



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



5562/06 (Presse 21)

PROVISIONAL VERSION

PRESS RELEASE

2705th Council Meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

General Affairs

Brussels, 30 January 2006

President **Ms Ursula PLASSNIK**
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria

* The 2706th meeting on External Relations is the subject of a separate press release (5565/06).

P R E S S

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Main Results of the Council

The Council took note of the operational programme for 2006 established by the current Austrian and future Finnish presidencies and of the Commission's legislative and work programme for this year.

The Council adopted:

- a directive on the **management of waste from the extractive industries**;*
- a directive on **pollution caused by dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment**;*
- a directive on **waste disposal**.*

*The Council appointed Mr Christian Schwarz-Schilling as the new EU special representative in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, following the departure of Lord Ashdown.*

The Council also:

- extended for a further year restrictive measures against persons considered as extremists in the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** and updated the list of these persons;*
- renewed restrictive measures against **Zimbabwe** for a further year.*

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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://ue.eu.int>.
- 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.

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PARTICIPANTS

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

Belgium:

Mr Jan DE BOCK

Permanent representative

Czech Republic:

Mr Vladimír MÜLLER

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs with responsibility for EU issues

Denmark:

Mr Per Stig MØLLER

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Germany:

Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Greece:

Mr Petros MOLYVIATIS

Mr Ioannis VALINAKIS

Minister for Foreign Affairs
State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr Carlos BASTARRECHE SAGÜES

Permanent representative

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 Rocco Antonio CANGELOSI

Permanent Representative

Cyprus:

Mr George IACOVOU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Latvia:

Mr Artis PABRIKS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Lithuania:

Mr Antanas VALIONIS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN

Mr Nicolas SCHMIT

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister with responsibility for Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Minister with responsibility for Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Hungary:

Mr Ferenc SOMOGYI

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr Michael FRENDU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Netherlands:

Mr Bernard BOT

Mr Atzo NICOLAÏ

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:

Mr Stefan MELLER

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Fernando DE OLIVEIRA NEVES

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 Mari KIVINIEMI

Minister for Foreign Trade and Development

Sweden:

Ms Laila FREIVALDS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

United Kingdom:

Mr John GRANT

Permanent representative

.....
Commission:

Mr José Manuel BARROSO

President

Ms Margot WALLSTRÖM

Vice-President

Mr Günter VERHEUGEN

Vice-President

.....
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

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Romania:

Mr Anton NICULESCU

State Secretary for Public Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED

WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2006

The Council held a brief public debate on the Council's operational programme for 2006, established by the current Austrian and future Finnish presidencies, and took note of the Commission's legislative and work programme for this year.

The debate focused on the main priorities identified by the two presidencies, namely:

- EU future financing;
- Constitutional treaty;
- Growth and jobs, the Lisbon economic reform strategy;
- Economic policy coordination;
- Strengthening competitiveness;
- Developing the EU's internal market;
- Information society, energy, transport, chemical policy;
- Employment, labour law, social policy, health and gender equality;
- Environment;
- Sustainable development;
- The common agricultural policy and fisheries;
- EU area of freedom, security and justice;
- EU enlargement;
- External relations;
- Human rights.

LISBON ECONOMIC REFORM STRATEGY

The Council took note of the presentation by President Barroso of the Commission's annual progress report on implementation of the economic reform strategy laid down at Lisbon in 2000.

The Commission's report will contribute to the European Council's work on the Lisbon strategy at its meeting on 23 and 24 March.

The Council will prepare the European Council, on the basis of an annotated draft agenda to be prepared by the presidency on 27 and 28 February.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - Restrictive measures

The Council adopted a common position extending for a further period of 12 months restrictive measures against persons considered as extremists in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and amending common position 2004/133/CFSP by updating the list of these persons (5247/06).

The measures aim to prevent admission on the EU's territory of certain individuals who actively promote or take part in violent extremist activities challenging the Ohrid framework agreement's basic principles of stability and territorial integrity and the multi-ethnic character of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and/or who deliberately undermine and obstruct implementation of the framework agreement by actions outside the democratic process.

The new common position will apply as from 10 February 2006.

Zimbabwe - Restrictive measures

The Council adopted a common position renewing restrictive measures against Zimbabwe for a further 12 months (5277/06).

The restrictive measures, first introduced in February 2002, consist of a ban on entry into the EU and a freeze on financial assets for individuals who engage in activities which seriously undermine democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law in Zimbabwe. An embargo on the supply of arms and equipment intended for military operations is also in force.

EU special representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Council adopted a joint action appointing Mr Christian Schwarz-Schilling as the new European Union special representative (EUSR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina as of 1 February 2006, following the departure of Lord Ashdown (5112/06).

The mandate of the EUSR in Bosnia and Herzegovina is extended until 28 February 2007. Joint action 2004/569/CFSP will be repealed with effect from 1 February 2006.

Since 11 March 2002, the EU has appointed the person serving as high representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the Dayton/Paris agreement as EU special representative in that country.

See also press release 14932/05.

Western Balkans - European partnership

The Council adopted decisions on principles, priorities and conditions contained in the European partnership with Albania (15263/05), Bosnia and Herzegovina (15267/05), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (15288/05) and Serbia and Montenegro including Kosovo (15283/05).

The partnerships are updated in order to identify new priorities for action on the basis of the findings of a progress report by the Commission on preparations by the Western Balkans countries for further integration with the EU. Priorities are adapted to each country's specific needs and state of preparation, and will again be updated as necessary.

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

ESDP training programme

The Council approved an EU training programme for the 2006-08 period under European security and defence policy (ESDP) (5561/06).

The programme is structured according to the different main training actors - the European Security and Defence College (ESDC), the European Police College (CEPOL) and the European Community project for civilian aspects of crisis management - and to the different ESDP areas of interest: civilian and civil-military training activities and training activities in the military field including EU headquarters training.

The EU's training policy under ESDP, approved by the Council on 17 November 2003, defines the overall political and operational framework for EU training activities, encompassing both the civilian and military dimensions of ESDP.

TRADE POLICY

Australia - Agreement on trade concessions – EU enlargement

The Council adopted a decision approving the conclusion of an agreement with Australia on trade concessions for certain agricultural products in order to take account of the accession of the EU's ten new member states, as well as a regulation on implementation of the agreement (15909/05 and 15910/05).

The General agreement on tariffs and trade (GATT agreement) requires the EU to negotiate compensatory adjustments with third countries that have negotiating rights with any of the acceding member states if the adoption of the EU's external tariff regime results in an increase in tariffs beyond the level for which that country has bound itself at the WTO.

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Proceedings in the Council's different configurations

The Council took note of a report from the presidency on proceedings in the Council's different configurations (5466/06).

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Protection of the euro against counterfeiting*

The Council adopted two decisions amending and extending until the end 2006 an EU programme on the protection of the euro against counterfeiting ("Pericles" programme) (15041/05, 15042/05 and 15483/05).

The decisions are aimed at enhancing efficiency of the "Pericles" programme by:

- increasing the maximum proportion of Community financing to 80% (instead of 70%);
- providing flexibility in the number of projects that one member state may present; and
- providing financial support for cooperation in cross-border operations, with the involvement of Europol.

A budget of EUR 1 million is allocated for implementation during 2006.

"Pericles" has been running since 2002 and was designed to support and supplement the measures undertaken by the member states and in existing programmes to protect the euro against counterfeiting. Such measures include information exchange (seminars, workshops, meetings and conferences), placements and exchanges of staff, as well as technical, scientific and operational back-up.

ENVIRONMENT

Fluorinated gases

The Council decided not to approve the European Parliament's second reading amendments to proposals for a directive on emissions from air conditioning systems in motor vehicles (*2003/0189a COD*) and for a regulation on certain fluorinated greenhouse gases (*2003/0189b COD*).

The Council decided in consequence to convene the Parliament-Council conciliation committee with a view to negotiating a common text.

Waste from the extractive industries *

The Council adopted a directive on the management of waste from the extractive industries and amending directive 2004/35/EC, following an agreement reached with the European Parliament in the conciliation committee (*PE-CONS 3665/1/05, 5111/06 ADD1*).

The directive is aimed at preventing accidents and consequent damage to the environment and human health arising from the treatment and disposal of mining waste, by setting minimum requirements intended to improve mining waste management.

The main elements of the directive are as follows:

- conditions for operating permits;
- general obligations concerning waste management;
- the obligation to characterise waste before disposing of it or treating it;
- measures to ensure the safety of waste management facilities;

- a requirement to draw up closure plans;
- an obligation to provide for an appropriate level of financial security.

For more details see press release 15486/05.

Pollution caused by dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment

The Council adopted a directive on pollution caused by certain dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment (*PE-CONS 3649/05*).

The Italian delegation abstained.

The directive codifies and repeals directive 76/464/EEC, substituting the various acts incorporated in it by putting it together with only such amendments as are required by the codification exercise.

Disposal of waste

The Council adopted a directive on the disposal of waste (*PE-CONS 3652/05*).

The directive codifies and repeals directive 75/442/EEC, substituting the various acts incorporated in it together with only such amendments as are required by the codification exercise itself.

AGRICULTURE

Outermost regions of the EU - Specific measures for agriculture*

The Council adopted by qualified majority, following the political agreement reached at its meeting on 20-22 December, a regulation laying down specific measures for agriculture in order to remedy the difficulties caused by the remoteness, insularity and distant location of the EU's outermost regions (*15367/05, 5410/06 ADD1*).

The Danish and Swedish delegations voted against (*see 15479/05*).

The regulation provides for specific supply arrangements, measures to assist local agricultural products, accompanying targeted measures and financial provisions. With regard to the handicaps of these regions and in order to boost trade, imports of certain agricultural products will be exempt from duties; aid will also be granted for the supply of products of Community origin to the outermost regions.

The Community will finance the measures provided for in the regulation up to an annual maximum as follows:

French overseas departments: EUR 84,7 million,

Azores and Madeira: EUR 77,3 million and

Canary Islands: EUR 127,3 million.

The regulation repeals regulations Nos 1452/2001, 1453/2001 and 1454/2001.

FISHERIES

EU- São Tomé and Príncipe agreement

The Council adopted a decision approving the signature of an agreement extending, for the period from 1 June 2005 to 31 May 2006, the protocol currently in force under the fisheries agreement between the EU and São Tomé and Príncipe (15967/05).

The fishing opportunities provided for in the protocol are expressed in vessel numbers (36 tuna seiners, 2 pole-and-line tuna vessels and 25 surface longliners) and concern France, Spain and Portugal.

The financial contribution is set at EUR 637 500. The EU will also provide financing of EUR 50 000 during this period for an evaluation study on deep-water crab.

CUSTOMS UNION

Industrial, agricultural and fishery products

The Council adopted a regulation amending regulation (EC) 1255/96 temporarily suspending, until the end of 2008, common customs tariff duties on certain industrial, agricultural and fishery products (15810/05+ADD1).

The annex to regulation 1255/96 containing the products concerned will be replaced by a new version with effect from 1 January 2006.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

Amendments to the EEA agreement

The Council adopted three decisions enabling the European Economic Area (EEA) joint committee to adopt decisions amending EEA provisions in the fields of social security (special benefits on supplementary allowance to persons with short periods of residence in Norway), small and medium-sized enterprises and trans-European telecommunication networks (in order to extend cooperation of the contracting parties to the EEA agreement as from 1 January 2006) (*5174/06, 5283/06 and 15924/05*).

The EEA joint committee's remit includes integrating all Community legislation relevant to the EEA agreement in order to ensure the legal certainty and homogeneity of the internal market.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance in higher education

The Council adopted, accepting all amendments suggested by the European Parliament, a recommendation on European cooperation in quality assurance relating to higher education (*PE-CONS 3666/05*).

It recommends, in particular, that member states encourage the creation of a "European register of quality assurance agencies" and give the freedom to higher education institutions to choose one agency among any of the agencies registered (not necessarily among the national ones).

TRANSPARENCY

Council public debates

The Council approved a list of topics on which there could be open debates at Council meetings under the Austrian Presidency until 30 June 2006.

The list is as follows:

COUNCIL	DATE	AGENDA ITEM
General Affairs and External Relations	27-28/02/06	Negotiation of the 10 th European Development Fund
Competitiveness	13/03/06	SMEs and entrepreneurship
Environment	09/03/06	Genetically modified organisms: policy debate
Transport, Telecommunications and Energy	27-28/03/06	Review of the EU strategy for sustainable development Road safety: -Mid-term review on road safety action programme: "Halving the number of road accident victims in the EU by 2010"
Justice and Home Affairs	27-28/04/06	Regional protection programmes
Justice and Home Affairs	27-28/04/06	(possible) Framework decision on the fight against organised crime
Education, Youth and Culture	18-19/05/06	Lifelong learning
Justice and Home Affairs	1-2/06/06	(possible) Framework decision on the application of the principle of mutual recognition to the enforcement of sentences
Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs	1-2/06/06	Review of the EU Strategy for Sustainable Development - Social Inclusion Commission communication on injury prevention and safety promotion (Action for a Safer Europe)
Competitiveness	29-30/06/06	Better Regulation – Simplification of legislation
Transport, Telecommunications and Energy	8-9/06/06	-Commission communication on infrastructure safety management Mid-term review of the Commission White Paper "European transport policy for 2010: time to decide" Commission communication on the promotion of inland waterways

Council public deliberations

The Council approved a list of legislative proposals on acts adopted in accordance with the co-decision procedure on which the Council's deliberations will be open to the public under the Austrian Presidency (5364/06)¹.

The list is as follows:

COUNCIL	DATE	AGENDA ITEM
Education, Youth and Culture	18-19/05/06	Revision of Directive 89/552/EEC "Television without frontiers"
Justice and Home Affairs	1-2/06/06	Draft Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the Visa Information System (VIS) and the exchange of data between Member States on short-visas
Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs	1-2/06/06	Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving the portability of supplementary pension rights
Economic and Financial Affairs	07/06/06	New Legal Framework for Payments (NLF)

¹ See also Council's conclusions on improving openness and transparency in the Council of 21.12.2005 (press release 15479/05, page 53).