



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



9866/08 (Presse 140)

**PROVISIONAL VERSION**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

2869th Council meeting

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

#### **General Affairs**

Brussels, 26 May 2008

President

**Dimitrij RUPEL**

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia

\* The 2870th meeting on External Relations is the subject of a separate press release (9868/08).

# **P R E S S**

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## **Main results of the Council**

*The Council approved negotiating directives for a new comprehensive framework agreement with **Russia**.*

*The negotiations will aim to conclude an agreement to replace the currentt partnership and cooperation agreement, including a broader range of areas for cooperation and enabling the future development of bilateral relations in various sectors.*

## CONTENTS<sup>1</sup>

<b>PARTICIPANTS</b> .....	<b>5</b>
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### **ITEMS DEBATED**

PREPARATION OF THE JUNE MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL .....	7
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### **OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

#### *EXTERNAL RELATIONS*

– EU-Russia relations - Negotiating directives for a new agreement .....	8
– EU special representative for Afghanistan - Extension of mandate.....	8
– Annual report on common foreign and security policy.....	8
– EU/Switzerland - Agreement on the free movement of persons - EU enlargement.....	9
– Agreements with Georgia and Armenia - EU enlargement.....	9

#### *EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY*

– Single progress report on EU military capabilities .....	9
– European security and defence policy annual report on training.....	10
– EU exercise programme for the 2009-2013 period.....	10

#### *DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION*

– United Nations conference on trade and development.....	10
– Commodities.....	11

#### *TRADE POLICY*

– Ukraine - Steel products .....	11
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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.

*GENERAL AFFAIRS*

- Proceedings in the Council's different configurations ..... 11

*ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS*

- Recovery of claims on certain levies, duties and taxes ..... 11
- Taxation of savings – Standard format for the exchange of information ..... 12

*BUDGETS*

- Surplus resulting from implementation of the 2007 budget ..... 12
- Draft amending budget for 2008 - Solidarity fund for Greece and Slovenia ..... 12

*FISHERIES*

- EU/Seychelles partnership agreement ..... 13

*AGRICULTURE*

- Community tobacco fund ..... 14
- Scrutiny of transactions by the guarantee fund ..... 14

## PARTICIPANTS

The governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

### Belgium:

Mr Karel DE GUCHT  
Mr Oliver 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:

Mr Ivailo KALFIN  
Ms Nina RADEVA

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Deputy Minister for the Economy and Energy

### Czech Republic:

Mr Alexandr VONDRA

Deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for European Affairs

Mr Karel SCHWARZENBERG

Minister for Foreign Affairs

### Denmark:

Mr Michael ZILMER-JOHNS

State Secretary for Foreign and Security Policy, EU Policy and EU Coordination

### Germany:

Mr Günter GLOSER

Minister of State

### Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET

Minister for Foreign Affairs

### Ireland:

Mr Michael MARTIN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

### Greece:

Ms Dora BAKOYANNI

Minister for Foreign Affairs

### Spain:

Mr Diego LÓPEZ GARRIDO

State Secretary for the European Union

### France:

Mr Bernard KOUCHNER  
Jean-Pierre JOUYET

Minister for Foreign and European Affairs  
Minister of State to the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, with responsibility for 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

### Hungary:

Ms Kinga GÖNCZ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

### Malta:

Mr Tonio BORG  
Mr Godwin GRIMA

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Principal Permanent Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister

### Netherlands:

Mr Maxime VERHAGEN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Austria:**

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK

Federal Minister for European and International Affairs

**Poland:**Mr Radosław SIKORSKI  
Mr Mikołaj DOWGIELEWICZMinister for Foreign Affairs  
State Secretary, Office of the Committee for European  
Integration**Portugal:**Mr Luís AMADO  
Mr Manuel LOBO ANTUNESMinistro de Estado, Minister for Foreign Affairs  
State Secretary for European Affairs, attached to the  
Minister for Foreign Affairs**Romania:**Mr Lazar COMANESCU  
Mr Anton NICULESCUMinister for Foreign Affairs  
State Secretary for International Affairs and  
Interinstitutional Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs**Slovenia:**Mr Dimitrij RUPEL  
Mr Andrej ŠTER  
Mr Matjaž ŠINKOVEC  
Mr Janez LENARČIČMinister for Foreign Affairs  
State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
State Secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister  
State Secretary at the Government Office for European  
Affairs**Slovakia:**

Mr Ján KUBIŠ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Finland:**

Mr Alexander STUBB

Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Sweden:**Mr Carl BILDT  
Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖMMinister for Foreign Affairs  
Minister for European Affairs**United Kingdom:**

Mr Jim MURPHY

Minister of State for Europe

**Commission:**

Ms Margot WALLSTRÖM,

Vice-President

**General Secretariat of the Council:**

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

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

The Council examined an annotated draft agenda prepared by the presidency for the European Council meeting to be held in Brussels on 19 and 20 June. (*doc. 9410/08*). It will prepare the meeting in greater detail at its session on 16 June.

The issues to be addressed by the European Council are:

- state of ratification and progress in preparatory work on the Lisbon Treaty;
- freedom, security and justice;
- policy implications of high food prices;
- economic, social and environmental issues;
- Western Balkans;
- external relations (in particular: implementation of the UN's millennium development goals and enhancement of the Euro-Mediterranean Barcelona process and of the eastern dimension of European neighbourhood policy).

The annotated draft agenda will serve as the basis and structure for draft European Council conclusions to be prepared by the presidency and submitted to the permanent representatives committee in the run-up to the Council's meeting on 16 June.

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED****EXTERNAL RELATIONS****EU-Russia relations - Negotiating directives for a new agreement**

The Council approved negotiating directives for an agreement that will provide a new comprehensive framework for the EU's relations with Russia.

EU-Russia relations have developed considerably since the existing partnership and cooperation agreement was signed at Corfu in June 1994. In successive summit meetings since 2005, the EU and Russia have agreed to establish a new contractual basis for bilateral relations. The negotiations will aim to conclude a new agreement to replace the partnership and cooperation agreement, including a broader range of areas for cooperation and enabling the future development of bilateral relations in various sectors.

**EU special representative for Afghanistan - Extension of mandate**

The Council adopted a joint action extending until 30 June 2008 Mr Francesc Vendrell's mandate as the EU special representative for Afghanistan (8740/08). The joint action amends joint action 2008/131/CFSP.

**Annual report on common foreign and security policy**

The Council approved an annual report, for presentation to the European Parliament, on the main aspects and basic choices of the EU's common foreign and security policy in 2007, including the implications for the EU general budget (8617/08).

The report provides a description of CFSP activities (including common positions, joint actions and implementing decisions) and looks at the prospects for future action.

The recapitulative lists of CFSP instruments (declarations, demarches and political dialogue meetings) are published once a year in a separate document. Information covering 2007 is contained in document 6084/08.



The following items relating to CFSP matters are available on the Council's website (<http://consilium.europa.eu>): list of CFSP legislative acts, declarations, information on EU special representatives, calendar of CFSP activities, including political dialogue meetings with third countries.

### **EU/Switzerland - Agreement on the free movement of persons - EU enlargement**

The Council adopted a decision approving the signing of a protocol to the agreement with Switzerland on the free movement of persons, regarding the participation as contracting parties of Bulgaria and Romania pursuant to their accession to the EU in January 2007 (8689/08).

The agreement on the free movement of persons entered into force in June 2002.

### **Agreements with Georgia and Armenia - EU enlargement**

The Council adopted decisions approving the conclusion of protocols to the EU's partnership and cooperation agreements with Armenia (8840/08) and Georgia (8947/08) in order to take account of the accession to the EU of Bulgaria and Romania in January 2007.

### **EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY**

Note: see Council conclusions on ESDP in the External Relations press release document 9868/08.

### **Single progress report on EU military capabilities**

The Council took note of a progress report on the development of the EU's military capabilities.

The report provides an update on progress concerning activities undertaken since November 2007 to improve the EU's military capabilities and the capability development process.

## **European security and defence policy annual report on training**

The Council took note of the 2008 annual report on ESDP (European security and defence policy) and ESDP-related training (8983/08).

The 2008 report links up with the findings of training reports of previous years. It is based on evaluation reports on training activities in the period from May 2007 to April 2008 (in particular the training activities of the European Security and Defence College), discussions in the relevant Council bodies and findings from a questionnaire.

## **EU exercise programme for the 2009-2013 period**

The Council approved a draft EU exercise programme for the 2009 - 2013 period.

## **DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

### **United Nations conference on trade and development**

The Council took note of the outcome of the 12th session of the United Nations conference on trade and development (UNCTAD XII) that took place in Accra, Ghana, from 20 to 25 April 2008 (9394/08).

UNCTAD members reached a consensus on two documents: the Accra declaration and the Accra accord ([www.unctadxii.org](http://www.unctadxii.org)). The main theme of the conference was “Addressing the opportunities and challenges of globalisation for development”.

The Council set out the EU's key objectives and priorities for UNCTAD XII in October 2007 (14209/07).

## **Commodities**

The Council adopted conclusions on implementation of the EU's action plan on agricultural commodity chains, dependence and poverty, and on the EU-Africa partnership in support of development of the cotton sector.

In the light of rising food prices and the challenges faced by commodity-dependent poor countries, the conclusions call on the Commission and the member states to follow a coordinated and proactive approach. They highlight the need to enhance synergies and coherence between trade, development, environmental and social policies.

The conclusions can be found in document [9251/08](#).

## **TRADE POLICY**

### **Ukraine - Steel products**

The Council repealed regulation 752/2007 regarding restrictions on imports of certain steel products from Ukraine, pursuant to its accession to the World Trade Organisation this month (9362/08).

## **GENERAL AFFAIRS**

### **Proceedings in the Council's different configurations**

The Council took note of a report from the presidency on proceedings in its different configurations (9414/08).

## **ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**

### **Recovery of claims on certain levies, duties and taxes**

The Council adopted a codified version of directive 76/308/EEC laying down rules aimed at ensuring the recovery, in each member state, of claims on certain levies, duties and taxes which arise in other member states (8717/08).

The new directive supersedes the various acts incorporated in directive 76/308/EEC whilst fully preserving its content. Directive 76/308/EEC is thereby repealed.

### **Taxation of savings – Standard format for the exchange of information**

The Council adopted conclusions regarding a revised standard format for the exchange of information under directive 2003/48/EC on the taxation of savings, as well as a list of statistics, their transmission and disclosure.

The conclusions can be found in document [9467/08](#).

In April, the Commission issued a list of statistics that member states should provide it in order to prepare its first formal report on implementation of the savings tax directive. At its meeting on 14 May, the Council called on the Commission to present its report by 30 September at the latest, to be followed by specific proposals on the basis of the report.

### **BUDGETS**

#### **Surplus resulting from implementation of the 2007 budget**

The Council established draft amending budget No. 4 to the EU's general budget for 2008, concerning the budgeting of a surplus resulting from implementation, in accordance with budgetary procedure of the 2007 budget. The budgetary documents will be forwarded to the European Parliament. (9433/08)

#### **Draft amending budget for 2008 - Solidarity fund for Greece and Slovenia**

The Council established draft amending budget no. 3 to the EU's general budget for 2008, which involves the following (9701/08):

- the revenue accruing from the Microsoft case, following the final judgement of the Court of First Instance;

- mobilisation of the EU's solidarity fund following to forest fires in Greece in August 2007 (EUR 89.7 million) and floods in Slovenia in September 2007 (EUR 8.3 million);
- savings arising from an increase in EU staff pay and pensions that was smaller than estimated in 2007;
- the reinforcement of the "emergency fund for veterinary complaints and other animal contamination which are a risk for public health" due to the bluetongue crisis;
- creation of the necessary budgetary structure to accommodate joint technology initiatives related to: innovative medicines, "Clean Sky", embedded computing systems and nanoelectronics;
- modification of the establishment plan of the European Institute for Gender Equality;
- modifications to the establishment plan of the European Economic and Social Committee.

The Council also adopted a decision on the mobilisation of the EU solidarity fund for Greece and Slovenia (8424/08).

The budgetary documents will be forwarded to the European Parliament in accordance with the budgetary procedure.

## **FISHERIES**

### **EU/Seychelles partnership agreement**

The Council adopted a regulation amending the protocol setting out, for the period from January 2005 to 17 January 2011, the fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for by the fisheries agreement with the Seychelles (16664/07 and 16663/07).

The amendments increase the reference tonnage of fishing vessels, taking account of the average level of catches over the past three years, introduce financial support for the partnership and increase the share paid by ship owners.

The fishing opportunities for EU vessels set out in the protocol and laid down in regulation 115/2006 remain unchanged.

## **AGRICULTURE**

### **Community tobacco fund**

The Council adopted regulations amending regulations 1782/2003 and 1234/2007 in order to transfer to the Community tobacco fund an amount equal to 5% of tobacco aid granted for the years 2008 and 2009, as was done for 2006 and 2007 (7386/08).

The Community tobacco fund is used for financing campaigns against tobacco consumption as well as measures to promote a switch of production. It is considered as a successful example of synergy between agriculture and health policies.

### **Scrutiny of transactions by the guarantee fund**

The Council adopted a codified version of regulation 4045/89 on scrutiny by member states of transactions forming part of the European agricultural guarantee fund funding system (8718/08).

Regulation 4045/089 has been amended several times with the consequence that its provisions remained scattered in different legal acts. The codified version brings together the various amendments into one act without any changes of substance and supersedes the acts incorporated in them, thus ensuring clarity and legal certainty.

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