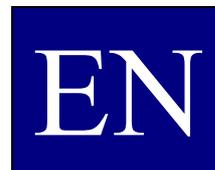




**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



8619/08 (Presse 105)

**PRESS RELEASE**

2864th and 2865th Council meetings

**General Affairs and External Relations**

Luxembourg, 29 April 2008

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

**P R E S S**

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8619/08 (Presse 105)

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**EN**

## Main results of the Council

*The Council welcomed the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) and of the Interim Agreement with **Serbia** as an important step on the country's path towards the EU. It looked forward to intensifying cooperation with Serbia through the comprehensive framework offered by these agreements and the other mechanisms of the Stabilisation and Association Process. Recalling that full cooperation with the ICTY, including all possible efforts to arrest and transfer indictees, is an essential element of these agreements, ministers agreed to submit the SAA to their parliaments for ratification and the Community decided to implement the Interim Agreement as soon as the Council decides that Serbia fully cooperates with the ICTY. The Council and the Commission will regularly monitor that Serbia continues to fully cooperate with the ICTY. The EU and its Member States will assist Serbia in this respect. The signing of the SAA and of the Interim Agreement took place in the margins of the Council.*

*The Council welcomed the conclusion of the first phase of the police reform in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** by the recent adoption of the two police laws. It recalled that agreement on police reform in line with the EU's three principles is one of the necessary conditions for further progress towards the conclusion of the SAA. The Council acknowledged BiH's progress on all the four conditions for the signing of the SAA as set out in the Council conclusions of 12 December 2005. While Bosnia and Herzegovina will need to undertake further efforts to address reforms, the Council expressed its readiness to sign the SAA. Technical preparations are underway.*

\* \* \*

*The Council also adopted, without discussion, a regulation reforming the common organisation of the EU's **wine market**. The reform is aimed at increasing the competitiveness of EU wine producers, winning back markets both within and outside the EU, balancing supply and demand, simplifying rules, preserving the best traditions of European wine production, reinforcing the social fabric of rural areas and ensuring respect for the environment. It will apply as from 1 August 2008, with exceptions. It is part of the reform of the EU's common agricultural policy that started in 2003.*

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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## PARTICIPANTS

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Member  
Member**General Secretariat of the Council:**

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

**ITEMS DEBATED****WESTERN BALKANS - *Council conclusions***

The Council discussed the situation in the Western Balkans, with particular focus on Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and adopted the following conclusions:

"SERBIA

The Council welcomes the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) and of the Interim Agreement with Serbia as an important step on the country's path towards the EU. It looked forward to intensifying cooperation with Serbia through the comprehensive framework offered by these agreements and the other mechanisms of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The Council recalled articles 2, 4 and 133 of the SAA and articles 1 and 54 of the Interim Agreement and stated that full cooperation with the ICTY, including all possible efforts to arrest and transfer indictees, is an essential element of these Agreements.

Accordingly, Ministers agreed to submit the SAA to their parliaments for ratification and the Community decided to implement the Interim Agreement as soon as the Council decides that Serbia fully cooperates with the ICTY.

The Council and the Commission will regularly monitor that Serbia continues to fully cooperate with the ICTY. The EU and its Member States will assist Serbia in this respect.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The Council welcomed the conclusion of the first phase of the police reform by the recent adoption of the two police laws. The Council recalled that agreement on police reform in line with the EU's three principles is one of the necessary conditions for further progress towards the conclusion of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA).

The Council acknowledged BiH's progress on all the four conditions for the signing of the SAA as set out in the Council conclusions of 12 December 2005. While Bosnia and Herzegovina will need to undertake further efforts to address reforms, the Council expressed its readiness to sign the SAA. Technical preparations are underway.

The Council highlighted the importance of the future SAA as the essential framework of the relations between EU and BiH, as well as an important element to ensure stability and strengthen dialogue within BiH. Therefore it encouraged all the political forces of BiH to unite their efforts to pursue with strong determination its reform agenda including the priorities set out in the European Partnership.

Recalling its Conclusion of 10 March 2008, the Council called on the European Commission to launch a visa dialogue with BiH as soon as possible.

## COMMISSION COMMUNICATION ON WESTERN BALKANS

The Council welcomed the Commission's Communication: "Western Balkans: enhancing the European perspective" as a basis for the discussions held at the informal EU Foreign Ministers Meeting (Gymnich) and the EU-Western Balkans Forum in Brdo on 29 March 2008.

Progress achieved in the recent years through the Stabilisation and Association Process must be sustained and made irreversible. The European perspective needs to be tangible and more visible to the people across the Western Balkans.

To this end, the Council welcomed the launch of the dialogue on visa liberalisation and looked forward to discuss roadmaps for all the countries in the region. It welcomed the Commission's intention to further increase the number of scholarships granted to students from the Western Balkans to study in the EU, initiative to step up support to civil society and to enhance coordination with international financial institutions and with bilateral donors in order to support socio-economic development in the region. It expressed support to the proposed enhanced cooperation on disaster prevention, preparedness and response in the region and called for further participation of the Western Balkans in Community programmes and agencies, as well as for the development of the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) into a fully fledged school as of early 2009.

The Council is committed to support the full implementation of these measures. The Council also invited other Council formations to take the work forward in the fields such as transport and energy, as set out in the Communication."

**ZIMBABWE - Council conclusions**

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

- "1. The Council closely follows the situation in Zimbabwe after the elections on 29 March and expresses its deep concern over the delay in announcing the result of the presidential elections as well as over acts of intimidation, human rights abuses, and violence.
2. The EU considers unacceptable and unjustifiable that four weeks after the people of Zimbabwe exercised their fundamental democratic right, no results of the Presidential elections have yet been published. The EU calls for the results of the Presidential elections to be released immediately and to be a genuine reflection of the free and democratic will of the Zimbabwean people, as the delay raises serious concerns about the credibility of the process.
3. The EU condemns the post-election violence and intimidation against Zimbabweans and calls for its immediate end. The EU considers that these serious incidents appear to be targeted and politically motivated attacks against supporters of democratic change. The EU also underlines that recent arrests have demonstrated that the Government of Zimbabwe is not committed to allowing the Electoral Commission in Zimbabwe to function as an independent institution.
4. The EU notes that respect for freedom of assembly and of the media, as well as an atmosphere free from intimidation and violence, are crucial to the holding of free and fair elections, and calls for the electoral process to be completed in a context which respects these principles.
5. The countries in the region, Southern African Development Community and the African Union have a crucial role and a responsibility to continue their engagement to resolve the current crisis in Zimbabwe. The EU shares the concern of the SADC about the situation and reiterates full support for its efforts to resolve the current crisis. In this context, the Council commends the holding of the extraordinary Summit in Lusaka.
6. The Council remains concerned about the possible effects on the stability of the region as a consequence of the ongoing events and therefore calls upon SADC to engage with renewed determination with the Zimbabwean authorities to implement the outcome of the Lusaka Summit including the decision to remain actively involved till the end of the electoral process.
7. The EU welcomes the statement by African Union Commission President Konaré reiterating the AU's willingness to work in concert with all the parties concerned, SADC, and the international community to ensure the successful completion of the electoral process in Zimbabwe.
8. The EU recalls that it does not supply or sell arms, related materials or equipment which could be used for internal repression in Zimbabwe. It encourages others to exercise similar restraint at this time by introducing a de facto moratorium on all such sales and welcomes actions which have already been taken in this respect.

9. The EU will continue to closely monitor the situation and to explore further options for increasing pressure on those who direct and engage in state-sponsored violence and intimidation in the post-election period.
10. The Council recalls its continued commitment to the people of Zimbabwe and emphasises that the EU remains the most important donor to Zimbabwe. The EU also wishes to confirm its willingness to continue to make use of any opportunity provided to engage in the dialogue with a democratically elected Government of Zimbabwe and, as soon as conditions allow, to begin working towards the resumption of full cooperation."

### **MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS**

Ministers discussed the Middle East peace process in preparation of the upcoming meeting of Quartet principals and ministerial conference of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee to be held on 2 May in London.

### **IRAQ**

The Council had an exchange of views on Iraq with a view to preparing for the review conference of the International Compact with Iraq, which takes place on 29 May in Stockholm.

### **PAKISTAN - *Council conclusions***

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

- "1. The Council welcomes recent progress made in the democratic process in Pakistan. The elections of 18 February 2008, generally seen as competitive and having achieved increased public confidence, provided both Pakistan and the EU with new opportunities to improve and deepen the existing relationship. The Council welcomes the transition to new governments at federal and provincial levels and the initial steps taken to restore judicial independence.
2. The EU fully supports the Government of Pakistan in countering terrorism, insurgency and violent opponents of a peaceful and democratic society. The Council recognises the sacrifices made by the Pakistani population and security forces in the struggle against a radical minority, out to disrupt progress and opposed to moderation. The Council calls upon the Government of Pakistan to address underlying causes of radicalisation, through a coherent approach that includes democratisation, socio-economic development, education and inter-cultural dialogue.

3. The Council underlines the EU's commitment to continuing support for the people and government of Pakistan. The Council welcomes the EU's dialogue with Pakistan and reiterates its wish to strengthen EU-Pakistan relations further, in full respect of international law and UN Security Council Resolutions. Particular focus will be given to economic development and trade, counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, human rights, migration, education, inter-cultural issues and regional cooperation as well as issues of wider international importance.
4. At the heart of the EU's cooperation with Pakistan is enhancing long-term development, including in the fields of rural development and education. The EU will look for ways to expand its support for education, including adult literacy and vocational training. The European Commission, which has substantially increased financial assistance to Pakistan over the 2007-10 period, will continue with the regular dialogue under the 2004 Cooperation Agreement.
5. Based on the recommendations of the EU Election Observation Mission, the EU will approach the Pakistani authorities to explore jointly ways to support strengthening of democratic institutions, the electoral framework with particular focus on institution building, legislative reform and voter participation. Progress in that sector is essential to the security and long term stability of Pakistan. The Council reiterates the importance of enhanced EU assistance to and dialogue on the rule of law.
6. One of the EU's main priorities is the promotion of human rights, paying special attention to women's and children's rights. The bi-annual exchange on human rights between EU Heads of Mission in Islamabad and the Government of Pakistan underlines this commitment.
7. The Council reaffirms its support for broad and substantial cooperation between Pakistan and its neighbours. In this respect, the EU fully endorses initiatives aimed at fostering better cross-border ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan, including in the framework of the G8, through the Ankara Process, and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. The Council also reiterates its support for the continuation of the composite dialogue between Pakistan and India. The EU further recognises the value of supporting opportunities for strengthening regional trade integration through SAARC/SAFTA. The EU will continue to explore ways to enhance trade with Pakistan and trade within South Asia.
8. The Council underlines its commitment to work together with Pakistan on non-proliferation and disarmament of Weapons of Mass Destruction in international forums. Support from Pakistan for the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to begin negotiations on a Fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) would be a strong signal in that respect. The Council stresses the importance of Pakistan's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency in order to have more information on outstanding issues related to the Iranian nuclear programme.
9. The Council will regularly review EU policy towards Pakistan."

**BURMA/MYANMAR - Council conclusions**

The Council discussed the situation in Burma/Myanmar and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union continues to be deeply concerned by the situation in Burma/Myanmar and again urges the authorities to take rapid steps for transition to a legitimate, civilian government and for national reconciliation.
2. The Council notes the report by UN Special Adviser on Myanmar, Ibrahim Gambari, on the absence of any immediate, tangible results of his recent visit to Burma/Myanmar. The EU reiterates its full support for the Good Offices Mission of the UN Secretary General and calls on partners, in particular the neighbours of Burma/Myanmar, to do likewise.
3. The Council commends the work of EU Special Envoy Piero Fassino in support of UN efforts and in coordinating with Asian partners. The EU will intensify its close consultations with ASEAN members and other neighbours of Burma/Myanmar, including those that are represented in the UN Security Council.
4. The Council remains convinced that only a process that involves the full participation of all stakeholders in the country, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and ethnic groups, will lead to national reconciliation and stability. Thus the Council believes the draft constitution, referendum and elections, as currently conceived, will not address the many problems facing Burma/Myanmar.
5. The Council calls on the authorities to allow a free and open debate by all political actors on the constitution prior to the referendum on 10 May, and to rescind the laws prohibiting criticism of the National Convention and the referendum. The EU calls on the authorities to guarantee that the referendum will be free and fair as well as to invite international monitoring. The Council urges the authorities to ensure the political process is transparent, and to give the people of Burma/Myanmar clarity about the future political process and the 2010 elections.
6. The Council expresses concern that the draft constitution would foresee restrictions on the eligibility for high political office, allow the military to suspend the constitution at will as well as fail to accommodate the country's ethnic diversity.
7. The Council reiterates its call for the immediate release of all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and deplores the intensified intimidation and violence in the run-up to the referendum. The Council reiterates its call for the authorities to cooperate fully with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, and implement his recommendations.

8. The Council notes today's adoption of the Common Position, renewing for a further twelve months restrictive measures targeted against those responsible for human rights abuses and lack of development in Burma/Myanmar. Recalling the Council Conclusions of 15 October 2007, the Council reiterates its readiness to review or amend these measures or to introduce further restrictive measures in light of developments on the ground.
9. The Council recalls that as part of its restrictive measures against Burma/Myanmar the sales, supply, transfer or export of arms and related material of all types are prohibited. The Council would like to encourage the international community to adopt similar measures.
10. The EU recalls its unwavering, strong commitment to the welfare of the people of Burma/Myanmar. The EU and its Member States provide substantial assistance to their country. The EU continues to stand ready to respond positively to genuine progress towards democracy by engaging with Burma/Myanmar in its development and by finding new areas of cooperation."

\* \* \*

The Council adopted a common position renewing restrictive measures against Burma/Myanmar until 30 April 2009 and updating the lists of persons and enterprises subject to those measures (8391/08).

The new lists take account of changes in the government, the security forces, the State Peace and Development Council and the administration in Burma/Myanmar, as well as in the personal situations of the individuals concerned. It includes other persons associated with the regime in Burma/Myanmar who are deemed responsible for acts of repression, and additional enterprises that are owned or controlled by the regime or by persons associated with the regime.

The restrictive measures, first adopted in 1996, were replaced by new measures under common position 2006/318/CFSP, adopted by the Council in April 2006. They consist of a visa ban and a freezing of assets of members of the military regime and other individuals, groups and undertakings that are impeding Burma/Myanmar's transition to democracy. They also include a ban on making financial loans or credits available to, and on acquiring or extending a participation in, Burmese state-owned enterprises.

Following the repression of peaceful protesters in autumn 2007 and continuing human rights violations by the Burmese authorities, the Council adopted in November 2007 additional measures targeted at the sources of the regime's revenue, such as the logging, timber and mining industries.

## **RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA**

The Council discussed negotiating directives for a new agreement to provide a comprehensive framework for EU-Russia relations.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Georgia**

The Council had an exchange of views on recent developments in the Georgian conflict areas following the Russian decision announced on 16 April to establish official ties with institutions of the de facto authorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia without the consent of the government of Georgia, and on ongoing and future contacts aimed at preventing an increase in tensions.

### **Maritime piracy**

Following recent acts of piracy perpetrated in international waters off the Somali coast against French and Spanish vessels, the Council had an exchange of views at Spain's initiative on ways to contribute, notably in the framework of the UN, to an international response to prevent and fight against such acts.

### **Tibet**

Ministers took stock of ongoing contacts regarding the situation in the autonomous Chinese region of Tibet, including during the recent visit of the Commission in China, as a follow-up to the discussion they had at their informal meeting in Brdo (Slovenia) on 29 March.

## **EVENTS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL**

The following events took place in the margins of the Council meeting:

*28 April 2008:*

- Association Council with Egypt
- EU-ECOWAS Troika (See final communiqué in doc. 8936/08).
- EU-OSCE Troika
- EU-Croatia Stabilisation and Association Council (See press release in doc. 4353/08).

*29 April 2008:*

- Signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and of the Interim Agreement with Serbia
- EU-Russia Troika

## **OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

### **EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

#### **Uzbekistan - Restrictive measures - *Council conclusions***

The Council adopted a common position on restrictive measures against Uzbekistan (8416/08), extending the suspension of visa restrictions for a further six months until 13 November 2008, following a review of the situation and with a view to encouraging the Uzbek authorities to take steps to improve the human rights situation.

The restrictive measures were introduced under common position 2005/792/CFSP, adopted by the Council in November 2005 in response to the excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by the Uzbek security forces during demonstrations in Andijan. Certain restrictive measures were renewed a year later under common position 2006/787/CFSP. In May 2007, the Council extended for six months the restrictions on admission for some individuals (common position 2007/338/CFSP). In November 2007, it adopted common position 2007/734/CFSP renewing certain restrictive measures imposed by common position 2005/792/CFSP.

\* \* \*

The Council also adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Recalling its previous Conclusions and especially Common Position 2007/734/CFSP of 13 November 2007, the Council welcomes the progress achieved in Uzbekistan in recent months in the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law, notably the abolition of the death penalty, the introduction of habeas corpus and the ratification of the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The Council looks forward to the effective implementation of these measures and stands ready to assist Uzbekistan in that regard. The Council also reiterates its willingness to strengthen cooperation with Uzbekistan in all priority areas outlined in the EU Strategy for Central Asia.
2. The Council welcomes the release by the Uzbek authorities of four human rights defenders in February 2008, namely Saidjahon Zainabitdinov, Ikhtior Khamraev, Ulugbek Kattabaev and Bobomurod Mavlanov, and the cancellation of the probation period of two other human rights defenders, Gulbahor Turaeva and Umida Niazova, who were released from prison last year.
3. The Council was also pleased that the Uzbek government has reached an agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the resumption of visits by the ICRC to prisons in Uzbekistan. The Council will pay close attention to the effective implementation of this agreement.
4. The Council looks forward to continuing comprehensive and results-oriented dialogue with the Uzbek authorities and in that context welcomes the Uzbek agreement to conduct a second round of the EU-Uzbekistan Human Rights dialogue in May/June this year. The Council also looks forward to the holding of an EU seminar on media freedom in Uzbekistan and encourages the

Uzbek authorities to take further steps to guarantee the freedom of expression and to allow further liberalisation of mass media in Uzbekistan.

5. Nevertheless, the Council remains seriously concerned about the situation of human rights and the rule of law in a number of areas in Uzbekistan and urges the authorities to fully implement their international obligations in that regard. In particular, the Council calls on the Uzbek authorities to take the following steps, as requested earlier by the EU: to ensure the early release of the imprisoned human rights defenders and to cease harassment of human rights defenders; to finalise without delay the accreditation of the new Country Director of Human Rights Watch and to allow the unhindered operation of that organisation; to cooperate fully and effectively with the UN Special Rapporteurs on Torture and on Freedom of the Media; and to revoke restrictions on the registration and operation of NGOs in Uzbekistan.

6. With a view to encouraging the Uzbek authorities to take substantive steps to improve the human rights situation and taking into account their commitments, the Council decided that the visa restrictions for individuals listed in the annex of Common Position 2007/734/CFSP would not apply for another period of six months. After three months, the Council will review the progress made by the Uzbek authorities towards meeting the conditions set out in Common Position 2007/734/CFSP and further specified in paragraph 5 of these Conclusions, and in light of any other action that demonstrates the readiness of the Uzbek authorities to adhere to the principles of respect for human rights, rule of law and fundamental freedoms. The Council will assess the outcome of this review and present its recommendations to the Uzbek government on possible further steps to be taken in order to improve the respect of human rights and rule of law in Uzbekistan. The Council will closely and continuously monitor and assess, in light of the conditions set out above, the human rights situation in Uzbekistan and may lift, amend or re-apply the visa restrictions as appropriate."

### **Review of EU guidelines on torture - *Council conclusions***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The Council welcomes the review of the Guidelines on Torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and adopts the updated version of the guidelines as set out in doc. 8590/08.

2. The Council confirms that the promotion and protection of the right not to be submitted to torture is a priority of the EU's human rights policy. To work towards the prevention and eradication of all forms of torture and ill treatment within the EU and worldwide is a strongly held policy view of all EU member states.

3. The Council recalls the EU's firm position to fully comply with obligations in respect of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, in the fight against terrorism, in particular the absolute prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

4. The Council underlines the importance of further strengthening the implementation of the torture guidelines through follow-up of the lessons identified during the review, in particular through strengthening the cooperation with UN mechanisms and regional actors.

5. The Council further stresses the importance of the new implementation measures and underlines that the effective implementation of the guidelines i.a. depends on active awareness raising measures, but also on the cooperation between government bodies and civil society.

6. The Council recalls the importance to complement diplomatic action with financial support for torture prevention and rehabilitation programmes and welcomes efforts aimed at improving the impact of these programmes. The Council acknowledges the important work by the European Commission in this regard and calls on Member States to support torture rehabilitation centres."

### **Afghanistan - Council conclusions**

"The European Union warmly welcomes the Afghan Government representative to the EU/Afghan Troika and would like to re-iterate its support to the Government of Afghanistan and for its National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS). It recalls the primary responsibility of the Government of Afghanistan in tackling the narcotics problem. The EU remains committed to assist in tackling the narcotics trade and the diversion of precursors, which threatens both Afghanistan's stability and prosperity, and the security of the wider region.

We strongly welcome the recent Afghanistan Joint Coordination Monitoring Board (JCMB) meeting in Tokyo and the Afghan Government's commitment to accelerate and improve implementation of the NDCS through:

- (i) provision of force protection for eradication in targeted areas;
- (ii) re-structuring and reform of the counter-narcotics trust fund;
- (iii) provincial based planning for CN policy implementation based on the Provincial Development Plans;
- (iv) expansion and effective delivery of programmes to promote licit development, including economic support for licit cash crops and rural industries;
- (v) strengthening of justice and other legal institutions and interdiction efforts;
- (vi) further strengthening of cross-border, regional, and international cooperation for CN activities; and
- (vii) mainstreaming CN into all government policies.

We consider this implementation vital. Efforts to improve the rule of law with an effective police and justice system are essential. Bringing to justice those involved in narcotics, improving security and provincial governments control, and fighting corruption are also pivotal in tackling the narcotics problem in a long term way.

Afghan leadership and delivery is critical and the EU stands ready to assist by pursuing its comprehensive strategy in combating the opium economy, through a combination of

improved economic opportunities, social development and better security and governance. EU assistance 2007-2013 focuses on these issues.

Concerning security, the EU fully supports the work of the ESDP police mission, EUPOL, and calls on Member States and international partners to continue the deployment of quality police personnel. The EU also stresses the paramount importance of the programme of measures under the Instrument for Stability to support Afghanistan in promoting rule of law through support to the reform of the Justice Sector.

The EU acknowledges there are no quick fixes. The experience of Pakistan and Thailand show that the fight against poppy cultivation takes time and that the application of a comprehensive and coordinated approach is essential. In line with the Afghan National Drug Control Strategy, combining the fight against drug trafficking, strengthening rural livelihoods, reducing demand, and strengthening state institutions, particularly criminal justice and law enforcement are priorities. We also welcome the inclusion of the aspect of countering corruption as a complementing element in the fight against drugs in Afghanistan, as put forward in the report to the JCMB on the implementation of the NDCS.

As part of this long-term endeavour UNODC will have to consider broadening and strengthening its range of reporting. This could help the Government of Afghanistan and the international community determine the success of all pillars of the NDCS.

The EU acknowledges and supports the Government of Afghanistan's opposition to licit opium cultivation."

### **Relations with Latin America and the Caribbean**

The Council approved draft agendas and draft joint declarations and communiqués, as a basis for further negotiations, for a series of summits to be held in Lima, on 16 and 17 May, namely:

- summit of the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC);
- summits between the EU troika and LAC partners from Chile, Mexico, the Andean Community, Central America, Mercosur and Cariforum.

### **Relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council**

The Council approved a provisional agenda for the 18th EU-GCC Joint Council and ministerial meeting as well as a draft joint communiqué setting out the position of the EU at this meeting, which will take place in Brussels on 26 May.

The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) is a regional organisation regrouping the six Gulf countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates).

## **DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

### **ACP-EU Cotonou partnership agreement - Mid-term review**

The Council adopted a decision approving the conclusion of an agreement enacting a number of amendments to the partnership agreement signed in Cotonou in June 2000 between the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) and the European Community ([6368/1/08](#)).

The amendments cover a variety of provisions, including with regard to the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, financial provisions and political dialogue on human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law.

The Cotonou agreement governs the relations between the ACP countries and the EU. Its main objective is fighting poverty through an enhanced political dimension, new economic and trade partnerships and improved financial cooperation. Concluded for a period of 20 years, the agreement provides for reviews of its provisions every five years.

The agreement concluded by the Council is the outcome of the review carried out at the end of the first five-year period.

## **TRADE POLICY**

### **Anti-dumping - Bed linen, coumarin and footwear**

The Council adopted regulations:

- amending regulation 397/2004 imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of cotton-type bed linen originating in Pakistan ([8030/08](#));
- imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of coumarin originating in China following an expiry review pursuant to regulation 384/96 extended to India, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia ([8180/08](#));
- extending the definitive anti-dumping measures imposed by regulation 1472/2006 on imports of certain footwear with leather uppers originating in China to imports of the same product consigned from Macao, whether declared as originating in Macao or not ([8199/08](#)).

## **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 ([8700/08](#)).

## **Communicating Europe - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted conclusions welcoming the Commission communication of 3 October 2007 entitled "Communicating Europe in Partnership" (COM(2007) 568 final) and taking note of the Commission working document containing a "Proposal for an Interinstitutional Agreement" (COM(2007) 569 final).

The text of the conclusions can be found in doc. [8528/08](#).

## **TRANSPARENCY**

### **Annual report on public access to documents**

The Council adopted its annual report on implementation of regulation 1049/2001 on public access to documents ([8475/08](#)).

The report, which covers 2007, indicates that:

- More than 67 % of Council documents produced in 2007 - i.e. 108 343 of the 161 121 new documents listed in the Council's register - were made directly accessible to the public via the register upon circulation.
- As of 31 December 2007, the Council's register referred to 1 010 217 documents (all language versions taken together), of which 724 338 (71,7 % of those registered) were public documents, i.e. either available in a downloadable format or on request.
- In 2007, 465 612 different users logged on to the Council's public document register (as against 380 349 in 2006), representing an increase of 22,4 %. The total number of visits increased by 21 % (2 078 602 visits in 2007 against 1 722 354 in 2006), representing more than 5 700 visits per day.
- The Council received 1 964 requests for access from the public concerning a total of 7 809 documents and gave access (total and partial access taken together) to 6 123 (78,9 %) of requested documents.

The report highlights key developments in the fifth year of the regulation's implementation and reviews complaints submitted to the European Ombudsman as well as rulings given by Community courts in cases concerning access to Council documents.

In addition, the report presents regulatory, administrative and practical adaptations made by the Council in order to comply with the regulation. It concludes that, as far as the Council is concerned, the aims set by the treaties and by regulation 1049/2001 were achieved in 2007.

## **Public access to documents**

The Council adopted a reply to confirmatory application 02/c/01/08 made by Mr Ottavio MARZOCCHI, with the Danish, Slovenian, Finnish and Swedish delegations voting against ([doc. 6449/08](#)).

## **BUDGET**

### **Adjustment to the EU's multiannual financial framework**

The Council adopted a decision adjusting the EU's multiannual financial framework via an amendment to the agreement between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline and sound financial management ([7682/1/08](#)).

The adjustment has become necessary because EUR 2 034 million in current prices could not be committed in 2007 nor carried over to 2008 as a result of delays in the adoption of certain operational programmes under heading 1b (structural funds and cohesion fund) and heading 2 (rural development and European fund for fisheries) of the EU's general budget. Parliament and Council agreed to transfer this amount to subsequent financial years. The decision does not lead to any increase in the overall ceiling for payments.

## **JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS**

### **SIS II schedule**

The Council confirmed presidency conclusions presented in a report on open issues related to the detailed schedule of the second generation of the Schengen Information System (SIS II).

The presidency was invited by the Council to report on this issue in conclusions adopted in February (see press release 6796/08, p. 8).

### **EU Monitoring Centre for drugs and drug addiction - Participation of Turkey**

The Council adopted a decision approving an agreement with Turkey on its participation in the work of the European Monitoring Centre for drugs and drug addiction ([13649/1/06](#)).

Turkey, as an EU candidate country, can participate in Community programmes and agencies in the context of the accession process.

The monitoring centre, based in Lisbon, was established in 1993 to provide the Community and the member states with factual, objective, reliable and comparable information at European level on drugs and drug addiction and their consequences.

The agreement with Turkey was signed in October 2007.

For more information see: <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu>.

## **AGRICULTURE**

### **Reform of the wine sector**

The Council adopted a regulation reforming the common organisation of the EU's wine market ([7292/08](#), [8317/08 ADD 1](#)).

The reform pursues the following objectives:

- increasing the competitiveness of EU wine producers
- winning back markets both within and outside the European Union
- balancing supply and demand
- simplifying rules
- preserving the best traditions of European wine production
- reinforcing the social fabric of rural areas, and
- ensuring respect for the environment.

Its key elements include:

- a scheme for *grubbing-up premiums*. Participation will be on a voluntary basis subject to certain conditions. In addition to the Community funds available for these premiums, member states can grant supplementary national aid up to 75 % of the premium already allocated;
- eligibility to the *single payment scheme* for those who have grubbed up vines, giving rise to the payment of the regional average amount of direct decoupled aid up to a limit of EUR 350/ha;
- the abolition of *planting rights* in 2015 with some derogations until 2018;
- the attribution of *national envelopes* which each member state can allocate to the funding of different measures such as the promotion of European wine in third countries, restructuring and conversion of vineyards, modernisation, green harvesting, mutual funds, the harvest insurance and transitional measures for distillation and must aid;
- an *evaluation report* on the effects of the reform, to be submitted by the Commission in 2012;
- the possible *indication of grape variety and vintage* for all wines, subject to certain conditions;

- a procedure for the protection of *designations of origin or geographical indications*;
- criteria for *sugar enrichment* (chaptalisation).

The reform will apply as from 1 August 2008, with the following exceptions: 30 June 2008 for the grubbing-up scheme and support programmes; 1 August 2009 for arrangements relating to oenological practices, protection of designations of origin, geographical indications and traditional terms, labelling and presentation, the vineyard register, compulsory declarations, accompanying documents and product registers; 1 January 2008 for derogations from the ban on the vinification of grapes from certain areas under article 2 (3) of regulation 1493/1999; 1 January 2009 for a number of amendments to regulation 1782/2003.

The new regulation replaces regulation 1493/1999 on the common organisation of the market (CMO) in wine. Its provisions are aligned as much as possible on the "single CMO"<sup>1</sup> into which it is destined to be incorporated at a later stage.

It is part of a reform of the EU's common agricultural policy that started in 2003 with arable crops and livestock and continued in 2004 with olive oil, tobacco and cotton, in 2006 with sugar and in 2007 with fruit and vegetables. It also takes into account Community policies for sustainable development, greater competitiveness, simplification and better regulation.

### **Monitoring of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE)**

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of a regulation incorporating in regulation 999/2001 new criteria for the revision of annual monitoring programmes concerning bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

Annex III of regulation 999/2001 contains rules for the monitoring of animals for transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. It will be amended so as to introduce requirements for member states which consider that their BSE situation has improved and merits a revision of their annual BSE monitoring programmes. In particular, the new regulation will lay down epidemiological criteria for demonstrating improvement through a quantitative assessment of the BSE situation.

## **RESEARCH**

### **Research fund for coal and steel \***

The Council adopted a decision establishing a research programme under the EU's research fund for coal and steel, as well as multiannual technical guidelines for the programme ([5882/08](#), [8354/2/08 ADD1](#)). (OJ L 29, 5.2.2003, p. 28).

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<sup>1</sup> Council regulation no 1234/2007 of 22 October 2007 establishing a common organisation of agricultural markets and on specific provisions for certain agricultural products (single CMO), OJ No L 299, 16.11.2007, p. 1.

The aim of the programme is to increase competitiveness and contribute to the sustainable development of the coal and steel sectors, complementing the EU's seventh research framework programme (OJ L 412, 30.12.2006, p. 1) in these sectors.

Regarding *coal*, the programme is aimed at supporting the Community's energy objectives and the competitive and environmentally-friendly use of coal. It promotes research relating to modern techniques and know-how required for further technological progress, mine safety, improved working conditions in mines and enhanced environmental protection.

As for the *steel* sector, the main emphasis of the programme is on the development of new or improved technologies to guarantee the economic, clean and safe production of steel and steel products, as characterised by steadily increasing performance, suitability to use, customer satisfaction, prolonged service life, easy recovery and recycling.

The maximum total financial contribution from the research fund for pilot and demonstration projects is increased to 50 % of eligible costs.

Multiannual technical guidelines for administration of the programme are modified in order to ensure complementarity with the seventh research framework programme and to take account of the incorporation of the EU's new member states.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **Cartagena protocol on biosafety - Negotiating directives**

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to participate, as regards matters falling within the Community's competence, in negotiations on international rules and procedures for liability and redress for damage resulting from transboundary movements of living modified organisms.

The negotiations, under the Cartagena protocol on biosafety, will take place at a meeting to be held in Bonn from 12 to 16 May.