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#### OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
On:	17 July 2017
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	Pakistan - Council conclusions (17 July 2017)

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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on Pakistan, as adopted by the Council at its 3557th meeting held on 17 July 2017.

**Council conclusions on Pakistan**

1. The Council endorses the 2017 implementation report on the EU-Pakistan 5-year Engagement Plan, adopted in 2012.
2. This 5-year Engagement Plan, which will end this year, has contributed to deepening the bilateral relations between the European Union and Pakistan. It has also intensified institutional dialogues across priority areas including: political cooperation; security; governance, human rights; migration; trade and energy; further dialogues have been set up in new areas such as counter-terrorism, non-proliferation and disarmament.
3. The EU has a clear interest in a stable, secure, and democratic Pakistan. The EU considers Pakistan an important partner in strengthening multilateral cooperation, especially within the UN.
4. The EU welcomes that a number of recommendations from the 2013 EU Election Observation Mission have been considered in the draft bill on elections and urges the Government of Pakistan to complete the passage of this bill into law, in time for the 2018 legislative elections in Pakistan. The EU is ready to consider another Election Observation Mission for these elections.

5. In view of the enhanced implementation of the EU-Pakistan Readmission Agreement, which is a priority for the EU and a critical component of its overall relations with Pakistan, the EU remains closely engaged with the country and will continue to follow up carefully this issue. The EU expects Pakistan to further accelerate its efforts to facilitate the return of its irregular migrants and will continue to provide Pakistan with support for the sustainable reintegration of returnees into the Pakistani society. In this context, the EU welcomes the agreement to set up an electronic platform for processing readmission applications and calls for its timely operationalisation. It also notes positively the establishment of the cooperation platform on migrant smuggling and encourages the Pakistani Government to fully utilise it as one of the avenues in the fight against migrant smuggling.
6. The EU is actively engaging on the situation of the displaced Afghan population. The EU takes note of Pakistan's new policy with regard to the Afghan refugee population, including the decision to register undocumented migrants and to pass a national refugee law based on the 1951 Refugee Convention, as well as the Repatriation Plan. The EU underlines the importance of predictability, orderly, safe and dignified returns and upholding international law in order to allow proper integration measures in Afghanistan and avoid a destabilising effect on Afghanistan. The EU provides support to the large refugee population and stands ready to consider additional targeted actions.

7. The EU underlines that the promotion of human rights and the rule of law forms a core part of the EU's engagement with Pakistan. In this regard, the EU welcomes legislation adopted, including on labour rights, children rights and violence against women, but stresses the need to ensure full implementation. The EU remains ready to support the implementation of the 'Action Plan to improve the human rights situation in Pakistan' and the institutional and budgetary strengthening and independence of the National Commission for Human Rights. The EU remains particularly concerned about the use of the death penalty and strongly urges Pakistan to re-instate the moratorium as a first step towards the abolition of the death penalty. The EU has also concerns regarding the issue of fair trial of civilians by military courts; the juvenile justice system; the situation of the minorities; the misuse of the blasphemy laws; freedom of religion or belief and the restrictions on freedom of speech, in particular for journalists and activists. The EU stands ready to support Pakistan embarking on a comprehensive judicial reform.
8. The EU follows with special attention the efforts of the Pakistani Government to promote women's and girls' empowerment, combat early/child marriages, and ensure safe conditions for girls to complete their education and pursue career opportunities on equal terms as boys. The EU stands ready to support Pakistan on its efforts to promote the empowerment of women and girls, on the important role of women in combating violent extremism and on the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

9. The EU attaches special importance on strengthening cooperation on security and defence issues with Pakistan. The EU is committed to working with Pakistan to combat terrorism and terrorist threats in all their forms, to step up cooperation to prevent and counter violent extremism, radicalisation and recruitment, and to address their root causes, in compliance with human rights standards. In particular, the EU underlines the importance of combating the financing of terrorist activities, including by ensuring full compliance with the UN Sanctions List concerning terrorist financing. The EU calls on Pakistan to continue and step up its efforts to ensure that its territory is not used for the preparation of terrorist activities. The EU also encourages Pakistan to uphold the highest standards of nuclear safety and security, have a constructive engagement in multilateral disarmament fora, as well as to ratify or subscribe to relevant non-proliferation and confidence-building treaties and initiatives such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).
10. The EU looks forward to continuing working with Pakistan in fostering inclusive regional cooperation, including through SAARC. It encourages Pakistan to intensify its cooperation with Afghanistan, including in facilitating an Afghan-led and -owned peace process, following up on the commitment made during the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan held in October 2016. The EU encourages a stronger India-Pakistan relationship that helps confidence building in South Asia and delivers regional peace, security and prosperity.
11. The EU sees that there is potential in increased trade between the EU and Pakistan which is of mutual benefit. The EU notes that Pakistan-EU trade has benefitted from the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP+) scheme, leading to a trade surplus of almost €1 billion for Pakistan in 2016. The EU encourages Pakistan to take full advantage of GSP+. This includes taking further steps to improve the business climate. The EU also recalls the importance for Pakistan to fully and effectively implement the country's commitments laid down in the 27 core international conventions on human and labour rights, environmental protection and good governance.

12. The EU underlines the great importance it attaches to the role of civil society organisations and NGOs, both national and international ones. In order for these organisations to fulfil their essential role in creating awareness and promoting fundamental rights, they need to be able to function in an unhindered way according to the fundamental rights of freedom of expression and the right to assembly. In this context, the EU underlines the importance of a transparent and streamlined system for registration for NGOs to work in Pakistan.
  13. The EU looks forward to continuing its cooperation with the Government both at Federal and Provincial levels in areas such as social development, rural development and governance.
  14. The EU welcomes the outcome of the first EU-Pakistan energy meeting, which took place in January 2017, and which provided a fruitful exchange of experiences in key areas of energy policy, with a focus on sustainable energy and policies fighting climate change, in order to work towards realising the Paris climate commitments.
  15. In line with the Council Conclusions of 18 July 2016, the EEAS and the Commission have initiated consultations with Pakistan on a political framework to replace the 5-year Engagement Plan through a new EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan.
  16. As stipulated in the 2016 Council Conclusions, the organisation of a third ad hoc EU-Pakistan Summit will depend on the progress achieved, not least in the areas of human rights and migration, including readmission.
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