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PRESS RELEASE

2736th Council Meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

General Affairs

Luxembourg, 12 June 2006

President **Ms Ursula Plassnik,**
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria

* The 2737th meeting on External Relations is the subject of a separate press release (9947/06).

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6083 / 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom

Main Results of the Council

*The Council agreed on common positions on the science and research chapter of the **accession negotiations with Croatia and Turkey**, with a view to the accession conferences held in the margins of the meeting.*

It approved the signing of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with **Albania**. The agreement was signed in the margins of the Council.

It decided to launch an EU military operation in support of the UN's MONUC during the electoral period in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, and to extend by four months, until 31 October, the EU's integrated **rule of law mission for Iraq**, providing urgent training to officials in the judiciary, police and penitentiary.

The Council examined draft conclusions for the European Council meeting in Brussels on 15 and 16 June.

The Council also adopted guidelines on **consular protection for EU citizens in third countries**.

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PARTICIPANTS

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

Belgium:	
Mr Karel DE GUCHT	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Didier DONFUT	State Secretary for European Affairs, attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Czech Republic:	
Mr Cyril SVOBODA	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Denmark:	
Mr Per Stig MØLLER	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Germany:	
Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER	Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
Estonia:	
Mr Urmas PAET	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Greece:	
Ms Theodora BAKOYANNIS	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Spain:	
Mr Miguel Ángel MORATINOS CUYAUBÉ	Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
France:	
Mr Philippe DOUSTE-BLAZY	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Ms Catherine COLONNA	Minister with responsibility for European Affairs
Ireland:	
Mr Dermot AHERN	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Italy:	
Mr Massimo D'ALEMA	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs
Cyprus:	
Mr George IACOVOU	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Latvia:	
Mr Artis PABRIKS	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Lithuania:	
Mr Antanas VALIONIS	Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs
Luxembourg:	
Mr Jean ASSELBORN	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Hungary:	
Ms Kinga GÖNCZ	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Malta:	
Mr Michael FRENDO	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Netherlands:	
Mr Bernard BOT	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Ms Atzo NICOLAÏ	Minister for European Affairs
Austria:	
Ms Ursula PLASSNIK	Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Hans WINKLER	State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Poland:	
Ms Anna Elżbieta FOTYGA	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Portugal:	
Mr Diogo FREITAS DO AMARAL	Ministro de Estado, Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Fernando DE OLIVEIRA NEVES	State Secretary for European Affairs

Slovenia:	
Mr Dimitrij RUPEL	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Janez LENARČIČ	State Secretary at the Government Office for European Affairs
Slovakia:	
Mr Eduard KUKAN	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Finland:	
Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Ms Paula LEHTOMÄKI	Minister for Foreign Trade and Development
Sweden:	
Mr Bosse RINGHOLM	Deputy Prime Minister, with responsibility for Coordination and Sport
Mr Jan ELIASSON	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Lars-Olof LINDGREN	State Secretary at the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications
United Kingdom:	
Ms Margaret BECKETT	Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Mr Geoff HOON	Minister of State for Europe

Commission:	
Ms Margot WALLSTRÖM	Vice-President
Mr Franco FRATTINI	Vice-President
Mr Olli REHN	Member

General Secretariat of the Council:	
Mr Javier SOLANA	Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

The Governments of the Acceding States were represented as follows:

Bulgaria:	
Mr Ivailo KALFIN	Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs
Ms Meglena KUNEVA	Minister for European Affairs
Romania:	
Mr Mihai-Răzvan UNGUREANU	Minister for Foreign Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED

PREPARATION OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON 15 AND 16 JUNE 2006

The Council examined draft conclusions prepared by the Presidency for the European Council meeting to be held in Brussels on 15 and 16 June.

The items to be addressed are as follows:

- the future of Europe: the Constitutional Treaty and EU enlargement;

- the EU's policy agenda, including security, energy, sustainable development, education, the environment and migration;

- improvements within the framework of the existing treaties: transparency, subsidiarity and comitology, the efficiency and coherence of external policy.

The European Council is also due to issue declarations on a number of external policy issues, in particular the Middle East peace process, Africa, the Western Balkans, Iraq, Lebanon and Iran.

A revised version of the draft conclusions will be presented to the European Council on 16 June 2006.

ENLARGEMENT - PREPARATION OF ACCESSION CONFERENCES

The Council agreed on an EU common position with a view to the accession conference with Turkey on 12 June 2006, providing for both the opening and the provisional closure of the science and research chapter of the accession negotiations.

The Council also agreed, without discussion, on an EU common position with a view to the accession conference with Croatia on the same day, providing for both the opening and the provisional closure of the science and research chapter of the accession negotiations.

EU AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

The Council took note of work on a draft Regulation aimed at establishing an EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and on a draft Decision on pursuit by the agency of its activities. It requested the Permanent Representatives Committee to continue work on the remaining outstanding questions so as to enable the Council to reach an agreement.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Africa - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"*Sudan*

The EU will work for the full and rapid implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) as a precondition for lasting peace and security in Darfur and an end to the suffering of millions of the people in Darfur. The EU calls on all parties to implement the DPA and states its willingness to take measures against those that impede the peace process. Together with other partners in the international community, the EU will continue to provide planning, technical, financial and equipment support to both the military and police components of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), in order to help it fulfil its mandate as effectively as possible. In doing so, the EU will also take into account the new tasks arising from the DPA, and the need to ensure a smooth transition to a UN led operation in Darfur, in line with the decisions of the Peace and Security Council of the AU of 15 May 2006 and in full cooperation with the Sudanese Government. The EU is ready to respond positively to the requests for support to the implementation of the DPA, including in relation to the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation. Similarly, the EU will continue to be at the front stage by organising in Brussels the forthcoming July 7 conference on AMIS. This conference will be followed by a pledging conference on reconstruction and development of Darfur, to be organised by the Netherlands in September.

The Council calls on the Government of Sudan and all parties in Darfur to remove immediately any existing obstacles to the delivery of aid and to end any obstruction of humanitarian work or of assistance rendered to AMIS.

The Council remains deeply concerned by the risk of destabilisation caused by the Darfur crisis on Chad, on the Central African Republic and by the reports of increasing insecurity in the Darfur refugee camps in Chad. The EU calls on Sudan and Chad to comply fully with the obligations as set out in the Tripoli agreement of 8 February, put an end to any direct or indirect support to rebel groups in the other country, with a view to contribute to secure peace at their common borders.

The Council recalls its support for sanctions against those blocking the peace process as set out in UN Security Council Resolution 1591 (2005). It reiterates its full support for the ongoing investigation by the International Criminal Court (ICC) of human rights abuses in Darfur as mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1593 (2005) and urges all parties, in particular the Government of Sudan, to fully cooperate with the ICC.

The EU reaffirms its commitment to continue supporting the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan, including through its participation in the Assessment and Evaluation Commission. The EU is closely following developments regarding talks between the Sudanese Government and the Eastern Front aimed at resolving existing problems in Eastern Sudan. In all these efforts, the EUSR for Sudan will continue to play an important role in ensuring comprehensive and coherent EU action.

Uganda

The EU stands ready to contribute to put an end to the unacceptable activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in both Northern Uganda and in the sub-region, as well as to assist efforts to improve the humanitarian situation in Northern Uganda. The Council calls on the Ugandan Government to work actively for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Northern Uganda in collaboration with countries in the region. The LRA commanders indicted by the ICC must be apprehended and brought to face justice as a matter of urgency.

Somalia

The EU is deeply concerned regarding recent violence between armed groups in and around Mogadishu. This poses a serious threat to a fragile process of transition towards democratic institutions. The EU welcomes reconciliatory statements from the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFI), notes the statement from the Union of Islamic Courts and encourages a similar approach from other parties in Mogadishu. It urges all parties to start a dialogue aiming at consolidating reconciliation in Somalia, for the sake of the stability of the country and the safety of its people.

Recalling its commitment to support the development of the capacities of the Somali security sector, the EU urges all parties to observe the arms embargo scrupulously and to avoid further destabilising a country which is already flooded with armaments.

The EU will continue to fully support, in line with the conclusions of the Council of 20 March 2006, all efforts by the Somali TFIs for dialogue, national reconciliation, stable governance and for reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Côte d'Ivoire

The Council calls on the parties to take urgently all the necessary measures for the "concomitant" implementation of the process of disarmament and identification, as prerequisite for the organisation, by the end of October 2006, of free, open, fair and transparent elections. Through its participation in the International Working Group, the EU will continue to support the full implementation of the *feuille de route*, under the leadership of Prime Minister Konan Banny, and will be ready to push for appropriate measures against those who impede the peace process. At the same time, the EU will be following closely developments in the West African region. The Council recalls the central role of the UN in Côte d'Ivoire.

Democratic Republic of Congo

The EU will continue to assist and help to secure the very extensive process of political transition, in particular through support to the holding of the first democratic elections since more than 40 years. The EU fully supports the electoral calendar by the electoral independent commission and recalls that there is no alternative plan to the holding of elections. The EU has provided substantial funding for the election preparations and is sending an Electoral Observation Mission. It calls upon all political forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to continue pursuing this path of peaceful and democratic change in the run-up of the elections, starting on July 30. The Council calls upon all actors to engage in the electoral campaign in a spirit of peace and reconciliation and it will strongly condemn all discourses which appeal to hatred and xenophobia. The EU will deploy the military operation EUFOR RD Congo, in response to a request from the United Nations, designed to provide support to MONUC in certain situations. This deterrence force, for the duration of the electoral period, will include an advanced element deployed in Kinshasa and a force over the horizon. EUFOR RD Congo will build on EU's longstanding engagement in the DRC. For the same purpose, the EU's police mission in Kinshasa (EUPOL Kinshasa) will be reinforced. The EU will continue to support the ongoing Security Sector Reform through its mission EUSEC RDC. All these activities will be carried out in full agreement with the government of the DRC. For the period after the elections, apart from continued support for security sector reform, the EU is prepared to engage in quick impact projects to assist immediate reconstruction and rehabilitation, to be followed by a long-term effort for sustainable development taking into account the principles of good governance and transparency. The ongoing process of securing regional stability through the early holding of the second Summit of the Great Lakes Conference has the full support of the EU."

EU guidelines on human rights defenders - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The Council pays tribute to the courage of human rights defenders and expresses its sincere admiration for the invaluable contribution they make to advancing respect for human rights worldwide. The Council expresses its concern about the ongoing threats and attacks and strongly condemns killings of human rights defenders, as documented in the latest report by the UN Special Representative on human rights defenders. It calls on all states to ensure the safety and protection of the rights of human rights defenders and calls particular attention to the situation of women human rights defenders.

2. The Council welcomes the first review of the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders (ANNEX II). The Council acknowledges progress made towards the implementation of the Guidelines but underlines the need to continue efforts to further increase the level of awareness amongst all relevant EU actors at the Brussels, capitals and mission level about the existence, purpose, content and operational application of the Guidelines. The Council therefore requests all relevant actors of the European Union to implement the steps recommended by the review.

3. The Council, its Member States and the Commission are committed to continued close cooperation with civil society in promoting human rights and in raising awareness about the content and the purpose of the Guidelines and to advance their full implementation. In this context, close cooperation with the European Parliament will also be pursued.

4. The Council stresses the importance of the mandate of the UN Special Representative and other relevant special procedures, and the crucial role played by the Special Representative in implementing the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and enhancing the protection of human rights defenders throughout the world. It reiterates the EU's full support for the UN Special Representative and is committed to continued close cooperation with this crucial mechanism. In view of the newly established Human Rights Council, the Council also underlines the importance the EU attaches to continued access and active participation of human rights defenders and NGOs from the outset.

5. The Council will continue to regularly review progress towards implementation of the Guidelines as well as action taken in response to the recommendations of this first review."

Albania - Stabilisation and Association Agreement

The Council adopted a Decision approving the signing of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Albania, and decided to request the European Parliament's assent with a view to conclusion of the agreement *(9030/06, 8155/06 and 8164/06)*.

The aims of the agreement are:

- to support the efforts of Albania in strengthening democracy and the rule of law;

- to contribute to political, economic and institutional stability in Albania, as well as to the stabilisation of the region;

- to provide a framework for political dialogue, allowing the development of close political relations between the parties;

- to support the efforts of Albania in developing its economic and international cooperation, also through the approximation of its legislation to that of the Community;

- to support the efforts of Albania in completing the transition to a functioning market economy, promoting harmonious economic relations and developing gradually a free trade area between the Community and Albania;

- to foster regional cooperation in the fields covered by the Agreement.

The Council also adopted a Decision approving the signing and the conclusion of an Interim Agreement on trade with Albania, pending the ratification and entry into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. *(9034/06, 8139/06 and 8154/06)*.

The two Agreements were signed in the margins of the Council (see press release *10389/06*).

Bosnia and Herzegovina - Comprehensive review of EU activities - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"As a potential candidate country, Bosnia and Herzegovina participates in the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), which is the framework for the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries. BiH is currently negotiating a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU. In addition to the activities of the European Commission and bilateral initiatives from EU Member States, the EU has deployed a number of instruments in BiH in the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP): an EU Special Representative (EUSR), an EU Police Mission (EUPM) and an EU Military Operation (Operation ALTHEA). The EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) also continues to be active in BiH. The various EU actors act in coordination with each other, and the results of the comprehensive EU approach in terms of security, political stability and overall socio-economic development have been notable in recent years. The coherent EU policy and a clear European perspective have contributed substantially to the country's transition from stabilisation towards closer ties with the EU.

The Council has undertaken a comprehensive review of the EU activities in BiH, including by conducting concurrent review processes of Operation ALTHEA and EUPM, which has helped ensure a more complete operational overview and a coherent approach to ESDP actions such as in the support to the fight against organised crime. The Council also welcomed the joint efforts of the SG/HR and the Commission in conducting the comprehensive review and took note of the Commission's contribution.

Within the framework of the comprehensive review, the Council reviewed Operation ALTHEA and welcomed the positive contribution of the operation to ensuring a safe and secure environment in BiH. The Council approved the SG/HR's recommendations for Operation ALTHEA and confirmed that EUFOR should maintain current force levels and its current tasks for the coming six months. The Council furthermore noted that cooperation with NATO continues to work well in the context of the Berlin Plus Arrangements. The Council considered that a EUFOR presence would be required beyond the end of 2006.

The Council also reviewed EUPM and welcomed the positive contribution of the Mission to the establishment of developing sustainable policing arrangements under BiH ownership. The Council recognised the important role of EUPM, in close coordination with the EC, in the area of police reform. The Council approved the SG/HR's recommendations for EUPM.

The Council welcomed the extensive EU support to BiH authorities in the fight against organised crime. In the broader framework of security sector reform in the Western Balkans, the EU has substantially contributed to the build-up of local capacity. The Council reconfirmed EUPM's leading role in the coordination of policing aspects of ESDP efforts in the fight against organised crime in BiH. The Council also welcomed the increased cooperation between the EUSR, EUFOR and EUPM in this regard."

Weapons of mass destruction - EU assistance to multilateral organisations

- Support for International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The Council adopted a Joint Action on support for IAEA activities in the areas of nuclear security and verification *(9381/06)*.

The Joint Action, to be carried out in the framework of the EU strategy against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), will implement IAEA projects aimed at strengthening:

- the security and control of radioactive materials;
- capabilities for detection of and response to illicit trafficking in radioactive materials;
- legislative and regulatory infrastructures for the implementation of relevant international instruments in the areas of nuclear security and verification.

The projects will be developed in countries situated in south-eastern Europe, central Asia, the Caucasus, the Mediterranean region, the Middle East and Africa.

The financial reference amount for implementation of the projects is set at EUR 7 million.

- Support for the implementation of UNSC resolution 1540(2004)

The Council adopted a Joint Action in support of implementation of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1540(2004), in the framework of the EU strategy against proliferation of WMD *(9515/06)*.

The projects are aimed at:

- raising awareness of the requirements related to the UNSC Resolution and of its importance to non-proliferation;

- contributing to the strengthening of third countries' administrative capacities in three regions (Asia-Pacific, Africa and Latin America-Caribbean) in drafting national reports on implementation of Resolution 1540.

The EU contribution to the implementation of projects in these three regions is set at EUR 195 000.

In April 2004, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1540, which is the first international instrument that deals with weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and related materials in an integrated manner. It establishes binding obligations aimed at preventing and deterring non-State actors from obtaining such weapons.

- Reports on implementation of the EU strategy

The Council endorsed a progress report on implementation of the WMD strategy covering EU activities in the first half of 2006.

The strategy, adopted by the European Council in December 2003, requires the Council to have a debate on implementation every six months.

Accumulation and trafficking of small arms

The Council endorsed:

- the first six-monthly report on implementation of the EU strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, adopted by the European Council last December; and

- the fifth annual report on implementation of the Council's Joint Action on the EU's contribution to combating the accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons *(10095/06)*.

Policy framework for security sector reform - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. Council welcomes the release of the European Commission Communication "A Concept for European Community Support for Security Sector Reform". This concept complements the Concept for ESDP support to Security Sector Reform, adopted in November 2005. Together the two concepts constitute a policy framework for EU engagement in Security Sector Reform (SSR), stressing the importance for the EU to take a comprehensive and cross-pillar approach to SSR recognising the fact that SSR is a holistic, multi-sector, and long-term process encompassing the overall functioning of the security system as part of governance reforms.

2. This EU policy framework for SSR is an important contribution to EU's external action. Preventing and resolving violent conflict and addressing fragile states are part of the EU's efforts to reduce insecurity and eradicate poverty through strengthening good governance and the rule of law in third countries; finding solutions to existing problems; thus helping to achieve the commitments of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, sustainable development and global security and to implement the EU's Development Policy Statement *"The European Consensus on Development"*, including the security objectives of the EU as set out in the European Security Strategy.

3. The EU action on SSR should be based on the following principles, drawing on the OECD-DAC definition on SSR:

- nationally/regionally owned participatory reform processes designed to strengthen good governance, democratic norms, the rule of law and the respect and promotion of human rights, in line with internationally agreed norms;

- addressing the core requirements of a well functioning security system, including the development of a nationally owned concept of security, well-defined policies and good governance of security institutions;

- addressing diverse security challenges facing States and their populations, based on a gender-sensitive multi-sector approach to the provision of security and access to justice, and targeting reform needs in different key sectors. This includes separating tasks between different services and institutions and taking into account the role of civil society and other non-State structures of governance;

- accountability and transparency standards should be the same that apply across the public sector, in particular improved governance through greater civilian and parliamentary oversight of security processes;

- political dialogue with each partner country, addressing human rights, development and security concerns, and be carried out in synergy with other instruments.

4. The EU has a broad range of civilian and military instruments which are able to support SSR activities. A case-by-case analysis based on a situation-specific approach is always needed to assess whether any proposed activities are most appropriately carried out through ESDP or Community action or a combination of both with the objective of ensuring effective and coherent EU external action in this area. The Council and the Commission will ensure consistency between their activities in accordance with Article 3 of the TEU.

5. The Council agrees to take forward work during the Finnish Presidency with the Commission to develop an EU approach to contribute to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) as part of broader SSR support and consistent with the EU policy framework for SSR.

6. The Council invites future Presidencies and the Commission to progressively translate this policy framework for EU engagement in SSR into operational actions by the European Community and in the framework of ESDP, in order to provide effective, coherent and sustainable support to EU partner countries and regions."

Consular protection for EU citizens in third countries

The Council adopted guidelines on consular protection for EU citizens in third countries, aimed at strengthening consular cooperation, especially in situations where the safety of EU citizens is endangered *(10109/2/06 REV 2)*.

The guidelines[1] deal mainly with:

- *Contingency planning*

Production of contingency plans in advance of a crisis, based on previous experience in crisis management and prevention. These plans require participation of all diplomatic representations of EU Member States present in a third country.

In countries at risk where not all member states are represented, heads of mission decide how to share responsibilities for ensuring that EU nationals are covered by contingency plans. The associated responsibilities include coordination with local authorities, third countries and international organisations.

- *Information exchange*

Consular contingency planning needs to be based on adequate information on EU citizens who may be affected. Missions of Member States encourage their nationals –and other EU nationals for whom they have responsibility– to register their consular details.

Heads of diplomatic and consular missions meet periodically to discuss the safety conditions of EU citizens and local effectiveness of contingency planning.

EU posts in third countries share information on changes in local legislation having a direct impact on consular work.

Member States are encouraged to share changes to travel advice relevant to the third country in question. Information should include a description of the nature of the threat and indicate whether it is considered relevant to citizens of other EU Member States.

Missions examine the possibility of establishing communication networks, or improving the existing ones, in order to ensure permanent contact between themselves.

- *Emergency plans*

Emergency plans of all EU Member States represented in a third country capital should be shared and reviewed on a regular basis. These plans should not only be consistent with each other, but should also fit in with those of the host country and other major partners.

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[1] The guidelines have been drawn up as part of the implementation of the mutual protection obligation provided for in the EC Treaty and the Treaty on the EU, building on two Decisions adopted in 1995. For the purposes of the guidelines, citizens of States acceding to the EU are considered on the same footing as EU citizens.

In the event of evacuation, diplomatic and consular missions will work together to ensure that use of logistical resources is optimised.

Annual report on Common Foreign and Security Policy

The Council approved an annual report for presentation to the European Parliament on the main aspects and basic choices of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), including the financial implications for the general budget of the EU *(10314/06)*.

The report provides a description of CFSP activities (including common positions, joint actions and implementing decisions[1]), whilst also referring to other areas, and also looks at the prospects for future action.

EU programme for the prevention of violent conflicts - Annual report

The Council approved a report on EU activities in the prevention of violent conflicts, including implementation of the EU's programme for the prevention of violent conflicts, to be submitted by the Presidency to the European Council on 15 and 16 June.

The report reflects achievements since 2001 and gives an overview of developments since last year's report.

EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council

The Council approved the position of the EU with a view to the tenth meeting of the EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council, which will be held in Luxembourg in June 2006 (date to be confirmed).

EU-Canada political dialogue

The Council endorsed a streamlined EU political dialogue as agreed with Canada, and to be applied from 1 January 2007.

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[1] Since 2004 complete summary lists of CFSP instruments (declarations, démarches, reports by Heads of Mission and political dialogue meetings) have been published in a separate document, issued twice a year. The information covering 2005 is contained in *7874/06*, available on the Council website: http://register.consilium.europa.eu.

EU-US cooperation on combating piracy and counterfeiting*

The Council endorsed an EU - US action strategy for the enforcement of intellectual property rights, which will be put to the EU - US summit in Vienna on 21 June 2006.

Northern Dimension Action Plan - Annual report

The Council took note of a report from the Commission on implementation of the Northern Dimension Action Plan in 2005, with a view to submitting it to the European Council in Brussels on 15/16 June 2006.

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

DR Congo - EU military operation in support of MONUC during the election process

The Council adopted a Decision on the launching of an EU military operation in support of the United Nations Mission (MONUC) during the election process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Operation EUFOR RD Congo).

Under the Decision, the EU military operation is launched on 12 June 2006. It authorises the EU operation commander, with immediate effect, to release the activation order in order to execute the deployment of the forces, and start execution of the mission.

On 25 April 2006, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1671(2006), authorising the temporary deployment of an EU force to support MONUC during the period encompassing the elections in the DR Congo.

Gabon - Agreement on the deployment of EUFOR RD Congo

The Council adopted a Decision approving the conclusion of an Agreement with Gabon on the status of the EU-led forces in the Gabonese Republic, with a view to facilitating the swift deployment of EUFOR RD Congo *(10256/06)*.

Iraq - EU Integrated Rule of Law Mission

The Council adopted a Joint Action amending and extending Joint Action 2005/190/CFSP on the EU Integrated Rule of Law Mission for Iraq (EUJUST LEX) (*9255/06*).

The new Joint Action extends the mandate of the mission for a period of 4 months until 31 October 2006 (Joint Action 2005/190/CFSP expires on 30 June 2006), as the first phase of an 18-month extension agreed by the Council.

EUJUST LEX is designed to address the urgent needs in the Iraqi criminal justice system by providing training in management and criminal investigation to be given to senior officials and executive staff in the judiciary, police and penitentiary. The operational phase of the mission started on 1 July 2005.

ESDP Training Report 2006

The Council took note of a report on ESDP-related activities in 2006 and approved its conclusions (*10188/06*).

The report evaluates activities conducted by the various training actors[1] during the period May 2005 to April 2006 and assesses to what extent identified training requirements in the field of ESDP have been met. It identifies future training needs and requirements which will need to be taken into account in the next review of training requirements, and analyses the overall training management process with a view to its improvement.

EU exercise programme for the period 2007 - 2011

The Council approved a draft EU exercise programme for the period 2007 - 2011. It cancelled exercise specifications for the EU's crisis management exercise 2006 (CME 06) and agreed that an exercise study (EST 06) will be conducted instead as a case-study in the second half of 2006, focusing on the accelerated decision-making process in the context of an EU rapid response operation.

EU military exercise MILEX 07/CPX

The Council approved draft exercise specifications for the EU military exercise MILEX 07/CPX, which will focus on the interaction between the EU operations centre and an EU force headquarters.

The EU will conduct this exercise from 7 to 15 June 2007 in the framework of the EU exercise programme approved by the Council in June 2005.

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[1] The European Security and Defence College, the European Police College, the Community Project on Training for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management, the European Diplomatic Programme, and the Member States / acceding States with their national institutes, colleges, academies.

Presidency six-monthly report on ESDP

The Council approved a Presidency report on European Security and Defence Policy with a view to its submission to the European Council on 15 and 16 June 2006.

The report covers all ESDP issues that have been discussed in the first half of this year and includes terms of reference for the incoming Finnish Presidency.

GENERAL AFFAIRS

EU sustainable development strategy

The Council agreed on the review of the EU sustainable development strategy (SDS) with a view to its adoption by the European Council at its meeting on 15-16 June 2006 *(10117/06)*.

The document sets out a single strategy on how the EU will more effectively live up to its long-standing commitment in meeting the challenges of sustainable development. It reaffirms the need for global solidarity and recognises the importance of strengthening work with partners outside the EU.

The overall aim of the renewed EU SDS is to identify and develop actions to enable the EU to achieve continuous improvement of the quality of life for current and for future generations, through the creation of sustainable communities able to manage and use resources efficiently and to tap the ecological and social innovation potential of the economy, ensuring prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion.

The strategy focuses on seven priority areas for action: climate change and clean energy; sustainable transport; sustainable consumption and production; conservation and management of natural resources; public health; social inclusion, demography and migration; and global poverty and sustainable development challenges.

EU policy strategy for 2007

The Council took note of a report on a dialogue conducted with the Commission on its annual policy strategy for 2007 *(9781/1/06)*.

Proceedings in the Council's different configurations

The Council took note of a Presidency report on proceedings in the Council's different configurations (*10134/06*).

EU emergency and crisis response capacities

The Council took note of a report by the Presidency on "Reinforcing the EU's emergency and crisis response capacities", with a view to submitting it to the European Council on 15-16 June 2006 *(10339/06)*.

The report draws together the follow-up to the various initiatives launched by preceding presidencies. It summarises efforts made by the EU to improve coordination of available assets; to get assistance quickly to where it is needed; and to provide more effective consular assistance to EU citizens in third countries.

COHESION POLICY

Structural funds

The Council, following its agreement on 5 May on a package of legislative measures for the EU's cohesion policy for the 2007-2013 period *(press release 9039/06*), adopted common positions on the following draft proposals:

– Regulation on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF),

– Regulation on the European Social Fund (ESF), and

– Regulation on the European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) .

The three draft Regulations establish the tasks of the ERDF, ESF and EGTC and the scope of their assistance with regard to the convergence, regional competitiveness and employment and European territorial cooperation objectives as defined in the general draft Regulation on structural funds for the period 2007-2013.

The texts will now be sent to the European Parliament for a second reading opinion under the codecision procedure.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Europol

The Council approved Europol's draft budget for 2007.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

External auditors of national central banks – France

The Council adopted a Decision approving the appointment of Deloitte & Associés and Mazars & Guerard jointly as external auditors of the Banque de France for the 2006 to 2011 period, and KPMG S.A. as deputy auditors *(9146/06)*.

The Decision amends Decision 1999/70/EC on external auditors of the Member States' national central banks.

APPOINTMENTS

Committee of the Regions

The Council adopted decisions appointing:

– Mr Volker HOFF, Hessen Minister for Federal and European Affaires and Commissioner of the Land of Hessen to the Federation, as a full member of the Committee of the Regions in place of Mr Jochen RIEBEL

for the remainder of his term of office, which runs until 25 January 2010.