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General Affairs and External Relations

External Relations

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President

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Main results of the Council

The Council discussed the situation in **Afghanistan** following the presidential elections held on 20 August. It expressed support for Afghan institutions and for the organisation of an international conference to discuss the country's future with the incoming Afghan government.

The Council held an exchange of views on how to enhance bilateral relations with the three Southern Caucasian countries **Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia**, within the framework of the EU's Eastern Partnership.

It adopted a joint action on the EU mission **EUSEC RD Congo** to provide advice and assistance for security sector reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Council also adopted conclusions on the situation in **Honduras** and in **Sudan**.

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¹ • Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
• Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
• Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

PARTICIPANTS

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

Belgium:

Mr Yves LETERME
Mr Olivier CHASTEL

Minister for Foreign Affairs
State Secretary for European Affairs

Bulgaria:

Ms Rumiana JELEVA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Czech Republic:

Mr Jan KOHOUT
Mr Štefan FÜLE

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for European Affairs

Denmark:

Mr Per Stig MØLLER

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Germany:

Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER
Mr Günter GLOSER

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ireland:

Mr Dick ROCHE

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach and
at the Department of Foreign Affairs with special
responsibility for European Affairs

Greece:

Ms Dora BAKOYANNI

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr Miguel Ángel MORATINOS
Mr Diego LÓPEZ GARRIDO

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
State Secretary for the European Union

France:

Mr Bernard KOUCHNER
Mr Pierre LELLOUCHE

Minister for Foreign and European Affairs
State Secretary with responsibility for European affairs

Italy:

Mr Alfredo MANTICA

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Cyprus:

Mr Nicholas EMILIOU

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Latvia:

Mr Māris RIEKSTIŅŠ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Lithuania:

Mr Vygaudas UŠACKAS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and
Immigration

Hungary:

Mr Péter BALÁZS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr Richard CACHIA CARUANA

Permanent Representative

Netherlands:

Mr Maxime VERHAGEN
Mr Frans TIMMERMANS

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for European Affairs

Austria:

Mr Hans-Dietmar SCHWEISGUT

Permanent Representative

Poland:

Mr Mikołaj DOWGIELEWICZ

Mr Jacek NAIDER

State Secretary, Office of the Committee for European
Integration
Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Portugal:

Ms Teresa RIBEIRO

State Secretary for European Affairs

Romania:

Mr Cristian DIACONESCU

Mr Vasile PUSCAS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Minister, Head of the Department for European Affairs

Slovenia:

Ms Dragoljuba BENČINA

Ms Andreja JERINA

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

State Secretary for European Affairs

Slovakia:

Mr Miroslav LAJČÁK

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Finland:

Mr Alexander STUBB

Ms Astrid THORS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Minister for Migration and European Affairs

Sweden:

Mr Carl BILDT

Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM

Mr Frank BELFRAGE

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Minister for European Affairs

State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

United Kingdom:

Baroness Glenys KINNOCK

Minister of State for Europe

.....
Commission:

Mr Olli REHN

Member

.....
General Secretariat of the Council:

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

ITEMS DEBATED

IRAN

Over dinner on 14 September, ministers discussed Iran, including the political situation after the presidential election, human rights, and the nuclear dossier following the recent handing over of proposals by Iran.

AFGHANISTAN

As a follow-up to the debate on 5 September at an informal ministerial ("Gymnich") meeting in Stockholm, the Council discussed the situation in Afghanistan.

The debate focused on the situation following the presidential elections held on 20 August. The Council expressed support for Afghan institutions and for the organisation of an international conference to discuss the country's future with the incoming Afghan government.

The Council expressed trust and confidence in the EU's representatives on the ground in a complex situation. It agreed to work towards a unified EU representation in Afghanistan.

The Council also took note of an updated version of an annual breakdown of the Commission's and Member States' annual assistance to Afghanistan, with a total average annual EU assistance of EUR 948 million for the period 2007-2010.

In June, the Council invited the High Representative Javier Solana and the Commission to look at how to further enhance and improve the EU's engagement in Afghanistan, and to report to the Council by October 2009 proposing recommendations, policy priorities and a strategy for EU engagement. This work, which will be discussed at the next GAERC meeting, is intended to prepare the EU for co-operation with the incoming government.

SOUTHERN CAUCASUS

The Council held an exchange of views on the strengthening of the EU's relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, within the framework of the EU's Eastern Partnership¹.

The discussion focused on how to enhance bilateral relations with the three Southern Caucasian countries, including principles for enhancing those relations. In the light of the debate, the Commission announced that it would present draft negotiation directives for association agreements with the three countries in early November.

Existing relations between the EU and the three Southern Caucasian countries are based on partnership and cooperation agreements. These entered into force in 1999 for an initial period of ten years and will from now be automatically extended on a yearly basis. With the creation of the Eastern Partnership, the EU has adopted a new vision for the development of its relations with these countries. The discussion in the Council helped to establish basic principles to guide deliberations in order to enhance the EU's relations with the three countries.

There will be meetings between the EU and the three countries in late September and Cooperation Council meetings in the margins of the General Affairs and External Relations Council on 26 and 27 October to further discuss this issue.

OTHER ITEMS

Under "other business", the Council held a brief discussion on religious beliefs and the protection of religious minorities, and agreed that EU member states should adopt a high profile on this issue at the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL

- EU-Uzbekistan Cooperation Council
- EU-Central Asia Ministerial Conference

¹ With Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Sudan- Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council reaffirms its support for the peaceful and democratic development in the whole of Sudan and reiterates the importance of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the interim national constitution. It underlines that the developments in Sudan have implications for the region as a whole.
2. The Council welcomes recent progress made but expresses its concern regarding the delayed and uneven implementation of the CPA, the deteriorating situation in South Sudan and the continued absence of a cease-fire agreement as well as the slow progress on political negotiations in Darfur. It expresses its concern at the situation in the Eastern Sudan where the underlying problems of poverty and marginalisation have yet to be resolved. Furthermore, the Council regrets the Government of Sudan (GoS) decision of non-ratification of the revised Cotonou Agreement and is concerned about the adverse effects this will have on those in need in Sudan.
3. The Council welcomes the Points of Agreement concluded by the parties of the CPA on 19 August regarding the implementation of the CPA, and commends the strong engagement of the United States. It urges the parties to keep the deadlines laid out in the accord. The EU will continue to coordinate its actions and support for the CPA with the international community.
4. It calls on the parties to urgently implement outstanding CPA commitments, including the North-South border demarcation, the Abyei Road Map and the decision by the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the Abyei border demarcation. The parties should make full use of and cooperate with the Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC) and the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS).

5. The Council urges the Government of National Unity (GoNU) to speed up preparations, including resolving the census issue, with regard to the nation-wide elections in April 2010, well ahead of the crucial voter registration phase in November 2009. It is imperative that the GoS, and the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) urgently establish a conducive environment for the election process and ensure full respect for human rights and democratic principles. The EU will support the electoral process and plans to send in the next few weeks an exploratory mission to Sudan to assess the conditions for a possible EU Electoral Observation Mission.
6. It calls on the parties to make all necessary preparations to allow for the 2011 referendum to be held according to the provisions of the CPA. It encourages all Sudanese stakeholders to engage in dialogue with regard to post-referendum arrangements. Active participation of women should be encouraged. The EU is committed to facilitate these endeavours, including by providing technical advice and assistance.
7. The Council expresses its concern at the frequent outbreaks of violence in the South Sudan. It calls upon the GoSS to make efforts to uphold the rule of law and to address insecurity. The Council emphasizes the need for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. It encourages the GoSS to implement the commitments of the Juba Compact, agreed on with EU and other development partners. Furthermore, it calls on the CPA parties to strengthen the capacity and integrity of the Joint Integrated Units in the Three Protocol Areas.
8. It urges the GoS and the Darfur rebel movements to urgently engage in the Darfur peace talks under the leadership of the UN/AU Chief Mediator, Djibril Bassolé. The Council welcomes the Mediator's efforts to encourage coherence among movements. The Council underlines the importance of ensuring opportunities for civil society in Darfur to contribute to conflict resolution and reconciliation. It underlines that the GoS has a responsibility to protect the civilian population and to facilitate the full and effective deployment of the AU-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).
9. The Council calls on the GoS, local authorities and rebel movements in Darfur to facilitate humanitarian access and to respect international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles. It strongly condemns the continued violence against civilians and humanitarian actors, including the abduction of aid workers in Darfur.

10. A lasting peace in Darfur and the region requires normalisation of the relations between Sudan and Chad. The Council calls on the governments of Sudan and Chad to implement, without further delay, previous commitments and urges regional partners to intensify their assistance in this process.
11. The Council underlines that impunity for international crimes can never be accepted. It follows closely the work of the Mbeki panel on justice and reconciliation in Darfur. The Council reiterates its support for the International Criminal Court (ICC) and calls upon the GoS to cooperate fully with the ICC in accordance with its obligations under international law."

Honduras - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council expresses its deep concern over the political crisis in Honduras and the ongoing violation of the constitutional order.

The Council confirms its firm support to the OAS and for the mediation efforts of the President of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, and calls on the actors involved, in particularly the *de facto* government, to work on the basis of the San José Accord in order to find a rapid and peaceful negotiated solution to the current situation and restoration of constitutional order in Honduras, particularly ahead of elections in November.

The Council underlines the importance of the Verification Commission proposed in the San José Accord as well as its impartiality.

The Council repeats its call on all relevant parties and institutions to refrain from any violence or activities that may incite violence.

The Council expresses its deep concern over reported human rights violations in the country (including threats to human rights defenders, arbitrary detentions and repression of peaceful protesters) and reminds *de facto* government of its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the OAS charter and the American Convention on Human Rights.

Member States will continue to restrict contacts at the political level with representatives of the de facto government. EU budgetary support payments have been put on hold. Development cooperation with the *de facto* government has also been suspended allowing only for support to civil society and humanitarian assistance.

Until a peaceful settlement is found, the EU will stand ready to take further restrictive measures including targeting those members of the de facto government who are seen to be blocking progress on a negotiated solution based on the San José Accord. The Council tasks relevant Council bodies to start necessary preparatory work."

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - EU Special Representative

The Council adopted a joint action extending the mandate of Mr Erwan Fouéré as EU special representative (EUSR) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), from 1 October 2009 until 31 March 2010 (12147/09).

The mandate is based on EU objectives, which include the consolidation of the peaceful political process and full implementation of the Ohrid framework agreement, thereby facilitating further progress towards European integration through the stabilisation and association process.

Mr Fouéré (Ireland) was appointed as EUSR in November 2005. His current mandate expires on 30 September 2009.

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

Joint action on EUSEC RD Congo

The Council adopted a joint action on the EU mission to provide advice and assistance for security sector reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (EUSEC RD Congo).

The Joint Action renews the EUSEC RD Congo mission statement. The current mission statement, set out in 2007 joint action 2007/406/CFSP, ends on 30 September 2009.

Under the new joint action, the EUSEC RD Congo mission is designed to assist the Congolese authorities in setting up a defence apparatus capable of guaranteeing the security of the Congolese people, while respecting democratic standards, human rights and the rule of law, as well as the principles of good governance and transparency. In particular, the mission is to contribute, in close coordination with international partners, to creating conditions to facilitate the implementation of guidelines adopted by the Congolese authorities in the revised plan for reform of DR Congo armed forces approved by the DRC President at the end of May.

The joint action will cover a period of one year (from 1 October 2009 until 30 September 2010). The financial reference amount to cover expenditure relating to the mission is set at EUR 10.9 million.

The European Union has been conducting the EUSEC RD Congo mission since June 2005. Currently composed of some 60 personnel headed by General Jean-Paul Michel, the mission has been instrumental in the implementation of several key projects such as the "chain of payments" project and the biometric census of troops in the DRC's armed forces. The EU has consistently supported security sector reform in the DRC, as one of the elements of a more general EU commitment to supporting development and democracy in the African Great Lakes region.

More information is available on: www.consilium.europa.eu/eusec-rdcongo

TRADE POLICY

Anti-dumping - sweetcorn in kernels from Thailand - polyester filament fabrics from China

The Council adopted regulations:

- amending regulation 682/2007 imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of certain prepared or preserved sweetcorn in kernels originating in Thailand ([12719/09](#));
 - terminating the partial interim review of the anti-dumping measures imposed by regulation 1487/2005 on imports of certain finished polyester filament fabrics originating in China ([12706/09](#)).
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