



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



15394/08 (Presse 318)

PRESS RELEASE

2902nd meeting of the Council

General Affairs and External Relations

General Affairs

Brussels, 10 November 2008

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P R E S S

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15394/08 (Presse 318)

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Main results of the Council

*The Council renewed the embargo on EU arms against **Uzbekistan**, while deciding not to renew the travel restrictions applying to certain members of the Uzbek regime. This follows on from the conclusions of its meeting on 13 October 2008, in which it welcomed the progress achieved by Uzbekistan with regard to respect for the rule of law and in the protection of human rights, while remaining concerned by the situation in certain areas.*

*The Council also decided not to apply, for a renewable six-month period, the travel restrictions on certain leading figures in **Belarus**, following the conclusions of its meeting on 13 October 2008. The aim of the decision, following the recent elections in Belarus, is to encourage dialogue with the Belarusian authorities and the adoption of measures to strengthen democracy and respect for human rights.*

*The Council approved the granting of more than EUR 215 million to **Somalia** from the European Development Fund, to support institution-building and economic and social development there, taking account of the needs of the poorest sections of the population.*

*The Council deplored the lack of progress towards a transition to democracy in **Burma/Myanmar**. The 2010 elections will have no credibility unless the authorities unconditionally release all political prisoners and initiate a political process with the full participation of the opposition and ethnic groups.*

*The Council also welcomed the return to normal functioning of the **Lebanese** institutions and encouraged all the parties to engage in dialogue in a spirit of compromise and consensus, in the interests of all the Lebanese people. It welcomed the announcement of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Syria.*

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- 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.

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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

Bulgaria:

Mr Ivailo KALFIN Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Czech Republic:

Mr Karel SCHWARZENBERG Minister for Foreign Affairs

Denmark:

Mr Michael ZILMER-JOHNS State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr Ib PETERSEN State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Germany:

Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ireland:

Mr Micheál MARTIN Minister for Foreign Affairs

Greece:

Ms Theodora BAKOYANNI Minister for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr Miguel Ángel MORATINOS CUYAUBÉ Minister for Foreign and European Affairs
Mr Diego LÓPEZ GARRIDO State Secretary for the European Union

France:

Mr Bernard KOUCHNER Minister for Foreign and European Affairs
Mr Jean-Pierre JOUYET Minister of State with responsibility for European affairs

Italy:

Mr Alfredo MANTICA State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Cyprus:

Mr Marcos KYPRIANNOU Minister for Foreign Affairs

Latvia:

Mr Māris RIEKSTIŅŠ Minister for Foreign Affairs

Lithuania:

Mr Juozas OLEKAS Minister for Defence

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Mr Nicolas SCHMIT Minister with responsibility for Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Hungary:

Ms Kinga GÖNCZ Minister for Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr Richard CACHIA-CARUANA Permanent Representative

Netherlands:

Mr Maxime VERHAGEN Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Frans TIMMERMANS Minister for European Affairs

Austria:

Mr Hans WINKLER State Secretary, Ministry of European and International Affairs

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Mr Mikolaj DOWGIELEWICZ

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Mr Dimitrij RUPEL

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovakia:

Mr Ján KUBIŠ

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

Minister for Foreign Affairs

United Kingdom:

Mr David MILIBAND
Ms Caroline FLINT

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Minister for European Affairs

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Commission:

Mr Louis MICHEL

Member

.....

General Secretariat of the Council:

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

ITEMS DEBATED**PREPARATION OF THE DECEMBER EUROPEAN COUNCIL**

The Council took note of an annotated draft agenda drawn up by the Presidency for the meeting of the European Council to be held in Brussels on 11 and 12 December 2008 ([14956/08](#)). It will prepare the meeting in greater detail at its meeting on 8 December.

The issues to be addressed by the European Council are as follows:

- the Treaty of Lisbon;
- economic and financial affairs (financial stability and financial supervision, the international financial system, growth and employment, competitiveness, scientific and technological development);
- energy and climate change (legislative package);
- common agricultural policy (CAP "health check");
- external relations and security (security and defence, eastern partnership).

The Presidency will use the annotated draft agenda as a basis for the preparation of draft European Council conclusions.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Uzbekistan – Restrictive measures

The Council adopted a Common Position amending and extending Common Position 2007/734/PESC concerning restrictive measures against Uzbekistan ([14531/08](#)).

Further to the Council conclusions of 13 October 2008 (*see press release [14137/08](#), p. 9*), this Common Position renews the arms embargo imposed by Common Position 2007/734/PESC for a period of 12 months, i.e. until 13 November 2009.

In these conclusions the Council welcomed the progress achieved by Uzbekistan in the last year with regard to respect for the rule of law and protection of human rights. In this context, it decided not to renew the travel restrictions applying to certain individuals referred to in Common Position 2007/734/PESC, which had been suspended in October 2007 and in April 2008.

The Council nevertheless said it was concerned by the situation in a number of areas. It called on the Uzbek authorities to meet their obligations in full in this respect, and is prepared to assist them in their reform efforts.

Belarus – Restrictive measures

The Council adopted a Common Position amending Common Position 2006/276/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against certain officials of Belarus ([14537/3/08 REV 3](#)).

This common position follows on from the conclusions adopted by the Council on 13 October 2008 (*see press release [14137/08](#), p. 9*). It extends for a period of 12 months the restrictive measures provided for in Common Position 2006/276/CFSP and, for a renewable period of six months, suspends the travel restrictions on certain leading figures in Belarus, with the exception of those involved in the disappearances which occurred in 1999 and 2000 and of the President of the Central Electoral Commission.

The Council decided not to apply the travel restrictions for a six-month period so as to encourage dialogue with the Belarusian authorities and the adoption of measures to strengthen democracy and respect for human rights. At the end of that period, it will re-examine the situation in the light of the progress made by the Belarusian authorities. It may decide to apply the travel restrictions earlier if necessary, in the light of the actions of the Belarusian authorities in the area of democracy and human rights.

Iran – Restrictive measures

The Council adopted a decision amending Annexes III and IV of Common Position 2007/140/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against Iran ([13336/1/08 REV 1](#)).

On 7 August 2008, the Council had adopted Common Position 2008/652/CFSP amending Common Position 2007/140/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against Iran with a view to the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1803 (2008) (*see press release [12426/08](#)*).

Common Position 2008/652/CFSP provides, *inter alia*, that the Member States shall exercise vigilance over the activities of financial institutions within their jurisdiction with all banks domiciled in Iran, and their branches and subsidiaries abroad, in order to avoid such activities contributing to proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities or to the development of nuclear weapon delivery systems.

The Council has identified the branches and subsidiaries abroad of the banks domiciled in Iran to which the provisions on financial vigilance in Common Position 2008/652/CFSP apply. Annexes III and IV of Common Position 2007/140/CFSP have been amended accordingly.

The Council also adopted a Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 423/2007 concerning restrictive measures against Iran ([13473/08](#), [13473/08 COR 1](#)).

The purpose of the Regulation is to implement in Community legislation some of the measures provided for in Common Position 2008/652/CFSP, so as to ensure that they are applied uniformly by economic operators in all the Member States.

Aid for Somalia

The Council approved the position to be adopted by the European Community within the ACP-EC Committee of Ambassadors regarding a decision on the allocation of resources to Somalia from the 10th European Development Fund ([14060/08](#)).

Under the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement, ACP States party to previous ACP-EC Conventions which, in the absence of normally established government institutions, have not been able to sign or ratify the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement, may nevertheless be accorded special support. To ensure the continuation of the support to the population of Somalia, the Council considers it appropriate to provide EUR 212 million for institution-building and economic and social development, taking account of the needs of the most vulnerable sections of the population, as well as EUR 3,8 million for unforeseen demands in the years 2008 to 2013.

Burma/Myanmar – *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council welcomed the Chair's Statement adopted at the ASEM Summit in Beijing on 24 and 25 October 2008, calling for the lifting of restrictions placed on political parties and early release of those under detention and encouraging the government to engage all stakeholders in an inclusive political process and to cooperate more closely with the United Nations. The Council also called upon the Burma/Myanmar authorities to facilitate the issue of visas.

However, the Council deplores the lack of progress made this year towards a genuine transition to democracy in Burma/Myanmar since the violent repression of peaceful demonstrations by the military authorities.

The European Union points out that the elections scheduled for 2010 will have no credibility unless the Burma/Myanmar authorities unconditionally release all political prisoners, in particular Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and initiate a political process with United Nations support on the basis of an inclusive, long-term dialogue in which the opposition and ethnic groups can participate fully.

The Council reaffirms its firm and unconditional support for the UN Secretary-General's Mission of Good Offices and welcomes his renewed personal commitment to ending the current deadlock.

The Council pays tribute to the work of European Union Special Envoy Mr Piero Fassino in support of the UN's efforts, aimed at closer cooperation with the countries of the region, and welcomes the renewal of his mandate.

The European Union is prepared to revise, amend or reinforce the measures it has already adopted to keep pace with developments in the situation. It is determined to help the people of Burma/Myanmar to achieve stability, prosperity and democracy and remains ready to react positively to real progress towards democracy.

The European Union welcomes the close cooperation between ASEAN, the UN and the authorities of Burma/Myanmar in reaction to Cyclone Nargis. The Council reiterates the commitment made by the European Union and its Member States to give substantial assistance to all those in need and to deal with the humanitarian situation in Burma/Myanmar in a more comprehensive way."

Lebanon – Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council welcomes the return to normal functioning of the Lebanese institutions following the Doha agreement of 21 May and reaffirms its full support for the Lebanese authorities, and in particular President Sleiman and the government led by Prime Minister Siniora.
2. It commends the resumption of the national dialogue under the authority of President Sleiman, in accordance with the Doha agreement. It encourages all the parties to engage in dialogue in a spirit of consensus and compromise in order to make progress on the question of the national defence strategy, in the interests of all the Lebanese people.
3. The Council welcomes the announcement of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Syria and Lebanon. That announcement, which should take practical form with the appointment of the ambassadors and the opening of the two embassies before the end of the year, constitutes a historic step. The Council encourages both parties to implement the other commitments referred to in the six-point communiqué agreed upon last August by Presidents Assad and Sleiman, and in particular the demarcation and monitoring of the common border and the issue of prisoners and disappeared persons.

4. The European Union and its Member States are willing to lend their support where necessary to the development and implementation of the Lebanese national border management strategy.
5. The Council commends the adoption by the Lebanese parliament of a new electoral law which takes account of some of the recommendations made by the Boutros Commission as a first step towards more comprehensive electoral reform. The European Union reiterates that it is fully prepared to support the preparation and organisation of and the follow-up to the 2009 legislative elections in order to ensure that they take place under transparent and fair conditions in accordance with international standards. It is also willing to envisage the deployment of an election observation mission if requested to do so by the Lebanese authorities.
6. The Council underlines the essential role played by the Lebanese State and its law enforcement authorities, and in particular its armed forces, in combating terrorism. It solemnly reiterates its commitment to the principle of State monopoly on the legitimate use of force. It encourages the Lebanese authorities to pursue their activities with a view to establishing a comprehensive policy for maintaining public order based on respect for the law and the proportionate use of force.
7. The Council reaffirms the European Union's full support for the Commission of Enquiry and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. It hopes that the Tribunal will commence its work as soon as possible.
8. The Council notes the opportunities offered by the Association Agreement and the European Neighbourhood Policy for contributing towards the implementation of the reforms announced at the Paris III Conference. It underlines the importance of implementing the economic, financial and commercial aspects of the EU-Lebanon Action Plan and of pursuing the reforms necessary for reviving the country's economic activity.
9. The Council notes that the European Union is the main donor for the reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared camp. It considers that other parties must also make a financial contribution to that reconstruction. It encourages the Lebanese authorities to improve the economic and social status of Palestinian refugees and to pursue initiatives to improve living conditions in the camps, without prejudice to the outcome of the peace negotiations on the final status of the Palestinian territories.

10. The Council reaffirms its support for the United Nations' efforts to make progress on the issue of the Shebaa Farms, and continues to support the option of placing them under UN trusteeship, in accordance with Prime Minister Siniora's seven-point plan. It also backs current efforts, and in particular UNIFIL's plan, aiming to find a solution to the issue of Ghajjar. It confirms its full support for UNIFIL, whose activities alongside the Lebanese army continue to be essential for peace in the region.
11. The Council remains determined to reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, unity and stability. The Council recalls its commitment to the full implementation of UNSC Resolutions 1559, 1680, 1701 and 1757."

Trilateral relations with Africa and China – *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council thanks the Commission for its communication and supports its proposal to establish trilateral dialogue and cooperation between the European Union, Africa and China, with the aim of promoting peace and security and contributing to efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Africa.
2. Africa is a strategic partner of the EU within the framework of the Action Plan adopted at the 2007 Lisbon Africa/EU Summit. China is also playing an increasing role in Africa and offers new prospects for the economic development of the African continent. Important commitments between China and Africa were made in November 2006 within the framework provided by the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).
3. In this new context, it would seem advantageous to coordinate the EU's and China's efforts more closely around priorities which reflect Africa's needs. The Council considers that establishing a trilateral dialogue, following on from the initiatives taken since the 2006 EU-China Summit, will strengthen the EU's bilateral partnerships with both China and Africa, including the African Union, by enabling common interests and areas for cooperation to be identified. This trilateral dialogue will support the efforts undertaken by Africa and by the international community to promote democratisation, political and economic integration, good governance and respect for human rights.

4. The Council considers that this cooperation should be developed within the framework of a joint approach and implemented by initiatives in the sectors of peace, security and sustainable economic and social development in Africa. The Commission's proposals regarding trilateral cooperation – initiatives in the sectors of peace and security in Africa; support for African infrastructure; sustainable management of the environment and natural resources; and agriculture and food security, based on existing plans and programmes – tend towards this end. Particular attention should be given to cooperation in the area of peace and security, where the European Union and China can contribute together to the stability of the African countries and to strengthening African crisis management capabilities. Given that development and security are interdependent, trilateral cooperation centred on these initiatives should promote coherence between actions undertaken in these different sectors.
5. In the interests of effectiveness, the Council wishes this trilateral cooperation to be developed progressively in the existing fora and within the framework of the structures established in the bilateral partnerships. The Council would stress the desirability of a common approach to improving the effectiveness of official development assistance and preventing crises of overindebtedness, taking account of the Paris declaration and the Accra Action Plan.
6. The Council notes with interest the Commission's recommendations. It requests the Commission, Member States and the competent Council bodies to examine these proposals in greater detail and participate actively in the process of implementing concrete proposals. The Council urges Africa and China to cooperate with the EU in establishing trilateral dialogue and cooperation."

EU–Africa Partnership – *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council thanks the Commission for its communication "One year after Lisbon: the Africa-EU partnership at work". It regards the communication as a useful contribution to the work initiated by the EU on assessing progress made one year after the Lisbon summit and identifying the main challenges to be met. It also considers that the content of the communication will contribute, along with, amongst other, contributions by the Africa-EU partnership implementation teams, to preparation of the joint progress report to be approved at the EU-Africa ministerial troika meeting in Addis Ababa on 20 and 21 November 2008.

2. The Council takes note of the priority activities proposed in the Commission working paper. It invites the European teams implementing the EU-Africa Action Plan to take them into consideration in their discussions, in particular with a view to forthcoming meetings of the joint expert groups.
3. The Council further notes the recommendations in the communication. It invites Member States to continue and intensify their efforts to implement the commitments of the Lisbon summit. It also invites them to encourage the mobilisation of African partner countries and regions with a view to implementing the eight partnerships under the EU-Africa Action Plan."

Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

The Council adopted a Joint Action in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, in the framework of the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction ([14362/08](#)).

The European Council adopted the strategy, which contains a list of measures to combat such proliferation, in December 2003. The universalisation of the convention on the prohibition of biological and toxin weapons, and assistance to third countries with the aim of reinforcing the implementation of that convention at national level, are among those measures.

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY¹

Somalia – piracy

The Council adopted a Joint Action on a European Union military operation to contribute to the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast ([13989/08](#)).

¹ See the "External Relations" press release (15396/08) for all the ESDP conclusions and decisions.

Middle East – Rafah border assistance mission

The Council extended until 24 November 2009 the Joint Action on establishing a European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point in the Middle East. The current Joint Action is due to expire on 24 November 2008 (*13692/08*).

Development of the military capabilities of the EU

The Council noted a progress report on the development of EU military capabilities, and approved its transmission to NATO for information.

European Defence Agency

The Council adopted draft guidelines for the activities of the European Defence Agency in 2009.

Civilian ESDP missions – Lessons learned

The Council approved guidelines for the identification and implementation of lessons learned and best practice in civilian missions in the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

The aim of the guidelines is to improve civilian crisis management in the ESDP framework, and constantly to improve practice, reflecting a high level of political ambition.

After 5 years of civilian ESDP missions, there is a large body of information and experience available, which needs to be captured in a systematic lessons learned process.

TRADE POLICY

Ukraine – Trade in services – Accession to the WTO

The Council adopted a Decision approving an agreement with Ukraine on the preservation of commitments on trade in services contained in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Ukraine, taking account of Ukraine's recent accession to the World Trade Organisation ([8968/08](#)).

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Contributions for the European Development Fund in 2009 and 2010

The Council adopted a Decision setting the ceiling for the annual amount of contributions by the Commission and the European Investment Bank for the European Development Fund in 2010, the annual amount of their contributions for 2009, and the amount of the first instalment of Member States' contributions for 2009 ([14995/1/08 REV 1](#)).

Health care in developing countries - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted conclusions on strengthening health systems in developing countries.

To ensure that there is eventually universal access to a high standard of healthcare, the Council considers that health systems in developing countries must be strengthened in two areas: addressing the shortage of health workers and ensuring the long-term financing of health systems.

Aware of the special role that the EU can and must play in this respect, the Council urges the Member States and the Commission to focus their efforts more specifically on these areas.

These conclusions are set out in [15391/08](#).

Local authorities as actors for development - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted conclusions, following up a Commission communication on local authorities as actors for development, working to reduce poverty.

The conclusions stress the importance of the contribution made by local authorities to democratic local governance, to inclusive and equitable local development and to the provision of the basic services needed by the population, particularly by the poorest section of the population. With their local knowledge and closeness to citizens, local authorities can facilitate dialogue and partnerships between different types of development cooperation actors.

The conclusions are set out in [15293/08](#).

GENERAL AFFAIRS**Work in the Council's other configurations**

The Council took note of a report on proceedings in its other configurations ([14955/08](#)).

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA**European Economic Area Council**

The Council approved an agenda and draft conclusions with a view to the 30th meeting of the European Economic Area Council, to be held in Brussels on 13 November 2008.

FISHERIES

Atlantic tuna

The Council adopted a Decision establishing the Community's position in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

The next extraordinary meeting of ICCAT will be held in Marrakesh (Morocco) from 17 to 24 November 2008.

Black Sea – Fishing opportunities and conditions for 2009*

The Council adopted a Regulation fixing the fishing opportunities and the conditions relating thereto applicable in the Black Sea for 2009, following the political agreement reached at its meeting on 27 and 28 October 2008 ([13846/08](#)).

The Regulation establishes an unchanged total allowable catch (TAC) and quotas of 100 tonnes for turbot (*Psetta maxima*), provisionally divided equally between Bulgaria and Romania, and a TAC of 12 750 tonnes for sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*), which is a 15 % reduction compared with 2008.

A statement annexed to the Regulation provides for cooperation with third countries bordering the Black Sea ([14694/08](#)).

TRANSPORT

Inland waterway vessels – Regulatory procedure with scrutiny

The Council decided not to oppose adoption by the Commission of a Directive amending Directive 2006/87/EC laying down technical requirements for inland waterway vessels.

The draft Directive aims to ensure that the Community inland navigation certificate and the Rhine vessel certificate are issued on the basis of technical requirements which guarantee an equivalent level of safety.

In accordance with the EU's regulatory procedure with scrutiny, the Council can oppose the adoption of legal acts by the Commission. Consequently, unless the European Parliament objects, the Commission can adopt the Directive.

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

The Council adopted:

- a reply to confirmatory application 16/c/02/08 made by Mr Yaman Akdeniz, with the Finnish and Swedish delegations voting against ([13728/08](#));
 - a reply to confirmatory application 17/c/01/08 made by Mr Robert Zbiral, with the Danish, Finnish, Slovenian and Swedish delegations voting against ([13782/08](#)).
-