

8817/05 (Presse 112)

(OR. fr)

PRESS RELEASE

2660th Council meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Brussels, 23 and 24 May 2005

President

Mr Jean ASSELBORN

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and
Immigration of Luxembourg

- * Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2659th meeting on
General Affairs (8816/05)

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B - 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 285 8716 / 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 285 8026
press.office@consilium.eu.int <http://ue.eu.int/Newsroom>

8817/05 (Presse 112)

MIDDLE EAST

Ministers discussed the following items over lunch:

- Developments in the *Middle East* peace process, in particular the continuing fragility of the situation with the resurgence of tensions in Gaza and at the Israel-Lebanon border; the meeting of the Quartet in Moscow on 9 May 2005 and the mission of Mr Wolfensohn, the Quartet's Special Envoy for Disengagement; the Palestinian legislative elections on 17 July 2005, for which the EU will send a team of observers; and implementation of the commitments made by the parties at Sharm el-Sheikh.
- The situation in *Lebanon*, including the Lebanese Government's decision to accept the deployment of European observers in the run-up to the forthcoming legislative elections. In this connection Ministers reaffirmed their support for the Government's efforts to achieve its objectives, in particular to organise, on schedule, free, democratic elections, conducted without violence or any outside interference and according to a voting method accepted by all parties.

Regarding implementation of Resolution 1559, they noted the Syrian troop withdrawals from Lebanon and the withdrawal of the security services, which has yet to be confirmed. Lastly, they reaffirmed their support for the independent international investigation commission recently established under UN Security Council Resolution 1595 to investigate the assassination of Mr Rafik Hariri.

- The situation in *Iraq*: the Presidency provided details of an international conference on Iraq to be attended by Foreign Ministers, which was planned for the end of June in Brussels. The Conference would provide Iraq with the opportunity to set out its long-term strategy and its priorities and ideas on the constitutional process, reconstruction, the rule of law and public policy and to present its work in these areas. For the international community the overall aim of the Conference would be to mark both its support for the new Iraqi government during the transition period leading up to the constitutional elections in December 2005 and its commitment to Iraq's political, economic and social reconstruction.
- The situation in *Iran*, including the forthcoming Presidential elections on 17 June 2005 and the Guardian Council's announcement on 22 May of the approved presidential candidates.

Ministers also considered the latest developments in the nuclear field. They confirmed their endorsement of the negotiations taking place between Germany, France and the United Kingdom, with the support of the High Representative/Secretary-General, and the Iranians. In this connection, it was reaffirmed that Iran must abide by the commitments made in November 2004 under the Paris Agreement.

BARCELONA PROCESS

The Council took note of the state of preparations for the Seventh Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference to be held in Luxembourg on 30 and 31 May 2005 and held a brief exchange of views.

The Ministerial Conference will be an opportunity to evaluate the progress achieved so far in the EuroMed Partnership and to discuss guidelines for the future, with a view to the extraordinary summit to be held in Barcelona on 27 and 28 November 2005 to mark the tenth anniversary of EuroMed.

A review of the partnership will be undertaken in order to define guidelines for the future as regards:

- governance, democracy and stability;
- economic reform and sustainable development;
- exchanges in the socio-cultural and education fields;
- justice, security and freedom, including the questions of migration and social integration.

The Council also approved, on 17 May 2005 by the written procedure, draft EU guidelines for the Seventh Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference.