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3191st Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Development

Luxembourg, 15 October 2012

President **Catherine Ashton**
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

P R E S S

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Main results of the Council

*The Council, reiterating that the EU stands by the **Syrian people** in its courageous struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy, underlined its deep concern at the spill-over effects of the Syrian crisis in neighbouring countries in terms of security and stability. Given the increasing violence, the Council reinforced once more the sanctions against the Syrian regime.*

*The Council repeated its serious and deepening concerns over **Iran's nuclear programme** and the urgent need for Iran to comply with all its international obligations. At the same time, it reaffirmed the EU's longstanding commitment to work for a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue in accordance with the dual track approach. Given Iran's flagrant violation of its international obligations and continuous refusal to fully co-operate with the IAEA to address the concerns on its nuclear programme, the Council adopted additional restrictive measures.*

*The Council expressed its continuing concern at the serious political and security crisis affecting **Mali** and the EU's determination to support Mali in restoring the rule of law and re-establishing a fully sovereign democratic government with authority throughout Malian territory. The Council invited the High Representative to develop a crisis management concept relating to the reorganisation and training of the Malian defence forces, taking account of the conditions necessary for success.*

*The Council noted the importance which it attaches to **Belarus** and to its citizens, and remained gravely concerned about the lack of respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law in that country. As not all political prisoners have been released and no released prisoner has been rehabilitated, and against the background of the lack of improvement as regards the respect for human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles, the Council prolonged the existing restrictive measures until 31 October 2013.*

*The development ministers had a debate to prepare the **post MDGs/2015 framework** and **follow-up to the Rio+20 summit**. They also exchanged views on **EU support for sustainable change in transition societies** and subsequently discussed the EU approach to **resilience**.*

*The Council adopted conclusions without debate on Europe's engagement with **civil society** in external relations, setting a renewed EU policy in support of civil society, with a focus on long-term partnerships with civil society organisations from partner countries. It also adopted conclusions on **social protection** in European Union development cooperation and on **financing for development**.*

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Ms Justine GREENING	Secretary of State for International Development

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Commission:	
Mr Štefan FÜLE	Member
Mr Andris PIEBALGS	Member
Ms Kristalina GEORGIEVA	Member

.....

The Government of the Acceding State was represented as follows:

Croatia:	
Ms Vesna PUSIĆ	Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED

Mali

The Council discussed the situation in Mali and adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The European Union (EU) remains concerned about the serious political and security crisis affecting Mali, in particular the situation in the north of the country, marked by the emergence and consolidation of a haven for terrorists, the oppression of local populations, human rights violations, particularly against women, the destruction of cultural heritage and the development of organised crime. This situation poses an immediate threat to the Sahel region and those living there, who are already suffering from an acute food crisis, as well as to West and North Africa and to Europe.

2. The EU welcomes the adoption by the United Nations Security Council of Resolution 2071 and the increasing international attention being focused on the Sahel and Mali, as also evidenced by the high-level meeting held in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly on 26 September 2012 and the development of a UN integrated strategy for the Sahel. It also welcomes the appointment of the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy and declares its intention to work closely with Romano Prodi. The EU calls for the mechanism for coordination with Mali's key partners to be extended in order to increase the effectiveness of support for the transition process on the political, security and economic fronts. To this end, the EU welcomes and stresses the importance of the meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group on Mali scheduled to be held in Bamako on 19 October 2012, at the initiative of the African Union (AU) and in consultation with the United Nations (UN) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

3. The EU is determined to support Mali in restoring the rule of law and re-establishing a fully sovereign democratic government with authority throughout Malian territory, for the benefit of the whole population. The EU welcomes the formation by the President of the Republic of Mali of a new Government of National Unity, as well as the efforts to mobilise the international community, notably the AU and ECOWAS, made by these new authorities in their contacts with all partners, in particular the EU.

4. In accordance with the principles approved by ECOWAS and the Support and Follow-up Group co-chaired by the UN and AU, and by United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2056 and 2071, the EU calls on the Government of National Unity to draw up a consensual road map as soon as possible, in consultation with all the political and civil society groups, to fully restore constitutional order and national unity. In particular this road map should allow the organisation of a democratic and credible electoral process, the prompt start of an inclusive national dialogue, including representatives of the northern populations, to prepare the re-establishment of the authority of the State in the north as peacefully as possible, and the reorganisation of the army under civilian control.

5. The EU reaffirms its commitment to contribute to the efforts being made by Mali to resolve this crisis, in cooperation with its regional and international partners, and accordingly to fully mobilise all its instruments within the framework of the EU strategy for security and development in the Sahel. Further to this:

– As soon as a credible road map has been adopted, the EU will gradually resume its development cooperation in the light of tangible progress. In the interim period, the EU will continue its operations to assist local populations and the democratic transition.

– The EU is prepared to support an inclusive national dialogue within Mali, aimed at the restoration of the rule of law in northern Mali, and to contribute to the stabilisation and reconstruction measures that such a dialogue would help give direction to.

– The EU and its Member States pledge to pursue their humanitarian efforts and will continue to monitor closely developments in the humanitarian situation in Mali and in neighbouring countries. The European Commission is prepared to significantly increase the amount of its aid in order to better meet the people's needs. The EU recalls the obligation to ensure that all humanitarian actors have free and unhindered access to vulnerable groups in the northern areas of the country.

– The Council invites the High Representative (HR) and the European Commission to examine other measures or additional actions which could help reduce the effects of the Mali crisis and its impact on neighbouring countries, and increase the resilience of vulnerable groups.

– The EU recalls the possibility of adopting, in close conjunction with ECOWAS, the AU and the UN, targeted sanctions against those involved in the armed groups in northern Mali and those hindering the return to constitutional order.

– In response to the request received from Mali and ECOWAS, the EU is convinced of the need for a rapid response to the security challenges and terrorist threat, within a framework to be defined by the United Nations Security Council. In this regard, the Council welcomes the HR's preliminary work on ways in which to provide possible support for rebuilding the Malian army's capacities, in line with the political objectives and action plan established by the international community and in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2071.

– The Council invites the HR and the European Commission to examine support for the involvement of regional partners, in particular the AU and ECOWAS, for example by providing rapid support in the field of planning. Subject to ECOWAS submitting a finalised concept, the Council invites the HR and the European Commission to examine the possibility of additional support, including financial support, such as mobilising the Peace Facility for Africa.

– The Council also requests that work on planning a possible CSDP military operation be pursued and extended as a matter of urgency, in particular by developing a crisis management concept relating to the reorganisation and training of the Malian defence forces, taking account of the conditions necessary for the success of any such mission, which include the full support of the Malian authorities and the definition of an exit strategy. This planning should take place in close collaboration with the organisations, in particular the UN, AU and ECOWAS, States and actors concerned, in order to ensure that their respective actions complement each other. The Council invites the HR to develop the crisis management concept ahead of its meeting on 19 November, and to present her recommendations at that meeting.

– As part of a global approach, the Council calls for use to be made of potential synergies with other EU actions in the region, in particular the EUCAP SAHEL Niger mission and its regional focus."

Southern neighbourhood

- Syria

The Council discussed the latest developments in Syria and adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The European Union stands by the Syrian people in its courageous struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy. The use of force by the Syrian regime against civilians, including by heavy weapons and aerial bombardments, has reached unprecedented levels and can only exacerbate further the violence and endanger the stability of the whole region. The EU recalls that the priorities should be to end oppression, stop all violence, deliver humanitarian aid for all those in need, prevent further regional instability and be prepared for the post-conflict period.

The EU underlines that those whose presence would undermine the political transition should be excluded and that President Assad, in this regard, has no place in the future of Syria.

The EU remains committed to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria.

2. The European Union remains deeply concerned by the spill-over effects of the Syrian crisis in neighbouring countries in terms of security and stability The EU strongly condemns the shelling by Syrian forces of the Turkish territory, particularly on the border town of Akçakale on 3 October. The EU calls on all to prevent escalation. The EU calls again on the Syrian authorities to fully respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all neighbouring countries.

3. Recalling that the main responsibility for the current crisis lies with the Syrian authorities, the EU warns against further militarisation and radicalisation of the conflict and sectarian violence which can only bring further suffering to Syria and risks having a tragic impact in the region. In this regard, the EU expresses concern about the protection of civilians, in particular vulnerable groups and religious communities. The intensification of violence and the recent series of terrorist attacks demonstrate the urgent need for a political transition that would meet the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people and bring stability in Syria. In this regard, the EU is deeply concerned about the increasing influx of weapons into Syria and calls on all States to refrain from delivering arms to the country.

The continuation and escalation of the crisis in Syria poses a threat to the wider regional stability.

4. The EU reiterates its full support for the endeavours of Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria and stands ready to strengthen its cooperation with him. The EU emphasises the need to focus international and regional efforts to solve the Syrian crisis through a political solution and calls on key actors in the region and all members of the UN Security Council to uphold their responsibilities and support Brahimi's efforts.

   The EU looks forward to the next meeting of the Friends of Syrian People Group to be held in Morocco to maintain international pressure on the Syrian regime.

5. In view of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and of the approaching winter, the EU recalls the moral imperative to step up assistance to all affected populations throughout Syria and neighbouring countries. The European Union expresses solidarity with the affected populations and neighbouring countries that have welcomed the refugees. The EU will continue to provide assistance and calls on all donors to increase their contributions to the latest UN appeals for funding humanitarian assistance and refugee assistance. The European Union urges donors to report their assistance and coordinate with the United Nations (OCHA) in order to maximise the effectiveness of the aid effort. All parties should allow full and safe access for the delivery of humanitarian aid in all parts of the country, and respect international humanitarian law. The European Union urges all parties to the conflict to respect in full their legal and moral obligations to protect civilians.

   Particularly alarmed by the dramatic and growing difficulties in the access in Syria to medical services, the EU urges all parties to commit themselves to respect in full the inviolability of all medical facilities, medical personnel and vehicles in respect of applicable international humanitarian law.

6. The EU is appalled by the deterioration of the situation in Syria and in particular by the widespread and systematic violations of human rights, international humanitarian law and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian authorities. In line with the UN Human Rights Council resolution on Syria adopted on 28 September, the EU calls upon all parties to put an end to all forms of violence and to take special measures to protect vulnerable groups such as children, as well as women and girls subject to gender based violence.

The EU welcomes the extension of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria and its strengthening through the nomination of two new members, Carla del Ponte and Vitit Muntarbhorn. The EU reaffirms its support to the Commission's investigations into alleged violations of international human rights law with a view to hold to account those responsible for such violations, including for those that may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes according to the definition of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The EU underlines the importance of documentation of the widespread, systematic and gross human rights violations and recalls that all those responsible must be held accountable. The EU reiterates its call to the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully with the Commission of Inquiry including by granting it full, immediate and unfettered access to the whole Syrian territory.

7. The EU recalls that an inclusive and coordinated opposition is essential to start a political transition. The EU continues to urge all opposition groups, inside and outside Syria, to put aside their differences and to agree on a set of shared principles and start working towards an inclusive, orderly and peaceful transition in Syria and to build upon the agreement on the "National Pact" and on a "Common Political Vision for transition in Syria". The EU will continue to work closely with the League of Arab States and facilitate further dialogue initiatives to complement its efforts to encourage the opposition towards forming an inclusive common platform. All Syrians must have a place in the new Syria and enjoy equal rights, regardless of their origin, affiliations, religion, beliefs or gender.

8. The EU commits to strengthening its support in building the capacity of civil society to participate in a future Syria, in line with the legitimate demands of the Syrian people for a more free, open and inclusive political system involving all Syrians. In this context, the EU also acknowledges the importance of the work of the local civilian bodies throughout Syria.

9. The EU approved today additional restrictive measures against Syria. The EU stands ready to engage with those seriously committed to a genuine democratic transition. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. The EU will also continue to urge the international community to join its efforts, in taking steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures on the Syrian regime and its supporters. In this context, the EU welcomes the fourth meeting of the International Group on Sanctions which was held in The Hague on 20 September. It calls on all Syrians to dissociate themselves from the repressive policy of the regime in order to facilitate a political transition.

10. The EU commits to working closely and comprehensively with international partners on planning to ensure the international community is ready to provide rapid support to Syria once transition takes place. In this respect, the EU underlines the importance of the establishment of a transitional body. The EU welcomes the second meeting of the Working Group on Economic Recovery and Development of the Friends of the Syrian People which was held in Berlin on 4 September 2012.

    The EU expresses concern about the destruction of Syrian cultural heritage.

    As soon as a genuine democratic transition begins, the EU stands ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria across all areas of mutual interest, including by contributing to a post-conflict needs assessment, mobilizing assistance, institution building, strengthening trade and economic relations and supporting transitional justice and the political transition.

11. Issues related to pressure created on the EU external borders will be addressed by the next Justice and Home Affairs Council."

Given the intensifying violence in Syria, the Council reinforced EU sanctions against the Syrian regime. For details, see press release *14793/12*.

- Egypt

The Council took stock of preparations for the task force meeting with Egypt, scheduled for 13 and 14 November in Cairo.

Middle East Peace Process

The Council took stock of the Middle East Peace Process, as a follow-up to events at the UN General Assembly in September.

Iran

The Council discussed the situation in Iran and adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The Council reiterates its serious and deepening concerns over Iran's nuclear programme and the urgent need for Iran to comply with all its international obligations, including full implementation by Iran of UNSC and IAEA Board of Governors' Resolutions.

2. The Council condemns the continuing production of enriched uranium and expansion of Iran's enrichment capacity, including at the Fordow site, and continued heavy-water activities in breach of UNSC and IAEA Board of Governors' Resolutions, as reflected in the most recent IAEA report. The Council notes with particular concern Iran's obstruction of the IAEA work towards the clarification of all outstanding issues, including with respect to the possible military dimension to Iran's nuclear programme. Therefore, the Council welcomes the adoption with overwhelming majority by the IAEA Board of Governors of its Resolution on 13 September 2012 deciding that Iran's cooperation was essential and urgent in order to restore international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

3. Iran is acting in flagrant violation of its international obligations and continues to refuse to fully co-operate with the IAEA to address the concerns on its nuclear programme. In this context, and in coherence with previous European Council and Council conclusions, the Council has agreed additional restrictive measures in the financial, trade, energy and transport sectors, as well as additional designations, notably of entities active in the oil and gas industry. In particular, the Council has agreed to prohibit all transactions between European and Iranian banks, unless authorised in advance under strict conditions with exemptions for humanitarian needs. In addition, the Council has decided to strengthen the restrictive measures against the Central Bank of Iran. Further export restrictions have been imposed, notably for graphite, metals, software for industrial processes, as well as measures relating to the ship building industry.

4. The restrictive measures agreed today are aimed at affecting Iran's nuclear programme and revenues of the Iranian regime used to fund the programme and are not aimed at the Iranian people. The Iranian regime itself can act responsibly and bring these sanctions to an end. As long as it does not do so, the Council remains determined to increase, in close coordination with international partners, pressure on Iran in the context of the dual track approach.

5. The Council reaffirms the longstanding commitment of the European Union to work for a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue in accordance with the dual track approach.

6. The Council reaffirms that the objective of the EU remains to achieve a comprehensive, negotiated, long-term settlement, which would build international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme, while respecting Iran's legitimate rights to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in conformity with the NPT, and fully taking into account UN Security Council and IAEA Board of Governors' Resolutions. The Council welcomes the determination for a diplomatic solution expressed by E3+3 Foreign Ministers on 27 September in New York and fully endorses the efforts led by the High Representative on behalf of the E3+3 in this regard. E3+3 have made a credible and substantial confidence building proposal for negotiations guided by the agreed principles of reciprocity and a step by step approach. The Council urges Iran to engage constructively, by focussing on reaching an agreement on concrete confidence building steps, negotiating seriously and addressing the concerns of the international community."

In addition, the Council significantly broadened the EU restrictive measures motivated by the EU's serious and deepening concern about the Iranian nuclear programme. For details, see press release *14803/12*.

Follow-up to the EU-China summit

The Council exchanged views on the outcome of the EU-China summit of 20 September, in view of the European Council of 18 and 19 October and the discussion leaders will have on relations with strategic partners.

Eastern neighbourhood

- Belarus

During lunch, ministers discussed the situation in Belarus in the wake of the parliamentary elections of 23 September. The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. Recalling the Council conclusions of 31 January 2011, 20 June 2011 and 23 March 2012, the Council notes the importance which it attaches to this country which neighbours the EU and to the citizens of that country, and remains gravely concerned about the lack of respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law in Belarus.

2. Referring to the Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Štefan Füle, the Council regrets that the Parliamentary elections of 23 September 2012, which took place against an overall background of repression, represented another missed opportunity for Belarus to hold elections in line with OSCE and international standards. It calls on the Belarusian authorities to address the recommendations made by the OSCE/ODIHR, to cooperate fully to that end with the OSCE/ODIHR, and to permit the return of an OSCE Office to Belarus.

3. The Council reiterates its calls for the immediate release and rehabilitation of all remaining political prisoners. It notes the release of Syarhei Kavalenka as a positive signal, but regrets that this was conditional on request for a Presidential pardon. The Council also remains deeply concerned about decisions concerning additional prison sentences and continued reports of mistreatment of political prisoners.

4. The Council again calls upon the Belarusian authorities to stop the harassment of civil society, the political opposition and the independent media. The Council urges the Belarusian authorities to comply with the Human Rights Council Resolution 20/13, including to implement all recommendations contained in the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights of April 2012 and to cooperate fully with the new UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus.

5. As not all political prisoners have been released and no released prisoner has been rehabilitated, and against the background of the lack of improvement as regards the respect for human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles, the Council decided to prolong the existing restrictive measures until 31 October 2013. In this context, the Council recalls its Conclusions of 23 March 2012 and reiterates that its policy on restrictive measures remains open and under constant review.

6. In the spirit of EU solidarity, the Council again calls on Belarus to respect fully internationally recognised diplomatic privileges and immunities of EU Member States' diplomatic representations and their personnel in Belarus, including to allow them to perform fully their functions.

7. The Council reiterates its firm commitment to strengthening the EU's engagement with the Belarusian people and civil society. The Council expresses its continued full support for and the intention to further elaborate the “European Dialogue on Modernisation”. It notes that the European Dialogue has stimulated a substantial debate among representatives of Belarusian society with a view to proposing concrete ideas on the reform needs and encourages the authorities of Belarus to engage in the discussions.

8. The Council reiterates the EU's readiness to launch negotiations for visa facilitation and readmission agreements which would enhance people-to-people contacts to the benefit of the Belarusian population at large, and regrets the absence of response from the Belarusian authorities to Commission's invitation in June 2011 to start negotiations. Meanwhile, the Council welcomes that EU Member States continue to make optimal use of the existing flexibilities offered by the Visa Code, in particular the possibilities to waive and reduce visa fees for certain categories of Belarusian citizens or in individual cases and would welcome the possibilities to explore ways to further reduce visa fees for Belarusian citizens.

9. The Council reiterates its commitment to the policy of critical engagement, including through dialogue and participation in the Eastern Partnership, and recalls that the development of bilateral relations under the Eastern Partnership is conditional on progress towards respect by Belarus for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The Council reiterates the EU's willingness to assist Belarus to meet its obligations in this regard."

In addition, it extended EU restrictive measures against Belarus by 12 more months. For more information on EU-Belarus relations, see *factsheet European Union and Belarus*.

- Georgia

During lunch, ministers discussed the situation in Georgia in the wake of the parliamentary elections of 1 October. The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The Council welcomes the parliamentary elections which took place in Georgia on 1 October 2012, and congratulates the Georgian people on this significant step towards the consolidation of democracy in their country. The Council takes note of OSCE-ODIHR's generally positive preliminary assessment of the conduct of these elections, and commits to support Georgia in implementing OSCE-ODIHR's recommendations.

2. The Council calls on all Georgian state institutions and political parties to work together constructively during the coming period of transition, with a view to assuring stability, the rule of law, human rights and good governance, in full respect of the democratically-expressed will of the people and the respective responsibilities of the Parliament and President under the Georgian Constitution. The Council welcomes the early establishment of contact between the sides, and the commitments made by representatives of both the incoming and outgoing administrations to an efficient and transparent political transition.

3. The Council confirms the EU's engagement, within the Eastern Partnership, to work towards political association and economic integration with Georgia, and reaffirms the EU's commitment to the shared objective of visa free travel in due course, provided that the conditions for well managed and secure mobility are in place. The Council acknowledges the European aspirations and European choice of Georgia, and looks forward to continued close cooperation with Georgia on our ambitious mutual agenda. In this context, the Council also recalls the joint statement of the Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers' meeting of 23 July 2012, which referred to the Roadmap as constituting a basis for guiding the monitoring and further implementation of the Eastern Partnership.

4. The EU stands ready to provide support and advice to the new administration, and to continue technical dialogue, with a view to ensuring continuity and maintaining momentum in the negotiations of an Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, and in measures taken in the context of the ongoing visa dialogue. The Council underlines its commitment to EU support for the necessary internal reforms by Georgia in these areas. The Council looks forward to a visit by the new Prime Minister at the earliest opportunity.

5. The Council stresses the critical importance of both an effective parliamentary opposition and a vibrant civil society to democratic development, and reiterates its intention to continue to support capacity building in these areas.

6. The Council reiterates its firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. The EU looks forward to continued engagement by Georgia in the Geneva International Discussions, and to the pursuit by Georgia of an effective policy in engaging with the breakaway regions. The EU reconfirms its commitment to remain engaged and involved in stabilisation and conflict resolution efforts in Georgia, including by continuing its engagement as co-chair in the Geneva discussions, the efforts of the EUSR, and the continued presence on the ground of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM). The Council calls on Georgia to continue to support the return of an OSCE Mission to Georgia."

Preparing the post Millennium Development Goals/2015 framework - Rio +20 follow-up

Development ministers discussed which principles should underpin a comprehensive EU approach to the post-2015 development agenda and the Rio+20 follow-up. They addressed several issues, including how to engage in the future development agenda taking into account lessons learnt from the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. Several ministers notably stressed the importance of maintaining poverty eradication as the key focus of the future development agenda, while addressing possible gaps in the existing MDGs framework, such as human rights, governance, accountability, sustainable growth as well as fragility and conflict or post-conflict situations.

Ministers also exchanged views on future sustainable development goals in the post-2015 development agenda. Several ministers also expressed their views on how the EU could promote an integrated approach to financing and other means of implementation, including through public-private partnerships.

Many ministers also touched upon the importance of agreeing a common EU position on the post-2015 development agenda and the Rio+20 follow-up. Outreach to strategic partner countries in relevant international negotiations will also be essential.

This debate will feed into the preparation of a Commission communication on the post-2015 development agenda. The communication is expected in early January 2013 and will be the basis of subsequent discussions.

EU support for sustainable change in transition societies

Development ministers discussed how best to provide support for sustainable change to countries undergoing major political, social and economic reforms - the so-called transition countries, on the basis of the Commission communication (*14662/12*).

Ministers discussed ways to take full advantage of the rich transition experience and expertise EU Member States have themselves, including through a broader use of the European transition compendium online database.

Several ministers insisted on the importance of country ownership to ensure the success of transition processes. The EU response should be based on country needs and adapted to each situation. The EU should also identify incentives to effectively support reforms, on the basis of the principle "more for more" (more support for greater and faster reforms).

This debate will feed into the preparation of Council conclusions that will establish the EU approach to support for sustainable change in transition countries at a later Council meeting.

The EU approach to resilience

Development ministers discussed ways of addressing chronic vulnerability and building resilience to crises on the basis of the joint communication "The EU approach to resilience: learning from food security crises" (*14616/12*).

Ministers exchanged views on how to improve the effectiveness of EU support for reducing vulnerability in food insecure and disaster prone countries. They underlined the importance of including resilience as a central aim of EU external aid, at the interface of humanitarian and development assistance.

This debate will inform the preparation of Council conclusions that will set out the EU approach to resilience.

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The Council adopted a *declaration* on the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Participation agreement with Kosovo

The Council authorised the Commission to open negotiations for a framework agreement with Kosovo* concerning its participation in Union programmes and adopted negotiating directives.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council reiterates its unequivocal support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective as a sovereign and united country enjoying full territorial integrity. It reaffirms its commitment to the March 2011, October 2011, December 2011 and June 2012 Conclusions. The Council welcomes the reconfiguration of Operation Althea, completed by 1 September 2012, with a reduced number of forces based in Bosnia and Herzegovina successfully focusing on capacity-building and training while also retaining the capability to contribute to the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities' deterrence capacity if the situation so requires. It expresses its concern about the current political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but recognizes that the security environment has remained calm and stable, and notes that the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities have so far proven capable to deal with threats to the safe and secure environment. In this context, as part of the overall EU strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Council confirms the EU's readiness to continue at this stage an executive military role to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to maintain the safe and secure environment, under a renewed UN mandate."

Appointments in United Nations bodies

The Council adopted revised guidelines on the criteria for selection procedures in UN system organizations, the EU coordination of applications and support for third country candidates.

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* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Eritrea - restrictive measures

The Council implemented changes to the UN sanctions regime against Eritrea in EU law. Accordingly, it exempted protective clothing for the use of UN personnel and supplies of non-lethal military equipment intended solely for humanitarian use from the existing arms embargo against Eritrea.

Somalia - restrictive measures

Following changes decided in the UN Security Council, the Council amended the restrictive measures in view of the situation in Somalia. It added two persons to the list of those targeted with a ban from entering the EU and an asset freeze and that are prevented from buying weapons and military equipment in the EU. At the same time, it exempted the weapons intended for the use of the UN political office for Somalia from the existing arms embargo against Somalia.

Relations with Lebanon

The Council adopted the EU position for the sixth meeting of the Association Council with Lebanon, to take place on 17 October in Brussels.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations

The Council adopted conclusions on "The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations" (*14451/12*), setting out a renewed EU policy in support of civil society, with a focus on long-term partnerships with civil society organisations from partner countries. In particular, the Council recognises the crucial role of an empowered civil society as an asset for any democracy and as a key element for contributing to more effective policies, equitable development and inclusive growth.

Social protection in European Union development cooperation

The Council adopted conclusions on social protection in European Union development cooperation (*14444/12*). In particular, the Council recognises the transformative role of social protection policies by fostering equity, promoting social inclusion and dialogue with social partners. Its conclusions set guiding principles for future EU development cooperation in the field of social protection, on the basis of a differentiated approach, taking into account partner countries' needs, priorities and capacities, and with the objective of supporting the development of inclusive and nationally-owned social protection policies and programmes.

Financing for development

The Council adopted conclusions on financing for development (*14272/12*), in particular confirming the commitments of EU and its member states in this area, as well as their comprehensive approach to supporting developing countries in mobilising financing from all available sources in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Annual report 2012 on the EU's development and external assistance policies in 2011

The Council adopted conclusions on the annual report 2012 on the European Union’s development and external assistance policies and their implementation in 2011 (*13107/12*).

African Peace Facility: endorsement of African Union requests

The Council agreed that the EU should endorse the request made by the African Union to replenish the African Peace Facility (APF) by reallocating EUR 100 million from the general reserves of the 10th European development fund to the peace support operations envelope of the APF. This will be the position of the EU within the ACP-EU committee of ambassadors. For more information, see *13933/1/12*.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Visa facilitation agreement with Cape Verde

The Council adopted a decision on the signature of the agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Cape Verde on facilitating the issue of short-stay visas to citizens of Cape Verde and of the European Union *(14202/12),* on the basis of reciprocity and for an intended stay of no more than 90 days per period of 180 days (*14203/12)*.

Visa facilitation agreements usually go hand in hand with readmission agreements between the EU and third countries. The readmission agreement with Cape Verde is expected to be signed in early 2013, and both agreements will enter into force on the same day, most likely before summer 2013.

The visa facilitation agreement will be sent to the European Parliament with a view to obtaining its consent before it can be concluded. The UK, Ireland and Denmark are not bound by the agreement.

WRITTEN PROCEDURE

Public access to Council documents

On 9 October 2012, the European Council adopted by written procedure the reply to confirmatory application 19/c/01/12 (EUCO 181/12).