

**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



12255/06 (Presse 241)

PROVISIONAL VERSION

PRESS RELEASE

2748th/2749th Council Meetings

GENERAL AFFAIRS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Brussels, 15 September 2006

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Main Results of the Council

The Council underlined its commitment to promoting tangible progress towards a resolution of the **Israeli-Palestinian conflict**. It welcomed the announcement by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on an agreement to form a government of national unity and expressed the hope that its political platform will reflect the Quartet principles and allow for early engagement.

It agreed that the operation of the Temporary International Mechanism, by which the EU and its Member States have already channelled substantial resources directly to the Palestinian people, should be extended for a further three months.

The Council stressed its commitment to support full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 on **Lebanon**. It welcomed the early deployment of the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon and the substantial contribution by EU Member States to the reinforced UNIFIL. It asked for a report on a possible European contribution to the implementation of Resolution 1701 on the Lebanese-Syrian border. It also underlined the EU's commitment to assist the Lebanese government in meeting needs and taking forward reforms in a number of areas, including security.

On **Iran's** nuclear programme, ministers welcomed High Representative Solana's consultations with the Secretary-General of the Iranian Supreme National Security Council, Dr. Ali Larijani, to explore the possibility of opening negotiations with Iran and supported these efforts.

The Council expressed its deep concern about the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in **Darfur**. It strongly supported UN Security Council Resolution 1706 which expands the mandate of the UN Mission in Sudan to Darfur and reiterated the EU's readiness to support the efforts of the UN and others in the planning for transition from the African Union mission (AMIS) to the UN. It strongly called on the Sudanese Government to give its consent to the deployment of the UN operation and to extend its full cooperation to the UN. It called on the non-signatories to join in and commit themselves to the implementation of the Darfur peace agreement.

The Council welcomed the meeting of **Democratic Republic of Congo** President Kabila and Vice-president Bemba on 13 September as an encouraging sign and commended the efforts undertaken by HR Solana in facilitating these developments. It noted that cooperation between the EU military operation EUFOR RD Congo and MONUC, together with the EU's reinforced police mission in Kinshasa (EUPOL Kinshasa), has so far proven instrumental in maintaining the stability during the electoral process.

The Council established an EU team to contribute to the preparation of an international civilian mission in **Kosovo**.

Finally, the Council adopted a decision amending its **rules of procedure** primarily with a view to increasing the openness and transparency of its work on EU legislative acts.

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council discussed the situation in the Middle East. It underlined that lasting peace and security in the region can only be ensured by a comprehensive settlement with a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at its core. The Council underlined the importance of reinvigorating the Peace Process and requested the High Representative to pursue his efforts to this end.

2. The Council stressed its commitment to support the full implementation of UNSCR 1701, welcomed the declared commitment of all regional parties to this end, and commended the efforts of UNSG Annan. It welcomed the early deployment of the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon and the substantial contribution by EU Member States to the reinforced UNIFIL mission. It appreciated the significant contributions pledged by other countries. The Council called for a full and speedy implementation of UNSCR 1701, including the withdrawal of Israeli troops in parallel with the deployment of UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Council welcomed the lifting of the Israeli air and sea blockade, which will ease the delivery of humanitarian aid and facilitate economic recovery, and the instrumental role played by EU Member States. The EU reiterated its call for the immediate release of the two abducted Israeli soldiers.
The Council invites the Presidency, the High Representative and the Commission to draw up a report on a possible European contribution to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 on the Lebanese-Syrian border.

3. The Council underlined the EU's commitment to assist the Lebanese government in meeting emergency, humanitarian and environmental needs, launching the rehabilitation and reconstruction process, extending its authority throughout Lebanese territory and taking forward political, security, economic and social reforms. It called on all outside actors and neighbours to support this process. The Council welcomed the Stockholm Conference for Lebanon's Early Recovery on 31 August. It noted that the EU/Lebanon ENP Action Plan provides an agreed framework through which the EU can assist the Government in implementing its reform agenda.

4. The Council underlined its commitment to promoting tangible progress towards a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It welcomed the announcement by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on an agreement to form a government of national unity and expressed the hope that its political platform will reflect the Quartet principles and allow for early engagement. The Council welcomed the prospect of a meeting between PM Olmert and President Abbas in the near future with a view to re-launching negotiations. It called for an immediate end to violence by Palestinian factions as well as to Israeli military activity in the Palestinian territories. The Council reiterated its call for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier. It further repeated its call for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators in Israeli custody. The Council reiterated the need for all parties to respect their Roadmap obligations. It renewed its call on the Israeli Government to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth of settlements. Ministers reiterated that the EU will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties.

5. The Council expressed deep concern at the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories. In this context the Council recalled the strong EU commitment made at the Stockholm International Donor Conference on 1 September. It welcomed the expansion of the Temporary International Mechanism, by which the EU and its Member States have already channelled substantial resources directly to the Palestinian people, and agreed that its operation should be extended for a further three months. It encouraged donors and others in the region to make full use of the mechanism. The Council repeated its call on Israel to resume transfers of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues. The Council called for the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access and, in this regard, reiterated its continued commitment to EU Border Assistance Mission in Rafah. It urged that Rafah and all other border-crossings be re-opened and remain open."

The Council also adopted a common position imposing an arms embargo in Lebanon in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 1701 (*see p. 23*).

Lebanon - Arms embargo

The Council adopted a common position imposing an arms embargo in Lebanon in accordance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1701(2006) (12257/06).

The UNSC adopted last August resolution 1701 introducing a ban on the supply of arms to entities or individuals in Lebanon unless authorised by the Government of Lebanon or by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Action by the European Community is needed in order to implement certain measures of the UNSC resolution at EU level.

TRADE POLICY

EC/Belarus - Agreement on trade in textile products

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations with Belarus with a view to renewing an agreement on trade in textile products.

Euro-Mediterranean conference on industry

The Council approved an EU common position on draft conclusions for the 6th Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference on industry, to be held in Rhodes on 21 and 22 September.

The conference will take stock of political and technical progress achieved and a number of political initiatives and actions to be taken against the background of the challenges engendered by globalisation. The new perspectives provided for by the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, by the EU's neighbourhood policy, the extension of cooperation to the field of innovation, and industrial dialogue focusing on the textile sector figure among the main points on the agenda.

The Euro-Mediterranean partnership was launched at Barcelona in 1995 in order to intensify the relationship between the EU and the Mediterranean partner countries (the "Barcelona process"). One of the key objectives of the partnership is the creation, by 2010, of an area of free trade of shared prosperity. The Euro-Mediterranean industrial partnership was launched in June 1996.