



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



9001/06 (Presse 126)

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2728th Council Meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

External Relations

Brussels, 15 May 2006

President

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
of Austria

* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2727th meeting on General Affairs (9000/06 Presse 125).

P R E S S

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Main Results of the Council

*The Council welcomed the willingness of the Middle East Quartet to endorse a temporary international mechanism, the objective of which is direct delivery and supervision of **assistance to the Palestinian people**. The EU is working urgently to develop such a mechanism which as a matter of priority will be aimed at contributing to meet basic needs including health services. It will consult International Financial Institutions and other key partners, and invite other donors to actively join in the effort to establish the mechanism as soon as possible.*

*On **Iran**, the Council called on Iran to cooperate fully with the IAEA, suspend all enrichment related and reprocessing activities, including R&D, and to suspend the construction of a reactor moderated by heavy water in order to create conditions in which negotiations might resume. It expressed full support for the Security Council making this mandatory. The Council also reaffirmed the right of Iran to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in conformity with its NPT obligations. Building on earlier proposals (August 2005), the EU would be prepared to support Iran's development of a safe, sustainable and proliferation-proof civilian nuclear programme, if international concerns were fully addressed and confidence in Iran's intentions established. The Council expressed the EU's hope that Iran will not fail to take up such an offer.*

*The Council conducted an in-depth review of developments under the **European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)**, in which it:*

- noted progress made in the development of EU military capabilities since November 2005 and welcomed in particular the improvements achieved in the area of strategic transport;*
- noted that it was now ensured that from January 2007 on the EU will have the full operational capability to undertake two battlegroup size operations of rapid response, including the ability to launch two such operations nearly simultaneously;*
- welcomed the results achieved by the European Defence Agency on the R&T agenda.*

*The Council also welcomed HR Solana's proposals to improve the EU's ability to **respond to disasters** and the **co-ordination of transport for relief efforts**. It agreed on the way ahead concerning the use of Member States' military or military chartered transportation assets as well as ESDP co-ordination tools in support of EU disaster response. It took first steps to put in place effective procedures at EU level for identifying potentially available military transport capacities, and for coordinating their use.*

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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.
- The documents whose 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 abovementioned Council Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

Please see General Affairs press release 9000/06.

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PARTICIPANTS

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

Belgium:

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Mr André FLAHAUT

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Defence

Czech Republic:

Mr Cyril SVOBODA
Mr Martin BĚLČÍK

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Deputy Minister for Defence with responsibility for
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Denmark:

Mr Søren GADE
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State Secretary

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Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER
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Mr Evangelos MEIMARAKIS

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Mr Miguel Ángel MORATINOS CUYAUBÉ
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Minister for Defence

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Minister for Defence

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Minister for Defence

Mr Willie O'DEA

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Mr Rocco Antonio CANGELOSI
Mr Andrea MELONI

Permanent Representative
Permanent Representative to the PSC

Cyprus:

Mr George IACOVOU
Mr Kyriakos MAVRONICOLAS

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Defence

Latvia:

Mr Artis PABRIKS
Mr Atis SLAKTERIS

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Defence

Lithuania:

Mr Antanas VALIONIS
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Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Defence

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister with responsibility for
Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Minister for Cooperation and Humanitarian Action,
Minister for Communications, Minister for Defence

Mr Jean-Louis SCHILTZ

Hungary:

Mr Ferenc SOMOGYI
Mr Imre IVÁNCSEK

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Political State Secretary, Ministry of Defence

Malta:

Mr Michael FREUDO
Mr Anthony ABELA

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister

Netherlands:

Mr Bernard BOT
Ms Atzo NICOLAÏ
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Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for European Affairs
Minister for Defence

Austria:

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK
Mr Günther PLATTER
Mr Hans WINKLER

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
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State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Mr Radosław SIKORSKI
Mr Stanisław KOMOROWSKI

Minister for Defence
Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Diogo FREITAS DO AMARAL
Mr Luís AMADO
Mr Fernando DE OLIVEIRA NEVES

Ministro de Estado, Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Defence
State Secretary for European Affairs

Slovenia:

Mr Dimitrij RUPEL
Mr Karl Viktor ERJAVEC

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Defence

Slovakia:

Mr Martin FEDOR
Mr József BERÉNYI

Minister for Defence
State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Finland:

Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA
Ms Paula LEHTOMÄKI
Mr Seppo KÄÄRIÄINEN

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Foreign Trade and Development
Minister for Defence

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Mr Jan ELIASSON
Mr Björn LYRVALL

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Permanent Representative to the PSC

United Kingdom:

Ms Margaret BECKETT
Mr Des BROWNE

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Secretary of State for Defence

.....
Commission:

Mr Olli REHN
Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER

Member
Member

.....
General Secretariat of the Council:

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

The Governments of the Acceding States were represented as follows:

Bulgaria:

Mr Ivailo KALFIN
Mr Vesselin BLIZNAKOV

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Defence

Romania:

Ms Anca Daniela BOAGIU
Mr Teodor ATANASIU
Mr Anton NICULESCU

Minister for European Integration
Minister for Defence
State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY - Council conclusions

The Council, in the presence of defence ministers, discussed recent progress under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and adopted the following conclusions:

"Military Capabilities

Headline Goal 2010

The Council noted with satisfaction the progress achieved with regard to the development of new methodologies for the qualitative approach to capability planning called for by the Headline Goal 2010.

The Council recognised the Roadmap to the Progress Catalogue as an important basis for achieving a far more advanced capability development process. It establishes a common understanding of the process of Scrutinising, Assessing and Evaluating of capabilities, using the Capability Development Mechanism (CDM), and in defining intermediate steps towards the Progress Catalogue in particular.

The Council noted the new bidding process against the Requirements Catalogue 05 using the Headline Goal Questionnaire, which represents an improved level of refinement over the previous Requirements Catalogue. Thereby the qualitative aspects of Member States' commitments to fulfilling the Headline Goal 2010 will be emphasised.

The Council welcomed the establishment of the methodology of scrutinising and the introduction of the Scrutinising Handbook as important elements in elaborating a qualitatively improved, capability based approach in the development of the EU's military capabilities that will be used to establish the Force Catalogue as the next step in the Capability Development Mechanism.

The Council looks forward to the further development of the methodologies and the finalisation of the Compilation of Member States Contributions by June 2006 as well as the timely development of the Force Catalogue in the second half of 2006.

Single Progress Report

The Council noted the Single Progress Report on military capabilities, drawn up in line with the EU Capability Development Mechanism, including the Capability Improvement Chart, which records progress made in the development of EU military capabilities since November 2005.

An overview of the chart will keep the public and the media informed¹.

In this context, the Council welcomed in particular the improvements achieved in the shortfall area of Strategic Airlift through the Strategic Airlift Interim Solution (SALIS). SALIS is an initiative by 14 Member States and Canada and Norway assuring timely availability of an additional capability to deploy outsized cargo.

With regard to the improvement of the European strategic transport capability the Council welcomed the launch of the initiative “Improving Strategic Airlift Capability Across Europe” and the work done so far. The Council invited the EDA, as part of ongoing work, to identify potential airlift solutions and coordinate requirements between interested participating Member States, keeping the EUMC informed.

With regard to the maritime dimension in ESDP, the Council noted that work is ongoing to investigate the contribution of EU maritime forces in ESDP missions/operations and their use in a rapid response capacity. It looks forward to further progress in this field.

The Council recognized that there has been further progress in capability development since the Helsinki Progress Catalogue 03, but stressed again the urgent need for further progress to be made in the development of military capabilities to remedy the current shortfalls and to address the largely qualitative limitations and constraints stemming from them.

The European Defence Agency, working with the EU Military Committee assisted by the EU Military Staff and in close co-ordination with the Political and Security Committee, gave added impetus to this work.

The Council noted that the EU-NATO Capability Group had continued to address issues of coherent and mutually reinforcing development of military capabilities in the EU and NATO where requirements overlap. All EU Member States were informed of these issues.

¹ See http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/esdp/89603.pdf

Rapid Response

In the context of Rapid Response, the Council noted the successful outcome of the Battlegroups Co-ordination Conference on 3 May. It is ensured that from January 2007 on the EU will have the full operational capability to undertake two battlegroup size operations of rapid response, including the ability to launch two such operations nearly simultaneously. The Council also welcomed the progress made by its subsidiary bodies in implementing the EU Battlegroups Concept, and particularly on aspects of the Lessons Learned methodology.

The Council recognised that, in line with the “EU Military Rapid Response Concept”, consideration is being given to a Rapid Response Air Initiative for further development within the framework of the Headline Goal 2010. This initiative aims at enhancing the generation of Air Rapid Response elements and proposes a draft concept on European Deployable Air Station.

European Defence Agency

The Council noted the report submitted by the Head of the Agency on its activities and welcomed the progress made.

The Council welcomed in particular the results achieved in pursuance of the Hampton Court Defence R&T agenda. It noted: the proposed targets for increasing Europe’s spending, overall and on collaboration; the way forward on launching ad hoc R&T projects; the approach to develop a European Defence R&T Strategy; and the proposal of a new mechanism for funding and managing joint investment in R&T programmes. The Council noted the recent conclusion of the Agency’s General Conditions, the necessary legal framework for launching R&T projects and programmes.

The Council took note of the progress made concerning the Capabilities priorities under “Hampton Court”, welcoming especially the promising initiatives in the Command, Control and Communications area. It invited the Agency and its participating Member States to continue work on solving the shortfalls in Strategic Lift and Air-to-Air Refuelling, noting the improvements achieved through SALIS.

The Council noted with satisfaction that work was well on track for the implementation of the Code of Conduct on defence procurement on 1 July 2006.

It noted the good co-operation of the European Defence Agency with the Commission on this topic, as well as on others.

The Council welcomed the progress made to develop an initial Long Term Vision for European capability and capacity needs, for Member States' consideration directly after the summer of 2006. The aim of the initial LTV is to provide a foundation for follow-on work to better define future ESDP capability needs and to provide an informed context for nearer term industrial, technological and investment decisions.

Looking ahead, the Council stressed the importance of the elaboration of a sound and viable financial framework and agreed priorities for the Agency for the years 2007-2009, to be approved by the Council unanimously in the autumn of 2006.

Civil-Military Co-ordination – Management of Operations

The Council noted that effective co-ordination of all the instruments that the EU has at its disposal is necessary for the EU to achieve maximum impact and exert maximum political leverage through its crisis management operations.

The Council therefore welcomed the continued efforts that have been undertaken, building on the work carried out under previous Presidencies to improve Civil-Military Co-ordination: A Framework paper of possible solutions for the management of EU Crisis Management Operations has been noted by the PSC as a living document, open to amendment as and when new developments or operational experience call for it, for example in light of the results of the work being undertaken by the SG/HR as a follow-up to Hampton Court.

The Council underlined that each EU engagement will have a unique character. This paper provides some concrete recommendations and possible solutions for Civil-Military Co-ordination in the field and should serve as an orientation guide for further work, recommendations on which should be made available by July 2006.

While noting that the Framework paper constitutes a further step in improving Civil-Military Co-ordination, the Council welcomed the intention of the incoming Finnish Presidency to pursue work on Civil-Military Co-ordination.

Security Sector Reform (SSR) in the Western Balkans

The Council recalled its conclusions from 21 November 2005 when it noted the EU Concept for ESDP support to Security Sector Reform and recalled that support to SSR in partner countries is a core area for EU action as identified in the European Security Strategy (ESS). It underlined that SSR in the Western Balkans is part of a broader agenda set out at the Thessaloniki summit in 2003 and through the Stabilisation and Association Process which will remain the framework of the European course of these countries.

The Council noted that the EU has continued its engagement through its ESDP operations in the region and is planning for its future engagement in Kosovo in the field of police and rule of law. It also noted that the Community has maintained a number of programmes aimed at supporting Justice, Freedom and Security and that Member States are active on a bilateral basis.

It therefore underlined the importance of a comprehensive EU approach to SSR in the Western Balkans, building on existing EU policies and instruments and respecting the following principles which will need flexibility in their implementation:

- Responsibility and ownership for the reform of their security sector lies with the countries in the region themselves;
- SSR is part of the long-standing requirement regarding fostering the rule of law, democratic institutions and respect for internationally agreed human rights principles in the region.
- Democratic accountability and parliamentary control of the security sector is paramount for the development of stable democratic societies. Parliamentary contacts are considered useful in this regard and are encouraged. Information and involvement of the civil society in the region should be sought as well.
- There is a need for a holistic approach towards the region with a view to finding solutions to existing problems and contributing to stability and security; at the same time, the EU's SSR activities should be modulated to the country-specific situation and requirements;
- SSR can contribute to co-operation amongst the countries of the Western Balkans and to the stabilization and development of the entire region. Therefore, SSR projects that support confidence-building and regional co-operation should be encouraged to the extent possible;
- EU support should continue to contribute to fighting organized crime in individual countries and in the region as a whole as well as proactively encourage cooperation between the countries of the region to fight cross-border crime more effectively;
- EU support should be well coordinated within the EU (need for an integrated and cross-pillar approach) and with activities of EU Member States;
- There is a need to coordinate with other international actors and donors active in the region;

Bearing in mind the need for appropriate co-ordination and exchange of information, the Council invited the Council General Secretariat and the Commission to elaborate an overview of ongoing EU SSR activities in the Western Balkans supported by the Council, the Commission and Member States in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and ensure coherence of efforts of all EU actors in this field. This should pave the way for an integrated approach."

– ***Emergency and crisis response: Getting assistance quickly where it is needed - Council conclusions***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council welcomed the Secretary-General/High Representative's proposals to improve the EU's ability to respond to disasters and the co-ordination of transport for the relief efforts, in the context of the Hampton Court follow-up. It noted the document "General Framework for the use of Member States' military or military chartered transportation assets and ESDP co-ordination tools in support of EU disaster response" and agreed on its way ahead. Ministers also heard a presentation from Mr Barnier on options and recommendations for possible further development of EU capabilities in responding to crises, which are set out in his report to the Presidency and the Commission.
2. Helping citizens in an emergency, crisis or disaster, whether natural or man-made, requires effective delivery of assistance where and when it is needed. In certain cases, Member States are able to offer assistance (notably through EU mechanisms) to respond to an emergency or natural disaster, but have no transport to bring it where it is needed. To this end, the Council, building on the Secretary-General/High Representative's contribution, has today taken first steps to put in place effective procedures at EU level for identifying potentially available military or military chartered transport capacities, and for coordinating their use as supplementary means when circumstances so warrant.
3. Bearing in mind the specific nature and the principles of humanitarian assistance, the Council, in order to complement civilian means of transport already available through existing mechanisms, notes that Member States may decide to make available on a voluntary basis:
 - military-owned strategic air and sea lift capabilities when such capabilities are available;
 - military-chartered civilian strategic lift capabilities, in particular under the Strategic Airlift Interim Solution (SALIS) as already decided by one Member State.

This action, in accordance with the UN guidelines on the use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief and complex emergencies respectively, needs to respect the primary responsibility of the competent authorities of the affected State as well as the overall role and responsibility of the United Nations in coordinating international relief assistance in third countries. It will take due account of the role of the Red Cross, of NGOs and of the existing Community Civil Protection Mechanism and the Commission department of humanitarian aid (DG ECHO).

4. Once agreed by the Council, detailed procedures to identify potential military owned or military chartered assets will ensure a more rapid match between transport needs with available military transportation capabilities. These procedures will include direct links with duty desks in Ministries of Defence manned 24/7, as well as with the main European air and sealift coordination centres in Eindhoven and Athens. This will ensure better coordination of the use of available assets. An interim capability will be ensured while this work evolves, making use of the capacity currently provided by the EU Movement Planning Cell and the coordination centres.
5. The Council welcomes the fact that procedures will be put in place between the Council Secretariat and the Commission (in particular the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) and DG ECHO) to exchange rapidly information on needs and available transportation means which will ensure effective mobilisation.
6. The Council will continue to closely follow this issue and assess progress achieved in the course of 2006."

– ***Operations***

The Council also discussed preparations for the Operation EUFOR RD Congo for support to MONUC during the electoral period in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It was briefed on the state of play by the Operation Commander, General Karlheinz Viereck.

Over lunch, ministers were also briefed on the state of play regarding the ongoing Operation EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Operation Commander, General John Reith.

Ministers discussed ongoing and future EU support to the African Union mission in Sudan/Darfur (AMIS) as well as prospects for a transition to a UN mission.

– *Appointments*

The Presidency recalled that EU Chiefs of Defence, at their meeting on 11 May, had agreed to recommend that the Council should appoint General Henri Bentégeat, French Chief of Defence, as the next chairman of the EU Military Committee to take up office at the end of the current mandate of General Rolando Mosca Moschini, which will expire on 9 April 2007. Ministers welcomed this choice and noted that the formal decision would be adopted at a future Council meeting.

They also welcomed the favourable opinion given by Chiefs of Defence to High Representative Solana regarding the appointment of General David Leakey as the next Director General of the EU Military Staff as from 1 March 2007 following the term of General Jean-Paul Perruche.

WESTERN BALKANS - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"Serbia and Montenegro / ICTY

1. The Council regretted that Serbia and Montenegro was still not fully cooperating with the ICTY and it therefore supported the Commission's decision to call off the negotiating round on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement scheduled for 11 May, in line with its conclusions of 3 October 2005 and 27 February 2006.
2. The Council reiterated its firm commitment to the European perspective of Serbia and Montenegro. In this context, the Council indicated its support to resume negotiations as soon as full cooperation with the ICTY is achieved. It once again urged the authorities in Belgrade to ensure that all remaining fugitive ICTY indictees, notably Ratko Mladic, are brought to justice without further delay.
3. If the necessary conditions are met and negotiations can resume rapidly, the Council underlines that a swift conclusion of the negotiations according to the timetable envisaged by the Commission¹ is still within reach.

Serbia and Montenegro / Montenegro

4. The Council reiterated the importance of a fair and orderly referendum process in Montenegro. It called on both sides to comply with the referendum law and provisions, to refrain from unilateral actions during the further stages of the process and to accept the outcome of a legitimately conducted referendum. It further stressed the importance of ensuring that the voters in Montenegro can make a free and informed choice between distinct alternatives and can freely express their will, without any undue interference. Direct talks between Belgrade and Podgorica on the way ahead will be needed in the aftermath of the referendum, whatever the outcome.

¹ The Commission envisages end of 2006

Bosnia and Herzegovina

5. The Council expressed disappointment that the constitutional reform was not adopted by the BiH House of Representatives. The Council encouraged the BiH authorities to spare no effort to continue the path of constitutional reforms in order to give the citizens of BiH more functional state structures that are better able to meet European standards.
6. The Council indicated the Union's readiness in principle to reinforce its engagement in BiH in the context of the envisaged closure of the OHR, provided that there will be sufficient progress and without prejudice to the PIC Steering Board decision in this regard. It invited the High Representative/Secretary-General, with the Commission, and in close consultation with the Presidency, to begin consultations to that end with the PIC Steering Board, the High Representative/EU Special Representative Mr Schwarz-Schilling, the BiH authorities and other stakeholders and to present a joint assessment to the Council.

Regional co-operation

7. The Council recalled that regional cooperation is one of the cornerstones of the Stabilisation and Association process. It welcomed the outcome of the South-East European Co-operation Process (SEECP) Summit held in Thessaloniki on 4 May 2006 and took note of the constructive efforts of the Greek SEECP Chairmanship in this context, also welcoming the incoming SEECP Chairmanship of Croatia. The Council emphasised the importance of enhancing regional ownership and encouraged the SEECP to take concrete decisions on its role in the context of the ongoing discussions with the European Commission and the Stability Pact. The Council looks forward to decisions on the future set-up of regional cooperation at the upcoming meeting of the Regional Table of the Stability Pact in Belgrade on 30 May."

IRAQ - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council warmly welcomes progress made in Iraq towards forming a government of national unity. It congratulates President Jalal Talabani, the Vice-presidents Adel Abdel Mahdi and Tariq Al-Hashemi, the President of the Council of Representatives, Mr Mahmoud Al-Mashhadani, and his deputies Khalid Al-Attiyah and Aref Tayfour upon their election. Likewise, it congratulates Mr Nouri Al-Maliki upon his nomination as Prime Minister.

The EU reiterates its commitment to the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq. It firmly believes that a government of national unity is essential to enhance the stability of the country and encourages all political groupings to continue working together towards the formation of such an inclusive government as soon as possible. In this context the Council reiterates its support for a process of national reconciliation including efforts by the UN in this area and the initiative by the League of Arab States to organise a conference on national accord.

The EU is ready to engage actively with the new government in order to achieve a secure, stable, unified, prosperous and democratic Iraq. In this regard the EU looks forward to discuss concrete measures to enhance EU-Iraq relations based on Iraqi priorities in the new government's programme and on shared values. The EU equally stands ready to strengthen EU-Iraq relations through continuing the political dialogue at all levels in accordance with the EU-Iraq Joint Declaration on Political Dialogue of 21 September 2005 and to negotiate an EU-Iraq Trade and Co-operation Agreement. Community assistance will be provided through the newly adopted assistance programme for 2006 to the following areas: improvement of basic services, good governance and furthering democracy. In response to Iraqi needs and requests, the Council is prepared to extend the activities of the Integrated Rule of Law Mission, EUJUST LEX, beyond its current mandate."

IRAN - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council noted the IAEA Director General's report of 28 April. The Iranian authorities have failed to comply with the requests made by the Agency's Board of Governors and the UN Security Council and have also failed to actively cooperate with the Agency to clarify the outstanding issues, including those that may have a military dimension.
2. The Council deeply regrets the failure of the Iranian authorities to take the steps deemed essential by the IAEA Board and the UN Security Council as well as their threats to maintain this failure into the future. It calls on the Iranian authorities to cooperate fully with the IAEA, suspend all enrichment related and reprocessing activities, including research and development, and to suspend the construction of a reactor moderated by heavy water in order to create conditions in which negotiations might resume. The EU fully supports the Security Council making this mandatory.
3. The Council reaffirms the right of Iran to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in conformity with its obligations under the NPT. Building on the proposals of August 2005 as confirmed by the Council in its February 2006 conclusions, the EU would be prepared to support Iran's development of a safe, sustainable and proliferation-proof civilian nuclear programme, if international concerns were fully addressed and confidence in Iran's intentions established. The EU hopes that Iran will not fail to take up such an offer.
4. At the same time, the EU is determined to preserve the effectiveness of the multilateral non-proliferation system. The Council stresses the importance of exercising the utmost vigilance in the application of existing export control mechanisms for sensitive material so as to prevent the transfer of goods, technology and materials that might be used, directly or indirectly, in fissile material programmes and missile programmes.

5. The Council remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Iran, which is at variance with universal principles and Iran's specific obligations. It expresses its concern about the increasing number of executions, arbitrary detentions, the growing restrictions on access to information, the increasing violations of freedom of speech and religion, especially concerning the situation of the Sufi and Baha'i communities, as well as the intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders, lawyers and minority groups. The Council is seriously concerned about the detention of the Iranian philosopher Dr. Ramin Jahanbegloo. The Council calls upon Iranian authorities not to penalize Iranian citizens for their contacts with Europeans, including embassies, universities and cultural institutes.

6. The Council remains committed to finding a diplomatic solution. The EU would like to be able to develop relations with Iran based on confidence and cooperation. The alternative is that Iran chooses further isolation. The Council therefore calls on the Iranian authorities to urgently take the necessary decisions required for the development of such relations with the European Union and the international community. The Council also expects Iran to contribute to regional stability."

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council assessed the situation in the Middle East and welcomed the statement of the Quartet Principals on 9 May in New York.
2. The Council expressed its serious concern about the deterioration of the humanitarian, economic and financial situation in the West Bank and Gaza.
3. The Council welcomed the willingness of the Quartet to endorse a temporary international mechanism, the objective of which is direct delivery and supervision of assistance to the Palestinian people. The EU is working urgently to develop such a mechanism which as a matter of priority will be aimed at contributing to meet basic needs including health services. It will consult International Financial Institutions and other key partners, and invite other donors to actively join in the effort to establish the mechanism as soon as possible.
4. The Council recalled its demand to the Palestinian Authority government to meet and implement the three principles of non-violence, recognition of Israel's right to exist and acceptance of existing agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap.
5. The Council urged both parties to take concrete steps to implement their obligations under the Agreement on Movement and Access.
6. The Council urged Israel to resume transfers of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues which are essential in averting a crisis in the Palestinian territories.
7. In line with their declared intentions and recalling President Abbas' commitment to a platform of peace, the Council called for an early engagement between the Israeli Prime Minister and the President of the Palestinian Authority in view of the urgent need to relaunch the process towards a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict leading to an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours. In this regard, the Council reiterated the importance of both parties avoiding unilateral measures which prejudice final status issues. Ministers recalled previous statements that the EU will not recognise any change to pre-1967 borders other than those arrived at by agreement between the parties.
8. The Council commended the services of James Wolfensohn as Quartet's Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement and his central role in the conclusion of the Agreement on Movement and Access as well as his promulgation of an agenda for Palestinian economic recovery."

RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA - PREPARATION OF SUMMIT ON 25 MAY

The Council held an exchange of views on the forthcoming EU-Russia summit, the 17th under the partnership and cooperation agreement, to be held in Sochi, Russia, on 25 May.

The following issues are likely to feature on the summit agenda:

- EU-Russia relations, including the four EU-Russia common spaces,¹ the situation in the EU and Russia, and future joint institutional arrangements;
- International and regional issues.

Priority subjects are likely to include EU-Russia institutional arrangements after expiry at the end of 2007 of the partnership and cooperation agreement, energy and international issues. Delegations also raised the issues of visa facilitation and readmission agreements, border agreements with Russia, trade in agriculture and rail tariffs.

The summit will be hosted by Russian president Vladimir Putin.

¹ Common economic space; common space of freedom, security and justice; common space of external security; common space of research and education, including cultural aspects.

NEPAL

The Council briefly discussed recent developments in Nepal and agreed to keep EU policy towards this country under active review over the coming weeks and months. It tasked its preparatory bodies to work on recommendations to that effect.

AFRICA

The Council discussed the outcome of the EU-Africa ministerial troika meeting held in Vienna on 8 May (see press release in doc. 9333/06 Press 135). It also addressed a series of specific issues: illegal immigration, as well as the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), in Zimbabwe, in Sudan and in Uganda.

Following a presentation by Spain of the dramatic situation in the Canary Islands, several delegations underlined the emergency of addressing illegal **immigration**, a trend that was not only local or national but that concerned all of Europe. A conference of interior ministers in Rabat next July would provide an important opportunity to address this issue.

On the **DRC**, the need to take the necessary steps to enable the EUSEC DR Congo mission to implement the chain of payments project for the Congolese armed forces was emphasized.

In the light of continued deterioration of the situation in **Zimbabwe**, calls were made for renewed EU focus on this country, on the basis of the existing EU common position.

On **Sudan**, which was also discussed by ministers of defence, on the **Democratic Republic of Congo** and on **Uganda** (EU support to AMIS, transition to the UN), the Council adopted conclusions which are set out in Annexes I, II and III respectively.

The Council also adopted conclusions on **Côte d'Ivoire** (see Annex IV).

– ***EVENTS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL***

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

– OSCE Troika;

– EU-GCC Joint Council;

16th session of the Joint Council established under the co-operation agreement between the European Community, and the States of the Gulf co-operation Council (United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait) (*see press release 3501/06*).

– Europe Defence Agency (EDA) Steering Board

(*see EDA press release on <http://www.eda.europa.eu/>*);

– Defence Troika with Norway, Turkey, Iceland, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

Please see General Affairs press release 9000/06.

ANNEXES

Annex I: Sudan - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council welcomed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) concluded in Abuja on 5 May by the Government of Sudan and the SLM/A. It sincerely commended the African Union (AU) for its tireless mediation efforts during many months of negotiations, and Nigeria for hosting the talks. The Council acknowledged that the DPA paves the way to the restoration of lasting peace and reconciliation in Darfur. The Council commended the Government of Sudan and the SLM/A for having put aside their differences. It strongly urged those parties who have still not signed the Agreement to agree and adhere to the Agreement in full. In this regard the Council also reiterated its full support for the application of sanctions under UNSCR 1591 against those who impede the peace process.
2. The Council condemned the recent ceasefire violations and demanded an end to all hostilities. In particular, it demanded in the strongest terms an immediate end to all attacks on civilians and all violations of human rights and forms of harassment. The Council stressed in particular the need to respect the unhindered deliverance of humanitarian assistance and goods and to guarantee security in the IDP camps, creating a climate favourable for the voluntary return of IDPs and refugees to their home.
3. The Council called on all parties to immediately remove any existing obstacles to the delivery of aid and to end any obstruction of humanitarian work. The Council urged the Sudanese Government to eliminate any restrictions placed on humanitarian access and the work of UN agencies and non-governmental organisations, and demanded that it comply fully with the Joint Communiqué of 3 July 2004 signed with the UN.
4. The Council called on the parties to the DPA urgently to implement the terms of the agreement, including by the rapid appointment of the relevant positions within government for Darfur and the movements and forming the necessary commissions. In this regard the Council stated the EU's readiness to respond swiftly to any requests addressed to it to support the implementation of the peace agreement and to contribute to the reconciliation of the people of Darfur. In this respect, the EU looks forward to the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation as an inclusive process with representatives of all Darfurian stakeholders, aimed at overcoming existing divisions between communities and building the foundations of a common future. The EU appeals to all parties to respect the autonomy and the integrity of the process.

5. The Council reiterated the EU's readiness to contribute to the reconstruction and development of Darfur once the peace agreement is effective and when security conditions on the ground allow the mobilisation of funds. The EU stands ready to support, in coordination with the UN, the World Bank and other lead donors in Sudan/Darfur, a Joint Assessment Mission for Darfur, ahead of a donors' conference aimed at mobilizing funds to promote a progressive shift from humanitarian aid to development cooperation.
6. The Council commended AMIS for its efforts to bring security and stability to Darfur in extremely adverse circumstances and acknowledged its continuing crucial role, including in relation to the implementation and verification of the DPA. The Council noted that a single comprehensive review was undertaken of the wide range of support that the EU and its Member States are providing to the AU's efforts to stabilise the situation in Darfur, including planning, technical, financial and equipment support to both the military and police components of AMIS. The Council confirmed the EU's readiness to continue providing such support, together with the UN and with other international partners, including NATO. The Council agreed to extend the EU civilian-military supporting action to the AU Mission in the Darfur region of Sudan to 30 September 2006. It will consider the appropriate legal and operational framework and the additional resources and capabilities that may be required for this extended EU support action. The Council also welcomed the agreement to provide a further EUR 50 million from the African Peace Facility to AMIS, in addition to the EUR 162 million already provided.
7. The Council urged the AU to take all necessary steps for a robust interpretation of the AMIS mandate to ensure a more forceful protection of the civilian population. The Council emphasised the need to continue efforts to enhance the operational capabilities of AMIS in order to fulfil its mandate as effectively as possible, also in view of the tasks arising from the DPA. The EU stands ready to continue its assistance to the AU and to continue honouring its commitments in this regard. In this context, it welcomed the decision to establish a Joint Operational Centre and looks forward to the implementation of the remaining recommendations of the Joint Assessment Mission in December 2005, as requested in the decision of the Peace and Security Council of the AU of 10 March.

8. The Council reaffirmed its support for transition from AMIS to a UN mission as the only viable option for providing sustained stability and security in Darfur in the long term. The agreement achieved in Abuja opens the way for the establishment of a UN peace-keeping mission in Darfur. The Council urged all stakeholders to proceed swiftly with the planning for a successful transition from AMIS to a UN operation, and underlined the readiness of the EU to support, as appropriate, the planning of the transition. The Council in particular urged the Sudanese government to collaborate fully with UN and to immediately allow an AU-UN technical assessment mission to go to Darfur to prepare the transition.
9. The Council welcomed UN Security Council Resolution 1672 of 25 April 2006 imposing travel restrictions and financial sanctions on four Sudanese individuals. Recalling its support for sanctions against those blocking the peace process, committing human rights violations, or violating the cease-fire and the arms embargo, the Council confirmed its position that full use should be made of the measures set out in UN Security Council Resolution 1591 (2005) and called for continued engagement by the UN Security Council to restore peace and security in Darfur. The Council reiterated its full support for the ongoing investigation by the International Criminal Court (ICC) of human rights abuses in Darfur as mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1593 (2005) and urged all parties, in particular the Government of Sudan, to fully cooperate with the ICC.
10. The Council expressed its grave concern about recent events in Chad, the political and security situation in the country and the instability on the Sudanese-Chadian border, and its potential impact on the humanitarian situation on the population in Chad and Darfur. The Council recalled the responsibility of the Sudanese government to help secure peace along its border with Chad and its obligation, as member of the AU, to promote democratic stability in Chad. Any assistance to attempts to overthrow the Chadian Government by way of unconstitutional means is incompatible with the pursuit of a political solution to the Darfur conflict. If lasting peace is to be achieved in Darfur, both Sudan and Chad must fully comply with the obligations set out in the Tripoli Agreement of 8 February, put an end to any direct or indirect support to rebel groups in the other country and resolve outstanding issues through dialogue and on the basis of full respect for the territorial integrity of the other.

11. Durable peace in Darfur can only be achieved within the framework of a peaceful Sudan. The Council expressed its concern about recent outbreaks of violence in different parts of Sudan, such as those reported in Eastern and Southern Sudan, which have cost the life of innocent civilians. The Council emphasised the urgency of implementing the security sector provisions of the comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) and proceed with the disengagement of forces, disarmament and demobilisation in order to prevent further outbreaks of violence. In this context, the Council called for an urgent start of talks between the Government of Sudan and the Eastern Front, with a view to resolving the existing problems in eastern Sudan.
12. The EU reaffirmed its commitment to support the continuing implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) as the only way to a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Sudan. It encouraged the parties to the agreement to facilitate the full implementation of the CPA and to correct swiftly all delays in this respect, as well as to cooperate in a spirit of partnership and transparency, recalling their common commitment to making the unity of Sudan attractive. In particular, the Council emphasised the paramount importance of the full implementation of the provisions of the CPA concerning Abyei and the other transitional areas.
13. The Council reconfirmed the EU's commitment to providing continuing support for the CPA process including through the involvement of Member States, the Commission and the EU Special Representative, and its readiness to reinforce the dialogue with the Government of National Unity and the Government of South Sudan. Similarly, it reiterated the importance the EU attaches to the Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC) as a key mechanism for the international community's monitoring of and support to the implementation of the CPA and stated its preparedness to consider ways and means to strengthen the role of the AEC and enhance its effectiveness.
14. Full normalisation of relations with Sudan will depend on progress achieved in implementing the CPA and the DPA and on a nationwide political process leading to democratisation and peace in the whole of Sudan."

Annex II: Democratic Republic of Congo - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. As the elections in the DRC draw near, the Council has carried out a comprehensive review of the EU's external action in the DRC. The Council reaffirms its engagement, and the importance it attaches to the proper conduct of the elections. A successful transition in the DRC will have a major impact on peace and development in the Great Lakes Region, and in the whole of Africa.

2. The Council welcomes the work done by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and the support provided by MONUC. It notes the date of 30 July 2006 set by IEC for the parliamentary and presidential elections. The Council urges the Congolese authorities to ensure that the election date is observed. Furthermore, at the earliest opportunity the IEC should set the date for a potential second round of presidential and provincial elections, as well as for the indirect elections to the Senate. Confirmation that municipal and local elections are to take place should also be forthcoming.

3. The Council welcomes the holding of elections, which must fulfil the earnest desire of the Congolese people to elect those who are to represent them at different levels of the democratic institutions and to vote on programmes and social projects which will affect the future of the country: peace, development, security, good governance, and an end to impunity. It urges all political parties and players to conduct a positive election campaign, bringing new hope, and to hold a responsible debate, not attempting to stir up divisions, and showing concern for the maintenance of public order and respect for human rights. In this regard the Council would highlight the importance of the code of conduct for the political parties, drawn up in June 2005, which must be consistently and broadly applied. The Council takes the view that, to create a favourable climate for democratic elections to be held, all possible measures must be taken to ensure respect for freedom of expression, including through fair access to the media. At the same time, it is crucial that the media should have a responsible attitude. The EU will contribute to the proper conduct of the elections by sending an observer mission.

4. The Council has always felt that the holding of elections which are as inclusive as possible would be the best guarantee of stability after the elections. Conditions are such that all those who wish to do so will be able to participate. That said, a law on funding for political parties has yet to be passed. The Council calls on all the political parties, even those which have chosen not to take part in the elections, to undertake to respect the verdict of the polls. Everyone should also look to the future in a spirit of reconciliation and national consensus, a future in which all political forces must participate in the reconstruction of the DRC.
5. The Council calls on all countries in the region to use their influence to contribute to the proper conduct of the elections. The success of the transition in the DRC is in the interest of the entire region. In this respect, the Council welcomes the continuing action of the United States of America in its facilitation of Tripartite Plus.
6. The Council would draw attention to the fact that responsibility for security during the elections lies first and foremost with the Transitional National Government, assisted by MONUC. Despite progress in the reform of the security sector, the Council remains concerned by the situation in many areas in the east of the country, notably Ituri, the Kivus and northern Katanga, and by the absence of some groups from the army integration process. The Council urges the Congolese authorities to pursue army integration and to remedy the problems of command, discipline and impunity, as well as those of financial management and social support. Furthermore, it highlights the need for strict enforcement of the arms embargo against armed groups in the DRC, overseen by the United Nations Security Council committee set up under Resolution 1533 (2004). It welcomes the firm action taken by the ICC to combat impunity in the DRC.
7. The Council welcomes the adoption by the United Nations Security Council on 25 April 2006 of Resolution 1671, authorising the deployment of EUFOR RD Congo during the election period in the DRC. It would highlight the fact that its decision to launch this operation came in response to a request from the United Nations. The operation is designed to provide support to MONUC when it does not have the capacity to confront certain situations. It will be directed from the headquarters which Germany has made available to the EU in Potsdam. In addition, the EUPOL Kinshasa mission will be reinforced during the election period to help the Congolese police forces coordinate their units' activities while the elections are taking place. The EU will thus be in a position to make a significant contribution to creating a more stable and secure environment during the election period.

8. The EUFOR RD Congo operation is part of the EU's ongoing engagement in support of the transition process in the DRC (that is why the EU has provided more than half of the funding required to stage the elections) and in the area of security. The Council would draw attention to the action undertaken and the results achieved by EUSEC DR Congo in relation to reform of the security sector, including the Chain of Payments Project, and by EUPOL Kinshasa in the formation of the Integrated Police Unit in Kinshasa.
9. The Council would emphasise how important it is that the international community remain committed to the DRC beyond the election period, thereby showing continued support for the Congolese people with regard to rebuilding the country and to security. The European Union is determined to maintain its efforts in support of the authorities emerging from the elections. The reform of the security sector must continue with the greatest determination; in particular, options will be examined which enable a comprehensive approach in conducting actions to promote it.
10. The Council thanks the International Committee in Support of the Transition (CIAT) for the decisive role it has played in supporting the transitional authorities. The EU remains ready to be a part of any engagement by the international community in the DRC after the elections.
11. The Council notes that the convening of the second Summit of the Great Lakes Region, and the decisions which it will be called on to take, should give additional impetus to the reconstruction of the DRC and to regional cooperation."

Annex III: Uganda - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council welcomes the holding in Uganda of the first multiparty elections for 25 years, and welcomes the high turnout which demonstrates the people's strong commitment to pluralist democracy. It congratulates the people of Uganda on the elections and President Yoweri Museveni on the occasion of his inauguration for a further term as president of the Republic of Uganda.
2. The Council calls on the Government of Uganda to continue the democratisation process in a multiparty environment, in particular with regard to the functioning of the Parliament, the dialogue between the government and the opposition parties and civilian control of the military in a democratic society. It reiterates its willingness to support Uganda in these efforts, as well as in the fight against corruption and for poverty alleviation. In this regard, the Council expresses the need for continued cooperation and dialogue between the EU and the Government of Uganda in the framework of Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement.
3. The Council reaffirms its concerns about the continuation of the conflict in Northern Uganda, which has caused serious security problems and a grave humanitarian situation. The Government of Uganda has the primary responsibility for addressing the conflict and the grave humanitarian impact it has had. The EU calls upon the Ugandan Government to further increase protection of its citizens in Northern Uganda and to actively promote the economic and social development of the region.
4. The Council notes with concern that the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) have increasingly taken on a regional dimension, posing a threat to the peace processes in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The EU calls on the Ugandan Government to actively work for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Northern Uganda in collaboration with countries in the region, noting that it would contribute greatly to the promotion of lasting peace and security in the Great Lakes region.
5. The Council urges the Government of Uganda, together with its international partners, to work towards implementing a comprehensive strategy that will include political, humanitarian, reconstruction and developmental aspects, as well as addressing security issues in Northern Uganda and the region.

6. The Council welcomes the increased involvement of the UN with regard to the conflict with the LRA, and in particular UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 1653 and 1663 which call for UN Secretary General recommendations for tackling illegal armed groups, including the LRA. It welcomes the initial recommendations made to the UNSC on 26 April. The Council looks forward to a more detailed elaboration of these proposals, including for a High Level Envoy with a regional focus, and calls on the Government of Uganda to accept recommendations from the international community aimed at bringing an early end to the conflict.
7. In line with these recommendations, the Council welcomes the setting up by the Ugandan Government of a Joint Monitoring Committee to help improve the humanitarian situation in Northern Uganda. Having been invited to do so, the EU will participate fully in this mechanism.
8. The LRA commanders indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) must be apprehended and brought to face justice as a matter of urgency. The Council calls on the Government of Uganda and neighbouring countries to work together to effect the arrest warrants. The Council also urged for increased international involvement by the Tripartite Plus Mechanism, the Core Group and other regional and international partners, with regard to the national and regional security aspects of the conflict.
9. Recalling its conclusions on the DRC of 12 December 2005, the Council reiterates that the successful completion of the transition process in the DRC is not only essential for the peaceful, long-term democratic development of the DRC but also for fostering peace and stability throughout the Great Lakes region. The Council therefore wishes Uganda to persist in its efforts to support the political transition in the DRC with a view to improving regional co-operation. It calls on Uganda to strengthen its co-operation with the UN and to help implement the arms embargo in the DRC, to sever all links and support to foreign armed groups in the DRC and to abstain from any unilateral intervention into eastern DRC or any action that would undermine the progress of the transitional process in DRC supported by the international community.
10. The EU urges all parties to intensify their efforts to promote regional co-operation, security and stability with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries in the Great Lakes region. It condemns the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. The EU recalls that full compliance with the obligations imposed by the arms embargo on illegal armed groups in DRC is an obligation for all states in the region."

Annex IV: Côte d'Ivoire - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council welcomes the changed mood in Côte d'Ivoire following the appointment of Mr Konan Banny as Prime Minister, allowing the revival of the peace process as defined by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1633 under which free, open, fair and transparent elections must be held no later than 31 October 2006.

The Council is nonetheless concerned at the delay in effectively carrying out identification and disarmament which must happen simultaneously, in line with commitments given by Ivorian political leaders at their meeting in Abidjan on 8 April 2006 (Yamoussoukro II).

The Council would appeal to all parties in Côte d'Ivoire to overcome any obstacles to the transition process promptly and genuinely in order to allow full implementation of the Road Map and the timely organisation of elections.

The Council would recall that the European Union is prepared to support, drawing on all available means, the efforts of Ivorian parties to bring the peace process to a successful conclusion.

In accordance with the conclusions of the International Working Group on 20 April 2006, the Council recommends that the Security Council provide UNOCI with the additional means necessary for it to perform its tasks."
