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THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**PROVISIONAL VERSION**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

2870th Council meeting

### **General Affairs and External Relations**

#### **External relations**

Brussels, 26-27 May 2008

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

\* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2960th meeting on General Affairs (9866/08).

# **P R E S S**

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## **Main results of the Council**

*In the context of its six-monthly review of developments under the **European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)** in the presence of defence ministers, the Council:*

- reiterated its determination to contribute significantly to police reform in **Afghanistan**. Given the size of the task, the Council expressed the EU's commitment to substantially increase its efforts through EUPOL Afghanistan, with the aim of doubling the original number of experts working in the mission.
- *noted that the full operational capability of Operation EUFOR **Tchad/RCA** which aims to protect civilians and improve the humanitarian situation in the region is expected to be achieved before the end of June;*
- *noted the deployment of an advance team to **Guinea-Bissau** to launch the mission EU SSR Guinea-Bissau by June. The mission has a comprehensive character, having tasks with police, judicial and military components contributing to security sector reform;*
- *agreed to expand the activities of the EUPOL COPPS mission in support of the **Palestinian** Civil Police, to cover the area of the criminal justice system;*
- *welcomed progress made on capabilities, notably in the elaboration of the Capability Development Plan, as well as on battle groups, with member states having committed in detail the required battle group packages until the second half of 2009 and packages until the first half of 2011;*
- *welcomed the results achieved in developing the strategies, policies and projects of the **European Defence Agency**.*

*The Council welcomed the strong support for the pro-European forces in the recent elections in Serbia. It hoped that a new government with a clear European agenda will soon be formed and will engage constructively in the Stabilisation and Association process. It reiterated that Serbia will be able to advance further on its EU path, including candidate status, once the necessary conditions are met. The Council looked forward to the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina in the margins of its June meeting. It welcomed the launching of the dialogue on visa liberalisation with BiH on 26 May.*

*The Council also held its six-monthly review of development cooperation issues, in the presence of development ministers, adopting conclusions aimed in particular at speeding up progress towards the UN's **millenium development goal**.*

*In its general affairs meeting, the Council approved negotiating directives for an agreement that will provide a new comprehensive framework for the EU's relations with **Russia**.*

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<sup>1</sup> • 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.

IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL..... 49

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

*none*

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Member  
Member  
Member

**General Secretariat of the Council:**

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

**ITEMS DEBATED**

**WORLD TRADE NEGOTIATIONS – DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

The Council took note of an assessment by commissioner Peter Mandelson of latest developments in negotiations under the World Trade Organisation's Doha Development Agenda (DDA), ahead of a possible WTO ministerial conference in Geneva in June.

This follows WTO revised draft modalities on agriculture and on non-agricultural market access that were distributed in Geneva last week.

The Council held a detailed exchange of views.

It will continue to monitor developments closely and will revert to the issue at its meeting on 16 June.



**GEORGIA - Council conclusions**

The Council discussed the situation in Georgia and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council examined the situation in Georgia following the parliamentary elections held on 21 May 2008 which were an important test for democracy. The Council congratulated the people of Georgia on the peaceful conduct of the elections, welcomed the efforts made by Georgian authorities since the last elections and urged them to take all necessary steps to address the shortcomings and problems identified by the OSCE-led International Election Observation Mission.
2. The Council stressed the need for constructive dialogue between the government and the opposition to agree on the way forward. It emphasised the importance of stability in Georgia and in the region and urged all parties concerned to respect the rule of law and to use only democratic and peaceful means in seeking to resolve political differences.
3. The Council reiterated the European Union's serious concern about the recent series of events that have raised tensions between Georgia and the Russian Federation. In this context, the Council reaffirmed its full commitment to the principles of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders, as most recently reaffirmed in the UNSC Resolution 1808 of 15 April 2008. The Council recalled the Presidency Declarations on behalf of the EU of 18 April 2008 and 2 May 2008. It underlined that it is essential now to reduce the risk of further escalation and take steps towards normalisation of relations. The Council emphasised that all parties should tone down public rhetoric and abstain from provocations and implementation of decisions that undermine the above principles.
4. The Council expressed its support for the UNOMIG investigation into the shooting down of a Georgian unmanned aircraft and looked forward to discussing its results as soon as possible. The Council believes that UNOMIG should be reinforced, as recommended in the UN Secretary General's report S/2007/588 of 4 October 2007 and supported in UNSC Resolution 1781 of 15 October 2007.

5. The Council reconfirmed its support for international efforts aimed at a peaceful settlement of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts, especially the efforts by the UN, the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary-General and the OSCE. The Council welcomed the peace initiative on Abkhazia put forward by the Georgian President, as well as the recent direct talks by the parties, hoping that they will contribute to a constructive dialogue on the issue. The Council affirmed that the EU stands ready to contribute to all these efforts and called on the parties to continue these talks on a higher level in order to reach peaceful and sustainable solutions. The Council underlined the importance of the work of the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus and recalled that the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the European Commission will continue to implement confidence-building measures in support of resolving the conflicts.
  
6. The Council looked forward to strengthening EU-Georgia relations through active continuation of EU-Georgia political dialogue and implementation of the ENP Action Plan. The Council welcomed the establishment of the EU-Georgia Subcommittee on Justice, Freedom and Security and the results of its first meeting on 30 April 2008. The Council took note of the Georgian wish for visa facilitation, and looks forward to continuing result-oriented work in the area of mobility. The EU is considering means of strengthening economic cooperation with Georgia and, if the necessary conditions are met, the possibility of a deep and comprehensive Free Trade Agreement.
  
7. The Council will continue to follow closely the situation in Georgia and will revert to it as appropriate."

AFRICA

**Somalia - Council conclusions**

The Council discussed the situation in Somalia and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council is seriously concerned over the security situation in Somalia and its negative humanitarian and human rights consequences. The Council reaffirms its commitment to a comprehensive approach to a lasting settlement of the Somali crisis, covering its political, security and humanitarian aspects. It reiterates that the only way to restore the situation is through a political process ultimately inclusive of all concerned Somali stakeholders that renounce violence in the interest of the people of Somalia. The Council commends those committed to dialogue in search of common ground.
2. The Transitional Federal Charter provides the only credible framework for an inclusive consultative process and broad-based ownership in shaping the future of Somalia through a permanent Constitution. The Council calls on all parties to engage in a constructive dialogue in shaping the future constitution of Somalia, to be the subject of a popular referendum in 2009, leading to elections.
3. The Council welcomes the continued efforts by the Prime Minister Nur "Adde" Hassan Hussein and his Cabinet, under the leadership of President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, and supported by the Transitional Federal Parliament, to advance the political process. To that end, it welcomes the outcome of the meeting held in Djibouti from 10-15 May 2008 under the auspices of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) Ould-Abdallah and urges all the parties to comply with the engagement to continue further discussions on 31 May and to put aside their differences, facilitate unhindered humanitarian access and the delivery of assistance to the people with immediate effect. The Council also welcomes the ongoing dialogue between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and local leaders in Mogadishu.

4. The Council is deeply troubled by the extremely serious humanitarian situation in Somalia, due to the combined effects of drought and violence. The Council calls on all parties to comply fully with international humanitarian law and its principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. The Council welcomes the intention expressed by the TFG to create a focal point for the humanitarian crisis as well as the commitment by the TFG to facilitate unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need, and calls on all other concerned parties to do the same, in the interest of protecting the lives of innocent civilians disproportionately victimized in the present fighting.
5. The Council urges that all violations of international humanitarian law and human rights be officially denounced and investigated. The Council supports the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, including the Independent Expert for Somalia, and encourages them to undertake an independent fact-finding and assessment mission to Somalia to address the human rights situation. This would be a welcome first step towards the creation of a mechanism to investigate systematic human rights abuses by all parties. The EU is ready to increase its support in the field of human rights, notably for capacity building within public institutions and services.
6. The Council commends the work of the AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), currently acting in Somalia on behalf of the international community. The Council commends the commitment of Uganda and Burundi to AMISOM and calls on all African Troup-Contributing Countries and other potential regional partners to provide the units required for the full deployment of AMISOM. The Council welcomes international efforts to enhance financial, logistical and technical support to AMISOM. The Council recalls the readiness of the EU and its Member States to continue to increase their support to AMISOM, *inter alia* by identifying substantial new financial support. The EU will continue to work, with the AU Commission and other partners, towards mechanisms that will facilitate the receipt and management of contributions for AMISOM and other future peace support missions.

7. The Council welcomes the unanimous adoption on 15 May of UN Security Council Resolution 1814 and emphasises the EU's full support for all its provisions. The Council welcomes the commitment of the UN to continue contingency planning for the possible deployment of a UN Mission to succeed AMISOM and welcomes its willingness to consider taking over from AMISOM at an appropriate time, subject to progress in the political process and improvement in the security situation on the ground. The Council fully supports the integrated and comprehensive approach aligning the political, security and programmatic work of the UN. The EU stands ready to expand its support in this field, including support for the ongoing reconciliation process, in view of achieving the political agreement which is necessary for effective mobilisation of the UN force, and for an agreed comprehensive security sector reform programme.
8. The EU remains firmly behind the initiatives of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) and is ready to provide political, financial and technical support to facilitate a process of dialogue and consultations with key constituencies, fully supports his leadership role, *inter alia* in facilitating improved multi-faceted coordination of international support for peace, security and development in Somalia. The Council welcomes the reinvigorated role of the International Contact Group on Somalia under the leadership of the SRSG and stays committed to participation in this mechanism, including at field level.
9. The Council expresses its concern over the upsurge of piracy attacks off the Somali coast, which affect humanitarian efforts, international maritime traffic in the region and contribute to continued violations of the UN arms embargo. The Council greatly appreciates the commitment of the UN Security Council to addressing the problem of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast and looks forward to the early adoption of a Security Council resolution to that effect.
10. The Council commends the sequenced initiatives of some EU member States to provide protection to World Food Programme vessels and welcomes the provisions of paragraph 11 of UN Security Council Resolution 1814 in this regard. The Council stresses the need for wider participation by the international community in these escorts in order to secure the delivery of humanitarian aid to Somali populations."

**Zimbabwe - Council conclusions**

The Council Council discussed the situation in Zimbabwe and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council notes the announcement by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission that the second round of the Presidential election will be held on 27 June, nearly 3 months after the first round of the elections.
2. The EU strongly condemns the state-sponsored campaign of violence and intimidation against Zimbabweans that has been increasing throughout the prolonged electoral process and calls for an immediate end to the beatings, tortures, killings and other human rights abuses. The Council calls upon the government of Zimbabwe to ensure a level playing field and a secure environment conducive to ensuring that the results of forthcoming second round will reflect the free and democratic will of the Zimbabwean people. In this respect the Council stresses the importance that all necessary measures be adopted in order to allow all candidates and supporters to participate safely and fully in the electoral process.
3. The second round presents an opportunity for the free and democratic will of the Zimbabwean people to be expressed and respected, opening the way for delivering political stability. The Council reiterates that the credibility of the electoral process requires conditions on the ground to be in full accordance with international standards, particularly those adopted by the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), of which Zimbabwe is a signatory, including the freedom of assembly and access to media. In this context the Council underlines specifically the importance of the publication of results outside the polling stations once counting is completed.

4. The Council emphasises the importance of effective election observation, local as well as international, to ensure regularity and transparency for the second round and reiterates the important role of the countries in the region in achieving this. The Council further welcomes the positive role played by the AU and the SADC Electoral Observation Missions (EOMs) during the first phase of the electoral process. The Council supports the intent of the AU and the SADC to ensure continued presence of their EOMs until the electoral process is complete and results announced and to deploy, as soon as possible, a significant number of election monitors across Zimbabwe, including rural areas, well in advance of the election day. The EU remains ready to deploy an EU election observation mission, if the right conditions are met, yet the Council notes that no invitation has been made to the EU as of today.
  
5. The Council calls upon SADC to continue to engage with strong determination with the Zimbabwean authorities to implement the outcome of the Lusaka Summit. The EU shares the concern of the SADC about the situation and reiterates full support for SADC's efforts to resolve the current crisis."

**WESTERN BALKANS - Council conclusions**

Ministers at lunch, discussed the situation in the Western Balkans. The Council adopted the following conclusions:

**"SERBIA**

The Council expressed satisfaction with the peaceful and orderly conduct of the elections, which were carried out in a free and democratic manner. It welcomed the strong support for the pro-European forces. The Council hoped that a new Government with a clear European agenda will soon be formed and will engage constructively in the Stabilisation and Association process.

Recalling the decisions as mentioned in its Conclusions of 29 April 2008 on the occasion of the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, the Council reiterated that Serbia will be able to advance further on its EU path, including candidate status, once the necessary conditions are met.

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

The Council is looking forward to the signature of the SAA at the June GAERC meeting. The Council called on Bosnia and Herzegovina to undertake all efforts to start immediately the implementation of the Interim Agreement once it enters into force. It welcomed the launching of the dialogue on visa liberalisation with Bosnia and Herzegovina on 26 May."



MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. The EU reaffirms its commitment to support the parties in the ongoing negotiations on all outstanding issues, including all final status issues, with a view to concluding a peace agreement before the end of 2008 as agreed in Annapolis last November. These negotiations must urgently press ahead. In this context, the EU also welcomes the recent meetings of the Quartet principals including with Arab foreign ministers and of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee of 2 May in London. The EU re-emphasizes the continued and constructive involvement of Arab partners and the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative as a major element in moving the Middle East Peace Process forward. The Council recalls that peace in the Middle East requires a comprehensive solution and in this regard welcomes the announcement that Syria and Israel have agreed to initiate peace negotiations under the auspices of Turkey.
2. The EU underlines the urgent need for swift and tangible results on the ground in order to sustain Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Action from both sides to implement their Roadmap obligations in parallel to the negotiations is vital in order to retain the confidence and support of the Israeli and Palestinian populations, the region and the wider international community.
3. The EU is deeply concerned by recent accelerated settlement expansion. The EU reiterates that settlement building anywhere in the occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, is illegal under international law. Settlement activity prejudices the outcome of final status negotiations and threatens the viability of an agreed two-state solution. It reiterates its call on Israel to freeze all settlement activity including natural growth, and to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001.
4. The EU condemns the continued firing of rockets from Gaza on southern Israel including the recent attack in Ashkelon and all other activities which are contrary to international law and endanger civilians. While recognising Israel's legitimate right to self-defence, the EU calls for an immediate end to all acts of violence. The EU urges all parties to ensure the protection of affected civilians in accordance with international law. The EU continues to support Egyptian efforts to bring about a cessation of violence and a solution that will allow for the reopening of all crossings.

5. The EU calls for the progressive removal of Israeli restrictions on movement and access in order to improve the situation on the ground and living conditions in the West Bank and revitalise the Palestinian economy. The EU welcomes as a step in the right direction the decision to remove a limited number of roadblocks but underlines the fact that much more remains to be done.
6. The EU remains deeply concerned about the unsustainable humanitarian situation in Gaza. It reiterates its call on all parties to work urgently for the controlled reopening of the crossings in and out of Gaza for both humanitarian reasons and commercial flows. In this context, it calls on Israel to fulfil its obligations regarding the uninterrupted provision of fuel and electricity supplies, as well as that of all other humanitarian assistance. It condemns the attacks from Gaza against the crossing points and terminals and their negative consequences on the delivery of humanitarian aid and fuel. It reiterates its readiness to resume its border assistance mission at the Rafah crossing point as soon as conditions allow under the provisions of the relevant international agreements related to Access and Movement concluded in November 2005.
7. The EU remains committed to assisting Palestinian state-building efforts across a broad range of areas. It welcomes the Palestinian Authority's efforts to develop an effective and reformed security sector and encourages ongoing efforts towards the fulfilment of its Roadmap obligations in this field. In this regard, the Council expresses its full support to the international conference in support of Palestinian civil security and the rule of law to be hosted by Germany on 24 June 2008. It has decided to expand the EUPOL COPPS mission to support the criminal justice sector namely in the fields of the judiciary and the penitentiary, in co-operation with international partners. It welcomes the recent package of measures agreed by the Quartet Representative with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities, aimed at enhancing both economic activity and the capacity of Palestinian Authority security forces, by improving their ability to operate freely. It emphasises the importance of early implementation of these measures. The Council also welcomes the success of the recent Palestinian Investment Conference in Bethlehem in taking forward the economic development agenda.
8. The EU underlines the need to deliver on pledges made at the International Donor's Conference for the Palestinian State in Paris last December. In this context, it highlights the importance of keeping the institutions of the Palestinian Authority running in the second half of 2008, for which additional budget support is urgently needed. As the largest contributor of financial assistance to the PA, the EU calls on other donors to increase their budget support to the PA, with due regard for equitable burden sharing."

**LEBANON - Council conclusions**

Minister discussed the situation in Lebanon. The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1 The Council welcomes the agreement reached in Doha on 21 May that has opened the path towards a full resumption of the functioning of all democratic institutions of the state of Lebanon. The Council welcomes the election of Michel Sleiman as President of Lebanon and looks forward to the full implementation of the Doha agreement based on the Arab initiative and on the principles enshrined in the Lebanese constitution and the Taif Accord.
2. The Council congratulates the parties concerned for their constructive approach and their will to engage in dialogue. It commends the efforts of the Arab League, in particular of the Committee of Foreign Ministers, under the leadership of the Emir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr al-Thani, and Secretary-General Amr Moussa, during both the mediation mission in Beirut and the negotiations in Doha, in ending the recent acts of serious violence and in helping the Lebanese leaders reach an agreement.
3. The Council reaffirms its solidarity with the people of Lebanon and its full support to the government and other democratic institutions. It also commends the Lebanese Armed Forces and their contribution to the stability of the country. It deplores the recent acts of violence in which over 70 people lost their lives and 250 were wounded. The Council reiterates its firm denunciation of all attempts aimed at undermining peace and stability in Lebanon, in particular through the use of force and in this regard it welcomes the agreement reached by the parties in Doha to ban the use of weapons and violence as a means to settle disputes, irrespective of their nature and under any circumstances.
4. The Council recalls its commitment to the full implementation of UNSC Resolutions 1559, 1680, 1701 and 1757 and in this respect looks forward to the start of work of the Special Tribunal. The Council also recalls previous statements and remains determined to reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, unity and stability.
5. The Council welcomes the holding of the International Donor Conference on the reconstruction and recovery of Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp and its surrounding area, which will take place in Vienna on 23 June 2008."

**IRAQ- Council conclusions**

The Council discussed the situation in Iraq and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU reaffirms its support to a secure, stable, democratic, prosperous and unified Iraq and reiterates its commitment to the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, where human rights are respected. It underlines its support for the central role of UN/UNAMI in Iraq and strongly encourages continued close cooperation between UNAMI and the Iraqi authorities on the implementation of UNSCR 1770.
2. The Council welcomes the visit to Brussels by Prime Minister Maliki and members of his government on 16 - 17 April and the opportunity to enhance the EU's political engagement with Iraq.
3. The Council welcomes the Expanded Ministerial Conference of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq in Kuwait on 22 April 2008 and underlines the importance of dialogue and co-operation between Iraq, its neighbours and regional partners. Constructive engagement of Iraq's neighbours and partners in the region remains essential to achieve peace and stability in Iraq and in the region as a whole. The Council encourages all neighbours and partners in the region to live up to the commitments made in the Final Communiqué of the Kuwait meeting and to strengthen their representation in Baghdad. The EU stands ready to support the neighbouring countries process and to provide its expertise where participants deem this helpful.
4. The Council also looks forward to the First Annual Review Conference of the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) in Stockholm, Sweden, on 29 May 2008. An EU Member State hosting the Annual Review Conference is a reflection of the EU's commitment to its partnership with Iraq. The Council urges strong Iraqi leadership and ownership in the implementation of the ICI, Iraqi sector wide inclusiveness and broad involvement of the international community including Iraq's neighbours and partners in the region. It also commends the progress made so far on economic aspects of the ICI, the passage of the Justice and Reconciliation, Amnesty, Provincial Powers Laws and the budget.

It encourages the Government of Iraq to make further progress in the political process and in national reconciliation. The EU will continue to develop a close co-operation and partnership with Iraq in accordance with the priorities indicated in the ICI and will do its utmost to assist Iraq in the implementation of the ICI together with the international community.

5. The Council underlines the importance of national reconciliation and welcomes initiatives of all parties to meet this end, including the 15-point statement issued by the Iraqi Political Committee for National Security. The EU encourages all parties to strengthen work in this area, consolidating the rule of law and national reconciliation.
6. The Council welcomes political agreement to hold provincial elections before the end of 2008 and strongly encourages the Government of Iraq and the Council of Representatives to adopt the necessary legislation and provide the funding in support of those elections. It also strongly encourages agreement on the hydrocarbon law as another important contribution towards national reconciliation. It expresses strong hope that the Constitutional Review Committee will be able to contribute to resolving outstanding issues. It welcomes the commitment of Iraq's political leaders to a government of national unity leading to further progress on the legislative and reform programme. It commends efforts made by the UN and others in solving issues related to the disputed internal boundaries.
7. The Council recalls that further improvements in the security situation in Iraq are central to the Government of Iraq's efforts to build a stable and prosperous state. It condemns all acts of terrorism in all its forms in Iraq and calls for the immediate cessation of all such acts. It supports the Iraqi Government's increasing efforts in combating terrorism and sectarian violence and to disarm militia forces.
8. The Council expresses concern about the displaced Iraqis inside Iraq and Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries, in particular in Jordan and Syria. It recalls the obligation of the Government of Iraq and the international community, as expressed at the Expanded Neighbours Ministerial Conferences, to protect and assist displaced Iraqis inside Iraq and in neighbouring countries by addressing their immediate and foreseeable needs and ensure their safety. It strongly encourages the Iraqi Government to use its resources to help neighbouring countries to cope with the additional burden of refugees.

9. The Council expresses concern about the human rights situation in Iraq, and supports the work of the UNAMI in this field. The Council reiterates that it is essential for the Government of Iraq to protect and promote the human rights of all Iraqis, paying special attention to vulnerable groups such as children, women and persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities. Increased respect for human rights is essential to achieve reconciliation between Iraq's communities and sustain improvements in the security situation. The promotion and protection of human rights in Iraq will also greatly benefit from strengthening of the rule of law in general, including by ensuring the neutrality and inclusiveness of the Iraqi judiciary and security forces. The Council calls upon the Iraqi Government to suspend the practice of the death penalty as a step towards abolition.
10. The Council recalls its strong commitment to Iraq as reflected in the priorities set out by the GAERC on 19-20 November 2007 for future assistance to Iraq. Taking into account the €829 million already committed by the European Community in reconstruction and humanitarian support since 2003, the additional substantial contributions from EU Member States, and the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, the EU:
- commits to provide further assistance to basic services and to strengthen Iraqi institutions and capacities to unlock Iraq's own resources;
  - welcomes the substantial progress on the negotiations on the Trade and Cooperation Agreement and states its determination to conclude negotiations as soon as possible, thereby establishing the first contractual relationship between the EU and Iraq;
  - aims to enhance energy co-operation in the mutual interest of the EU and Iraq;
  - notes the significant diplomatic EU presence in Baghdad, including the EC Delegation, and expresses intentions for further strengthening the EU presence;
  - looks forward to enhancing the current political dialogue at ministerial and senior official level with Iraq, including through regular meetings, and building on the mutual desire to take such a dialogue forward;

- underlines the importance of establishing a system of rule of law and a culture respecting human rights, welcomes the Commission's programme supporting the rule of law and justice sector and stresses the important role that the EUJUST LEX has played to this end;
- underlines its readiness to consider ways to build on the significant contribution of EUJUST LEX when its mandate comes to an end;
- will explore possibilities to provide further expert assistance to the secretariat of the International Compact;
- accepts the invitation to the EU, including the Commission, to participate in the three Expanded Neighbouring Countries of Iraq working groups on refugees, energy and security cooperation and coordination;
- commits to provide further contributions to help alleviate the humanitarian situation of displaced Iraqis inside Iraq and Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries in particular in Jordan and Syria;
- welcomes support from the Community budget provided already for the preparations for local elections scheduled to be held before the end of the year."

**EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY**

The Council heard a presentation by the Polish and Swedish delegations on suggestions for an Eastern Partnership. This follows the debate by the European Council in March on the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean and on the need to strengthen the eastern dimension of European neighbourhood policy. The issue will be further tackled at the European Council in June.



**EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY**

The Council held its six-monthly review of developments under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), in the presence of defence ministers.

Defence ministers discussed ESDP missions and operations, notably the EU military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR Althea), EU operations in Africa (the EU military operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA, as well as the EUSEC RD Congo and EU SSR Guinea Bissau missions), capabilities - including battle groups -, European Defence Agency (EDA) issues and cooperation with partners, namely EU-UN and EU-NATO relations.

In a joint session with foreign ministers, they discussed Afghanistan and children and armed conflict.

**AFGHANISTAN - *Council conclusions***

On Afghanistan, the Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Looking ahead to the International Conference in Support of Afghanistan, to be held in Paris on 12 June 2008, and recalling Conclusions on Afghanistan of the European Council in December 2006 and successive GAERC Conclusions since February 2007, the Council underlines the EU's continued commitment to long-term support for the people and Government of Afghanistan. The central objective of the EU in Afghanistan is to support the Government in establishing a sustainable and functioning state providing security, respecting the rule of law and human rights, and fostering development.
2. The Council welcomes the important progress made through combined efforts by the Government and people of Afghanistan and the international community, most notably in building political institutions, health and education.
3. The Council, nevertheless, notes the remaining challenges, especially in the areas of development and governance, and the underlying factors, notably corruption and a lack of security -with narcotics being linked to both- which continue to undermine the functioning of the Government of Afghanistan. The Government and the international community need to address this through the Afghanistan Compact.
4. The Council, therefore, welcomes the opportunity to assess progress in Afghanistan at the Paris Conference and wishes to focus on the following areas.
5. The Council calls on the Government of Afghanistan to take greater responsibility for reconstruction and development. The Council therefore thinks that as much assistance as possible should be directed in support of the Government through multi-donor trust funds or budgetary support, with due attention to absorption capacity.

6. The Council underlines that increased ownership should be paired with accountability. Urgent progress in meeting the benchmarks of the Afghanistan Compact is needed, notably:
  - a) implementation of a strategy to tackle corruption at all levels, in recruiting competent and credible professionals to public service on the basis of merit, and establishing a more effective, accountable and transparent administration at all levels of Government; this includes ensuring proper functioning of an independent mechanism for senior appointments as agreed in the Compact;
  - b) strengthening resources and authority of sub-national government structures building upon successful national programmes and through the Independent Directorate for Local Governance;
  - c) implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy, under the leadership of the Government of Afghanistan, including implementation of an effective rural livelihoods strategy.
7. Furthermore, together with the international community the EU will provide full support to the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the implementation of priorities set out therein, in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.
8. The Council further underlines the importance of a unified approach by the international community in pursuing common goals, in full coordination with the Government of Afghanistan and with coherence between the military and civilian dimensions. In this context, the Council calls for strengthening UNAMA's capacity, including by lending support to efforts aimed at widening its presence throughout the country, notably in the South and West. The Council supports an enhanced role of the UN Secretary General Special Representative Kai Eide in coordinating efforts of the international community and stresses the synergy in objectives between UNAMA, EU and ISAF.

9. The Council recalls that promotion of respect for human rights, including freedom of the media, and gender equality is a fundamental responsibility of the Afghan Government, which should fully support the functioning of its relevant institutions and the implementation of its international obligations in the field of human rights. Full support should also be given to the abolition of the death penalty in Afghanistan. As a first step a de facto moratorium on the death penalty should be re-established.
10. The Council stresses the importance of the democratic process in Afghanistan, especially in light of the Presidential elections in 2009 and the parliamentary elections in 2010. The EU stands ready to support preparations for the elections. The Council also stresses the importance of well-defined, Afghan-led political outreach.
11. Security and rule of law remain key challenges to progress in Afghanistan. A lack of security in parts of the country is compounded by weak judicial and law enforcement institutions. The Council stresses the importance of the Community programmes to support Afghanistan in promoting rule of law through support to the reform of the Justice Sector. The EU underscores the need for a coherent approach to the rule of law sector, in particular the interface between Community justice reform programmes and activities in the police sector.
12. The Council reiterates its determination to contribute significantly to police reform through the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan), respecting Afghan ownership and working in close cooperation with other international actors, in particular the USA. EUPOL Afghanistan has made progress in implementing its mandate and is now deployed throughout the country; full deployment is planned for June 2008. In this context, the Council would also like to welcome the contributions of third countries to EUPOL Afghanistan.
13. Given the size of the task, the EU is committed to substantially increase its efforts through EUPOL Afghanistan, with the aim of doubling the original number of experts working in the mission. Such an increase of the mission size would provide an important additional capacity on the key police reform issues. Due to the challenging operational environment, thorough preparation, timely planning, prior full operational capability and continued contribution of high-calibre staff are essential.

14. The Council recognises the importance of the International Police Co-ordination Board's work on a unified, integrated vision of the Afghan police, which should be given the highest priority.
  
15. The Council considers good relations with neighbouring countries to be key to achieving stability in Afghanistan, especially given the multi-dimensional character of issues such as narcotics. The Council therefore continues to support efforts aimed at improving relations between Afghanistan and its neighbours, and at full integration of the country into regional structures. "

## **CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT**

Following a presentation by the presidency, the Council commended the study made on children affected by armed conflict. The Council approved the general review of the implementation of the checklist for the integration of the protection of children affected by armed conflict into ESDP operations, and emphasised the aim of further enhancing its implementation on the ground.

On the basis of an extensive survey of existing practices in the mission areas, the revised checklist includes substantive improvements, particularly on the elaboration of the definition of child protection; specific training on children affected by armed conflict; monitoring and reporting; improving visibility and awareness; the possibility to have specific expertise on the ground; and enhancing expert communication between missions/operations and Brussels.

**EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY - *Council conclusions***

The Council adopted the following overall conclusions on ESDP ([9841/08](#)):

**"I. ESDP Missions and Operations**

**Western Balkans**

**Operation ALTHEA**

1. 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 the positive contribution of the force to the safe and secure environment in BiH. The security situation remains stable and the EU-led force (EUFOR) continues to provide reassurance, and remains ready to respond to possible security challenges throughout the country.
2. The Council further welcomed the continued contribution of EUFOR, together with other forms of EU engagement, to international efforts to support reform of the security sector in BiH.
3. Following the successful reconfiguration of Operation ALTHEA in BiH in 2007 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. Elements of the European Gendarmerie Force have successfully participated in the Integrated Police Unit of EUFOR since November 2007.
4. Coherence of EU action in BiH - involving all EU actors including the Commission and EU Heads of Mission - remains a priority. The EU Force Commander, the EUSR and the Head of EUPM continue 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 has continued to work smoothly and efficiently.

**EUPM BiH**

5. The Council welcomes the adoption of the police reform laws and supports the efforts of EUPM in aiding BiH authorities in the implementation of those laws. The Council notes the progress made by BiH authorities in tackling the most serious forms of criminality, with the operational assistance of EUPM. The Council welcomes the efforts of EUPM to improve the coordination of the police and the judiciary in BiH with the aim to establish an effective criminal justice system and to adopt a country-wide coordinated approach to the fight against organised crime.

**EULEX KOSOVO**

6. In line with the conclusions of European Council of 14 December 2007, which underlined the readiness of the EU to play a leading role in strengthening the stability in the region, Council welcomes the preparations for the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX KOSOVO), including the on-going deployment of the mission staff. The Council commends the work of the European Union Planning Team for Kosovo (EUPT), whose mandate was extended until 14 June 2008.

**Middle East**

**EUBAM Rafah**

7. The Council reiterates the EU commitment and readiness to redeploy to the Rafah crossing point as soon as conditions allow it. Ever since the closure of the Crossing Point, EUBAM Rafah has continued to maintain operational capability. The Council decided to extend the mandate of the mission for a further 6 months until 24 November 2008.

**EUPOL COPPS**

8. EUPOL COPPS has continued its efforts in support of the Palestinian Civil Police. The mission supports the implementation of the Palestinian Civil Police Development Plan, including through the training of Palestinian police and facilitating and coordinating the provision of equipment in close cooperation with European Community activities. The Council also agreed to expand EUPOL COPPS' activities in the area of the criminal justice system, including the judiciary, the prosecutors as well as penitentiary service.



**EUJUST LEX**

9. The EU has been contributing towards strengthening the rule of law in Iraq and promoting human rights through its Integrated Rule of Law Mission for Iraq (EUJUST LEX), by providing training courses and work experience secondments in EU Member States for senior Iraqi police, judicial and penitentiary personnel. The Council welcomes the continuation of EUJUST LEX's work in partnership with the Iraqi authorities and international bodies until 30 June 2009.

**Africa**

**EUFOR Tchad/RCA**

10. The Council recalled the urgent need to protect civilians and improve the humanitarian situation in the whole region. The Council reaffirmed its full commitment to contribute to the implementation of UNSCR 1778 (2007) which authorizes the deployment in the Republic of Chad and the Central African Republic of a multidimensional presence, the military element of which is provided by the EU. In accordance with this resolution, the EU is conducting the military bridging operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA for a period of 12 months from the declaration of initial operational capability (IOC) on 15 March 2008. The Full Operational Capability (FOC) is expected to be achieved before the end of June 2008; the deployment of EUFOR has been progressing on schedule. EUFOR's mandate is to contribute to the protection of civilians in danger, particularly displaced persons and refugees, to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and the free movement of humanitarian personnel and to contribute to the protection of UN personnel, facilities, installations and equipment. In observance of its mandate EUFOR Tchad/RCA will act in an impartial, neutral and independent manner. The Council looks forward to the mid-term review and report foreseen in UNSCR 1778(2007) which will report arrangements for following up EUFOR Tchad/RCA after the one-year period for which it has been authorized by the UN Security Council. The Council stressed the need for a timely start of preparatory work in this respect.

11. Negotiations with some Third states that have shown willingness to contribute to the operation are ongoing. Agreements with Russia and Albania, which have made a formal offer, are under negotiation or about to be concluded. Non-EU European NATO members and other countries which are candidates for accession to the EU have been regularly informed about the development of the operation.
12. The deployment of EUFOR Tchad/RCA is a major EU contribution to the international efforts, which, together with UN mission MINURCAT in the Republic of Chad and the Central African Republic and in coordination with the Hybrid AU/UN mission UNAMID in Darfur, helps to address conflict in the region and its devastating effects on the humanitarian situation. In this context, the Council urged the Government of Sudan to facilitate a speedy deployment of UNAMID. The EU will continue its close cooperation and coordination with all actors involved, in particular with the UN and the AU.
13. EUFOR is part of the EU's multi-faceted support to the area. The EC and Member States continue their ongoing development cooperation and humanitarian aid. The EU will continue to support a process of inclusive national dialogue, in order to promote the necessary conditions for the holding of free and transparent elections.
14. Given the cross-border involvement of armed groups the Council called on the governments of Sudan and Chad to improve their relations and to immediately stop supporting and equipping these groups. It called on the countries of the region to contribute to good neighborhood relations and improve their cooperation. In this context, the Council welcomed the Dakar Agreement of 13 March, brokered by the Senegalese President Wade, and signed by the Presidents of Chad and Sudan to effectively end their disputes; noting particularly the built-in implementation mechanism with regular high-level meetings between government representatives from not only Chad and Sudan, but also Libya, Congo-Brazzaville, Senegal, Gabon and Eritrea. Continued pressure on the parties concerned by the international community will be crucial for sustainable successful implementation.

EUSEC RD Congo

15. The Council supported current efforts aiming at the re-launching of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, as part of the overall effort to restore stability in the DRC. Deploring the continued violence exerted against women in the East, the Council expressed its support for a stronger involvement of MONUC in this regard to address robustly exactions by armed groups. The Council expressed its concern at the rise in the recruitment of child soldiers to armed groups in the Eastern DRC and underlined the need for all actors in the field to address this problem as a priority.
16. Security Sector Reform (SSR) remains necessary to reach a sustainable stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo. To that end, the continued work and close co-ordination between the ESDP missions (EUSEC RD Congo and EUPOL RD Congo) and Community activities are of great importance. Further stabilization of the DRC is one of the most important factors for peace in the whole Great Lakes region. Concerning the reform of the defence sector, the Council underlined its willingness to continue its support, via the mission EUSEC RD Congo, to sustainable reforms which are respectful of key principles of good governance and human rights.
17. The Council underlined practical activities undertaken by EUSEC, including the continuation of the biometric census of the Armed Forces personnel as well as the chain-of-payments project which has achieved real progress, notably the better delivery of increased salaries to the military. A gradual transfer of responsibilities to the Congolese administration is now an objective to be achieved by June 2009.
18. The Council underlined the importance of the full implementation by all parties of their commitments taken at the Goma Conference and in the Nairobi Communiqué. The current peace process represents a chance for a lasting stability enabling the Government to focus on long-term reforms. Of crucial importance is a developed dialogue with the Congolese people and authorities to promote a better national ownership of the reform process. Coordinated support from the EU Member States will contribute to a successful outcome. The Council commended the efforts of the EUSR for the African Great Lakes Region in providing essential support to the Congolese parties in keeping the Goma process firmly on track, as well as his support to follow-on of the Nairobi Communiqué. In this regard, the Council recalled that the mission EUSEC RD Congo has provided support to the EUSR for the African Great Lakes Region in his effort aiming at keeping these processes on track.

EUPOL RD Congo

19. The Council welcomes the achievements of EUPOL RD Congo in support of the reform of the Congolese police and the latter's interaction with justice, especially the operationalisation of the coordinating mechanism through the CSRP (Comité de Suivi de réforme de la Police). The Council also expresses its appreciation for the mission's contribution to EU overall efforts intended to bolster the Security Sector Reform (SSR) process in DRC, and takes note of the ongoing preparatory work to extend EUPOL RD Congo for another year, including with a limited deployment in Eastern DRC, in support to the stabilization process.

EUSSR Guinea Bissau

20. The Council notes the deployment of an advance team to Guinea-Bissau to launch EU SSR GUINEA BISSAU by the month of June. The Council underlines the comprehensive character of the mission, having tasks with police, judicial and military components contributing to security sector reform. EU SSR GUINEA BISSAU will provide advice and assistance to the local authorities on reform of the security sector in Guinea-Bissau in order to contribute to creating the conditions for implementation of the National Security Strategy in close co-operation with other EU, international and bilateral actors, and with a view to facilitating there through subsequent donor engagement.

**Asia**

EUPOL AFGHANISTAN

21. The Council commends the progress achieved by EUPOL AFGHANISTAN in the implementation of its mandate and in its deployment throughout the country. The mission has supported, in close coordination with its key international partners, the Afghan Government's efforts in reforming and strengthening its police and more broadly the rule of law sector in Afghanistan.
22. With respect to the EUPOL AFGHANISTAN the Council recalls the Council Conclusions on Afghanistan adopted on May 26 2008.

**II. Capabilities**

**Civilian Capabilities**

23. As civilian crisis management continues to grow, the further development and consolidation of underlying civilian capabilities becomes all the more important. The Council notes that implementation of the new Civilian Headline Goal 2010 started with work on a new common pilot illustrative scenario supportive of both civilian and military ESDP capability development processes, taking into account relevant capabilities available to the European Community. The Council stresses that, in the further development of the capability planning process under CHG 2010, special attention must continue to be dedicated to synergies between civilian and military ESDP and between ESDP and European Community activities.
24. Council noted that the work has begun on the development of a systematic approach regarding the human resources with a view to put in place a clear framework that would help to recruit and have in place the most qualified staff, so as to achieve optimal success in the area of civilian crisis management.

**Military Capabilities**

25. The Council welcomed the continued progress made in the EU military capabilities development process.
26. The Council noted that in accordance with the recommendations of Progress Catalogue 2007, based on the Initial Orientation findings, additional information was compiled and analysed against Capability Shortfalls in order to derive the First Prioritisation for addressing capability shortfalls.
27. The Council encouraged Member States to undertake the appropriate actions in order to address the identified capability shortfalls, in particular in the areas of force protection, deployability and information superiority, including through good use of opportunities for cooperation aiming at improving the EU's capability to act and the European Defence Agency to continue being actively involved in capability development, in close co-operation with the EU Military Committee.

28. The Council welcomed progress made in the elaboration of the Capability Development Plan (CDP), which participating Member States are elaborating through the European Defence Agency and the EUMC in active and efficient co-operation. The Council encouraged Member States to use the CDP, of which the first tranche of the actionable conclusions will be presented at the EDA Steering Board in July, as a tool to orientate their efforts to further improve their military capabilities.
29. The Council agreed to terminate the European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP) . The Council looked forward to being informed on the follow-up of the issues highlighted by the former ECAP project groups on Special Operations Forces, Headquarters, and Air and Missile Defence in their final reports.
30. The Council noted the work on Information Exchange Requirements (IER) aimed at identifying operational requirements for exchanging information between all entities, both civilian and military, that may interact in support of ESDP operations. This work includes the development of vignettes covering military and civilian operations, as defined in the revised Global Overview and Roadmap noted by the PSC in December 2007. The Council looked forward to further Steps in accordance with the IER Methodology.
31. The Council noted that the work on IER is undertaken in close co-ordination with the work undertaken on the ESDP Network Enabled Capabilities.

#### Rapid Response

32. The Council noted that work has started on the revision of the EU Military Rapid Response Concept and looked forward to further work on this revision, which shall be concluded in 2008. The Council welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the Maritime Rapid Response and Air Rapid Response Concepts agreed in November and December 2007 respectively. This includes the first Maritime Rapid Response Information Conference (MarRRIC) held in April 2008, where Member States reviewed the assets and capabilities they have declared for the second semester of 2008 and their indicative declarations for the first semester 2009. In view of the next MarRRIC scheduled for October 2008, Member States are invited to provide further indications to the EUMS.

33. The Council welcomed the outcomes of the Battlegroup Co-ordination Conference (BGCC) on 24 April, where Member States have committed in detail the required BG packages until the second Semester in 2009 and have committed packages until the first Semester in 2011. The Council strongly encouraged volunteering Member States to make new offers at next BGCC in October 2008 in order to fill in particular the vacant slot in the second semester of 2010. The Council looked forward to a Generic Preparation Guide, which Member States may use on a voluntary basis in order to facilitate their BG preparatory activities.

#### **EUMS Organisation Development**

34. The Council welcomed work conducted in order to implement the SG/HR report on the EU Military Staff's ability to conduct military planning at the strategic level for EU-led operations, as requested by the Council in May 2007, following the Wiesbaden Ministerial Conference. This resulted in a provisional restructuring of the EUMS and a limited revision of its Terms of Reference and organisation, aimed at enhancing the military ability to conduct early planning at strategic level in order to better inform and accelerate the Member States decision making process. The Council recalled that it will revert to this issue as soon as practicable during the course of 2008, including the need for any additional personnel, on the basis of an evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the measures and actions in responding to the Council request to the SG/HR.
35. The Council welcomed the declaration made in March of the Initial Operational Capability of the EU Watchkeeping Capability which monitors ESDP operations.

#### **European Defence Agency**

36. The Council noted the report by the Head of the Agency on its activities and welcomed the achievements.

37. The Council welcomed the progress made in developing and implementing the long-term strategies:
- a) Preparation, in close cooperation with the EU Military Committee and the EU Military Staff, of the Capability Development Plan (CDP) in view of delivering its initial version at the Steering Board in Capabilities Directors' formation in July this year with the first tranche of Actionable Conclusions. Good progress has been achieved in the four strands of the CDP. The two strands under the responsibility of the EUMC, strand A (which provides the EUMC guidance on the first prioritisation of identified shortfalls) and strand D (which provides lessons identified from EU and non-EU led military operations) were completed and forwarded to EDA for follow-up work on CDP. Regarding the two strands under the Agency's lead, work has progressed towards the identification of the potential capability trends and characteristics up to 2025 and beyond, and participating Member States have accelerated the inputting of potential collaborative projects into the CDP Projects and Initiatives Database with their national projects, programmes and initiatives across all capability lines of development.
  - b) Implementation of the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) strategy with, notably, some progress on the identification of key industrial technologies to be developed or preserved in Europe (it was agreed by the Steering Board in National Armament Directors (NAD) formation that work would focus initially on Future Air Systems), and the establishment of Security of Supply Points of Contacts/National Representatives.
  - c) Development of a European Defence Research and Technology Strategy, with progress on the definition of key technologies and on a number of new tools to manage Research and Technology (R&T) activities and to improve the generation of opt-in R&T projects under EDA's umbrella.
  - d) Development of a European Armaments strategy meant to describe the translation process between a capability need and a cooperative armaments programme. This strategy will be delivered for approval by the ministerial Steering Board in November 2008.



38. The Council encouraged EDA to continue with advertising its potential added value in specific ad hoc cooperative projects and programmes with a view to enhancing and improving European cooperation. The results deriving from the CDP will assist participating Member States to achieve a more coherent and coordinated capability development effort. In this respect, the EDA is encouraged to launch concrete projects and programmes.
39. The Council also welcomed the results achieved on policies and specific projects and initiatives:
- a) Positive assessment of the overall implementation of the Regime on defence procurement, indicating that in general subscribing Member States have adapted their procurement practices to the provisions of the Code of Conduct (CoC). The Council underlined the need to increase the awareness of the CoC, and the importance of ensuring higher value cross-border awards and of encouraging cross-border biddings. The Council welcomed the decision of Bulgaria to join the Regime on 23 April 2008, which brought the number of subscribing Member States to 25. The Council also welcomed the Steering Board's approval of Norway's participation in the Regime.
  - b) Successful implementation of the first Agency Defence R&T Joint Investment Programme, in the area of Force Protection, with contracted projects launched and further calls for projects under way.
  - c) Approval by the Steering Board in Defence Minister's formation of a new Defence R&T Joint Investment Programme, in the area of Innovative Concepts and Emerging Technologies.
  - d) Initiation of activities to improve the availability of helicopters for ESDP operations: investigating the potential for co-operation of participating Member States who operate the same types of helicopters, to create upgrade and/or support programmes to enhance deployability; and investigating the opportunities for participating Member States to share training and maintenance facilities for existing and new helicopters.

- e) Preparatory work in view of implementing the roadmap to fly UAVs in regulated airspace, including with the approval of four priority areas where the € 6 m earmarked revenue agreed in November 2007 could be used.
  - f) Progress on the drafting of the NEC Concept, to be discussed by the Steering Board in Capabilities Directors' formation (July 2008), after which the SG/HR will decide on further handling, for consideration of the Council bodies, including the PSC.
  - g) Establishment of a Project Team to study viable business and operational models for the development of a European Air Transport Fleet and their implementation modalities.
  - h) Adoption of Rules and Procedures for ad hoc projects and programmes for mutual use of governments test facilities and cooperative test and evaluation, which will increase transparency and interdependencies in Europe in this area.
40. The Council welcomed the Agency's efforts to seek synergies between military and civilian activities, in consultation and coordination with the European Commission (in relation to its research activities), especially in the areas of SDR, UAV and Maritime Surveillance."

The conclusions also cover conflict prevention, strategic partnerships, security and development, human rights, training and exercises. The full text of the conclusions is in document [9841/08](#).

## **DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

The Council held its six-monthly review of development cooperation issues, in the presence of development ministers, focusing on four main issues:

- the role of the EU as a global partner for development, in the context of the UN's millennium development goals;
- the negotiation and implementation of economic partnership agreements with ACP regions and states;
- the place of the child in EU external action
- the situation in Burma/Myanmar following the passage of cyclone Nargis.

### **RIGHTS OF THE CHILD - *Council conclusions***

The Council held an exchange of views on the rights of the child in development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and adopted conclusions on the subject.

Promotion and protection of the rights of the child are closely linked to activities under the UN's millennium development goals (MDGs) agenda, as the well-being and development of children impact directly on progress towards achieving the MDGs. The Council highlighted the need for mainstreaming the rights of the child in the use of the EU's development cooperation instruments.

Regarding children in emergency situations, the Council emphasised the need for effective and rapid interventions to address vital needs, in accordance with the European "consensus on humanitarian aid", whilst establishing the conditions for longer-term development policies and access to basic services. The conclusions pay special attention to the issue of separated and unaccompanied children and that of children's education in emergency situations.

The conclusions also address the issue of the most vulnerable groups of children, the specific rights and needs of girls and boys, and the forms of violence and exploitation to which they may be exposed. The importance of systematically linking relief, rehabilitation and development are also highlighted.

The conclusions can be found in document [9497/08](#).

**BURMA/MYANMAR - *Council conclusions***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council reaffirms its solidarity with the people of Burma/Myanmar affected by Cyclone Nargis. The Council underlines that the scale of the disaster is so extensive that the combined efforts of UN, ASEAN countries, international and local agencies and NGOs are required in order to bring relief to those who have survived the cyclone. In this context, particular attention should be given to the needs of all vulnerable groups.

The Council reiterates its support for the central role of the UN in response to the disaster and welcomes the decision of ASEAN Foreign Ministers on 19 May to establish a mechanism to expedite the delivery and distribution of aid inside Burma/Myanmar. In this context it notes the outcome of the International Conference in Yangon on 25 May 2008 co-sponsored by the UN and ASEAN and the commitment of the authorities of Burma/Myanmar to participate in the UN/ASEAN mechanism agreed at the Conference. The Council stresses that the most pressing priorities are immediate access and a significant increase in the speed and volume of aid reaching those in most need. It hopes that the Conference will help to deliver this.

The Council welcomes the reports from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon that the authorities of Burma/Myanmar have agreed to grant access to foreign aid workers regardless of nationality, and takes note of the gradual openings made so far. The Council calls on the authorities to implement this commitment and ensure that national and international aid workers and transport will be allowed to deliver aid on the scale the people in the affected areas of the Irrawaddy delta desperately need.

The Council reiterates that full access to these affected areas is urgently required for humanitarian experts of all nationalities, to enable the efficient and prompt delivery of emergency assistance to all populations in need and to enable a comprehensive needs assessment of the disaster zone.

The Council urges the authorities of Burma/Myanmar to give the highest priority to overcoming obstacles to the delivery of immediate humanitarian relief to all affected regions of the country. The Council calls on the UN Secretary General, the UN Humanitarian Relief Coordinator and the ASEAN Secretary General to remain closely involved to ensure that there is much needed progress on the ground.

Whilst the delivery of emergency aid to the affected populations remains the international humanitarian priority, the Council recognises the importance of a thorough international assessment of rehabilitation and reconstruction needs, which can pave the way for a credible rehabilitation plan.

The EU stands ready to continue to contribute technical and material assistance to humanitarian and rehabilitation needs assessments, within the terms of the Council Common Position<sup>1</sup>."

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<sup>1</sup> Council Common Position on restrictive measures against Burma/Myanmar.

**MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS - Council conclusions**

The Council held an exchange of views on how to speed up progress towards the UN's millennium development goals (MDGs), including as regards the EU's contribution. It adopted conclusions on the subject.

In the light of progress made in some areas, the Council considered that all of the MDGs can still be attained in all regions of the world, provided that concerted action is taken immediately and in a sustained way over the seven years that remain for fulfilling them. At the same time, however, it expressed concern at under-achievement in many countries and regions, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa.

Established by world leaders at the millennium summit in September 2000, the MDGs consist of eight goals to be reached by 2015: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases; ensuring environment sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development.

The Council emphasised the leading role played by the EU as the world's largest donor and called for an ambitious response before, during and after a number of key events to be held in the second half of this year: the 3rd OECD-DAC high-level forum on aid effectiveness (HLF-3, Accra, 2-4 September), the UN high-level event on the MDGs (New York, 25 September) and the UN international conference on financing for development (Doha, 29 November-2 December).

The Council conclusions, in particular:

- examine how the achievement of the MDGs can be accelerated;
- take stock of progress on its long-term financial commitment to scaling up the EU's development aid;
- examine how to hasten the pace of reforms aimed at increasing the effectiveness of EU aid;

- examine implementation of the EU's strategy on aid for trade, launched last year;
- call for better synergies and coherence in efforts towards achieving the MDGs and policies with regard to climate change, biofuels, migration and research;
- take stock, from a development and humanitarian assistance perspective, of the challenges posed by climate change and rising food prices.

The member states' long-term commitment to spending 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) on official development assistance (ODA) was confirmed by the Council, with an interim target of 0.56 % of GNI to be reached by 2010. This will mean a doubling of the EU's annual ODA to more than EUR 66 billion in 2010. In this context, the Council expressed concern at the recent decrease in collective ODA volume from 0.41 % of GNI in 2006 to 0.38 % in 2007.

The conclusions can be found in document [9907/08](#).

**ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS - Council conclusions**

The Council held an exchange of views on developments in the negotiation and implementation of economic partnership agreements (EPAs) with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states and regions, and adopted conclusions on the subject.

This follows the initialling of a regional EPA with the Forum of the Caribbean ACP states (Cariforum) and interim agreements with several other ACP regions.

The EPAs provide for trade and development measures aimed at helping the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states and regions to boost investment, output, trade and employment. They are intended to replace arrangements by which the EU, for more than 30 years, granted unilateral trade preferences to ACP developing countries, but which conflicted with the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) because they were unilateral and not reciprocal in nature. A WTO waiver, whereby action couldn't be taken against the non-compliant trade preferences, expired on 31 December 2007.

Believing EPAs to have a potential key role in accompanying and supporting regional integration and in promoting development, the Council set out recommendations for the effective conclusion of the negotiations. The conclusions highlight the need for EPAs to build upon, foster and support existing regional integration processes, and acknowledge that, with varying degrees of regional integration across various ACP regions, the scope of an EPA may also differ from one region to another.

The Council examined the adjustments and reforms that regional integration and EPAs may entail in ACP economies and policies, and reaffirmed the EU's commitment to increasing its trade-related assistance to EUR 2 billion annually by 2010. It also reaffirmed the importance of an appropriate monitoring system to assess progress in implementation and to assess the impact of EPAs on development and trade. The Council highlighted the need for the institutional set-up of EPAs to ensure adequate synergies with the institutions set up under the Cotonou agreement, which remains the framework for relations between the ACP and the EU.

The conclusions can be found in document [9629/08](#).



**IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL**

The following meetings were held in the margins of the Council meeting:

Monday 26 May:

- European Defence Agency steering committee;
- EU-Gulf Cooperation Council ministerial meeting.

Tuesday 27 May:

- EU-EEA (European Economic Area) Council;
- EU-Turkey association council;
- Cooperation council with the Republic of Moldova;
- Ministerial Troika meeting with Cape Verde.

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

See press release 9866/08.

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