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NOTE

from : The future Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies
to : Delegations

Subject : 18 month programme of the Council

Delegations will find attached the final version of the 18 month programme of the Council, prepared by the future Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies.

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<p>18 MONTH PROGRAMME</p> <p>OF THE SPANISH, BELGIAN AND HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCIES</p>

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the combined programme of the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies covering the period January 2010 to June 2011. It is presented in two parts. The first part contains the strategic framework for the programme, setting it in a wider context, and specifically within the perspective of more long-term objectives running into the subsequent three Presidencies. For this reason, in accordance with the Council's rules of procedure, the future Polish, Danish and Cypriot Presidencies have been consulted on this section. The second part constitutes the operational programme setting out the issues which are expected to be covered during the 18 month period.

The three Presidencies will exercise their respective functions on the basis of the new Treaty which entered into force on 1 December 2009. They will make every effort to ensure a smooth functioning of the new rules and provisions. This implies very close cooperation between the three Presidencies and between them and the new President of the European Council and the HR who will chair the Foreign Affairs Council. At the same time, the Presidencies will rely very much on the input provided by the new Commission on the basis of the political guidelines set out by its President in September 2009 and its work programme. They will also work very closely together with the European Parliament, whose role has been greatly enhanced by the Treaty of Lisbon.

PART I

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

In a rapidly changing world, we are confronted with a number of unprecedented challenges that need to be addressed collectively and with determination. Only by acting together within the framework of our European Union will we be able to play a leading role and exercise a significant influence on major issues at the global level.

We need to work towards a Union closer to its citizens and their concerns. We will therefore promote targeted policies that directly benefit citizens. In doing so, we can build upon the achievements of the past as well as on the economic, social and cultural resources including cultural diversity, which are unique to Europe.

The coming 18 months will be decisive for laying the ground for a fully sustainable growth model which responds effectively to current and future challenges. The Treaty of Lisbon will improve the Union's capacity to address these challenges in a more efficient way.

The task ahead of us is to build a more united and a more integrated Europe, a Europe capable of facing global challenges.

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The **revision of the Lisbon Strategy** is a major priority. Our ambition is to launch a new strategic policy framework in order to build a Europe capable of mastering the crisis, promoting sustainable growth and employment as well as innovation and competitiveness, strengthening social, economic and territorial cohesion, fighting climate change and enhancing energy security.

The development of a new Strategy will take full account of the progress reports on the European and national recovery plans. It will feed into the implementation of the European Employment Strategy in the light of demographic and environmental challenges. The post-2010 Lisbon Strategy must respond to the diversity of the EU. In particular, it should be better articulated with a strong cohesion policy and contribute to the catching-up of disadvantaged territorial units and social groups. One of the key objectives of the new Strategy must be to tackle the negative economic and social effects of the financial crisis.

Research&Development&Innovation should continue to play a key role in this respect, on the basis of the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon. Full use should also be made of a strong and well functioning Single Market, including the full implementation of the four freedoms. Europe needs a strengthened industrial base, a modernised service sector and a thriving rural economy.

The new Strategy should set realistic common targets for the next ten years, laying special emphasis on growth and jobs. It should also include a review of all implementation mechanisms in order to ensure more coherent and effective policymaking. In particular, we need to ensure a strengthened involvement of relevant stakeholders, including at the local and regional levels, in order to best deliver growth and jobs. The three Presidencies would be fully prepared to examine possible new initiatives by the Commission and welcome in particular the announced "EU 2020 Strategy" and a possible quality framework on services of general interest.

The financial crisis has demonstrated weaknesses in the **economic and financial system**. Financial markets must be better regulated and supervised. In particular, it is important rapidly to finalise work on the legislative proposals setting up the European Systemic Risk Board and the European Supervisory Authorities so that these are up and running by the end of 2010.

Work will need to be swiftly completed on important issues such as transparency, including improved methods for asset valuation and improved financial decision-making, strengthening the prudential framework (capital requirements and provisions), including countercyclical elements; and strengthening of the infrastructure of capital markets. The three presidencies will carry on with the strengthening of the single market in financial services.

Appropriate coordinated and country-specific exit strategies from both monetary and fiscal stimulus will need to be carefully devised, implemented and monitored to ensure the right conditions for a return to strong growth, sustainable public finances, a supportive economic and financial environment, employment and improved social cohesion.

On all of these issues, the EU must continue to develop coordinated positions and play a leading role on the global scene, in particular within the G20 and at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Special attention should be given to the role and responsibility of the Euro-zone.

On the basis of the Commission's assessment of progress to date as well as a broad consultation process with Member States, social partners and civil society, the three Presidencies will have a fresh look at the **renewed social agenda** dated July 2008. Future social action should have a wide remit, including the commitments undertaken within the European Youth Pact and the Youth Strategy, the European Pact for Gender Equality and the European Pact for the Family.

Particular attention should be given to the implementation of the EU Health Strategy for 2008-2013.

2010 will be the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The fight against poverty and social marginalization will constitute a major objective, with particular attention being paid to the unemployed, children in poverty, the working poor and one-parent families. The European Year for Voluntary Activities 2011 will also play an important role.

Fighting discrimination and promoting integration are shared basic values throughout the European Union. Gender equality is a key concern and will be mainstreamed throughout the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy. A new Plan for the equality of women and men will be launched. Priority will be given to the question of violence against women and the follow-up of the implementation of the European Pact on Gender Equality. Other key social issues concern the mainstreaming of policies for people with disabilities, taking into account the application of universal accessibility in order to achieve their full participation; the fight against social and fiscal fraud; the social and economic integration of the Roma; the promotion of the European social model within the framework of multilateral and bilateral external relations; and the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda promoted by the ILO.



The implementation and possible review of the **energy and climate package** is a top priority for the three Presidencies. The EU will have to maintain its leadership role in international negotiations on climate change, in the light of the outcome reached at the Copenhagen Conference (COP 15). This outcome will be assessed early in 2010, paying special attention to its effects on the European industry and economy and on the citizens.

A new 2010-2014 Energy Action Plan for Europe will be elaborated with a view to its adoption at the Spring 2010 European Council. The new Energy Plan will be the framework within which European energy policy will continue to be developed and strengthened. Special attention will be given to territorial and social cohesion as far as access to energy supply is concerned. The three Presidencies will promote and intensify actions to improve and promote renewable energy, the energy efficiency of buildings, energy infrastructures, eco-friendly means of transport and products.

Energy security will remain a key issue. A new EU Energy Security and Infrastructure Instrument will be adopted, focusing on the diversification of energy sources, origins of supply and transit routes, as well as on identifying and promoting the development of interconnection projects. Particular attention must be given to a higher degree of solidarity between Member States in the case of an emergency. Regional or bilateral solidarity arrangements addressing disruption of supplies must be enhanced. Given the importance of energy efficiency in strengthening energy security and tackling climate change, an ambitious renewed Energy Efficiency Action Plan will be adopted.

In the context of the evaluation of the common **transport** policy, eco-friendly means of transport and the improvement of intermodality will be pursued. Moreover, priority will be given to the revision of the Trans-European Transport Networks.

The halt of loss of **biodiversity**, including the protection of forests against natural hazards, remains a priority that will lead to the elaboration of a comprehensive European Biodiversity Strategy for the period beyond 2010. Another emerging important theme will be the development of a sustainable use of natural resources, in particular of sustainable water management, essential in providing universal access to clean and safe water both to the European population and the ecosystems.

The **cohesion policy** remains an EU solidarity instrument in order to help the convergence of Member States and regions, alleviate structural difficulties, strengthen competitiveness. Future cohesion policy will continue to contribute to the basic objectives laid down in the Treaty.

In this context, the launching and implementation of the EU strategy for the **Danube region** will be of exemplary importance. The three Presidencies are in favour of developing and applying a new strategy for the **Outermost Regions**.

Agriculture is a strategic sector that has crucial importance for the functioning of other economic sectors and serves as a basis for the economic and social development of rural areas. The upcoming discussions on the **Common Agricultural Policy** after 2013 will be decisive. Reinforcing both pillars of the Common Agricultural Policy and promoting food security, safety, sustainability and innovation, as well as responding to global challenges will be core concerns of the future reform.

Marine resources must be used and exploited in a sustainable manner. Therefore, the reform of the **Common Fisheries Policy** will be key to the survival of this economic sector. Its main purpose will be the management of fishing activities in order to ensure its economic, social and environmental viability, keeping in mind that the most important negative factors are over-fishing and overcapacity of the fleet.

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The three Presidencies will focus on the effective implementation of the new multi-annual programme for the development of the area of **Freedom, Security and Justice (Stockholm Programme.)** The challenge will be to ensure respect for fundamental freedoms and privacy, while enjoying the highest possible level of protection and security in Europe. Striking the right balance between law enforcement measures and measures to safeguard individual rights, the rule of law and international protection rules will be of paramount importance. The achievement of a European area of **Justice** will be further consolidated. Priority will be given to mechanisms that facilitate people's access to the courts, ensuring fair and simple access by all to justice. Special attention will be paid to the application of the overarching principle of mutual recognition and to the harmonization and consolidation of legislation. Further deepening and, on the basis of the agreed criteria, enlargement of the Schengen area will be pursued.

The development of a forward looking and comprehensive European **Immigration and Asylum policy** will remain a key objective of the European Union. The European Pact on Immigration and Asylum will be the basis for further developments in this field as well as the actions planned for the implementation of the Global Approach to Migration.

Improving the **security** in the Union and protecting the lives and safety of European citizens remains a top priority. The fight against terrorism, organized and cross-border crime, trafficking in human beings and drug trafficking, will be further pursued through more effective cooperation between Member States, the EU institutions and competent agencies. Lastly, the external dimension of these policies will be further enhanced.



The **enlargement process** will continue in the context of the renewed consensus on enlargement. The conclusion of the Accession negotiations with Croatia and the signature and ratification of the Accession Treaty will be high on the Agenda. Efforts will be made to create the conditions that will enable more sustained and visible progress in the accession negotiations with Turkey. The accession application by FYROM will be followed-up. The Presidencies will address the three applications for membership by Albania, Iceland and Montenegro according to the provisions of the Treaty.

The EU will continue strengthening the European perspective of the **Western Balkans**, through the Stabilization and Association Process and the Thessaloniki Agenda. Using all the instruments at its disposal, the EU will help the region's stability and prosperity.

The security, stability and prosperity of Europe will also be promoted through the full implementation of the **European Neighbourhood Policy** with a view to facilitating sustainable economic development and stability in the area. Both the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean will be enhanced in a coordinated and balanced manner.

The EU will strive to improve the effectiveness, coherence, and visibility of the **external action of the EU** in order to enhance the development of an authentic, effective multilateral system. This will be done taking into account the EU's interests and projecting the set of inalienable values on which the EU's shared project and security are based. The creation of the new post of High Representative and the setting up of the European External Action Service will allow to strengthen the EU's role on the global scene. The EU's relations with its most important **bilateral and regional** partners will continue to be developed, in particular through the organisation of meetings at the highest political level.

The **Common Commercial policy** remains an important aspect of the EU's multilateral action. The EU will continue pursuing a double track approach, working towards a global, comprehensive and balanced agreement on the Doha Round, while at the same time continuing to pursue regional and bilateral trade agreements and pushing for further improvement of market access.

The protection and promotion of **human rights and fundamental freedoms** and their full integration in all EU policies will continue to be a priority for the EU in external relations.

The EU is the world's larger donor and trading partner and as such it will continue to encourage the achievement of international commitments on quantity and quality of aid as well as strategic partnership with developing countries, particularly with regard to the **Millennium Development Goals**. Special attention will be paid to the needs of developing countries in the context of global financial and economic crisis. Their adaptation capacity to climate change and the means they devote to biodiversity conservation, food security and sustainable development should be strengthened.

The development of **civil and military capabilities** will be further pursued. The European Union should be in a position further to contribute to crisis management and the stabilization and resolution of conflicts through the use of the above-mentioned capabilities. The EU will continue to cooperate closely with the United Nations, NATO, OSCE, AU and other regional organizations in the area of crisis management.

The three Presidencies will support the development of **consular protection** for all European citizens, not only outside of the territory of the European Union but also during their circulation and residency in other Member States.

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The challenges and objectives listed above can only be tackled if the EU has the necessary **tools to implement its ambitions**.

The budget review offers the opportunity to discuss how to adapt the Union's financial means to its ambitions, so as to design a budget that is driven by common policies and reflects the Union's new challenges.

In order to prepare the next financial perspective the three Presidencies, in cooperation with the Commission, will debate both the future of the Union's resources and of EU policies such as cohesion, agriculture, energy, environment and research & development & innovation, as well as EU external action, in line with the provisions of the Treaties and the conclusions of the European Council of December 2005.

The **Treaty of Lisbon** which entered into force on 1 December 2009 will allow the Union to function more effectively and more democratically, thanks notably to streamlined decision-making procedures and the new legal bases it offers. The three Presidencies will continue the necessary work to ensure that the Treaty is fully and comprehensively implemented.

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PART II

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

GENERAL AFFAIRS - HORIZONTAL ISSUES

A new Treaty

The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty has given to the Union a new legal framework for its action. The preparatory work in view of its implementation allowed for the smooth entry into force. A certain number of provisions still need to be implemented or finalised. The President of the European Council, the three Presidencies, the Commission, and the High Representative will therefore continue this work as a matter of urgency.

The possibilities provided by the new treaty, notably as regards the right of initiatives of the citizens, the accession of the EU to the European Convention of Human rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the new role given to the national parliaments should be fully used.

The post-2010 Lisbon Strategy (EU 2020)

The revision of the existing **Lisbon Strategy** will be a key priority for the three Presidencies. On the basis of the Commission's proposals for the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy, and taking into account the work of the Reflection Group headed by Felipe González as well as the contribution of the European Parliament and the consultative bodies (EESC, CoR), the three Presidencies will work on a framework in order to deliver on the challenges that matter most to Europe's citizens.

This policy framework will address the future economic, employment, social, environmental challenges and the issue of targets for the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy with special attention to growth and jobs. In terms of governance, the European Council itself will continue to play a central role in guiding the process.

The revision of the existing Lisbon Strategy will address all aspects of the implementation mechanisms, including governance and the involvement of different stakeholders.

In the wake of the financial, economic and employment crisis the new Strategy will certainly take into account the results of the first assessments of the impact of the European and national recovery plans. Other components and elements to be considered in the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy will be elaborated in more detail under the respective headings.

The proper functioning and deepening of the internal market is essential. It is our common goal to accomplish a fully integrated internal market where the four freedoms are properly ensured.

Climate change / energy security

The **fight against climate change** requires the transformation of the present development model into one of low carbon emissions, creating a reduction in dependence on fossil fuels. This will increase energy security and contribute to strengthening new areas of economic activity. The necessary mitigation of GHG emissions and adaptation to climate change are mutually inclusive, and bearing this in mind it is vital to design an appropriate action plan that is coordinated and effective. In this way, actions to cope with climate change present an opportunity to strengthen the sustainable dimension of sectoral policies, of which the most important are Energy Policy, Transport Policy, Research&Development&Innovation Policy, Cohesion Policy, Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), as well as migration policy and the resulting financial implications. The EU should also continue its active role in strengthening international cooperation.

The three Presidencies will devote their utmost attention to the follow-up to the Copenhagen Conference.

In order to strengthen **energy security**, that is also important for the EU's economic development, efforts for interconnection and diversification of energy suppliers, sources and supply routes must intensify. With a view to addressing supply disruptions, further flexible, efficient and transparent crisis response mechanisms for oil and gas supplies should be developed. Energy efficiency, including the revision of the Energy Efficiency Action Plan, is one of the key means towards strengthening energy security. It is vital to identify and remove barriers to investments in interconnection projects, renewable energies and the sustainable use of fossil fuels. External relations in the energy field play a very important role. Diversification of ways and means should be developed. Therefore the Union should "speak with one voice" on external energy issues in their dialogues with supplier, transit and consumer countries.

The mid-term review of the financial framework / next financial perspective

The three Presidencies will pay full attention to the EU Budget and Policies review process currently under way. This process constitutes an opportunity to discuss how the European budget should adapt to the challenges which must be addressed by all Member States. The result must be a budget that is driven by common policies and reflects the Union's new challenges.

In that context and with a view to preparing the next financial framework, the three Presidencies, in cooperation with the Commission, will debate the future of own resources and EU's 2020 strategy objectives and spending common policies, such as Research & Development & Innovation, energy, environment, external assistance, cohesion policy and agriculture. This will be done in line with the provisions of the Treaties and of the conclusions of the European Council 2005.

Furthermore the three Presidencies will concentrate their efforts on ensuring that the discussion on EU own resources and expenditures will be held simultaneously, respecting the principles of sufficiency, graduality, equity and solidarity while the balance of reforms and stability in expenditure must be kept.

Cohesion policy, territorial cohesion and urban development

Cohesion Policy aims at helping reduce disparities between the levels of development of the various regions - thereby laying the ground for the balanced and sustainable economic, social and territorial development. This remains important for the future. At the same time, it is also an important tool for the implementation of the single market and the single currency.

The three Presidencies will strive to develop a wide-ranging and in-depth debate on regional policy after 2014. This will provide an opportunity to analyse and thoroughly discuss the Strategic Report 2010 and the 5th Cohesion Report.

The Presidencies will take forward work on the future of the policy with special regard to its structure and the simplification of its rules and procedures. They will act together in order to evaluate and revise the aspects of the territorial dimension of the Cohesion Policy and the territorial agenda to be adopted in 2011.

In terms of urban development, the three Presidencies will continue work on the implementation of the Leipzig Charter. Priority topics will include integrated urban regeneration, urban dimension of climate change, economic crisis and demography challenges.

Concerning housing policies, especially in urban areas, the Presidencies will focus on the issues of social cohesion, quality of housing and energy efficiency of buildings, especially on urban regeneration programmes.

Danube strategy

The European Council invited the Commission in June 2009 to present an **EU strategy for the Danube region** before the end of 2010. The three Presidencies will take forward this initiative which corresponds well with the goals of sustainable development. The specific challenges should be dealt with in an integrated approach, whilst respecting the individual circumstances of each Member State involved. Environmental, transport, socio-economic and cultural development aspects of this region as well as the external dimension of this Strategy will certainly be addressed in this context, covering the States participating in the Danube Co-operation process. They should be complementary to already existing EU policies for the region.

Outermost regions

The three Presidencies consider it necessary to explore the opportunity of a **new EU strategy for the Outermost Regions**, in accordance with the parameters established in the Commission's Communication 'The Outermost Regions: an advantage for Europe' of 17 October 2008. In this regard they look forward to the adoption of proposals by the Commission.

Integrated maritime policy

The three Presidencies will take forward the work towards the establishment of an **EU integrated maritime policy** and will take up work on any proposals and initiatives outlined in the Blue Book submitted by the Commission.

Enlargement

The three Presidencies will take forward the work on enlargement in line with the December 2006 European Council conclusions.

In case the accession negotiations with **Croatia** are concluded, the Presidencies will ensure a rapid finalisation of the Accession Treaty and a smooth integration of the new Member State. The accession negotiations with **Turkey** will actively be taken forward in line with relevant Council Conclusions, and the accession application by FYROM will be followed-up.

The three applications for membership by **Albania, Iceland and Montenegro** will be examined according to the provisions of the Treaty.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Economic policy coordination

As the recovery takes hold after the financial crisis and the ensuing recession, the Council will need to pay close attention to ensuring a coherent and coordinated approach to restoring the conditions for robust and sustained growth. This approach will need to address structural weaknesses in the economy and enhance potential growth rates, building on a solid foundation of macroeconomic stability, through a comprehensive strategy of structural improvements. In particular, the three Presidencies will focus on the follow up of the European Economic Recovery Plan, including financial rescue plans, appropriate exit from state support measures, budgetary policies and structural reforms. Special attention should be paid to economic policy coordination, to generate synergies, tackling persistent distortions to the Single Market and ensure an adequate effective level-playing field; single market aspects are very important.

The three Presidencies will ensure that the Stability and Growth Pact continues to be applied in a economically sound manner, contributing to the progressive re-orientation of fiscal policies towards sustainability. Additional steps need to be taken to lay the foundation for more balanced sustainable growth. In this context, the three Presidencies will put particular emphasis on exit strategies aimed at facilitating the return to normal conditions in the markets and avoiding a reversal of the progress made in stabilising the financial sector. These strategies will ensure consistency between short term measures meant to support and sustain the economic recovery, and the key requirements to enhance the quality of public finance and to make adequate provisions for the costs of an ageing population. They should be implemented in a coordinated manner, taking into account the specific situations of individual countries.

Financial markets and services

The focus of the sector will in the immediate future be on the coordination of financial sector support packages and exit strategies in order to take into account potential spill-over effects.

The EU has already taken unprecedented measures to restore stability to financial markets and to get credit flowing again. These must be matched by an extensive reform of financial services regulation to prevent a repeat of the crisis and to rebuild trust in the financial industry. The emphasis will be on measures to promote propriety, integrity and transparency and to safeguard against system-wide threats and excessive risk-taking.

A new European framework for macro- and micro-prudential supervision is of paramount importance. At the micro-prudential level it is urgent to set up the European Supervisory Authorities (ESAs) for banking, insurance and securities. At the macro-prudential level, the European Systemic Risk Board will monitor and assess potential threats to financial stability. The new body should be fully operational by the end of 2010. International macroeconomic coordination based upon a close cooperation of the IMF, the FSB and the supervisory authorities, should be a priority in order to avoid a repetition of the crisis.

In the longer term perspective, work should concentrate on correcting the weaknesses in financial services regulation, made apparent by the financial crisis. In order to ensure a level-playing field for operators in the financial markets and services, the EU must make its best to ensure that the introduction of any new measures in financial markets and services are well coordinated with other key players in the market and do not lead to unfair competition, in order to promote globally stable and competitive markets.

International aspects

The follow-up to the agreement on climate change (Copenhagen UNFCCC Conference) will have to be ensured.

The EIB external mandate Mid Term Review will be followed up in 2010.

The three Presidencies will closely follow and coordinate EU positions in the ongoing G20 process, at the level of Finance Ministers as well as at the highest level, so as to follow up and ensure the implementation of the agreements reached at the Washington, London and Pittsburgh meetings of G20 Leaders. The Presidency will be a proactive player in the process by helping shape EU positions to be taken in G20 meetings and by presenting and defending EU interests. Building on the strong EU track record in implementing the G20 action plan agreed in November 2008, the three Presidencies will do their utmost to ensure that the EU remains at the forefront of implementation of G20 measures.

Financial issues will also be looked at in international fora such as ASEM and Union for the Mediterranean.

Taxation

In the area of indirect taxation the three Presidencies will give priority to the modernisation of the rules on the common system of value added tax and on combating tax fraud. As regards the VAT system, work on the treatment of insurance and financial services, on the invoicing rules and on the VAT treatment of postal services might be further pursued. The Presidencies intend to return to the VAT regime for travel agencies proposal. As regards the issue of combating tax fraud further discussions will be undertaken on the introduction of a reverse charge mechanism to prevent fraud with GHG emission rights. Work on the recast of the regulation on administrative cooperation in the field of VAT will be actively taken forward. Particular efforts will also be made in the revision of the Directive on energy taxation, once the Commission proposal is received.

As regards direct taxation the three Presidencies will continue the work on the proposal to improve the functioning of the savings taxation mechanism within the EU and with the third countries. They will also strive to finalize the new directives on administrative cooperation in tax assessment and mutual assistance in recovery of taxes. The three Presidencies will endeavour to reach an agreement with third countries on cooperation and information exchange in direct tax matters as well as to achieve a widespread acceptance of the principles of good governance in the tax area. The three Presidencies will continue to foster the work of the Code of Conduct Group on rolling back harmful tax competition measures and to advance the issues of its Work Package, in particular anti-abuse, links to third countries, transparency and exchange of information in transfer pricing and administrative practises. Finally, the work on better coordination of national tax systems could continue.

Post-2010 Lisbon strategy

The renewal of the Lisbon strategy is a comprehensive task involving many Council formations and stretching over the three Presidencies. The renewed Strategy will build on the assessment of the current Lisbon Strategy, and should take into account the consequences of and the challenges related to the current global financial and economic crises and serve the longer term objectives of the Union.

A strong core economic policy strategy remains essential if the EU is to maintain levels of potential growth and ensure sustainable prosperity. The crisis, along with the ageing of our populations, makes a broad-ranging and serious economic reform programme even more crucial now than in the decade of the previous Lisbon strategy.

Member States will emerge from the crisis with differing budgetary and structural situations, so the process of defining guidelines will need to be flexible enough to meet individual Member States' needs, while remaining committed to the overarching global objectives of increasing competitiveness, sustainability and prosperity in the long-term.

EU budget

The three Presidencies will devote particular attention to the **EU Budget review** as soon as the Commission presents its Communication. Work on the revision of the Financial Regulation will be launched as soon as the Commission will submit its proposal. Preparatory work on the next financial perspective may be initiated towards the end of the 18 month period. Upon presentation by the Commission of the Multi-annual Financial Framework Regulation and other issues related to the new budgetary procedure the Presidencies will launch work on this important issue. The “own resources” decision on the basis of a report by the Commission will be examined.

Statistics

The three Presidencies will promote the implementation of the European Code of Practice, in particular, the quality improvement, reliability and transparency of the statistical production.

In line with the objective of reducing up to 25% the administrative burden of businesses by 2012, the three Presidencies will encourage policies with the objective to reduce the burden on the respondents and improve the cost-benefit balance, while meeting the statistical information requests from statistical users. To achieve this goal, such policies should focus on an increased use of information and communication technology tools. In this context, it is specially relevant to promote enterprise data collection systems and the use of electronic exchange systems for statistical data.

COMPETITIVENESS

Single Market

The internal market remains the core piece of European integration and therefore deserves continuous attention from all the actors at EU level. The three Presidencies will therefore spare no effort to take any initiative or conduct work which aim at protecting, strengthening and completing the internal market and improving its functioning.

The three Presidencies will work on the ongoing **Single Market Review** promoting the free movement of the four freedoms. Making full use of the potential of the internal market is an essential tool for the recovery of economic growth for the benefit of both businesses and consumers. The possibility of revoking the transitional periods limiting the free movement of workers from the new Member States will be examined.

The implementation of the **Services Directive** is a key element in completing the internal market in services as well as improving competitiveness across Europe. The Presidencies will therefore promote an effective and transparent mutual evaluation process provided for in article 39 of the Directive, which will allow for evidence-based policy conclusions, help ensure high quality implementation across Member States and result in a summary report by the Commission in December 2010, accompanied where appropriate by proposals for additional initiatives.

Better Regulation is an ongoing concern and will accordingly be high on the agenda of the three Presidencies. The improvement of the regulatory environment in Europe remains a pivotal objective. Efforts must be pursued in order to guarantee the achievement of the objective of a 25% **reduction of administrative burdens** for European enterprises by 2012. E-government aiming at decreasing administrative burdens will be important in this context. The Presidencies will make an extended use of comprehensive **impact assessments** in decision-making and will aim at improving this instrument where necessary, e.g. through evaluation of impact assessments and improving the consultation process.

The three Presidencies consider it also important to improve the current **simplification programme**. Furthermore, they will promote the exchange of experience and best practice between public administrations of Member States, especially as regards methods, means and ways of reducing administrative burdens at national level. The three Presidencies are looking forward to possible new Commission initiatives on better regulation ("smart regulation") and will continue to produce progress reports or conclusions.

In the area of **competition**, as a follow-up to the "White Paper on damages actions for breach of the EC antitrust rules", a legislative proposal is expected to be submitted by the Commission in the first semester of 2010, and thus, substantive work on this initiative will be initiated.

Further to the Commission report of April 2009 on the functioning of Regulation 1/2003, a possible revision could be carried out during the term of the three Presidencies.

Also, further to the mandate given by the Council authorizing the Commission to open negotiations with Canada for an agreement on co-operation and the exchange of information in competition investigations, the three Presidencies will do their utmost to reach agreement and to have the cooperation agreement with Canada signed before the end of their term.

The implementation of the **New Legislative Framework** (Goods package) is one of the key elements which can improve the potential of the Internal Market. The ongoing work in connection with industrial products will be continued by the three Presidencies.

Furthermore the promotion of ICT tools, an improved access of SMEs to the internal market, the creation of a more dynamic business environment, the improvement of the competitiveness of the EU and public procurement, including the green and innovative public procurement, will be promoted by the Presidencies.

In the field of **company law**, special attention will be paid to simplification proposals. The Commission is expected to submit a proposal on the simplification of the 4th and 7th Company Law (Accounting) Directives.

Also, as both the take-over Directive and the SE Regulation are to be reviewed in the near future, the three Presidencies await the Commission's reports on these two matters with a view to start consultations and, if appropriate, follow-up work on these matters. Finally, should discussions on the proposal on a regulation on a European Private Company Statute not be finalised before, the three Presidencies will do their utmost to reach agreement on the proposal.

Competitiveness aspects and industrial policy

The post-2010 Lisbon Strategy will be the key priority of the three Presidencies. The objective will be to make a constructive contribution to this debate regarding the strategic priorities and the programmatic preparation. The three Presidencies will build on the various mid-term reviews which will be available at the beginning of 2010, and it will also be necessary to take stock of the recovery plans, of the European initiatives in particular, to draw the lessons for future policies and Financial Perspective.

In that context, and taking into consideration the challenges posed by globalisation, the external dimension of competitiveness will require a special attention. Being of transversal nature, this theme will be treated in close linkage with the different thematic priorities of the three Presidencies. The objective is to enable European companies to seize opportunities rising from globalisation and the opening of external markets, but also to answer to the threats in terms of competitiveness which are linked to these evolutions.

The follow-up of the Commission communication on the access to the raw materials will also be given a high priority.

The Presidencies' aim will be to make concrete contributions as regards sustainable industrial policy initiatives, to promote eco-innovation and the development of a competitive green economy, in particular with a view to the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy and the recovery of the European economy, such as promoting green cars and electricity powered cars.

The Presidencies will be particularly attentive to the competitiveness challenges linked to environmental and climate policies. In that context, avoiding the risk of carbon leakage and the positioning of the highly energy intensive industries will receive special attention.

SMEs

The three Presidencies will give high priority to the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Small Business Act and its Action Plan with a view to contributing to the debate on the post-2010 SME's policy. The aim is to further develop SMEs' policies, and to take them duly into account within the framework of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy. Challenges like globalisation, access to finance, improving skills, sustainable development, transmission of businesses, networking, innovation, entrepreneurship, will be at the heart of our reflections.

Innovation and intellectual property

In close linkage with the reflection on the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy, the future industrial and R&D&I policies, and building on the coming Commission proposals, the three Presidencies will also contribute to the debate about the future European Innovation policy, and its instruments, with a special focus on clustering policies (international dimension, interfacing businesses, R&D&I and training, monitoring and evaluation), lead markets, standardisation, fight against counterfeiting and piracy.

European standardisation is important for innovation and for the competitiveness of our industry.

In the intellectual and industrial property field, strengthening IPR protection, inter alia through the development of a Counterfeiting and Piracy Observatory, will be one of the major priorities.

Furthermore, the three Presidencies will spare no effort in order to reach a comprehensive agreement on the establishment of a Unified patent litigation system and an EU Patent Regulation. They also await with great interest the Commission review of the EU trade mark. Finally, they will pay special attention to the awaited Commission proposals in the field of copyright aimed at establishing a European framework which fosters digitisation of copyright-protected material while fully respecting authors' rights. In that context, the Presidencies are looking forward to commencing work on the announced Commission initiatives regarding protection of orphan works.

Research & Development & Innovation

The three Presidencies will take full account of the importance of Research & Development & Innovation in the renewal of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy.

The full development and consolidation of the European Research Area (ERA) through a close interaction between Higher Education, Research and Innovation policy will remain a priority aim with a view to promoting Europe's competitiveness and addressing the major societal and technological challenges.

Therefore the Presidencies will work on the design of future target(s) and/or political objectives, with a view to coordinating EU and Member States policy efforts for the post-2010 period. They will support the development and implementation of a set of indicators to monitor progress towards full realisation of the ERA. The importance of the ERA for developing a sustainable economy and society will be emphasized.

The Presidencies will promote an enhanced Governance of ERA enabling a more effective coordination of European, national and regional policies and programmes, notably the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) and the Research and Technological Development Framework Programme (RTD), allowing for more efficient and more effective investments in research and innovation in Europe. In this context they will further develop steps leading to an evaluation culture, including foresight studies and impact assessments, in particular ex-post impact assessments, covering all relevant key research policy measures in the ERA.

In addition, specific attention will be given to the analysis of the **mid-term review of the Seventh Research Framework Programme** and discussions on the design and ex ante impact assessment of the future Framework Programme will be taken forward. Moreover, the review of the structure and mechanisms of the **European Research Council** and Joint Undertakings (IMI, ARTEMIS, ENIAC CLEAN SKY) will be carried out. Specific attention will be given to the involvement of industry, especially the SMEs in the context of the aim to achieve at least 15% SME participation and to simplifying the administrative and financial control procedures.

Public Private Partnerships (PPP), in particular in the areas of energy, efficient building, factories of the future, green cars and future internet will be an important instrument, based on a set of common framework rules.

As part of further coordination of **European, national and regional policies**, particular attention will be given to the implementation of the joint programming through selection and implementation of a first list of themes and the detailed arrangements for cooperation and for the coordination of cross-border financing.

An important horizontal theme is the role of the regions in the fields of research and European scientific policy. The three Presidencies will emphasize the importance of the **regional dimension** in the development, implementation and follow-up of the innovation and research policies, in particular those where complementarities are possible with initiatives co-financed by the Structural Funds.

The effective implementation of the **free movement of knowledge in ERA** (the fifth freedom) is vital. Further steps building on the European partnership will be taken to accelerate progress in making research careers in Europe more attractive and to attract the world's best brains to European research institutes and universities.

The three Presidencies will closely follow the implementation of the **knowledge triangle**, including the first knowledge and innovation communities (KICs) of the **European Institute for Technology and Innovation (EIT)**. In addition they will pay great attention to the implementation and follow-up of the initiatives taken within the framework of the new European innovation plan.

The three Presidencies will closely monitor the progress of the realisation of the pan-European research infrastructures listed on the ESFRI-roadmap and promote the development of medium-sized and networked research infrastructures.

The preparation and discussion of the 8th EURATOM Framework Programme with special attention to the ITER project will be on the agenda.

The three Presidencies support the development of the EU space policy.

Customs

Negotiations on a Protocol to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control on illicit trade in tobacco products will continue in 2010 and results can be expected under the three Presidencies. In the area of control of drug precursors, negotiations on an agreement with Russia have just started and are likely to be finalised within 2010.

The facilitation of trade and the reinforcement of supply chain security will remain at the centre of attention of the three Presidencies. Negotiations at bilateral and international levels on mutual recognition of trade programs will continue.

In the area of the protection of intellectual property rights, the three Presidencies will monitor the implementation of the action plan for community customs 2009-2010 (intellectual property rights) and deal with the revision of the counterfeit regulation. Negotiations on a pluri-lateral Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), in particular the border control measures, will continue (a first round is scheduled in January 2010 in Mexico). In the framework of the review of Council Regulation (EC) No 1383/2003 of 22 July 2003 concerning customs action against goods suspected of infringing certain intellectual property rights and the measures to be taken against goods found to have infringed such rights, a draft amending Regulation to could also be tabled.

Council conclusions on customs controls will be adopted on the basis of the Commission report announced in the Council conclusions on the strategy to follow for the development of the Customs Union.

Tourism

On the basis of the new treaty, the Presidencies will support coordinated action on policies and EU measures regarding the tourism sector and tourism activities. To this end, they will encourage the creation of a comprehensive tourism policy framework with adequate financial instruments for EU actions in the field of tourism.

The Presidencies acknowledge the horizontal importance of tourism as a sector of the economy which contributes significantly to job creation and growth. They will promote the inclusion of tourism aspects in other relevant EU policies and, more specifically, they will address training, employment and social affairs regarding tourism, tourism's role in quality of life, tourism innovation, environmental sustainability and tourism, consumer protection, economy and taxation in tourism sector, tourist visas and security, transport and tourism mobility.

The Presidencies will promote a Socially Responsible and Solidarity European Tourism Model, as well as a set of conditions and principles or codes of good practices, so as to make tourism development compatible with economic, social and environmental sustainability in line with the aims set out in the Commission Communication about an "Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism".

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

With the European economy on the recovery track, there is a need to ensure that growth will be sustainable and benefit all. The impact of the recession on employment and the social situation needs to be addressed and structural reforms must be achieved in this process.

The response of the European Union to these challenges will be based on the following key priorities : promoting employment and entrepreneurship; combating structural and long-term unemployment; promoting social inclusion with a focus on the most vulnerable; ensuring a high level of social protection systems; working towards equal opportunities and combating all forms of discrimination as well as reinforcing social dialogue at all levels.

The three Presidencies will give priority attention to Social Europe. Fundamental strategies will be discussed, coordinated and launched during their term. The post-2010 Lisbon Strategy will take full account of the European Employment Strategy and the European Social Agenda as well as forthcoming initiatives such as the new Roadmap for equality between women and men (2011-2015), the follow-up of the European Pact on Gender Equality, the New Strategy for persons with disabilities (2010-2017), and the mid-term review of the Community Strategy for Health and Safety at Work (2007-2012).

Post-2010 Lisbon Strategy

As regards the social dimension of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy, the focus will be placed on employment and social cohesion, with due regard to gender equality.

In the wake of the financial crisis, the effectiveness of the European financial instruments (European Social Fund, European Globalisation Adjustment Fund), which are available for pursuing employment and social goals, will be evaluated.

The finalisation and the launch of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy requires a good coordination between the various configurations of the Council.

An active role of the social partners is crucial for achieving the overarching objectives of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy. Thus the three Presidencies aim at enhancing the role and visibility of the Tripartite Social Summit.

European Employment Strategy

Based on the European Employment Strategy (EES), action should simultaneously respond to the short term challenges such as the increasing unemployment and the labour market imbalances brought about by the recession, and to the long term challenges such as globalisation, the ageing of the population, the consequences of climate change and the increasing importance of skills and innovation.

Key objectives include full employment (more jobs), quality employment (better jobs) and efficient governance principles. In this context a coherent methodology needs to be developed with a view to adopting common guidelines and recommendations on employment policies of the Member States as well as promoting mutual learning.

Beyond working on the overall policy framework, the three Presidencies will address the following key issues: improving anticipation and matching of skills with labour market needs; promoting the development of green jobs; facilitating the practical and balanced implementation of the common principles of flexicurity; enhancing the labour market participation, in particular of women, the youth and the labour market entrants, of the elderly people and of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups; addressing undeclared work, illegal work and black economy as well as improving the conditions for self-employment.

As regards the quality of employment, the mid-term review of the Community Strategy for Health and Safety at Work (2007-2012) will be examined. Specific EU initiatives concerning i.a. the muscle-skeletal risks, infections via needle-stick injuries and the ban on tobacco at the work place will be important issues in this context.

The European Social Agenda

The coming 18 months will be a crucial period as regards promoting social progress in the Union. Attention will be paid to ensuring that the Social Agenda is a fully integrated part of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy.

The Social Agenda should be implemented through hard as well as soft law, to be determined in close cooperation with the Commission.

In the legislative area, the three Presidencies will take work forward on the revision of the Directives on the transfer of undertakings, on information and consultation of workers, on collective redundancies, on the proposal improving the implementation of the Post workers Directive and on the proposal amending the Working Time Directive.

The three Presidencies will also pay special attention to the external dimension of the European Social Model. In this regard, they will work towards reinforcing the social dimension in external multilateral and bilateral relations, by promoting the Decent Work Agenda of the ILO, the fundamental labour and social rights and a global social framework compatible with the European Social Model.

Corporate social responsibility is important with a view to ensuring sustainable European competitiveness.

Social inclusion and social protection

Tackling the social implications of the recession will be high on the political agenda. In this context the three Presidencies will use the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in 2010 to highlight the importance of these concerns.

The three Presidencies will promote reinforcing the Open Method of Coordination and its different processes (targets, indicators as policy tools, recommendations, social impact assessment, peer review and benchmarking).

A comprehensive approach to preventing and fighting poverty, in particular women's and children's poverty, will be pursued. In this context, assistance of the most vulnerable groups and communities, like people with disabilities, migrant workers and their families, homeless persons, the Roma population and minorities are of utmost importance.

Furthermore, the three Presidencies will focus on supporting various initiatives in the context of the ageing society, and thus conduct preparatory work with a view to the European Year on Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity in 2012. In this context the modernisation, sustainability and adequacy of the pension systems is of vital importance.

In the field of the coordination of social security systems, the work on the implementation and the adaptation of the Regulation 883/04 will be pursued. Work on the coordination of the Social Security Chapters of the Association Agreements, in particular those with Maghreb countries and Eastern European countries will be launched.

The work on the social services of general interest will continue.

Equality between women and men and non-discrimination

In line with Article 19 of the Treaty, the promotion of gender equality and the strengthening of protection from all forms of discrimination continue to deserve special attention. The three Presidencies intend to give new political impetus in the areas of gender equality and non-discrimination.

The three Presidencies will push forward the gender equality agenda, by giving high priority to gender mainstreaming in the context of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy. They will follow-up the Commission's evaluation of the current Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men (2006-2010) and work on a new Roadmap for the period 2011-2015. The follow-up of the implementation of the European Pact on Gender Equality on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of its adoption by the European Council and the continued work on the monitoring and implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action will be high on the agenda of the three Presidencies.

Furthermore, the three Presidencies will focus on combating gender violence, addressing the pay gap between men and women, combating gender-based stereotypes and promoting women's entrepreneurship as well as the reconciliation of professional, private and family life.

In order to promote equal treatment in all areas, they will continue the work on the proposal of the Directive on equal treatment (former Article 13).

Public Health

In the field of public health, the three Presidencies will promote action to improve the health of EU citizens in line with the Statement of 2006 on common values and principles in European Union Health Systems and the EU health strategy for 2008-2013. Special attention will be paid to integrate health aspects and health determinants into other EU policies.

Concerning the sustainability of healthcare systems and the protection of health, the exchange of experiences and good practices will be promoted. While fully respecting the principle of subsidiarity, work will be undertaken in the field of social determinants of health and the reduction of inequalities; an important concern for the Presidencies will be the promotion of healthy lifestyles, including healthy nutritional habits. Measures against obesity and prevention of addictions (e.g. smoking, alcohol drinking, drugs etc.) as well as special health needs of children, adolescents and vulnerable groups will also be addressed.

Pandemic preparedness and response will be a permanent concern of the three Presidencies. Attention will also be paid to health security and in particular to the health impact of climate and environmental change and to the international collaboration with third countries in this field.

Furthermore, the three Presidencies will address issues such as innovation in healthcare, in particular in the context of an ageing population. This covers *inter alia* quality and safety of healthcare, the future approach to chronic diseases, e-health and the issues related to the EU health professionals.

Work on the legislative proposals on donation and transplantation of organs and tissues will be taken forward as a priority.

The three Presidencies will support possible initiatives aimed at securing an adequate supply of radio-isotopes.

Work will be conducted on issues such as the safety and the quality of pharmaceuticals, antimicrobial resistance, rational use of antibiotics, pharmaco-vigilance and counterfeit drugs and cross-border healthcare.

Consumer protection

In the area of consumer protection, priority will be given to the proposed Directive on consumer rights. In view of the complexity of this proposal, work may stretch over the period covered by the three Presidencies.

In the framework of the review of the consumer *acquis*, work on the revision of the Directive on package travel, package holiday and package tours will be pursued in 2010.

In the field of international co-operation on protection and promotion of consumer rights, two co-operation agreements between the European Union and the United States of America, namely on the enforcement of consumer protection laws and on cooperation and information exchange in the area of consumer product safety will be negotiated and concluded.

The mid-term evaluation of the EU action in the field of consumer policy (2007-2013) will be carried out in 2010. The Commission may also come forward with a proposal on consumer's collective redress.

The three Presidencies will be attentive to the integration of consumer protection aspects in other policies.

Foodstuffs legislation

The three Presidencies will take forward work on various legislative proposals currently under discussion or under preparation. This concerns in particular the Regulation on the provision of food information to consumers ('food labelling') the adoption of which will be a priority for the three Presidencies.

As concerns food safety, the three Presidencies will take forward the discussions on the new regulatory framework for novel foods and work towards a new legislation on food intended for particular nutritional uses (dietetic food).

TRANSPORT, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND ENERGY

Transport

Sustainability, innovation, safety and security will be the key concepts inspiring the action of the three Presidencies in the field of transport.

Concerning sustainable and competitive transport, discussions concerning the internalization of external costs will be extended to all modes of transport. In the context of the implementation of the Action Plan for Logistics and the Action Plan for Urban Mobility, the Commission may come forward with proposals.

With a view to the future of transport in the EU after 2010, the policies implemented in accordance with the 2001 White Paper will be analysed and the forthcoming “New White Paper” will be examined.

In the area of **land transport**, particular attention will be given to the implementation and revision of the first railway package which aims at achieving an efficient and competitive rail market.

Concerning road safety, the Presidencies will continue the work on cross-border enforcement of penalties and will launch the work on a new Road Safety Programme. Special attention will also be given to a global review (2010) regarding the existing scheme for fatality reduction in the last decade. Work on greening transport, in particular related to Eurovignette, will also be carried forward.

In the field of **aviation**, the Presidencies will seek reaching agreement on the new airport security charges Directive and on the revised code of conduct for computer reservation systems. They will also work towards a successful outcome of the negotiations on air transport agreements with third countries. Regarding air transport safety, particular attention will be given to reaching an agreement on the Regulation on investigation and prevention of accidents and incidents in civil aviation.

Moreover, particular attention will be given to the implementation of the Single European Sky II Package (SES II). Finally, the three Presidencies will also have special focus on the agreement on the 2nd Phase of the Air Transport Agreement between the EU and the United States of America.

In the area of **maritime transport**, the revision of the Regulation establishing the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), which aims at clarifying EMSA's status and competences, will be a priority as well as the work on the “European Maritime Transport Space without barriers”, which aims at improving the efficiency in ports and maritime transport. Special attention will be given to reviewing the development of the motorways of the sea and the progress made up to date.

The revised proposal for new orientations for Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) will be considered a priority. In this context, particular attention will be given to the proposed new approaches on environment, modal shift, multimodality, better infrastructure management and financing.

The three Presidencies will take forward the EU initiatives for promoting actions in the different transport modes and provide significant input for the use of intelligent transport systems (**ITS**), especially in road transport, but also in air transport (SESAR, GALILEO). The Action Plan for the deployment of ITS and the Directive on ITS will be given special consideration.

The three Presidencies will also focus on the implementation of the European GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite System) programme in all its aspects, in particular the preparation for the post-2013 exploitation of Galileo and EGNOS, application and service, the international cooperation strategy and bilateral cooperation agreements.

The inland navigation (NAIADES) initiative will be followed up and work will be initiated on implementing actions to be proposed by the Commission.

Telecommunication

The Presidencies will launch work on the new scope of the universal service in electronic communications and on the incorporation of the broadband in the scope of universal service on the basis of a Commission communication.

The approval of the New Strategy 2010-2015 for the promotion of the Information Society (i2010) will be a main priority.

The three Presidencies will foster the deployment of next generation networks, both in infrastructure and services, on the basis of the forthcoming Commission Recommendation.

Work on network security, electronic commerce and protection of intellectual property in Internet and the fight against piracy will be promoted.

The extended mandate of the European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA) will expire in March 2012. Taking into account the outcome of the review of the regulatory framework for electronic communications, the Presidencies will initiate discussions on the future of the ENISA.

The Presidencies will further contribute to the development of the Internet of the Future. New challenges such as the extension of the universal service, network neutrality, broadband on mobile, convergence of fixed and mobile networks and the development of the internet of things will be examined.

Special attention will be given to the development of the European Action Plan for eGovernment for 2010-2015 and the electronic rights of citizens to interact with government and with businesses.

The Presidencies will coordinate and prepare for the upcoming World Radiocommunications Conference in 2011 (WRC-11) in a way to ensure consistency with the Union's policies and principles.

As regards postal services, the Presidencies will coordinate the EU position at the UPU Strategic Conference (Nairobi, 21 to 25 September 2010).

Energy

Ensuring a thorough review of the Action Plan “Energy Policy for Europe” at the 2010 Spring European Council will be the main political challenge for the three Presidencies in the energy field.

In the field of security of energy supply, a number of important activities and measures will fall within the next 18 months. The existing TEN-E instrument is to be replaced by a new “EU Energy Security and Infrastructure” instrument. The TEN-E financial regulation and TEN-E guidelines will be revised according to the outcome of the discussions on the Green paper “Towards secure, sustainable and competitive European energy networks”.

Further work will be carried out on the six priority infrastructure actions (as outlined in the 2nd Strategic Energy Review): the Southern gas corridor; a diverse and adequate LNG supply for Europe; the effective interconnection of the Baltic region; the Mediterranean Energy Ring; adequate North-South gas and electricity interconnections within Central and South-East Europe and the North Sea and the North West Offshore grid. Barriers to investment will be identified and possible solutions explored, including by means of streamlining of planning and consultation procedures, in particular for projects which improve interconnection.

The current EU monitoring system of investment in the energy sector at EU level will be up-dated and an efficient methodology to analyse investment trends with a view to matching the future demand and EU policy objectives will be developed.

The work on the Security of Gas Supply Regulation will be finalised and gas diversification will be promoted.

In the area of the internal energy market, the main concern will be to make the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) fully operational.

In the field of sustainable energy and energy efficiency, the Presidencies will take up the energy-climate challenges, taking into account the results of the Copenhagen Climate Conference. Special attention will go to the use of biomass for energy production, including the implementation of sustainable criteria.

The three Presidencies will ensure the final adoption of the efficiency legislative package. They will work on the revision of the Energy Efficiency Action Plan (EEAP).

The Presidencies will attach importance to the implementation of the Strategic Energy Technology Plan and will pay due regard to the European energy industrial initiatives in full cooperation with the private sector.

In line with the above, an agreement will be sought as to investing in the development of low carbon technologies in order to stimulate and facilitate the use of clean technologies in line with EU competitiveness and economic recovery.

The Presidencies will contribute to developing a vision towards an energy policy in 2050, which will identify actions which allow for a low carbon energy generation by 2050.

In the nuclear energy field, the Presidencies will pay particular attention to the development of instruments for the safe and sustainable management of radio-active waste and the review of the Basic Safety Standards Directive.

External Relations in the energy field will play a very important role. The Presidencies will ensure strengthening cooperation with major suppliers, transit countries and key partners of the EU and within multilateral organisations and frameworks.

ENVIRONMENT

Overarching priority: Greening the policies

The EU and its Member States are at a turning point. The economic crisis and rapidly changing global and European economic processes are bringing new challenges. A high level of protection of the environment is not only an objective in itself. In the context of sustainable development it is also an important factor for long-term economic growth as it contributes to a more efficient use of resources. Grasping growth opportunities for tomorrow requires fostering comprehensive sustainability for all EU policies and eco-innovation and by setting standards; creating new jobs; rethinking public investments; continuing to adapt our mobility and energy patterns; exercise international leadership. Renewed emphasis on sustainable development and the greening of policies will be overarching priorities of the three Presidencies.

Synergy between the Post Lisbon-strategy and the EU Sustainable Development Strategy as well as the integration of environment in the post-2010 Lisbon strategy will be ensured.

The Presidencies will pursue endeavours to better integrate environment in relevant other policies, such as transport, energy and agriculture.

The three Presidencies will aim to strengthen the substance of, and coherence between, the CSD process, the Millennium Development Goals, the International Environmental Governance and the follow-up to the Rio and Johannesburg Conferences in general.

Climate change

The three Presidencies will pay continued attention to the implementation of the Climate and Energy Package (including some important decisions to be taken under comitology¹) and will, in this context, take work forward on the Regulation on CO₂ emissions labelling for vehicles, the Regulation on CO₂ emissions reduction from light commercial vehicles and the forthcoming communication on CO₂ emissions from shipping. The issue of passing to a EU 30% of green-house gas emissions reduction will be examined in the light of the outcome of the Copenhagen Conference.

The three Presidencies will start paving the way for the implementation of the 2013 EU Adaptation Strategy and address the measures already needed ahead of this strategy.

At multilateral level, the three Presidencies will ensure the follow-up to the outcome of the COP 15 of the UNFCCC. The preparation of the COP-UNFCCC 16 will be a priority.

Biodiversity

The three Presidencies will devote substantial efforts to develop a post 2010 Action Plan, aiming at a significant improvement of the status of Biodiversity in the EU. Special attention will also be paid to new threats such as invasive alien species, and the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and natural resources.

Special attention will be paid to the Green Paper on Forests. The protection of forests against fire, storms and droughts, also in the context of climate change and environment protection, will be of great importance to the Presidencies.

The UN General Assembly on Biodiversity will be one of the key moments of the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity.

¹ Regulation on auctioning (comitology by 30/6/2010); implementing measures for allocating free allowances (comitology by 31/12/2010); situation of the sectors exposed to carbon leakage (report + proposals in codecision by COM by 30/6/2010).

The COP 10 of the Convention on Biological Diversity will finalise the negotiations on access and benefit sharing. It will discuss the strategic planning for a new post 2010 objective, the protection of marine biodiversity in protected areas and the synergy between climate and biodiversity.

The conclusion of the liability and redress regime will be one of the major issues on the agenda of MOP 5 of the Biosafety Protocol.

The three Presidencies will aim to strengthen an effective biodiversity protection through CITES and the conclusion from COP 15.

The three Presidencies will also give attention to the follow-up of the Council Conclusions on GMOs of December 2008 and to the envisaged Guidelines on the evaluation of GMO's.

Environment and Health

In order to reach the EU objectives on air quality, the Presidencies will take forward work on the revision of the national emissions ceilings for the main atmospheric pollutants (NO_x, SO_x, VOC, NH₃, PM) as well as on the Industrial Emissions Directive.

The Second Environment and Health Action Plan ends in 2010. The three Presidencies will take the necessary steps to prepare its successor. A Green Paper on in-door pollution is expected with a view to harmonising methodologies in order to decrease the sources of pollutants.

A communication on nanotechnologies, focusing on the impacts and benefits of these new technologies, in particular with regard to the environment, is expected.

The three Presidencies will seek to finalise the work on the Biocides Directive.

Up-dates are expected within the framework of the Long-Range Trans-boundary Air Pollution Convention (LRTAP) and its Protocols, the Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management ((SAICM) and the mercury negotiations.

For the LRTAP UNECE Convention and its Protocols, a revision of the Goteborg Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-Level Ozone is foreseen (in the light of the revision of the EU NEC directive) as well as the revision of the Aarhus Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) with a view to adding a number of new substances to the existing obligations. The UNECE POPs protocol will probably be revised in parallel to the revision of the UNEP Stockholm Convention on POPs. The negotiation of the global mercury convention which will start in the first half of 2010 will require due attention.

Sustainable consumption and production /sustainable use of natural resources

The three Presidencies will pay due attention to the Joint Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industrial Policy and to its coherence with other plans, such as the Environmental Technologies Action Plan (ETAP). Measures related to green public procurement, fight against illegal wood imports are expected. Emphasis will also be put on eco-conception and on sustainability criteria for biomass.

Action in this field will focus on transportation, waste, chemicals and mining and in particular on the ten-year framework for programmes on sustainable consumption and production (10YFP). The framework should strengthen international cooperation and increase exchange of information and best practices to facilitate the implementation of national and regional programmes to promote sustainable consumption and production. The Marrakech process is a global effort to promote progress on the implementation of Sustainable Consumption and Production and the elaboration of the 10YFP through global and regional meetings and the Marrakech Task Forces.

The Green Paper on bio-waste will possibly be followed-up with a proposal for a Directive on bio-waste. In the context of the revision of the Thematic Strategy on Waste, it will be important to clarify concepts such as the definitions, coherence with existing legislations and monitoring of targets.

The protection of soil merits effective and full implementation of the EU strategy. The three Presidencies will in particular seek to reach agreement on the proposed soil Directive.

Water resources

The three Presidencies will develop an integrated approach to a sustainable water policy.

The Presidencies will focus on the evolving strategy for water scarcity and droughts envisaged for 2012 and on the revision of the drinking water Directive. Steps will also be taken to promote the assessment and management of critical water-related problems such as extreme events (flood, excess water, water scarcity and accidental water pollution), climate change, endangered ecosystems etc. The evaluation of the experiences made with the first series of river basin management plans will also be an important step in this context. As regards the external dimension of EU water policy, the three Presidencies will foster a higher level of European involvement and the development of a financial framework for international co-operation.

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive will have to be transposed by July 2010. With a view to the implementation of the obligations of the Directive, technical and scientific exchange among Member States is crucial for the coherence of environmental objectives and the achievement of good environmental status. The three Presidencies will help ensure the coordination in this area.

Better instruments for environmental policy

The three Presidencies will ensure the follow-up to the evaluation of the results of the 6th Environmental Action Programme and its thematic strategies. This work will be conducted in connection with the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy and the Sustainable Development Strategy.

The three Presidencies will proceed with the better regulation agenda, by seeking to further simplify the *acquis communautaire* (waste), to improve the implementation and enforcement of the EU legislation (harmonisation of the environmental inspection criteria) as well as to elaborate new and better tools to facilitate this implementation (e.g. reporting through the Shared Environmental Information System).

Measures with a view to addressing environmentally harmful subsidies, to « greening » fiscal instruments and to promoting resource- and energy-efficient products are being prepared.

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The above themes are likely to constitute the policy tools needed for the greening of policies. The setting-up of the 7th Environment Action Programme will be of utmost importance to underpin these priority policy areas. Together with the evaluation and revision of the Lisbon Strategy as well as the evaluation and development of the Sustainable Development Strategy, it offers a unique opportunity to give the necessary direction to these developments.

EDUCATION, TRAINING, YOUTH, SPORT, CULTURE AND AUDIOVISUAL POLICY

Education and training are key drivers for the achievement and improvement of employability, competitiveness, innovation, cultural development, social inclusion and consequently for the attainment of greater economic welfare. They have made a substantial contribution towards achieving the long-term goals of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs and will undoubtedly continue to play a key role in the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy.

The Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework

The three Presidencies will contribute to defining and strengthening the link between the new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (E&T 2020) and the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy, while fully taking into account those aspects of education and training that are not directly linked to growth and jobs. This adjustment will take into account the results of the 2010 evaluation of the progress made, the Commission's proposals for possible benchmarks in the areas of mobility and employability (by the end of 2010) and the Commission's report (also by the end of 2010) on the coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks adopted by the Council in May 2007.

Evidence based education and training policies should be underpinned by sound data. Special attention should therefore be given to the contribution of international evaluation studies (PISA, PIRLS, etc.).

The Open Method of Coordination (indicators, benchmarks, peer-learning and exchange of good practices) will be pursued with regard to the four strategic objectives (lifelong learning and mobility; quality and efficiency; equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; innovation and creativity).

As regards lifelong learning the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) will be closely followed and more flexible learning pathways and greater openness towards non-formal learning will be examined.

Synergies between the Bologna Process for higher education, the Copenhagen Process for Vocational Education and Training and the framework for European cooperation in education and training need to be further strengthened.

Social dimension of education and training

The three Presidencies will give special consideration to promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. They will address the issues of ensuring equitable access to early childhood education, combating early school leaving and promoting inclusive education policies for learners from disadvantaged groups.

2010 has been designated the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion and 2011 will be the European Year of Voluntary Activities. Both topics are of high relevance for education and training.

Schools for the 21st century

School education plays a key role in the implementation of the above-mentioned issues. Implementation of the agenda for schools in the 21st century will be carried forward by the three Presidencies, particularly with regard to issues such as school governance and leadership, the improvement of teacher training, the development of key competences and the promotion of innovation-friendly institutions.

Vocational education and training - the Copenhagen process

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is as much a key factor for socio-economic development, as it is for the progress of society in general.

Reviewing, renewing and implementing common European policy priorities for VET remain valid objectives. In this context the recently adopted European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF) are of utmost importance. In addition, particular attention will be paid to promoting adult learning, to anticipating and matching labour market needs and skills to improving the quality of guidance systems and to institutional governance, as well as to enhancing cooperation between education and training institutions, on the one hand, and business and industry, on the other.

The next of the two-yearly meetings to follow up the Copenhagen process will take place under Belgian Presidency, which offers the opportunity to discuss the results of the review of the Copenhagen Process.

Modernising higher education

A Ministerial meeting to assess the progress made so far in the framework of the Bologna Process will be held in Budapest and Vienna on 11-12 March 2010.

The Bologna Follow-up Group will be entrusted with the task of adjusting the 2009-2012 work programme in line with the results of the independent assessment presented earlier in Budapest and Vienna. In order to ensure synergies between higher education, research and innovation, emphasis will also be placed on the coherence between the Bologna Process and the new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training.

The three Presidencies will work on the modernisation agenda for European higher education so as to enhance its visibility and to enable it to play the role of a catalyst role in the knowledge triangle (higher education-research-innovation).

Finally, in a context of growing internationalisation, university cooperation will be promoted beyond the borders of the Union.

Mid-term review of the life-long learning programme

The current action programme in the field of lifelong learning will expire in 2013. In the context of the mid-term review in the course of 2010, the outline for the succeeding programme will be discussed.

Mobility is an essential element of lifelong learning and an important means for enhancing employability and flexibility. Learners' and teachers' mobility will thus remain high on the agenda.

Youth issues

The Presidencies will follow up the Council Resolution establishing a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field, by developing initiatives in line with the Commission's communication of April 2009 on an *EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering*. The worthiness of the Open Method of Coordination in this area will be emphasised and priority will be given to initiatives which facilitate the cultural and personal development, social inclusion, employment and participation of young people.

In implementing the above Council Resolution, the Presidencies will seek to adopt a series of conclusions in the specific fields of action outlined in the new framework for cooperation (i.a. education, employment, creativity, entrepreneurship, health and well-being, participation, social inclusion, voluntary activities and youth and the world). The youth dimension will also be discussed in the context of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy. Finally, the Presidencies see a link between youth issues and the upcoming "European Years", which in 2010 will focus on the fight against poverty and social exclusion and in 2011 on voluntary activities.

Culture

Culture is a key factor for promoting tolerance, dialogue and mutual understanding.

The adoption of a European Agenda for Culture by the Council in November 2007 was an important step towards further developing cooperation in the cultural field and increasing the coherence and visibility of European action in this field. It helped shape a new, strategic and horizontal approach to culture and helps promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Culture is also a catalyst for creativity and innovation and cultural and creative industries are important elements of the response to be given to the global economic and financial crisis.

The three Presidencies will continue to implement the Council's work plan for culture 2008-2010 and conduct work on its assessment with a view to developing a new work plan for the subsequent years. Special regard will be given to the evaluation of the results of the work conducted in the framework of the Open Method of Coordination.

Cultural and creative industries, including SMEs, contribute significantly to growth and employment, as well as to local and regional development. The role of cultural and creative industries should therefore be addressed in the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy.

The cultural heritage of Europe is particularly rich and contributes to the economic attractiveness and sustainable development of the regions, in particular through cultural tourism. It also contributes to the development of European citizenship. The three Presidencies will therefore promote the implementation of the « European heritage label » initiative and finalise work on the corresponding legislative instrument.

In preparation of the next financial perspective, the three Presidencies will pay attention to the preparation of the next phase of the culture-related EU programmes. They will also take into consideration the aims of the European Years 2010 and 2011 in the framework of the activities.

Audiovisual policy

In the area of film policy, the three Presidencies will pay attention to the review of the “Cinema Communication” of the Commission of 2001 and to the follow-up of the recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 2005 on film heritage and the competitiveness of related industrial activities, while taking into account the necessity to encourage the circulation of European film works.

The content creative online initiatives of the European Union are a solid basis for further actions aiming at strengthening the European audiovisual and on-line industry. The three Presidencies will specifically focus on the development of the audiovisual content industry and its positive effects on the whole economy. The safeguarding of the interests of right-holders and alternative methods of distribution of audiovisual works (digital distribution, e-cinema) as well as digital cultural and creative content will also be addressed.

The three Presidencies will also address the progress report and development perspectives of the European digital library EUROPEANA and the problem of the long term preservation of European digital cultural heritage. They will therefore encourage further cooperation at European level in order to raise awareness of this threat and to find appropriate actions to address it.

Sport

The three Presidencies will focus on the societal role of sport which is well described in the Commission White Paper on Sport. Within this framework, they will address the health benefits of physical activity, taking into account the “EU Physical Activity Guidelines” endorsed by EU Sport Ministers in November 2008.

Another important aspect will be to promote joint action between Member States in the fight against doping.

In the context of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010 and the Year of Voluntary Activities 2011, the three Presidencies will promote the acknowledgement of the potential of sport for social inclusion and integration, for combating poverty and for volunteering.

The next step will be to start defining the strategic principles, objectives and criteria of the future Sport Programme, based on the White Paper on Sport and taking into account the specific characteristics of sport, as well as to promote its positive contribution to the improvement of the mental and physical health of the population, to social cohesion as well as to the economy.

AGRICULTURE

Reform of the Common Agriculture Policy beyond 2013

On the basis of the health check conclusions on the existing CAP and with a view to the debate on the next financial perspectives, the discussions on the goals and new challenges of the future CAP will be intensified, particularly on the basis of the Commission Communication expected in 2010 aimed at launching a public debate.

Special attention will be paid to natural resources management, in particular water, in the perspective of its strategic importance for agricultural production and its relation to climate change.

Milk sector

The situation in the dairy market will remain a major concern throughout the terms of the three Presidencies. Against this background, they will attach special attention to the Commission report regarding the evolution of the market situation and the consequent conditions for a smooth phasing out of the milk quota system, which will be possibly accompanied by appropriate proposals. Due attention will be given to the discussions on the medium and long term perspectives to be held in the High Level Group set up by the Commission.

Quality of agricultural products

The Presidencies will work towards reaching agreement on the legislative proposals regarding product standards, farming requirements and quality schemes for agricultural products.

Agri-food industry competitiveness

Another priority of the three Presidencies will be to promote and take forward the initiatives to improve the competitiveness of the European Agri-food Industry.

Rural development

Concerning the new delimitation of Less Favoured Areas (LFA), the three Presidencies will follow-up the relevant communication and start work on a legislative proposal which is foreseen to be submitted in the second half of 2010.

In accordance with the first Action Programme for the implementation of the territorial agenda, work needs to be done in relation to the mandatory on the degree of implementation of said Programme in the course of 2010.

Forestry

The Presidencies will seek to reach agreement on the proposal for a Regulation laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market.

Simplification

The three Presidencies will pay a continued attention to the process of further simplification of EU legislation. Particular attention will be given to cross-compliance and to benefiting not only the European and national/regional authorities, but also and especially the producers themselves.

Coherence

In their work, the Presidencies will attach importance to ensuring coherence and synergy between environmental policy and the CAP, in particular with reference to the Health Check “new challenges”, between the territorial policy and the CAP as well as between research, development, innovation policy and the CAP. Furthermore they will seek to fully integrate the strategic objectives of rural development in the CAP.

WTO/DDA negotiations

The three Presidencies will closely monitor the evolution of these negotiations, with special attention for the agricultural part, for which a possible final agreement should remain within the CAP Reform 2003-framework, should be balanced and respect the interest of EU farmers.

The Presidencies will also undertake the work on the revision of those Regulations that need to be amended in the light of the eventual outcome of the DDA.

POSEI Regulation

The Commission is expected to present a report on the operation of the POSEI Regulation, possibly accompanied by legislative proposals. The Presidencies will undertake the examination of said report and launch the work on possible legislative proposals.

Animal health and animal welfare

The three Presidencies envisage a follow up on the Animal Health Strategy Action Plan 2007-2013. The work on the proposal on the unique Animal Health Law will be initiated.

Work will be taken forward on the proposal on the protection of animals during transport. The Presidencies will possibly initiate work on a legislative proposal concerning labelling of welfare indicators on foodstuffs.

Plant Health

The three Presidencies welcome the initiative to review the plant-health framework. An evaluation report on the existing legislation will be the basis for future discussions.

GMO's

The Presidencies will ensure the follow-up discussions on the report on socio-economic implications of placing on the market of GMO's which will be presented by the Commission by June 2010.

Currently an external review on the operation of both pieces of legislation on GMOs (Regulation 1829/2003 and Directive 2001/18) is under way and its results are expected for mid 2010. This external review could be followed by legislative proposals.

Hygiene package

The report on the effectiveness and consistency of sanitary and phyto-sanitary controls on imports of food, feed, animals and plants will be examined and work will be initiated on possible ensuing legislative proposals.

Third countries

For several sub-groups of the Potsdam working party, the three Presidencies have decided to appoint one chairperson for the whole 18-month- period.

The current legislation on imports of live animals and products of animal origin will be reviewed. In this context the Presidencies are also looking forward to a report from the Commission concerning the application of EU rules on the production of imported products, and in particular the verification of the fulfilment by producers in third countries of EU animal health, public health and animal welfare requirements.

FISHERIES

Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy

The three Presidencies will attach high priority to the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). A number of crucial steps in the reform process (impact assessment, Council conclusions, first legislative proposals) will take place during the 18 month period.

Reform of the Common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products

The Presidencies will initiate and advance work on the reform of the Common Market Organisation for which the Commission intends to present its proposal in parallel with the reform of the CFP.

Implementation of the aquaculture strategy

Following the Council conclusions on the sustainable development of EU aquaculture, the Presidencies will work on a revision of the strategy.

TACs and quotas 2011

The setting of the TACs and quotas are an annual exercise to which the three Presidencies attach great importance. Bilateral and multilateral negotiations (including the agreement with Norway) which are of eminent importance for the EU fisheries sector will also be high on the agenda in the final months of 2010.

Multi-annual management and recovery plans

The three Presidencies will pay special attention to a number of multi-annual management and recovery plans, including the evaluation of the management plan for fisheries exploiting stocks of plaice and sole in the North Sea.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, a Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security will be set up within the Council. The three Presidencies will ensure that the structure and the work of this new body will contribute effectively to enhancing internal security within the EU.

In this context, the three Presidencies will do their utmost to ensure the implementation of the Stockholm Programme and all efforts will be undertaken for the adoption of the Action Plan in the first semester of 2010.

HOME AFFAIRS

Asylum and Immigration

The European Council will hold an annual debate on immigration and asylum policies in order to review implementation of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, as well as related aspects of the Stockholm Programme, and to provide ongoing strategic guidance for work in this field.

Legal immigration

The facilitation of well-managed legal migration and the promotion of an effective match of labour market demand with supply, based on the needs of the labour markets of destination, will be further pursued. Synergies between migration and development need to be established.

Work will therefore be taken forward on the outstanding aspects of the Policy Plan on Legal Migration - the Single Permit, seasonal workers, intra-corporate trainees - and the implementation of existing directives evaluated.

Integration of Third Country Nationals

Efforts will continue for sharing the best practices of integration policies. Furthermore, attention will be given to measures required in the field of education, vocational training, recognition of qualification and competences, and active labour market policies.

Illegal immigration

The EU has made commitments at the highest political level to pursue the fight against illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings. These commitments will be taken forward by reference to all relevant policy areas, the development of the integrated management of the external borders including through exploring the possibilities offered by new technologies, the strengthening of the role of FRONTEX, further development of an effective and sustainable policy on return and readmission, with full respect to human rights, and combating illegal employment. In addition, new ways of maximizing the effectiveness of the existing EU instruments will be explored in order to reinforce operational cooperation and to develop synergies in the framework of an integrated EU internal security strategy.

Special attention will also be paid to unaccompanied minors, within a global approach comprising of preventive and protection measure, as well as the sustainable return to the country of origin, taking into account the best interest of the child.

Visa policy

The deployment of the Visa Information System (VIS) remains a priority. Local Consular Cooperation will be further promoted and the possibilities of establishing Common Visa Application Centres will be also examined. The evaluation of the Visa Facilitation Agreements will be considered as a priority.

Schengen Area

The further strengthening and extension, in line with existing criteria, of the Schengen area will not only increase the area's security, but will allow more European citizens to profit from the benefits of free movement of persons. The completion and successful launch of the new generation of the Schengen Information System is indispensable in this respect. Work on the improvement of the Schengen Evaluation procedure will continue.

International protection

Work on the legislative measures directed to the establishment of the second phase of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which has as its objective the establishment of a common asylum procedure and a uniform and ambitious status for those granted international protection, will continue to be prioritised. Particular emphasis will also be put on reinforcing practical cooperation, including through the establishment of the European Asylum Office. Solidarity in the management of the protection systems, both among Member States and towards third countries, remains a pillar of the CEAS while respecting the principle of voluntary participation.

Cooperation with third countries in the framework of the EU Global Approach

The Global Approach to Migration offers the possibility for new forms of dialogue and cooperation with third countries in this field and to promote synergies between migration and development. The EU will continue to seek effective and balanced implementation and the further development of its three components. In this context, the implementation of the Global Approach to the South, to the East and the South-East of the EU will continue. The EU will also pursue an enhanced, structured and comprehensive dialogue with Latin America and the Caribbean region on migratory issues.

Internal Security Strategy

The three Presidencies will work on a multidimensional EU sustainable strategy on internal security which will reflect the state of play, future challenges and strategic action of the EU in this field. This strategy will cover the main priority policy areas in the EU law enforcement cooperation. One priority concrete action will be the development of the European Criminal Intelligence Model (ECIM).

Countering Terrorism

The objective of countering terrorism in all its forms, while respecting human rights and international law in all international counter terrorism work, remains a top priority for the EU. The three Presidencies will focus on the implementation of the EU Strategy and Action Plan to Combat Terrorism, as well as on the development of the multidisciplinary response to terrorism, the operational co-operation between the law enforcement authorities of the Member States, the co-operation among European agencies such as Europol and Eurojust, and the co-operation with key third countries. Special attention will be paid to the phenomena of radicalisation and recruitment, based on the EU Strategy and Action Plan. The three Presidencies' objectives will also include actions on the countering of the misuse of the internet for terrorist purposes, enhancing the security of explosives and the coordination of exchange and analysis of information and intelligence on terrorism.

Fight against trafficking in human beings

The fight against trafficking in human beings will remain an important priority. On the basis of the results of the evaluation of the EU Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings, the three Presidencies will propose new orientations for action, focusing on all forms of exploitation and while paying particular attention to highly vulnerable victims.

Combating Drugs

The three Presidencies will continue the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Drugs for 2009-2012. The three Presidencies reiterate the importance of a multidisciplinary, comprehensive and well-balanced approach, focusing on the prevention as well as on the fight against precursors and the illicit production and trafficking of drugs. In addition, the three Presidencies will explore new possibilities for a more effective and co-ordinated law enforcement co-operation with a view to fight against drugs trafficking.

As far as international cooperation is concerned, the same approach will apply. The focus will be on increased cooperation with key third countries in the Mediterranean, Western Balkans, Western Africa, Latin America and Central Asia to crack down on the traffic in precursor chemical and drugs.

Police and Customs cooperation

The three Presidencies will enhance the operational co-operation between the law enforcement authorities and European agencies, such as Europol. In this context, all efforts will be undertaken to ensure the smooth adaptation of Europol's working methods within its new legal framework.

The three Presidencies will explore the possibilities for enhancing the current EU legal framework for law enforcement co-operation, especially for co-operation in the border regions. The development of the practical co-operation on the basis of the Prüm Decisions will be promoted. Experiences and best practices in working with Police and Customs Co-operation Centres should be further exchanged and minimal standards for their functioning could be developed. In this line, the three Presidencies will seek to enhance the interoperability between law enforcement radio communication systems. The European Network for Internal Security Technology Departments will be fully utilised.

The promotion of common police training and the development of a European police culture will remain an objective and in this context the efficient functioning and organisation of CEPOL's core business will be further pursued.

In the field of security at football matches with an international dimension, the three Presidencies will evaluate the current working program and will prepare a new one for the period 2011-2013. They will also work towards the enhancement of co-operation between the authorities responsible for the private security sector in the Member States, the establishment of measures to improve the co-operation on the protection of public figures, and the identification of best practices among the networks of European liaison officers.

The implementation of the EU Strategy for Customs Co-operation in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice, will continue by presenting a new Customs Co-operation Action Plan.

Crime Prevention and Fight against serious and organised crime

The three Presidencies are committed to continue the co-operation in the field of crime prevention. Special attention will be paid to prevent and fight against gender-based violence. Further emphasis will be put on the promotion of methods of non-violent conflict management to prevent violence and/or restore relationships. Special consideration should be given to the implementation of the Directive on the protection of the environment through criminal law.

The fight against serious and organised crime requires a multidisciplinary, intelligence-led approach in order to provide more effective and long-term results. In this context, added value of the Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA) will be sought, including by developing its regional approach.

The three Presidencies will continue to implement the Concerted Work Strategy and the Practical Measures against Cybercrime. Special attention will be paid to combat any form of sexual abuse of children on the Internet.

Identification and recovery of criminal assets and the fight against money laundering will remain a key priority. The issue of identity fraud will be given particular attention and in this context, initiatives will be launched with regard to the verification of the authenticity of identity documents at the European level. Lastly, a reflection on the new socio-economic spheres where organised crime has gained influence and which have a significant impact on the everyday life of our citizens, will be launched.

Exchange of information

The development of a global and coherent long-term EU policy on law enforcement information exchange, with full respect of data protection, will be further pursued. Efforts will be made to come to a more efficient use of the existing national and European law enforcement information systems, in order to avoid overlaps and to optimise costs and potentials for the final users. The establishment of an Agency to manage large scale IT systems is considered a priority.

The three Presidencies will seek to launch and implement an operational SIS II within the agreed n time schedule and will work on the implementation of the “Swedish” Framework Decision and the Prüm Decisions, with a view to starting with the EU-wide automated sharing of data, at the latest in August 2011.

Civil protection

The three Presidencies will continue the work on improving EU response capacities in the face of disasters and crises, both within EU-borders as well as in third countries and with a sufficient balance between prevention, preparedness and response. In this respect, the three Presidencies will follow up on the two Commission Communications on Reinforcing the Union's Disaster Response Capacity and on an EU approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters.

All initiatives regarding training will be pursued thoroughly and particular attention will be paid to the implementation and development of the Civil Protection Modules and to the reinforcement of the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) within the Civil Protection Mechanism framework. The three Presidencies will also carry out work with regard to prevention. In addition, the Presidency will pay specific attention to the evaluation of the Civil Protection Mechanism and Financial Instrument, which will start during the term of the next three Presidencies.

In this context, cooperation with the United Nations will be continued. The progress of the elements of the European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection (EPCIP) will be followed-up during the three Presidencies and special consideration will be given to CBRN-related risks and forest fires prevention.

JUDICIAL COOPERATION

Practical Cooperation in judicial matters

Regarding the **horizontal issues in the field of justice**, the three Presidencies will put an accent on the protection and promotion of **fundamental rights**, the protection of personal data, **E-Justice** and the **training of judges, prosecutors and judicial staff**.

The promotion of **fundamental rights** and liberties within the EU and in its external relations represents a hallmark of the Union. The three Presidencies will contribute to this aim by promoting close cooperation with the European Parliament and the Commission. The Three Presidencies will also strive to improve the cooperation mechanisms between the Fundamental Rights Agency and the EU Institutions. The prompt accession of the EU to the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is a priority for the three Presidencies.

The EU should develop a proactive and consistent approach on the **protection of personal data**, in particular when developing a global strategy on information systems in the field of internal security.

Recognising the significance of the use of the information and communication technologies in the field of justice, the three Presidencies are determined to push forward the projects included in the **E-Justice** Action Plan 2009-2013 and, taking into account its open nature, may launch additional ones. An assessment of the implementation structure's activities should take place before June 2011. Consequently, projects such as the interconnection of registers of wills and the training of legal practitioners will be launched. Work should start on the service of judicial and extrajudicial decisions in civil and commercial matters, on legal aid, on the European order for payment as well as on the small claims procedure. Furthermore, attention will also be paid to the horizontal issue of translation and interpretation.

The three presidencies will encourage the implementation of the general guidelines as accepted by the Member States in the resolution concerning the training of judges, prosecutors and staff of the Administration of Justice. In particular, the three Presidencies aim at developing efficient cooperation between the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) and the relevant national training centres.

Judicial Cooperation in Criminal matters

The principle of **mutual recognition** of judicial decisions in criminal matters is the cornerstone of judicial cooperation between Member States. In this regard special emphasis will be placed on the improvement of direct judicial cooperation, in particular, through the strengthening of the application of the principle of mutual recognition in the field of evidence in criminal proceedings, the feasibility of achieving a general instrument replacing the European evidence warrant (possibly called “European Investigation Order”) or accepting the evidences gathered in another Member State.

In addition, the three Presidencies will also focus on the enhancement of the application of the principle of mutual recognition to the exchange of information on criminal records, the approximation of procedural law, the cooperation between judicial authorities concerning the conduct of proceedings, and the protection of the vulnerable persons and assistance to victims.

With a view to facilitating judicial cooperation between Member States, the three Presidencies will aim at strengthening the exchange of information on criminal records through the establishment of a European Index of convicted third country nationals and will examine the possibilities of exchanging information on supervisory measures adopted in ongoing criminal proceedings and on non final judgments.

The three Presidencies will also pursue the approximation of procedural legislation which is a key element for increasing mutual trust and facilitating mutual recognition. Work should be focused on improving the legal framework, through the adoption of legal instruments in view of setting common minimum standards as to procedural rights and guarantees for individuals in criminal proceedings, as well as the revision of the Council Framework Decision of 15 March 2001 on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings (2001/220/JHA).

The three Presidencies will continue work in view of establishing common rules on the *ne bis in idem* principle in light of the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice.

The three Presidencies will work on a new legal framework to allow the transfer of criminal proceedings from one Member State to another.

The three Presidencies will aim at improving the legal framework for the protection of children and will launch an Action Plan against sexual exploitation of children and child pornography.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the assistance to victims, *inter alia*, victims of terrorism as well as victims of gender-based and domestic violence. To this end, work will be pursued towards a European legal framework, to remove any obstacle to an effective implementation of protection measures in the whole territory of the EU, in order for victims under threat to receive the necessary protection regardless of their residence. In line with the Stockholm Programme, the three Presidencies will take work further on a European Protection order.

Judicial Cooperation in Civil law matters

The three Presidencies will focus on family law, a crucial area affecting the everyday lives of EU citizens. Work will continue on the harmonization of rules on conflicts of jurisdiction and laws. Work will also focus on other aspects of family law, notably the adoption of a Regulation relating to matrimonial property regimes and a regulation on applicable law and jurisdiction on divorce matters.

Work will be advanced on the Regulation on succession and wills.

In addition, work on further developing the principle of mutual recognition will be further pursued. In this context, the revision of Regulation 44/2001/EC will be a priority of the three Presidencies, with special regard to the abolishment of exequatur for the judgments in civil and commercial matters. Lastly, the Presidencies will work on improvement of cross-border enforcement of the judgements given in a Member State in another one, in particular through an analysis of mechanisms for the attachment of bank accounts.

External relations in the area of Freedom Security and Justice

The three Presidencies will aim at fostering the external dimension of the area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

As far as **thematic priorities** are concerned, the three Presidencies are committed to carry on the efforts of the previous Presidencies in the field of immigration, counter-terrorism, the fight against organized crime, criminal and civil judicial cooperation and the strengthening and protection of fundamental rights. The cooperation between Europol, Eurojust and third countries will also be strengthened.

Regarding the **geographical priorities**, particular attention will be paid to the cooperation with candidate countries, Western Balkan countries and countries participating in the European Neighbourhood Policy and in the Eastern Partnership. The EU-US strategic dialogue, the partnership with Russia, the dialogue and cooperation with Africa, the enhanced, structured and comprehensive dialogue with the Latin America and Caribbean region, as well as the cooperation with Asian countries, will remain priorities for the three Presidencies.

The three Presidencies will seek to enhance coordination of the EU position within all international organisations.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The creation of the new post of a HR and the setting up of the European External Action Service will greatly enhance the external action of the EU. It will be of crucial importance to reach agreement early in 2010 on the Decision concerning the organization and functioning of the EEAS. The Union will continue to work in the framework of the European Security Strategy, with particular emphasis on new threats such as those associated with climate change and energy security.

Crisis management

The EU will continue to reinforce CSDP in all its components in order to enhance the role of the Union as a global and autonomous actor in the field of conflict prevention, crisis response, crisis management and post-conflict stabilization with a special focus on civil-military synergy. With a view to improving the effectiveness of crisis management, new ways of cooperation will be encouraged, including multinational solutions, such as pooling of resources, training and logistics, as well as new possibilities provided under the Lisbon Treaty.

Special attention will be paid to implementing the civilian and military Headline Goals and enhancing the EU's rapid response capabilities will be a priority. New possibilities for the development of civilian capabilities will be further explored and the activities of the European Defence Agency for developing capabilities further developed.

The EU will strive to develop close cooperation with UN, NATO, OSCE, the AU and other international and regional organizations. Special attention will be given to further improving relations with NATO at the political strategic level, including with respect to the development of capabilities.

The Presidencies will take stock of a decade's progress in the field of crisis prevention and on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts (Gothenburg Programme) will propose further steps.

Priority will be given to improving the planning and operational conduct of both military and civilian operations. With due regard to the financial situation, priority will be given to making sufficient financial means available for the EU's expanding crisis management role.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women Peace and Security, the Presidencies will promote human rights and gender mainstreaming in the planning and conduct of ESDP missions/operations.

The Presidencies will promote the European security and defence culture and will continue to strengthen the European Security and Defence College (ESDC).

Non-proliferation, disarmament

The implementation of the EU Strategy against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction will continue. To this end, the potential of international meetings scheduled during the period of the three Presidencies, such as, the meeting for the review of the NPT, will be further exploited. Furthermore the EU will actively participate in the implementation of the provisions of the UNSC Resolution 1887 of 2009, in cooperation with third countries.

Work on the EU's strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition will continue, as well as active engagement in the negotiations for an Arms Trade Treaty.

Fight against terrorism

Work will continue on the external aspects of the implementation of the EU's counter-terrorism strategy and the fight against radicalization and recruitment.

Multilateral cooperation

The Union will continue to support the process of UN reform with particular emphasis on enhancing coherence and strengthening the institutional system, through the balanced development of the three pillars, namely, peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. The EU's financial contribution must be properly reflected in the activities of the organization.

Advancing EU-UN co-operation in the field of peace and security and improving the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations will remain of key importance.

European Consular Cooperation and the Protection of the European Citizen

The three Presidencies will work towards the improvement of consular protection of EU-citizens within and outside of the European Union, as far as assistance to and protection of travellers and citizens residing abroad is concerned.

Work on the minimum levels of consular assistance to be offered to citizens of the Member States outside EU territory will be advanced.

Coordination in crisis situations outside the territory of the Union needs to be further developed.

Special attention will be paid to an evaluation of the “lead state” framework and enhanced consular cooperation through ‘mutualisation’ of consular resources. Priority will be given in this respect to training of consular staff in order to improve cooperation in crisis situations and knowledge of EU law.

Consular help offered to European citizens will be promoted throughout the territory of the European Union. Promotion of diplomatic assistance in the handling of Rogatory Commissions in third countries will also receive due attention.

Human rights and rule of law

The Union will concentrate on further strengthening the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the promotion of their universality. The abolition of the death penalty will remain high on the EU's international agenda.

Special emphasis will be given to mainstreaming human rights and gender in all EU policies, including in ESDP, in particular by integrating human rights in political discussions and dialogues with third countries. Particular emphasis will be put on the international prevention of genocide and mass atrocities.

The Union will also strengthen its work in promoting the Rule of Law. Fighting impunity will remain one of the cornerstones of the EU's approach to building and maintaining lasting peace. The EU's support to the International Criminal Court (ICC) will remain strong and in this context the EU should strive to achieve universality and full implementation of the Rome Statute of the ICC. The Review Conference of the Rome Statute which will take place in the course of 2010, will offer an opportunity to further express broad support for the continued development of international criminal law.

Trade Policy

The first global economic contraction for over 50 years has fundamentally changed the operating environment of the Union's commercial policy. The EU will continue making the case for openness and engagement rather than isolation and retreat. In this context, the conclusions of an ambitious, balanced and comprehensive Doha Round will remain an EU priority. In parallel, the EU will continue to pursue bilateral and regional trade agreements with key trade partners.

In the framework of the EU Market Access Strategy, the three Presidencies will support initiatives that enhance exports of goods and services from European companies, particularly SME to third countries, using all the available instruments. Concerted actions to remove non-tariff barriers, to open up government procurement markets and to increase protection for intellectual property rights remain of particular importance.

Development Cooperation

The EU recognises the need to maintain all the commitments made at the Monterrey and Doha meetings. To this end, the EU will continue to monitor closely compliance with the EU's ODA commitments as established in the European Consensus on Development, in particular the EU's intermediate collective target of 0.56% of GNI by 2010. The EU will pay special attention to the needs of Least Developed Countries while continuing to support all developing countries, including both low income and middle -income countries, to achieve a more balanced global development.

The EU will continue to promote aid effectiveness, as agreed in the Accra Agenda for Action. With a view to the High level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (Seoul 2011), it will continue its active implementation, taking into account the specificity of countries in fragile situations.

The EU will also monitor and act upon the achievement of the MDG's. Spain, Belgium and Hungary will closely collaborate on preparing the High Level Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly (September 2010) to mark the 10th anniversary of the Millennium Declaration. In this context, attention will be given to food security and the fight against hunger and poverty by enhancing sustainable rural development, agricultural production systems and management of water and forests. The strengthening of health systems and the preparation of the EU Gender Equality and Woman Empowerment Action Plan for European development policies will be supported. Furthermore, the implementation of the EU commitments on environment made at relevant conferences will be promoted.

With respect to relations with African, Caribbean, Pacific (ACP) countries, the EU will ensure the conclusion of the second revision of the Cotonou Agreement, work on the conclusion and follow-up of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) guaranteeing regional integration and development for ACP countries and also encourage the implementation of EPAs and other regional integration, including through Aid for Trade packages.

Strengthening the transatlantic partnership on development cooperation and promoting cooperation with emerging donors (China, Brazil, India) will also be a priority.

Lastly, the three Presidencies will promote awareness among European citizens of the need to maintain solidarity efforts with countries in need, which suffer more severely from the consequences of the current economic situation.

Non-EU Western Europe

The EU will further develop the cooperation with the three EEA countries, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein and will intensify cooperation with Switzerland, possibly through conclusion of a new framework agreement. The EU will also enhance cooperation in anti-fraud and tax matters with Liechtenstein, Andorra, Monaco and San Marino and Switzerland by concluding new or updating existing agreements.

Western Balkans

The European perspective of the countries of the Western Balkans will be further advanced, in line with the renewed consensus on enlargement of December 2006. The Stabilization and Association Process, in line with the Thessaloniki Agenda, will remain the most important tool in this respect. The EU will continue to assist the Western Balkan countries in their political, economic and institutional reform processes and continued support will be provided for regional cooperation among the Western Balkan countries. Particular attention will be paid to the full implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreements concluded with partner countries as well as the fulfilment of the SAP criteria. Work will also continue with a view to concluding the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Bosnia-Herzegovina (and ratifying and implementing the agreement with Serbia). The implementation of the visa liberalization road-maps will also be taken forward.

Neighbourhood : Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean

The Union will continue to enhance the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as a single and coherent policy framework, paying equal attention to its eastern and southern dimension.

As regards the Eastern dimension, promoting stability, good governance and economic development in its Eastern neighbourhood remains of strategic importance for the European Union. In this context, the Union will continue the implementation of the Eastern Partnership, through deeper bilateral engagement and with a view to a new multilateral framework involving the EU, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine which will aim at accelerating reforms, legislative approximation and further economic integration. In addition, negotiations for deep and comprehensive free trade agreements with partners that are members of the WTO and ready to comply with their commitments will be pursued during the next 18 months. Further steps will be taken towards visa liberalization, on a case by case basis, as a long term goal provided that conditions for well managed and secure mobility are in place. The second Eastern Partnership Summit will be held in the first half of 2011.

Regarding the Southern dimension, the Union for the Mediterranean will be reinvigorated through the 2nd UfM Summit in the first half of 2010 and the adoption of the first UfM Work Programme for 2010-2012. The effective and efficient functioning of the Secretariat to be established in Barcelona will be another priority.

On the bilateral track, close attention will be paid to the bilateral framework of relations with Morocco, Israel, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan, while continuing developing relations with Algeria, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Authority. The signature of the agreement with Syria will be pursued as well as negotiations on an agreement with Libya will be pursued. The first EU-Morocco Summit will be organised in the first semester of 2010.

The EU will also further implement the **European regional strategies**, such as the Northern Dimension, the Black Sea Synergy, ensuring complementarity with the ENP and other regional EU initiatives.

Relations with Russia

The Union will further develop the strategic partnership with Russia on the basis of common interests and values. Efforts will continue to progress in the negotiations for a new EU-Russia agreement and also for the implementation of the road maps for the four common spaces. The Union will urge Russia to complete its WTO accession which will open the prospects for a bilateral free trade agreement and to work towards the resolution of other outstanding issues. The Union will also ensure coherence and continuity among the consecutive Summits to be held with Russia.

Central Asia

During the 18-month period, the EU will pursue the implementation of its Central Asia Strategy in its seven main areas: human rights, rule of law, good governance and democratisation, education, economic development, trade and investment, energy and transport, environment and water, common threats and challenges and intercultural dialogue. Moreover it will examine the possibilities for strengthening cooperation with countries in Central Asia.

Middle East

The Union will continue to support all efforts to reach comprehensive peace in the Middle East, based on the two State solution, in cooperation with regional and international partners. The Union will continue playing an active role and will work towards enhanced relations with the countries of the region, including by exploring ways and formulating proposals for supporting the implementation of a peace agreement.

The Union will continue to follow closely the developments in Iran and will continue to contribute to a long-term negotiated solution to the nuclear issue as part of a broader agenda with Iran.

The Union will continue its support to a secure, stable, democratic prosperous and unified Iraq and will pursue the conclusion of negotiations on a Cooperation and Trade agreement with this country. The finalization of the FTA negotiations with the Gulf Cooperation Council remains a key objective for the EU.

Transatlantic Relations

Transatlantic relations will remain a key priority on the EU's agenda. Efforts will be made to continue strengthening the EU-US strategic partnership with particular attention on key multilateral issues, namely climate change, energy, the economic and financial crisis, crisis management and development cooperation. In the field of Energy, all efforts will be undertaken to effectively use the EU-US Energy Council. Efforts will continue on the implementation of the 2007 programme for economic cooperation as well as regulatory dialogue, in particular through the work of the Transatlantic Economic Council. A renewed political agenda will include enhanced dialogue and possibly joint action on regional issues, non proliferation and disarmament, and security. Further cooperation in the field of freedom, security and justice as well as counter-terrorism will also be explored.

The close relations with Canada will be developed further and work will continue on the new Comprehensive Economic Agreement as well as other areas.

Africa

The EU will continue to focus on implementation of the joint EU-Africa Strategy and the Action Plan. Special emphasis needs to be put on actions in the fields of peace and security, energy, climate change, trade, the respect of human rights, democracy and the rule of law as well on issues of migration. The EU and Africa will co-organize the third EU-Africa Summit during the second semester of 2010.

The promotion of peace and security on the continent remains one of the key objectives of the EU's policy in Africa. The EU will continue cooperating with the African Union (AU) to enable it to play a major role in conflict prevention and resolution of conflicts across the continent. The EU will continue supporting crisis prevention, stabilization and reconciliation processes and will continue contributing to capacity building, especially as concerns the planning and conduct by the AU of peace keeping missions.

The EU will continue to monitor developments in crisis-prone areas such as the Great Lakes Region, the Sahel Region and the Horn of Africa (in particular Sudan and Somalia), and will engage in stabilization and conflict resolution efforts with regional and international partners.

Asia

The Union will place particular attention to developing and strengthening its relations with its Asian partners. In this context, the ASEM8 Summit, to be held in the second half of 2010, will be an opportunity to promote the political and economic objectives of the EU and to further enhance relations with Asia.

Relations with individual South Eastern Asian countries will also be strengthened through the conclusion and implementation of the bilateral Partnership and Cooperation Agreements and if possible, a free trade agreement with ASEAN. The EU should pursue its accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation which reflects the EU's strong support for and contribution to regional, peace, security and cooperation as well as its willingness for greater constructive engagement in regional integration processes.

We will focus on strengthening bilateral relations with Japan with the prospect of the renewal of the current Action Plan.

New contractual relations with China, South Korea, India, will also be pursued. As regards China the EU will continue the efforts aimed at broadening economic relations and strengthening political contacts with this important partner. The human rights dialogue will continue to be an important part of relations with China. The next logical step in the EU-India relations would be the negotiations of a PCA; the EU will continue exploring ways of engaging India in this respect.

The EU will also continue to monitor closely developments in the Korean Peninsula, to promote stability. Once the new legal framework is in force, the EU will pursue the upgrade of the relationship with Republic of Korea to a strategic partnership.

The EU will actively follow developments in Myanmar/Burma and support regional and UN's efforts aimed at helping the transition to democracy, in particular in the context of the planned 2010 elections.

The EU will remain actively engaged in Afghanistan and Pakistan, pursuing the implementation of the Plan for Strengthened EU action in Afghanistan and Pakistan, while taking into account the regional dimension. The EU is committed to engaging with the new Afghan government to assist the country in meeting the challenges it faces.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Relations with Latin America will be further developed. The 6th EU-LAC Summit, to take place in the first half of 2010, will ensure the follow-up to the Action Plan and will set up the EU-LAC Foundation. The Summit with Mexico and the fourth EU-Brazil Summit will take place, respectively, in the first and second semester of 2010. Work will also continue on the follow-up of the Strategic Partnerships and Action Plans concluded with Mexico and Brazil.

Relations with individual countries or groups of countries will also be nurtured and to this end the regular bilateral Summits with Chile, Central America, Andean Community, Cariforum and Mercosur will be organized in the course of the 18 months.

Strong emphasis will be placed on the conclusion and signature of the Association Agreements with the Central American and the signature of the Multilateral Agreement with the Andean Community countries, as well as on the resumption and advancement of negotiations for the Association Agreement with Mercosur.

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