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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Council conclusions on Pakistan

At its meeting on 20 July 2015, the Council adopted the Council conclusions as set out in the annex to this note.

Council conclusions on Pakistan

1. The Council endorses the 2015 implementation report on the EU-Pakistan 5-year Engagement Plan. Recalling its Conclusions of 2012 and 2013, the EU reiterates its commitment to both strengthening democracy and intensifying relations with Pakistan. The Council welcomes the broadening and deepening of dialogue with Pakistan over recent years on a wide range of issues, including counter-terrorism, disarmament and non-proliferation, and migration management. The EU looks forward to continuing its dialogue with Pakistan across this range of issues and recalls the importance it attaches to full and effective implementation of the EU-Pakistan Readmission Agreement. The Council notes that Pakistan has benefited considerably from preferential market access to the EU under the GSP+ scheme, with an increase in exports to the EU of more than €1 billion in 2014.
2. Pakistan has a significant role to play in advancing political, economic and trade relations in the region, which can contribute to growth, stability and peace in Central and South Asia. The EU welcomes Pakistan's hosting of the next 'Heart of Asia' Ministerial meeting in Islamabad later this year and the positive steps taken to engage constructively with the Government of Afghanistan. The Council encourages Pakistan to continue these initiatives and to strive to facilitate Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace talks. Furthermore, the EU calls on Pakistan to actively contribute to international efforts in the field of nuclear security, non-proliferation and disarmament.

3. The Council welcomes the first visit by the EUSR for Human Rights to Pakistan in October 2014 and calls on Pakistan to prioritise and take further action to respect, protect and promote freedom of religion or belief, the rights of persons belonging to minorities, the rights of women and rights of the child and freedom of expression, including for journalists and human rights defenders. The EU is concerned by the recent measures that Pakistan has taken concerning civil society groups and by the introduction of processes that limit the freedom of national and international NGOs to operate. The EU also underlines the importance of respect for basic humanitarian principles
4. The EU welcomes Pakistan's progress in relation to its IMF programme. The Council calls on Pakistan to build on this by undertaking further economic reforms.
5. The EU recognises the sacrifice that Pakistan has made in combatting terrorism. The Council calls on Pakistan to build on the steps it has taken to prevent and fight terrorism and counter violent extremism, notably through measures to prevent hate speech, curb financing of terrorist organisations, enforce the ban on proscribed organisations, take effective steps against religious persecution, and register and regulate madrassas.
6. The EU is deeply concerned by Pakistan's decision to lift the moratorium on executions in place since 2008 and to resume executions at an alarming pace. The EU is strongly opposed to capital punishment in all cases and has consistently called for its universal abolition. The EU urges Pakistan to reinstate the moratorium immediately to commute the sentences of persons sentenced to death as first steps towards the abolition of the death penalty and to respect fully all its international obligations. Pakistan is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention against Torture, which affirm the right to fair trial, prohibit the death sentence for crimes committed by persons under eighteen years of age and require prompt and impartial investigation where there is reasonable ground to believe that torture has been committed. Effective implementation of these conventions is a requirement under the GSP+ scheme.

7. On 8 May 2015, a helicopter of the Pakistani army carrying several diplomats, including EU-diplomats, crashed upon landing in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, during a three-day tour of Pakistan's northern areas. The Council would like to thank Pakistan for their assistance after the helicopter crash and welcomes an early delivery of the investigation report to ensure an adequate follow-up.
 8. The EU remains fully committed to continuing its dialogue and engagement with Pakistan under the 5-year Engagement Plan. Depending on progress achieved on the main elements of the Engagement Plan, including human rights, this could lead to a third EU-Pakistan ad hoc Summit.
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