



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



9947/06 (Presse 162)

PROVISIONAL VERSION

PRESS RELEASE

2737th Council Meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

External Relations

Luxembourg, 12 June 2006

President **Ms Ursula Plassnik,**
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria

* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2736 meeting on General Affairs (9947/06).

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 8239 / 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom>

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Main Results of the Council

*The European Union and its Member States have decided that they will develop further their relations with the Republic of **Montenegro** as a sovereign, independent State, taking full account of the referendum result and the subsequent acts by the Montenegrin Parliament. Member States will take the subsequent measures implementing this decision nationally in accordance with international law and practice. The Council also called on Serbia and Montenegro to pursue a direct and constructive dialogue on their future relations. The EU stands ready to support this dialogue.*

*The Council reaffirmed the relevance and validity of the objectives of its 1996 common position on **Cuba** and reiterated that a constructive engagement and a critical and comprehensive dialogue at all levels remained the basis for the EU's policy towards Cuba. Deploring the further deterioration of the human rights situation in Cuba since the last evaluation in June 2005, it once again urged the Cuban government to unconditionally release all political prisoners. The Council decided to extend the suspension of diplomatic measures taken on 5 June 2003 until the next evaluation of the common position in June 2007. It also decided to start working on a mid-and long-term strategy on Cuba.*

*The Council met with the foreign minister of the new government of **Iraq** to discuss i.a. future EU-Iraq relations. It also decided to extend the mandate of the EUJUST LEX mission for Iraq under the European Security and Defence Policy.*

Under its "General Affairs" agenda (see press release 9946/06), the Council also:

- *adopted a decision on the launching of an **EU military operation** in support of the United Nations Mission (MONUC) during the election process in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** (Operation EUFOR RD Congo).*
- *adopted a decision approving the signature of a **stabilisation and association agreement with Albania**, and decided to request the European Parliament's assent with a view to conclusion of the agreement. The agreement was signed in the margins of the Council meeting.*

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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.

PARTICIPANTS

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

Belgium:

Mr Karel DE GUCHT
Mr Didier DONFUT

Minister for Foreign Affairs
State Secretary for European Affairs, attached to the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Czech Republic:

Mr Cyril SVOBODA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Denmark:

Mr Per Stig MØLLER

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Germany:

Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Greece:

Ms Theodora BAKOYANNIS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr Miguel Ángel MORATINOS CUYAUBÉ

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

France:

Mr Philippe DOUSTE-BLAZY
Ms Catherine COLONNA

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister with responsibility for European Affairs

Ireland:

Mr Dermot AHERN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Italy:

Mr Massimo D'ALEMA

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Cyprus:

Mr George IACOVOU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Latvia:

Mr Artis PABRIKS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Lithuania:

Mr Antanas VALIONIS

Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and
Immigration

Hungary:

Ms Kinga GÖNCZ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr Michael FRENDO

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Netherlands:

Mr Bernard BOT
Ms Atzo NICOLAI

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for European Affairs

Austria:

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK
Mr Hans WINKLER

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

Poland:

Ms Anna Elżbieta FOTYGA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Diogo FREITAS DO AMARAL
Mr Fernando DE OLIVEIRA NEVES

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

Slovenia:

Mr Dimitrij RUPEL

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovakia:

Mr Eduard KUKAN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Finland:

Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ms Paula LEHTOMÄKI

Minister for Foreign Trade and Development

Sweden:

Mr Bosse RINGHOLM

Deputy Prime Minister, with responsibility for
Coordination and Sport

Mr Jan ELIASSON

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Lars-Olof LINDGREN

State Secretary at the Ministry of Industry, Employment
and Communications

United Kingdom:

Ms Margaret BECKETT

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Mr Geoff HOON

Minister of State for Europe

.....

Commission:

Mr Olli REHN

Member

Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER

Member

Mr Peter Mandelson

Member

.....

General Secretariat of the Council:

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

.....

The Governments of the Accessing States were represented as follows:

Bulgaria:

Mr Ivailo KALFIN

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ms Meglena KUNEVA

Minister for European Affairs

Romania:

Mr Mihai-Răzvan UNGUREANU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED

WTO

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council heard an update from the Commission on the state of the negotiations and on the tentative agenda for informal negotiating sessions at ministerial level in June and July 2006. It welcomed the renewal of the Commission's commitment to keep the Council fully informed of the developments in the negotiations, and that its action remained in line with the mandate it had received from the Council. The Council noted with satisfaction that the Commission would remain in close contact with the Member States' delegations in the coming weeks, in the run up to, and during, the negotiating sessions at ministerial level.
2. The Council reconfirmed the objective of a comprehensive, balanced and ambitious agreement within and across all the main elements of the DDA in conformity with the Commission's mandate as defined in its previous conclusions.
3. The Council confirmed that it would meet in special session as necessary throughout the negotiating sessions at Ministerial level in Geneva, to take stock of developments during these negotiations, to provide the Commission with any further necessary guidance in these negotiations and, in accordance with its practice, take a position on the outcome of the negotiations, recalling the principle of the single undertaking. "

RELATIONS WITH THE GULF STATES - NEGOTIATIONS ON A FREE TRADE AREA AGREEMENT

Commissioner Mandelson briefed the Council on developments and prospects in negotiations on a free trade area agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait) in the light of his constructive discussion with GCC finance ministers in Abu Dhabi on 9 June.

RELATIONS WITH WESTERN BALKANS - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia)

The Council took note of the recent reports by the ICTY President and Chief Prosecutor to the UN Security Council. The Council reiterated that full co-operation with the ICTY is essential to achieve lasting reconciliation in the region and to lift a fundamental obstacle on the way towards the European Union. In this context, the Council noted with concern that the Chief Prosecutor had not been able to report any progress on the arrest and transfer of the six remaining fugitives. The Council called on all countries concerned to take decisive action to ensure that all remaining fugitive indictees, notably Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, are finally brought to justice. In this context, the Council welcomed that the Bosnian authorities have recently transferred Dragan Zelenovic to The Hague.

Albania

The Council welcomed the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and of the Interim Agreement with Albania as an important step on the country's path towards the EU. It looked forward to intensifying co-operation with Albania through the comprehensive framework offered by these agreements and the other mechanisms of the Stabilisation and Association Process. The Council looked forward to a sustained and effective track record in implementing these agreements.

The Council called on Albania to push ahead with its reform agenda and encouraged all political forces to unify their efforts to accelerate that process. It called on Albania to intensify its efforts on a number of priorities, set out in the European Partnership, including clear improvements in media freedom, accelerating property restitution and compensation, further strengthening of public-sector governance, improving respect for and protection of minorities and ensuring that the forthcoming municipal elections fully comply with international standards. Noting recent encouraging steps taken in the fight against corruption and organised crime, a key element in the European Partnership and the Stabilisation and Association Process, it stressed the importance of further determined action and sustained progress in the rule of law, including the full respect of its independent institutions.

Regional co-operation

The Council warmly welcomed the results of the Stability Pact's Regional Table meeting held in Belgrade on 30 May 2006. Underlining the need for the region of South Eastern Europe to gradually take over ownership and responsibility, including financial, for regional cooperation, it welcomes the phased evolution of the Stability Pact into a more regionally owned, streamlined and effective regional co-operation framework in which the South East European Cooperation Process, if successfully strengthened, should play a central part. The Council fully supports the creation of a Regional Co-operation Council to be operational by 2008.

Stressing the importance of preserving relevant Stability Pact achievements and initiatives, the Council welcomes the agreement on those priority areas in which the successful work should continue. It expressed the European Union's readiness to remain involved, together with other donors and partners, in the implementation of the Belgrade conclusions and in furthering regional co-operation, which is one of the prerequisites for the realization of the region's European perspective."

MONTENEGRO - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council has taken note that, on 3 June 2006, based on Article 60 of the Constitutional Charter of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro and following the Montenegrin referendum of 21 May 2006, the Parliament of Montenegro has passed a Declaration on the Independence of the Republic of Montenegro which states that the Republic of Montenegro is an independent State with full legal personality under international law.

Furthermore, the Council has taken note that, on 5 June 2006 following the above-mentioned Declaration, the Parliament of Serbia has passed a Decision that defines the Republic of Serbia as the continuing State of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

The Council recognizes that these Parliamentary Acts were taken in conformity with the arrangements and procedures foreseen in the Belgrade Agreement of 14 March 2002 as well as in compliance with Article 60 of the Constitutional Charter of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. The European Union and its Member States have therefore decided that they will develop further their relations with the Republic of Montenegro as a sovereign, independent State, taking full account of the referendum result and the afore-mentioned Parliamentary Acts. Member States will take the subsequent measures implementing this decision nationally in accordance with international law and practice.

The Council calls on Serbia and Montenegro to pursue a direct and constructive dialogue on their future relations. The European Union stands ready to support this dialogue.

The Council reaffirms the European perspective of the Western Balkans on the basis of the Stabilisation and Association Process. "

PREPARATION OF EU-US SUMMIT

The Council was briefed on preparations for the EU-US summit to be held in Vienna on 21 June and provided further guidance for the remaining preparatory work. Leaders are expected to decide on a strengthening of the transatlantic partnership in the following areas: promoting peace, democracy and human rights in the world; confronting global challenges, including security; fostering prosperity and opportunity; and promoting cooperation on energy and energy security.

CUBA - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The Council reaffirmed the relevance and validity of the objectives of the Common Position of 1996 and reiterated that a constructive engagement and a critical and comprehensive dialogue at all levels remained the basis for the European Union's policy towards Cuba. The Council underlined its determination to pursue a genuine dialogue with the Cuban authorities as well as with Cuba's peaceful political opposition and civil society. Using the fullest range of its resources available, the EU will continue to offer to all sectors of society practical support towards peaceful change in Cuba.

2. The Council deplores the further deterioration of the human rights situation in Cuba since the last evaluation in June 2005.

The Council noted that the number of political prisoners in Cuba had risen over the past twelve months according to Cuban human rights organisations to more than 330 documented cases, including several individuals detained without charge or trial since 2005. In addition, hundreds of young Cuban citizens had been detained and sentenced under the Penal Code stipulation of "propensity to commit a crime".

The Council once again urged the Cuban government to unconditionally release all political prisoners, including the group of 75 who were detained and sentenced in 2003.

3. Of particular concern was the staging since July 2005 of several dozen acts of violent harassment and intimidation, including acts of repudiation. The Council expressed its concern at reports that some acts of repudiation are taking place with the collusion of police and security forces. In any case, the Cuban authorities are not fulfilling their obligations to protect all citizens. The Council urgently called on the Government of Cuba to take prompt action to stop the ongoing harassment and to undertake every effort to effectively prevent its resumption.

The Council strongly condemned these acts and other restrictions of fundamental civil and political rights which are guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights obligations to which Cuba, as a UN member and signatory of relevant Declarations, is party. The Council reminded the Cuban authorities in particular of their responsibilities regarding the basic rights of free access to information, freedom of expression, association and assembly, privacy and due process of law. The EU will continue to monitor closely policies of the Cuban government with respect to human rights.

The Council recalled the commitments required of all members elected to Human Rights Council to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights.

4. The EU would welcome the resumption of a political dialogue with the Cuban authorities. This dialogue should include the issue of human rights and take place on a reciprocal and non-discriminatory basis. The Council urged the Cuban government, with a view to promoting a positive and mutually beneficial dialogue, to show its commitment to dialogue by making concrete improvements in the human rights situation. The Council underlined that every high-level visitor should raise human rights concerns with the Cuban authorities.
5. The Council expressed concern that the Cuban government had rolled back reforms leading to a tentative economic opening. The Council regretted that these restrictions had further curtailed the space for private economic initiatives.

The Council underlined that the EU continued to stand ready to provide development co-operation, including projects that promote sustainable economic growth and improvements in the living standards of the Cuban people.

6. The Council took note of the sixteenth Evaluation of the European Union Common Position on Cuba and decided to extend the suspension of diplomatic measures taken on 5 June 2003 until the next Evaluation of the Common Position in June 2007.

The Council decided to start working on a mid-and long-term strategy on Cuba."

IRAN

Over lunch, ministers were briefed by High Representative Javier Solana on his visit to Tehran on 6 June when he presented to the Iranian authorities a new proposal for resolving the Iranian nuclear issue through a long-term agreement based on mutual respect and the establishment of international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's programme.

The proposal was supported by all countries represented at a meeting of the foreign ministers of France, Germany, the UK, as well as China, Russia and the US in Vienna on 1 June.

The European Council on 15-16 June is expected to adopt a declaration on Iran.

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

Over lunch, ministers discussed the Middle East peace process with a view to the 15-16 June European Council meeting on the basis of a presentation by High Representative Solana who visited the region on 4-5 June. Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner informed ministers on the state of preparations on the establishment of a temporary international mechanism designed to ensure direct delivery and supervision of assistance to the Palestinian people.

Following the expression by the Middle East Quartet of its willingness to endorse such a mechanism, the EU is working urgently to develop it in consultation with international financial institutions and other key partners.

The European Council on 15-16 June is expected to adopt a declaration on the Middle East peace process.

IRAQ

Over lunch, ministers discussed the situation in Iraq following the formation of the new national unity government on 20 May, as well as measures to enhance EU-Iraq relations based on Iraqi priorities in the new government's programme. They had an exchange of views in this respect with the foreign minister of the new Iraqi government, Hoshyar Zebari.

The Council also adopted a joint action extending the mandate of the EUJUST LEX Mission for Iraq under the European Security and Defence Policy. (*See General Affairs press release, 9946/06.*)

The European Council on 15-16 June is expected to adopt a declaration on Iraq.

OTHER BUSINESS

– *International Facility for the purchase of medicines*

The French minister briefed partners on developments regarding the International Facility for the purchase of medicines (UNITAID) initiative launched by France, Brazil, Chile and Norway. He called for the broadest possible support to this initiative from the EU and its Member States (some of which had already pledged such support).

The aim of the initiative is to ensure a long-term financial resource to improve the access of developing countries to quality medicines at affordable prices to fight the major pandemics (HIV/Aids, tuberculosis, malaria). This initiative will be based on an international contribution on air tickets and will also complement other initiatives.

– *Burma/Myanmar*

The Netherlands minister called for EU support for a possible initiative on Burma/Myanmar at the UN Security Council.

– *East Timor*

The Portuguese minister briefed his colleagues about the situation in East Timor and ongoing activities, notably by Portugal (e.g. dispatching of police officers), to address the crisis. He called for support for possible UN Security Council initiatives in that respect, notably in the light of the assessment to be presented to the UNSC on 13 June by UN Special Representative Ian Martin.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

Please see General Affairs press release 9946/06
