



Brussels, 11 May 2006

DRAFT

BACKGROUND¹

GENERAL AFFAIRS and EXTERNAL RELATIONS COUNCIL

Monday 15 May in Brussels

*The meeting will have a significant **ESDP** (European Security and Defence Policy) component and include participation of **defence** ministers, meeting within the Council as well as for the European Defence Agency steering board.*

*The Council will start at 10.00 with a session on general affairs dealing with preparation of the **June European Council**.*

*In its session on external relations, in addition to **ESDP** issues, the Council will address in particular preparations for the **EU-Russia** summit, the **Western Balkans**, **Nepal**, **Africa** and, over lunch, **Iran**, the **Middle East peace process** and **Iraq**.*

The presidency will hold press conferences after lunch on defence and other issues covered by the Council.

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In the margins of the Council:

Monday:

- 9.00 European Defence Agency steering board meeting;
- 16.30 Meeting with the OSCE troika;
- 17.00 Troika meeting with defence ministers of Norway, Turkey, Iceland, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- 18.00 EU-Gulf cooperation council joint meeting.

Tuesday:

- 9.15 EU-Algeria association council.

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

SESSION ON GENERAL AFFAIRS

Preparation of the European Council on 15-16 June

The Council will examine an annotated draft agenda prepared by the presidency for the European Council to be held in Brussels on 15 and 16 June (*doc. 9035/06*).

The items to be addressed by the European Council are:

- The future of Europe;
- Internal security, crisis management, the efficiency and coherence of external policy, external relations in the energy sector;
- Institutional issues, the *better regulation* initiative, EU enlargement, as well as the issues of transparency, subsidiarity and comitology;
- Sustainable development, the social dimension. employment and growth.

Work will be carried out on most of these issues in the Council configurations concerned and the presidency will draw on the outcome of that work when preparing draft European Council conclusions.

The European Council is also expected to approve declarations on a number of foreign policy issues.

SESSION ON EXTERNAL RELATIONS

European security and defence policy

As is the case every six months the Council will include a significant ESDP component, with the participation of defence ministers. It will deal with the following subjects:

Military capabilities

The Council will note progress made in establishing a far more advanced capability development process called for by the Headline Goal 2010. New methodologies are being developed for better taking into account the qualitative aspects of Member States' commitments. According to the Roadmap to the Progress Catalogue the Compilation of Member States' Contributions should be available by June 2006.

The Council will also note the **Single Progress Report** on military capabilities, drawn up in line with the EU Capability Development Mechanism, including a Capability Improvement Chart, which records progress made in the development of EU military capabilities since November 2005. An overview of the chart will be made public.

In this context, the Council should welcome in particular the improvements achieved in the shortfall area of strategic airlift through the Strategic Airlift Interim Solution (SALIS) - an initiative by 14 Member States and Canada and Norway assuring timely availability of an additional capability to deploy oversized cargo - as well as the launch of the initiative "Improving Strategic Airlift Capability Across Europe" and the work done so far.

In the context of **Rapid Response**, the Council is expected to note the successful outcome of the battlegroups co-ordination conference on 3 May. On the basis of this outcome, 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 is also due to note the report submitted by the Head of the **European Defence Agency** on its activities. In the context of the follow-up to Hampton Court, it should welcome in particular the results achieved on the R&T agenda and the progress made concerning the capabilities priorities.

The EDA Steering Board will meet in the margins of GAERC.

Civil-Military Co-ordination – Management of Operations

The Council will return to the theme of civil-military cooperation after its informal discussions in Innsbruck in March. Noting that effective co-ordination of all the instruments that the EU has at its disposal is necessary for the EU to achieve maximum impact, it will look at progress made in this area, notably on concrete recommendations for civil-military co-ordination in the field in the context of EU crisis management operations.

Security Sector Reform (SSR) in the Western Balkans

The Council should invite the 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, to pave the way for an integrated approach.

Support to SSR in partner countries is a core area for EU action as identified in the European Security Strategy. 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.

EU Emergency and Crisis Response - Getting assistance quickly where it is needed

The Council is expected to welcome High Representative Solana's proposals to improve the EU's ability to respond to disasters and the co-ordination of transport for relief efforts, in the context of the follow-up to the Hampton Court meeting. It should note a "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 agree on its way ahead.

For cases in which 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, the Council, building on the High Representative's contribution, is expected on Monday to take 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.

It should note that Member States, in order to complement civilian means of transport already available through existing mechanisms, may decide to make available on a voluntary basis military-owned strategic air and sea lift capabilities when such capabilities are available and military-chartered civilian strategic lift capabilities, in particular under the Strategic Airlift Interim Solution (SALIS) as already decided by one Member State.

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.

Procedures will be put in place between the Council Secretariat and the Commission to exchange rapidly information on needs and available transportation means which will ensure effective mobilisation.

Ministers are also due to hear 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.

Operations

Ministers will be briefed by the respective Operation Commanders on the state of play regarding the planning for operation EUFOR RD Congo and concerning the ongoing operation EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Western Balkans

The Council is due to adopt conclusions focusing on:

- *Bosnia and Herzegovina*: on the transition from the Office of the high representative to an office led by the EU special representative;
- *Serbia and Montenegro/International criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)*: the Council will note with regret that negotiations on a stabilisation and association agreement scheduled for 11 May had to be called off, and indicate the EU's readiness to resume the talks as soon as full cooperation with ICTY is achieved;
- *Serbia and Montenegro/Montenegro*: on organisation of the referendum on the future status of Montenegro.

Relations with Russia - Summit preparation

The Council will take note of progress in preparations for the 17th summit under the EU-Russia partnership and cooperation agreement, to be held in Sochi, Russia, on 25 May. It will hold an exchange of views.

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

- EU-Russia relations, including the four EU-Russia common spaces,² the situation in the EU and Russia, and future joint institutional arrangements;
- International and regional issues.

² Common economic space; common space of freedom, security and justice; common space of external security; common space of research and education, including cultural aspects.

Priority subjects are likely to include EU-Russia institutional arrangements, energy and international issues.

The summit will be hosted by Russian president Vladimir Putin, accompanied by foreign minister Sergey Lavrov.

The EU will be represented by Austrian chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel, president of the European Council, assisted by high representative Javier Solana and president of the Commission Jose Manuel Barroso. Austrian foreign minister Ursula Plassnik, president of the Council, and commissioners Benita Ferrero-Waldner and Peter Mandelson.

Iraq

The Council will discuss the situation in Iraq and notably progress made in Iraq towards forming a government of national unity. In its conclusions, it should reiterate the EU's commitment to the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and express its readiness to discuss concrete measures to enhance EU-Iraq relations based on Iraqi priorities in the new government's programme and on shared values. It is also expected, in response to Iraqi needs and requests, to express its readiness to extend the activities of the Integrated Rule of Law Mission, EUJUST LEX, beyond its current mandate.

Iran

Over lunch, Ministers will discuss the situation regarding the Iranian nuclear programme and current discussions in New York. The Council should in particular note the IAEA Director General's report of 28 April and recall that 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.

It should reiterate the EU's commitment to finding a diplomatic solution and call on the Iranian authorities to fully cooperate with the IAEA and suspend all enrichment related and reprocessing activities, including research and development. It is expected to express the EU's preparedness to support Iran's development of a safe, sustainable and proliferation-proof civilian nuclear programme, if international concerns were fully addressed. It should also address the human rights situation in Iran.

Middle East

Over lunch, Ministers will discuss the situation in the Middle East notably after the Quartet meeting in New York on 9 May regarding assistance to the Palestinians.

The Quartet in New York expressed its willingness to endorse a temporary international mechanism, the objective of which is direct delivery and supervision of assistance to the Palestinian people. The Quartet welcomed an offer of the European Union to develop and propose such a mechanism and invited other donors and international organizations to consider participation in such a mechanism.

Consequently, the Council will discuss the rapid development of such a mechanism, which will be aimed at contributing to meet basic needs, focusing in the first instance on health services.

The Quartet on 9 May also discussed the current situation in Israel and the West Bank, and Gaza. It condemned the Palestinian Authority government's failure to take action against terrorism and the justification of the April 17 suicide bombing in Tel Aviv and urged it to act decisively against terrorism and bring an end to violence. It noted that President Abbas condemned the April 17 attack as he has consistently condemned all acts of terrorism in the past.

The Quartet also expressed its concern over Israeli military operations that result in the loss of innocent life. It called for restraint and asked Israel to bear in mind the potential consequences of its actions for the population. It expressed its concern about settlement expansion, and noted with continued concern the route of the barrier, particularly as it results in the confiscation of Palestinian land and cuts off the movement of people and goods. The Quartet reiterated the importance of both parties avoiding unilateral measures which prejudice final status issues.

The Council will adopt conclusions.

Africa

The Council is due to discuss a series of issues including the follow-up to the EU-Africa ministerial troika, Sudan and the Abuja peace process, as well as Chad.

(It is also due to adopt conclusions, without debate, on a number of other issues such as Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda and elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo.)
