementary to the work of the EU special representative for the South Caucasus, whose mandate is, *inter alia*, to contribute to the prevention of conflicts, to assist in conflict resolution and to intensify the EU's dialogue with the main actors in the region.

EU strategy for Central Asia - Report on implementation

The Council approved a joint progress report by the Council and the Commission on implementation of the EU's strategy for Central Asia, and agreed to submit it to the European Council meeting on 19 and 20 June.

The strategy provides an overall framework for the EU's relations with Central Asia and builds on the implementation of various agreements, EU assistance programmes and other initiatives taken by the EU to engage with the countries of the region.

Association agreement with Jordan - EU enlargement

The Council adopted a decision approving the signing and provisional application of a protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean association agreement with Jordan to take account of the accession to the EU of Bulgaria and Romania in January 2007 ([9372/08](#), [9373/08](#)).

United Nations General Assembly - EU priorities

The Council approved a list of the EU's priorities in the areas of peace and security, sustainable development and human rights for the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, which will start on 16 September ([9978/08](#)).

The EU is fully committed to effective multilateralism with a central role for the United Nations. Its goal is to work towards a multilateral system based on international law as well as the purposes and principles of the charter of the United Nations.

The prevention of violent conflicts - Annual report on EU activities

The Council approved an annual report on the EU's activities in relation to conflict prevention, including implementation of the EU programme for the prevention of violent conflicts. It agreed to submit it to the European Council meeting on 19 and 20 June.

Weapons of mass destruction - Progress report on EU strategy

The Council approved a six-monthly progress report on implementation of the EU's strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and an updated list of priorities for its implementation in the future.

The report was established in coordination by the high representative's personal representative for non-proliferation and the Commission.

The EU strategy against the proliferation of WMD was adopted by the European Council in December 2003.

The accumulation and trafficking of small arms - Progress report EU strategy

The Council approved a progress report on implementation of the EU's strategy to combat the illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and ammunition. The report covers EU activities in this field during the first half of 2008.

EU guidelines on the death penalty - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council recalls the adoption of the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty on 29 June 1998. They were the first ever EU Guidelines on Human Rights to be adopted, thus underlining the priority placed on the issue of the death penalty by the EU. These EU Guidelines have gone on to become a key practical tool of the EU's human rights policy towards third countries.

The Council adopts the revised and updated version of the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty as set out in doc. [10015/08](#) and reaffirms that working towards universal abolition of the death penalty constitutes an integral objective of the EU's human rights policy.

The Council notes that since the adoption of these Guidelines 10 years ago, considerable progress has been made worldwide towards the abolition of the death penalty. The adoption by the UN General Assembly last year of a cross-regional initiative calling for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, in the view of the Council, is a significant achievement in this regard. The Council draws attention to the establishment of a 'European Day against the Death Penalty' in December 2007, which is to be celebrated on 10 October each year.

The Council recalls the opposition of the European Union to the death penalty in all cases and in all circumstances. The abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and the progressive development of human rights. For this reason, the Council regrets that a number of States still maintain the death penalty. We call on all these States to abolish the death penalty; if necessary with the immediate establishment of a moratorium on the use of death penalty, with a view to abolishing it."

EU guidelines on children in armed conflict - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council welcomes the review of the Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict and adopts the updated version of these guidelines as set out in doc. [10019/08](#).

The Council reaffirms its strong commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, and in particular those of children affected by armed conflict, who are among the most frequent victims of serious human rights violations and abuses. The Council reconfirms the close link between the Guidelines on Children's Rights adopted in December 2007 and the updated Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict in terms of their jointly reinforcing implementation.

The EU recognizes the importance of ensuring coherence, complementarity and coordination between the various policies and actions targeting the situation of children affected by armed conflict in the various policy areas, including CFSP/ESDP, development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

The Council recalls its conclusions of May 2008 on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in the EU's external action – the development and humanitarian dimensions, and on the Checklist for the integration of protection of children affected by armed conflict into ESDP operations. The Council also considers it of critical importance to raise awareness of this issue by giving more prominence to EU actions in this field worldwide.

The Council underlines the importance of further strengthening the implementation of the Guidelines on Children affected by Armed Conflict in particular through further mainstreaming of this issue throughout the EU. The Council invites all instances of its decision-making, civilian and military missions and all other offices, agencies, the special and personal representatives of the SG/HR, other bodies of the EU to redouble their efforts to implement the Guidelines. In this sense the Council welcomes the Handbook with Compilation of relevant documents on Mainstreaming Human Rights and Gender into European Security and Defence Policy. The Council looks forward to continued close cooperation with the Commission, Member States and civil society on this important issue.

The Council also stresses that EU actions should support and complement the work of the United Nations, including inter alia the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1612 on children and armed conflict."

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

Presidency report on ESDP

The Council approved a report by the presidency on European security and defence policy (ESDP), and agreed to submit it to the European Council meeting on 19 and 20 June.

The report covers all ESDP issues discussed in the first half of this year and includes terms of reference for the incoming French presidency.

Bosnia and Herzegovina - Operation ALTHEA - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council reviewed Operation ALTHEA and approved the Secretary General/High Representative's recommendations on the Operation in the light of advice from relevant Council bodies.

The Council reiterated that the EU remained actively committed to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), including through Operation ALTHEA, and that, as part of the EU's overall engagement in the country, the EU-led military presence would remain there for as long as necessary. The Council welcomed recent political developments in BiH, and noted that further developments in the country would need to be reflected in the EU's overall engagement. The Council noted that the security situation remained stable, welcomed the positive contribution of the operation to the safe and secure environment in BiH, and added that the EU-led force (EUFOR) continued to provide reassurance and remained ready to respond to possible security challenges throughout the country.

EUFOR numbers some 2500 troops on the ground, backed up by over-the-horizon reserves. Its operational focus remains the maintenance of a safe and secure environment and the transfer of Joint Military Affairs (JMA) tasks to relevant national authorities. The Council welcomed the successful participation of elements of the European Gendarmerie Force in the Integrated Police Unit of EUFOR since November 2007.

The Council underlined that coherence of overall EU action, including in support of further progress on reforms, in BiH - involving all EU actors, including the Commission and EU Heads of Mission - remained a priority. It noted that the EU Force Commander, the EUSR and the Head of EUPM continued to consult each other regularly prior to taking action. EUFOR has also maintained a close working relationship, including on operational matters, with other international actors. In respect of Operation ALTHEA, cooperation with NATO continues to work smoothly and efficiently."

Guinea-Bissau - EU security sector reform mission

The Council adopted a decision approving the conclusion of an agreement with the Republic of Guinea-Bissau on the status of the EU mission in support of security sector reform in Guinea-Bissau (EU SSR GUINEA-BISSAU). ([9032/08](#)).

On 12 February, the Council adopted joint action 2008/112/CFSP establishing EU SSR GUINEA-BISSAU.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

African peace facility – Financing for 2008-2010

The Council approved an EU position on a draft decision, to be adopted by the EU-ACP committee of ambassadors, on the preparation of an action programme for the financing of the African peace facility (APF) for the period 2008-2010 ([10419/08](#)).

Following a request by the African Union, the EU will start preparations with a view to concluding a financial agreement on the funding of the APF.

The APF is an EU-funded instrument created in 2003 in support of peace and security in order to create better conditions for development in Africa. EUR 300 million were earmarked under the 10th European development fund for funding the APF for the period 2008-2010.

International coffee agreement

The Council adopted a decision approving the signing and conclusion of the 2007 international coffee agreement ([9559/08](#)).

The agreement will replace the 2001 international coffee agreement, which was extended up to 30 September 2008. It is now open until 31 August 2008 for signature and ratification, acceptance or approval.

The parties to the agreement recognise the exceptional importance of coffee to the economies of many countries which are largely dependent on it for their export earnings and for their social and economic development.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

External dimension of justice and home affairs - Progress report

The Council took note of the second progress report on implementation of the EU's strategy on the external dimension of justice and home affairs .

The strategy was adopted in December 2005 with the aim of setting thematic priorities, clarifying underlying principles, reviewing mechanisms and tools and presenting EU structures and processes in the field of justice and home affairs and external relations policies.

Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks inventory

The Council took note of an inventory of EU instruments relevant for addressing chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks ("CBRN inventory"), which outlines the instruments that can be used to prevent, prepare for and respond to CBRN risks and threats in areas such as police, human health, the food chain, the environment, nuclear protection, civil protection, military support and research ([10382/08](#)).

The inventory will enable the Council to take stock of the EU's capabilities for coping with CBRN threats and risks and help the Commission in proposing policy measures on CBRN risks in 2009.

The CBRN inventory was requested by the Council in December 2007 in conclusions on addressing CBRN risks and on bio-preparedness ([16589/07](#)). It updates a CBRN inventory of 2002 ([15873/02](#), [15873/02 COR2](#)) and a bio inventory of 2007 ([14802/07](#)). It was drawn up by the Council and Commission services under the responsibility of the presidency and in close cooperation with the civil protection working party, the counter-terrorism coordinator and the high representative's personal representative for non-proliferation.

Reinforcing the Union's disaster response capacity - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted conclusions set out in document [10128/08](#).

Global approach to migration - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted conclusions set out in document [9604/08](#).

GENERAL AFFAIRS**Cyprus - Amendments to the "green line" regulation**

The Council adopted amendments to the "green line" regulation.

The green line regulation provides for special rules concerning goods, services and persons crossing the line between those areas of the Republic of Cyprus in which the government of the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control ('the areas') and those areas in which it does exercise effective control.

The amendments focus on three measures and aim at enhancing trade and economic interaction on the island on the basis of the experience gained so far.

More specifically, the duties on agricultural products originating in 'the areas' are removed thus avoiding cumbersome procedures. Furthermore, the temporary introduction of goods (for up to six months) from 'the areas' into the areas in which the government of the Republic of Cyprus exercises effective control is regulated in a transparent way. This should encourage the provision of services across the Line, facilitate participation in trade fairs or similar events and also permit the repair of equipment in areas in which the government of the Republic of Cyprus exercises effective control. Finally, the total value of goods contained in the personal luggage of persons crossing the Line is substantially increased from EUR 135 to EUR 260 so as to encourage economic interaction on the island.

The aforementioned amendments to the green line regulation are also expected to contribute to the favourable climate on the island, facilitate crossings of persons across the Line, and support the ongoing process towards reaching a comprehensive and viable settlement of the Cyprus problem within the UN framework and in line with the principles on which the Union is founded, as laid down in article 6(1) of the EU treaty.

Proceedings in the Council's different configurations

The Council took note of a report from the presidency on proceedings in its different configurations ([10430/08](#)).

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

Amendments to the EEA agreement

The Council approved draft decisions, to be adopted by the European Economic Area (EEA) joint committee, amending the EEA agreement with a view to:

- extending cooperation in implementation and the development of the internal market ([10056/1/08](#)), and
- including participation in the European Institute of Innovation and Technology ([10053/1/08](#)).

CUSTOMS POLICY

Opening of new zero rate tariff quotas

The Council amended regulation 2505/96 on Community tariff quotas, opening new quotas at zero rates of duty for fixed amounts of certain industrial products ([9399/08](#)).

The amendment is intended to ensure that Community industry's demand for those products is met under the most favourable conditions. It will take effect from 1 July 2008.

Suspension of common tariff duties on certain products

The Council amended regulation 1255/96 on the temporary suspension of common customs tariff duties on certain products, including a number of new industrial and agricultural products and withdrawing the suspension for two products ([9400/2/08](#)).

The aim of tariff duty suspensions is to allow Community enterprises to obtain supplies at a lower cost for a certain period, thus stimulating economic activity and improving the competitiveness of the Community's industry.

The measure will take effect from 1 July 2008 and expire on 31 December 2012, with the possibility of continuation beyond this period or premature termination if warranted by technical or economical reasons.

APPOINTMENTS

Committee of the Regions

The Council adopted a decision appointing as alternate member for the remainder of the current term of office, ending on 25 January 2010, Mr Enrique OJEDA VILA, Secretario General de Acción Exterior, Andalucía.
