



Brussels, 23 May 2008

DRAFT

BACKGROUND¹

GENERAL AFFAIRS and EXTERNAL RELATIONS COUNCIL

Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 May in Brussels

*The Council's session on general affairs will start at 10.00 on Monday and will focus on preparations for the June meeting of the **European Council**. The Council's external relations session, which will follow, will also include substantial segments on **security and defence** and on **development**, in the presence of defence and development ministers respectively.*

*In the external relations session, foreign ministers have on their agenda, among other things, **WTO/DDA**, Africa (**Somalia, Zimbabwe**), **Georgia** and **Iraq**. Without debate they are expected to adopt the **negotiating directives for a new agreement with the Russian Federation** to provide a comprehensive framework for EU-Russia relations.*

*In the presence of defence ministers, they will hold their six-monthly review of **European security and defence policy (ESDP)** and discuss **Afghanistan**.*

*Defence ministers will separately be briefed on the work of the **European Defence Agency** and will discuss **ESDP operations** in the Western Balkans and Africa (notably Chad and the Central African Republic), as well as **capabilities**, including EU battlegroups.*

Lunch discussion items are due to include:

- *foreign ministers: **Western Balkans** and the **Middle East** (peace process and Lebanon);*
- *defence ministers: **cooperation with strategic partners** (notably EU-UN and EU-NATO relations).*

*Starting at 18.00 on Monday and continuing on Tuesday morning (9.00-13.00), development ministers will discuss the promotion and protection of the **rights of the child** in the EU's external action, the situation in **Burma/Myanmar** as well as progress towards the **Millennium Development Goals and Economic Partnership Agreement**. At an informal dinner on Monday they will discuss Women and armed conflict as well as the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. At lunch on Tuesday they will discuss rising food prices and food security in developing countries.*

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

Press conferences:

- *Monday: press conferences at 14.00 (defence minister) and after the foreign ministers' lunch (as from +/-16.00)*
- *Tuesday: development issues (as from 15.00).*

Press conferences and public events can be followed by video streaming:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/videostreaming>

In the margins of the Council:

Monday 26 May:

09.00 European Defence Agency steering committee, *(note: the EDA's Chief Executive is expected to brief the press in the course of Monday morning);*

18.00 EU-Gulf Cooperation Council ministerial meeting, *with press conference as from 20.00.*

Tuesday 27 May:

10.00 EU-EEA (European Economic Area) Council;

10.00 EU-Turkey association council, *with press conference as from 11.30;*

12.00 Cooperation Council with the Republic of Moldova, *with press conference as from 14.15;*

16.00 Ministerial troika meeting with Cape Verde.

SESSION ON GENERAL AFFAIRS

Preparation of the June meeting of the European Council

The Council will briefly examine 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*)

The issues to be addressed by the European Council are:

- State of ratification and progress of 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, enhancement of the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean as well as of the eastern dimension of European neighbourhood policy).

The annotated draft agenda will serve as the basis for draft European Council conclusions to be prepared by the presidency.

SESSION ON EXTERNAL RELATIONS

WTO/DDA

The Council is expected to discuss the state of play regarding the WTO's Doha Development Agenda (DDA) negotiations.

Africa

- *Somalia*

The Council will discuss Somalia in the light of the security situation there and its negative humanitarian and human rights consequences. It should reaffirm its commitment to a comprehensive approach to a lasting settlement of the Somali crisis, covering its political, security and humanitarian aspects. It should call on all parties to engage in a constructive dialogue in shaping the future constitution of Somalia and welcome efforts to advance the political process.

It will underline the importance of unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need and call on violations of international humanitarian law and human rights be officially denounced and investigated. It should also commend the work of the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and recall the EU's readiness to continue to increase its support to AMISOM. Finally it is expected to express its concern over the upsurge of piracy attacks off the Somali coast and its appreciation for the UN Security Council's commitment to addressing the problem of piracy and armed robbery.

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions along those lines.

- *Zimbabwe*

The Council will discuss the situation in Zimbabwe in the context of the recent announcement by the 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.

It is expected to condemn the state-sponsored campaign of violence and intimidation against Zimbabweans and call upon the government of Zimbabwe to ensure a level playing field and a secure environment conducive to ensuring that the results of the forthcoming second round will reflect the free and democratic will of the Zimbabwean people. It should emphasise the importance of effective election observation, local as well as international, to ensure regularity and transparency for the second round and underline the important role of the countries in the region in achieving this. It should also reiterate its support for SADC's efforts to resolve the current crisis.

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions along those lines.

Iraq

Foreign ministers will discuss Iraq following the visit to Brussels by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and members of his government on 16 - 17 April and ahead of the first annual Review Conference of the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) to be held in Stockholm on 29 May.

The Council will adopt conclusions reaffirming its support to a secure, stable, democratic, prosperous and unified Iraq and for the central role of the UN and UNAMI in the country. It should welcome Prime Minister Maliki's recent visit to Brussels and the opportunity to enhance the EU's political engagement with Iraq, as well as the expanded ministerial Conference of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq in Kuwait on 22 April.

Looking forward to the upcoming first annual Review Conference of the International Compact in Stockholm, it should urge 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 and encourage the government to make further progress in the political process and in national reconciliation. It should welcome political agreement to hold provincial elections before the end of 2008. It should note 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.

The Council should recall the EU's strong commitment to Iraq. Taking into account the EUR 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 Council should express the EU's commitment to provide further assistance in a number of areas, welcome the substantial progress on the negotiations on the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, underline the importance of establishing a system of rule of law and a culture respecting human rights and stress the important role that the EUJUST LEX mission has played to this end.

Georgia

The Council will discuss recent developments in Georgia and the situation in the country following the 21 May parliamentary elections.

EU High Representative Javier Solana meets the Georgian foreign minister, Eka Tkeshelashvili, on 23 May to discuss the situation in Georgia after the elections, as well as EU-Georgia relations.

ENP

Following the debate by the European Council in March on the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean and also on the need to strengthen the eastern dimension of European neighbourhood policy, Poland and Sweden will present to the Council suggestions for an Eastern Partnership. The issue will be further tackled at the European Council in June.

Western Balkans

At lunch, ministers will discuss the situation in the Western Balkans, particularly in Serbia following the parliamentary, regional and local elections on 11 May 2008.

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions expressing satisfaction with the peaceful and orderly conduct of the elections in Serbia, which were carried out in a free and democratic manner, and welcoming the strong support for the pro-European forces. It should also recall the conclusions it adopted 29 April 2008 on the occasion of the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement.

Middle East

At lunch, ministers will discuss the Middle East peace process - including Annapolis follow-up and preparations for the June Berlin Conference in support of Palestinian civil security and the rule of law -, as well as Lebanon. The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on both subjects.

- Middle East peace process

The Council will reaffirm 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. It is expected to welcome the recent meetings of Quartet principals, including with Arab foreign ministers, and of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee on 2 May in London. It should underline the urgent need for swift and tangible results on the ground in order to sustain the negotiations.

It is expected to express concern at recent accelerated settlement expansion. It will condemn the continued firing of rockets from Gaza on southern Israel. It should call 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. It will express continued concern about the unsustainable humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The Council is expected to express the EU's continued commitment to assisting Palestinian state-building efforts across a broad range of areas, and, in his regard, its support to the international conference in support of Palestinian civil security and the rule of law to be hosted by Germany in Berlin on 24 June 2008. It should note that it has decided to expand the EU's EUPOL COPPS mission to support the criminal justice sector. It should welcome the recent package of measures agreed by Quartet Representative Tony Blair with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities, aimed at enhancing both economic activity and the capacity of Palestinian Authority security forces, as well as the Palestinian Investment Conference held in Bethlehem to take forward the economic development agenda.

- Lebanon

The Council is expected to condemn the recent acts of violence in Lebanon and urge all parties to refrain from any further actions that could upset public order and the security of the citizens, and recall its commitment to the full implementation of UNSC Resolutions 1559, 1680, 1701 and 1757. It should also welcome the outcome of the Doha meeting led by Qatar and the Arab League. The agreement reached by the Lebanese parties in Doha, based on the Arab League's three point plan, which the EU has supported from the start, should enable the election the new President of Lebanon.

Other items

The Council is expected to adopt a number of items without discussion, including:

- EU-Russia relations - negotiating directives for a new agreement with the Russian Federation to provide a comprehensive framework for EU-Russia relations.

EU/Russia relations have become far broader and deeper since the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was concluded. In successive summit meetings since 2005, the EU and Russia have agreed to establish a new contractual basis for the bilateral relationship. The aim of the negotiations will be to conclude with Russia a new agreement which replaces whilst drawing upon the existing Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed at Corfu in June 1994, and which will include the full range of cooperation areas as well as the evolution of bilateral cooperation mechanisms.

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

As usual once every six months, the Council will include a substantial ESDP component, with the participation of defence ministers.

A European Defence Agency (EDA) Steering Board will be held in the margins of the Council meeting.

In the Council, defence ministers will discuss ESDP missions and operations, capabilities, including battle groups, and EDA issues.

On operations and missions, the Council is due to discuss:

- the EU military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUFOR Althea
- EU operations in Africa, notably the EU military operation in Chad/CAR (operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA), as well as the mission EUSEC RD Congo and the mission EU SSR Guinea Bissau.

In a joint session with foreign ministers, they will discuss Afghanistan and children and armed conflict. At lunch, defence ministers will discuss cooperation with partners, namely EU-UN and EU-NATO relations.

Afghanistan

The Council will discuss Afghanistan, ahead of the international conference in support of Afghanistan to be held in Paris on 12 June 2008. It will underline 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.

The Council will welcome the opportunity to assess progress in Afghanistan at the Paris Conference and is expected to identify a number of areas for priority focus, including increased ownership and accountability. It should further underline the importance of a unified approach by the international community in pursuing common goals, in full coordination with the government and with coherence between the military and civilian dimensions. It will also address issues relating to human rights, the democratic process - especially in view of the 2009 presidential and 2010 parliamentary elections -, as well as security and the rule of law.

The Council is expected to reiterate its determination to contribute significantly to police reform through the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan), which has made progress in implementing its mandate and is now deployed throughout the country. Given the size of the task, the Council is likely to express the EU's commitment to substantially increase its efforts through EUPOL Afghanistan.

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions along those lines.

Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC) - Revised Checklist

Following a presentation by the presidency on the importance of enhancing the EU response to Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC), the Council will underline the efforts which resulted in the General review of the implementation of the checklist for the integration of the protection of children affected by armed conflict into ESDP operations. On the basis of a thorough political dialogue and extensive survey of the existing practices in the mission areas, the revised Checklist includes substantive improvements, especially where the main deficiencies were detected, particularly on elaboration of the definition of Child protection; specific training on CAAC; monitoring and reporting; improving visibility and awareness; possibility to have specific expertise on CAAC on the ground; and enhancing expert communication between missions/operations and Brussels.

The Council will adopt the document and look forward to improved implementation of the revised Checklist provisions on the ground, in ESDP missions and operations.

In its conclusions, which it will adopt in the joint session of foreign and defence ministers, the Council will cover a broad range of issues:

ESDP Missions and Operations

The Council is due to reiterate that the EU remains actively committed to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), including through **Operation ALTHEA**, and that the EU-led military presence will remain there for as long as necessary. 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. With regard to the EU Police Mission in BiH (**EUPM**), the Council will welcome the adoption of the police reform laws in BiH and the efforts of EUPM in aiding BiH authorities in the implementation of those laws.

The Council is also expected to underline the readiness of the EU to play a leading role in strengthening the stability in **Kosovo**. In that regard, it will welcome the preparations for the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX KOSOVO), including the on-going deployment of the mission staff.

The Council will address the military bridging operation in the Republic of Chad and the Central African Republic (**EUFOR Tchad/RCA**) that the EU is conducting in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1778 (2007). 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. It will note that after 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 Council should also note that negotiations with some third states that have shown willingness to contribute to the operation are ongoing, some of them about to be concluded.

The Council will recall that the deployment of EUFOR Tchad/RCA is a major EU contribution to the international efforts, which, together with UN mission MINURCAT in Chad and the CAR 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. Given the cross-border involvement of armed groups the Council should also call on the governments of Sudan and Chad to improve their relations and to stop supporting and equipping these groups. In this context it will welcome the 13 March Dakar agreement signed by the Presidents of Chad and Sudan to effectively end their disputes.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Council will underline that Security Sector Reform (SSR) remains necessary to reach sustainable stability in the DR Congo. To that end, the continued work and close co-ordination between the two ESDP missions (**EUSEC RD Congo** and **EUPOL RD Congo**) and Community activities are of great importance.

With regard to Guinea-Bissau, the Council will note the deployment of an advance team to Guinea-Bissau to launch the mission **EU SSR GUINEA BISSAU** by the month of June. In that regard, the Council will underline the comprehensive character of the mission, which has 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.

With regard to the Middle East, the Council is due to underline that the mission **EUPOL COPPS** will continue its efforts in support of the Palestinian Civil Police. The Council will also agree to expand EUPOL COPPS' activities in the area of the criminal justice system. Finally, the Council will reiterate the EU's commitment and readiness to redeploy to the Rafah crossing point (mission EUBAM RAFAH) as soon as conditions allow it.

The Council will welcome the continuation, until 30 June 2009, of the Integrated Rule of Law Mission for Iraq (**EUJUST LEX**) in partnership with the Iraqi authorities and international bodies.

- Civilian Capabilities

The Council will note 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.

- Military Capabilities

The Council is expected to welcome the continued progress made in the EU military capabilities development process, in particular the progress made in the elaboration of the Capability Development Plan (CDP), which participating member states are elaborating through the European Defence Agency and the EU Military Committee (EUMC). The Council will agree to terminate the European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP).

The Council is also due to welcome the outcomes of the Battlegroup Co-ordination Conference (BGCC) on 24 April, where member states have committed in detail the required Battlegroup packages until the second semester in 2009 and have committed packages until the first semester in 2011. Finally, the Council will welcome the progress made in the implementation of the Maritime Rapid Response and Air Rapid Response Concepts agreed in 2007.

- Military planning arrangements

The Council will welcome work conducted in order to implement the High Representative's report on the EU Military Staff's (EUMS) ability to conduct military planning at the strategic level for EU-led operations, as requested by the Council in May 2007, following the Wiesbaden informal ministerial meeting. This resulted in a provisional restructuring of the EUMS, aimed at enhancing the military ability to conduct early planning at strategic level in order to better inform and accelerate the decision making process.

- European Defence Agency (EDA)

The Council is due to note the report presented by the Head of the Agency, HR Javier Solana, on the EDA's activities. In particular, the Council is expected to welcome the results achieved in developing long-term strategies:

- preparation of the Capability Development Plan (CDP);
- implementation of the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) strategy;
- development of a European Defence Research and Technology strategy;
- development of a European Armaments strategy.

The Council should also welcome the results achieved by the Agency on specific policies, projects and initiatives, in particular:

- the overall implementation of the regime on defence procurement, whereby subscribing member states are to adapt their practices to the provisions of the Code of Conduct;
- successful implementation of the first Agency Defence R&T Joint Investment Programme, in the area of Force Protection;
- initiation of activities to improve the availability of helicopters for ESDP operations;
- preparatory work in view of implementing the roadmap to fly UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) in regulated airspace.

In its conclusions, the Council will also cover the following issues:

- conflict prevention
- strategic partnerships (EU-UN, EU-NATO and EU-Mediterranean partners)
- security and development
- human rights
- gender
- children affected by armed conflict
- training in the field of ESDP
- exercises.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Burma/Myanmar

Development ministers will once again review the humanitarian situation in Burma/Myanmar following the catastrophic cyclone Nargis, after their first discussion of the issue at the extraordinary meeting on 13 May.

Rights of the child

The Council will hold an exchange of views on the rights of the child in development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and is due to adopt conclusions.

The rights of the child are closely linked to activities under the UN's millennium development goals (MDGs, see following item) agenda, given that the rights, well-being and successful development of children impact directly on progress towards achieving the MDGs. The Council will highlight the need for mainstreaming the rights of the child in applying EU's development cooperation instruments.

It will focus on the needs of children in emergency situations, recalling the need for effective and rapid interventions to address vital needs and to establish the conditions for longer-term development policies and access to basic services. The Council will pay special attention to the issue of separated and unaccompanied children and that of children's education in emergency situations.

Furthermore, the Council will address the issue of particularly 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 will also be highlighted.

The EU as a global partner for development – The millennium development goals

The Council will take stock of the EU's contribution towards the UN's millennium development goals (MDGs), and is expected to adopt conclusions highlighting the EU's continued role as the world's largest donor and a global partner for development.

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.

In the light of progress made in some areas, the Council is expected to convey the message that all 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 next seven years. However, it will express concern at under-achievement in many countries and regions, in particular sub-Saharan Africa.

In particular, the Council will:

- 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.

Economic partnership agreements

The Council will take stock of the process of negotiating and implementing economic partnership agreements (EPAs), after the initialling of one 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 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 will set out recommendations for the conclusion of the negotiations. It will acknowledge that, with varying degrees of regional integration across ACP regions, the scope of an EPA may also differ from one region to another.

The Council will discuss the adjustments and reforms that regional integration and EPAs may entail in ACP economies and policies, whilst noting that the EU is committed to increasing its trade-related assistance to EUR 2 billion annually by 2010. It will also reaffirm the importance of an appropriate monitoring system to assess progress in implementation as well as the impact of EPAs on development and trade. It will highlight 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 exchange of views is expected to clear the ground for discussions at a meeting of the ACP-EU Council of Ministers in Addis Ababa on 12-13 June.

Commodities

The Council is due to adopt, without discussion, conclusions on implementation of EU's action plan on agricultural commodity chains, dependence and poverty, and on the EU-Africa partnership in support of cotton sector development.

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