



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



7425/08 (Presse 67)

**PROVISIONAL VERSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

2858th Council meeting

**General Affairs and External Relations**

**GENERAL AFFAIRS**

Brussels, 10 March 2008

President            **Mr Dimitrij Rupel**  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia

\* The 2859th meeting on External Relations is the subject of a separate press release (7426/08).

**P R E S S**

## **Main results of the Council**

*The Council approved a package of legislative proposals on **food improvement agents** – additives, enzymes and flavourings – aimed at harmonising evaluation procedures in accordance with the "farm-to-table" concept, so as to provide a high level of consumer protection whilst ensuring free circulation in the EU's internal market.*

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• 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 Alexandr VONDRÁ Deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for European Affairs

Mr Tomáš POJAR First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs with responsibility for bilateral relations

**Denmark:**

Mr Per Stig MØLLER Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Germany:**

Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Mr Günter GLOSER Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Estonia:**

Mr Urmas PAET Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Ireland:**

Mr Dermot AHERN Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Greece:**

Ms Dora BAKOYANNI Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Mr Ioannis VALINAKIS State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

**Spain:**

Mr. Miguel Ángel MORATINOS Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation  
Mr Albert NAVARRO GONZÁLEZ State Secretary for the European Union

**France:**

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

**Italy:**

Mr Famiano CRUCIANELLI State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

**Cyprus:**

Mr Markos KYPRIANOU Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Latvia:**

Mr Normans PENKE State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Lithuania:**

Mr Petras VAITIEKŪNAS Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Luxembourg:**

Mr Jean ASSELBORN Deputy Prime Minister, 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:**

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK Federal Minister for European and International Affairs

**Poland:**

Ms Grażyna BERNATOWICZ

Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Portugal:**

Mr Luís AMADO  
Mr Manuel LOBO ANTUNES

Ministro de Estado, Minister for Foreign Affairs  
State Secretary for European Affairs, attached to the  
Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Romania:**

Mr Adrian CIOROIANU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Slovenia:**

Mr Dimitrij RUPEL  
Mr Matjaž ŠINKOVEC

Minister for Foreign Affairs  
State Secretary

**Slovakia:**

Mr Ján KUBIŠ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Finland:**

Mr Ilkka KANERVA  
Ms Astrid THORS

Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Minister for Migration and European Affairs

**Sweden:**

Mr Carl BILDT  
Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM

Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Minister for European Affairs

**United Kingdom:**

Mr David MILIBAND  
Mr Jim MURPHY

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

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**Commission:**

Ms Margot WALLSTRÖM  
Mr Olli REHN  
Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER

Vice President  
Member  
Member

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**General Secretariat of the Council:**

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

**ITEMS DEBATED**

**PREPARATION OF THE SPRING MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL**

The Council examined draft conclusions prepared by the presidency for the spring meeting of the European Council, to be held in Brussels on 13 and 14 March.

The European Council will launch a new three-year cycle of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, to cover the 2008-10 period, and will also focus on climate change and energy policy, as well as the stability of financial markets. It will review the international situation if necessary.

On the Lisbon strategy, the main emphasis of the new three-year cycle will be on implementation and delivery of reforms, given that it is now considered to be delivering on its objectives. The current priorities, agreed at the 2006 spring European Council, continue to be valid. And whilst evolving challenges need to be addressed, economic and employment guidelines are seen not to need an overhaul. The European Council will stress the importance of investment in knowledge and innovation, unlocking the business potential, particularly of SMEs, investment in people and the modernisation of labour markets.

As regards climate change and energy policy, the European Council will discuss the impact of climate change on international security and stability, on the basis of a paper prepared by High Representative Javier Solana and the Commission. It will also reiterate its commitment to delivering on the ambitious goals it set last year, confirming its international leadership in working towards an ambitious and comprehensive climate change agreement for the post-2012 period.

Regarding the stability of financial markets, the European Council will reaffirm its readiness to act, recognising that financial systems remain fragile following the recent turbulence, and that transparency needs to be improved in order to ensure greater stability.

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

**EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

***Afghanistan - Council conclusions***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. In line with its previous conclusions, the Council reaffirms the EU's commitment to long-term support for the people and government of Afghanistan and the core principles of promoting Afghan leadership, good governance, responsibility and ownership, and fostering the development of a democratic, secure and sustainable Afghan State with respect for human rights and the rule of law.
2. The Council supports the approach launched at the Joint Co-ordination and Monitoring Board in Tokyo on 5-6 February to prepare an international conference to be held in Paris in June to review progress in implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, reaffirm the commitment of the international community to Afghanistan and discuss the way forward. The Council calls on the Government of Afghanistan to make further progress on human rights and good governance, including through establishment of an independent Senior Appointment mechanism and the implementation of the national anti-corruption strategy and the approval of a media law consistent with freedom of expression. The EU remains committed to working with the Government of Afghanistan to strengthen its human rights institutions and mechanisms. The Council recalls its urgent appeal to halt any future executions and to re-establish a de facto moratorium on the use of the death penalty and to enhance its implementation of transitional justice action plan.
3. The Council underlines the continued engagement of the EU in Afghanistan, including through the bilateral cooperation programmes of EU Member States, as well as through EC's assistance strategy, which contains substantial multi-year commitment until 2013, and focuses on governance and rule of law, particularly on the judiciary and police, and on rural development and health. The Council looks forward to the finalisation, launch and implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and welcomes the participatory process this has involved to date.
4. The Council welcomes the progress of the EU police mission in Afghanistan towards full deployment at central, regional and provincial level by the end of March. The mission is supporting the development of the Afghan police force under local ownership, respecting human rights and operating within the framework of the rule of law. The EU remains committed to addressing the multiple challenges lying ahead in close cooperation with the Afghan authorities and international partners. The Council expresses its readiness to consider further enhancement of EU engagement, particularly in the field of police and wider rule of law.



5. The EU, underlining its overall coherence in objectives with UN and NATO on the basis of Afghanistan Compact, reaffirms its readiness to closely work with UNAMA and ISAF, *inter alia* through EUPOL Afghanistan, in order to strengthen overall coordination of the international community in Afghanistan. The Council will continue to follow developments with regards to Afghanistan closely, including at the forthcoming NATO summit in Bucharest.

6. The Council will keep the EU's policy towards Afghanistan under review in the coming months, in advance of the Paris conference.

7. The Council welcomes the appointment of Mr Kai Eide as Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan."

### **Pakistan - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council takes note that the parliamentary and provincial elections which took place in Pakistan on 18 February 2008 were competitive, despite significant problems with the election framework and environment. The elections were an important step in the democratic development of Pakistan.

The EU remains committed to supporting Pakistan in building a prosperous and stable society based on the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The EU will support Pakistan in strengthening democratic institutions, promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as combating extremism. The EU continues to support development and economic growth in Pakistan. The EU will continue to explore ways to enhance its trade with Pakistan and trade within the South Asia region.

While underlining the importance the EU attaches to its relationship with Pakistan, and Pakistan's contribution to regional peace and security, the Council looks forward to continued engagement with Pakistan on a shared agenda based on the 2004 Cooperation Agreement and the 2007 EU-Pakistan Joint Declaration. The EU will review its policy towards Pakistan."

**ENLARGEMENT**

**Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - Accession partnership**

The Council adopted a regulation amending regulation 533/2004 on the establishment of partnerships in the framework of the stabilisation and association process for the Western Balkans (6686/08).

The regulation is amended following the decision of the European Council in December 2005 to grant the status of candidate country to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Consequently, the name of the partnership with FYROM will be changed from "European partnership" to "accession partnership".

In addition, the regulation is amended to take into account the fact that Serbia and Montenegro are two independent states since June 2006.

**COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY**

**EU code of conduct on arms exports**

The Council adopted an updated version of the common list of military equipment covered by the EU code of conduct on arms exports (6680/08).

**TRADE POLICY**

**Anti-dumping measures (ammonium nitrate - manganese dioxides)**

The Council adopted regulations:

- imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty and collecting definitively the provisional duty imposed on imports of certain manganese dioxides originating in South Africa (6512/08);
- terminating the partial interim review pursuant to article 11(3) of regulation 384/96 of the anti-dumping duty on imports of solutions of urea and ammonium nitrate originating in Russia (6606/08);

- terminating the partial interim review pursuant to article 11(3) of regulation 384/96 of the anti-dumping duty on imports of ammonium nitrate originating in Russia (6597/1/08); and
- terminating the partial interim review pursuant to article 11(3) of regulation 384/96 of the anti-dumping duty on imports of ammonium nitrate originating, inter alia, in Ukraine (6602/08).

The Council also approved a draft decision, to be adopted by the Commission, terminating the anti-dumping proceeding concerning imports of polyvinyl alcohol originating in China and Taiwan and releasing the amounts secured by way of the provisional duties imposed (6788/08).

## **EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA**

### **Amendments to the European Economic Area agreement**

The Council approved a draft decision, to be adopted by the European Economic Area (EEA) Joint Committee, amending the EEA agreement so as to extend cooperation to the Community action programme in the field of health 2008-2013 (6305/08).

The Council also approved a draft decision, to be adopted by the EEA Joint Committee, amending annex II (technical regulations, standards, testing and certification) to the EEA agreement (6310/08).

## **GENERAL AFFAIRS**

### **Bulgaria and Romania - Mechanism on cooperation and verification - *Council conclusions***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"Reaffirming its conclusions of 17 October 2006 and 23 July 2007, the Council welcomes the Interim reports from the Commission on Progress in Romania and Bulgaria under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism. The Council shares the analysis of the Commission contained in the reports.

The Council welcomes the commitment expressed by Bulgaria and Romania and acknowledges the efforts made by these two Member States towards fulfilling the objectives of the mechanism and the good level of co-operation with the Commission and the other Member States.

The Council encourages Bulgaria and Romania to step up their efforts, in particular with regard to areas highlighted in the conclusions of the Interim reports.

In the light of the above, the Council looks forward to the Commission reports to be tabled in the summer 2008, inter alia taking into consideration the experience gained from the functioning of the mechanism."

### **The EU in 2007 - Annual report**

The Council approved a draft report on progress of the European Union in 2007, with a view to its endorsement by the European Council on 13/14 March. The report will then be submitted to the European Parliament pursuant to article 4 of the EU treaty (7233/08).

### **Proceedings in the Council's different configurations**

The Council took note of a report from the presidency on proceedings in its different configurations (7179/08).

## **AGRICULTURE**

### **Food improvement agents**

The Council adopted a common position on a package of legislative proposals on food improvement agents<sup>1</sup>, which will be forwarded to the European Parliament for a second reading, in accordance with the codecision procedure (16673/08 + ADD1, 16675/08 + ADD1, 16676/08 + ADD1 and 16677/0 + ADD1).

The Parliament delivered its first-reading opinion on 10 July 2007 on the whole package and the Commission forwarded amended proposals on 24 October, mentioning the amendments that it could accept.

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<sup>1</sup> Food additives, food enzymes and food flavourings.

The package on food improvement agents is aimed at harmonising across the board, in accordance with the "farm to table" concept, the evaluation procedure for authorising food improvement agents and certain requirements concerning their labelling, in order to guarantee a high level of protection of human life and health and the interests of consumers, whilst ensuring the proper operation of the internal market.

For details on the respective aims of the package, see press release of 17 December 2007:  
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st16/st16373-re01.en07.pdf>





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7426/08 (Presse 68)

**PROVISIONAL VERSION**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

2859th Council meeting

**General Affairs and External Relations**

## **EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

Brussels, 10 March 2008

President      **Mr Dimitrij Rupel,**  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia

\* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2858th meeting on General Affairs (7425/08).

# **P R E S S**

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7426/08 (Presse 68)

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## **Main results of the Council**

*The Council discussed the state of play in the **WTO** Doha Development Agenda (DDA) negotiations, ahead of possible WTO ministerial discussions in Geneva. It reconfirmed the importance of achieving a comprehensive, ambitious and balanced final outcome within and across all of the areas of the DDA, in agriculture and non-agricultural market access and also including services, rules, trade facilitation and geographical indications. It also reconfirmed its commitment to a successful result, meeting the main objectives of the EU and the needs and interests of developing countries, in particular LDCs. To that end, it urged WTO partners to make meaningful contributions to the negotiations, commensurate with their level of development. For emerging economies, in industrial tariffs in particular, this requires granting additional market access. In this context, the Council expressed its support for the Commission in seeking the further improvements of the Chairs' negotiating texts needed to move the negotiations forward, alongside further progress on the Single Undertaking as a whole, including services and geographical indications.*

*The Council expressed continued concern about the humanitarian, political and economic situation in **Zimbabwe** and conditions on the ground, which may endanger the holding of free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections on 29 March. It noted that no formal invitation has been made to the European Union to send an official EU observation mission. It urged the government of Zimbabwe to ensure that the forthcoming elections meet international norms and standards.*

*In the context of its general affairs session (see press release 7425/08), the Council*

- *took note of the fact that the parliamentary and provincial elections in **Pakistan** on 18 February were competitive, despite significant problems with the election framework and environment. The elections were an important step in the democratic development of Pakistan. The EU Council reaffirmed the EU's commitment to supporting Pakistan in building a prosperous and stable society based on the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights.*
- *reaffirmed the EU's commitment to long-term support for the people and government of **Afghanistan** and supported the approach taken towards an international conference to be held in Paris in June to review progress in implementation of the Afghanistan Compact and reaffirm the international community's commitment to the country. The Council also welcomed the progress of the EU police mission in Afghanistan towards full deployment at central, regional and provincial level by the end of March and expressed its readiness to consider further enhancement of EU engagement, particularly in the field of police and wider rule of law.*

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**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

*none*

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Mr Karel DE GUCHT Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Bulgaria:**

Mr Ivailo KALFIN Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Czech Republic:**

Mr Alexandr VONDRÁ Deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for European Affairs

Mr Tomáš POJAR First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs with responsibility for bilateral relations

**Denmark:**

Mr Per Stig MØLLER Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Germany:**

Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Mr Günter GLOSER Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Mr Peter HINTZE Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Technology

**Estonia:**

Mr Urmas PAET Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Ireland:**

Mr Dermot AHERN Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Mr John McGUINNESS Minister of State with special responsibility for Trade and Commerce at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

**Greece:**

Ms Dora BAKOYANNI Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Mr Ioannis VALINAKIS State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

**Spain:**

Mr. Miguel Ángel MORATINOS Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation  
Mr Albert NAVARRO GONZÁLEZ State Secretary for the European Union

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Mr Frans TIMMERMANS Minister for European Affairs

**Austria:**

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK

Federal Minister for European and International Affairs

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Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Portugal:**

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Mr Manuel LOBO ANTUNES

Ministro de Estado, Minister for Foreign Affairs  
State Secretary for European Affairs, attached to the  
Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Romania:**

Mr Adrian CIOROIANU

Mr Stefan IMRE

Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Secretary of State for Trade

**Slovenia:**

Mr Dimitrij RUPEL

Mr Matjaž ŠINKOVEC

Minister for Foreign Affairs  
State Secretary

**Slovakia:**

Mr Ján KUBIŠ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Finland:**

Mr Ilkka KANERVA

Mr Paavo VÄYRYNEN

Ms Astrid THORS

Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Minister for Foreign Trade and Development  
Minister for Migration and European Affairs

**Sweden:**

Mr Carl BILDT

Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM

Ms Ewa BJÖRLING

Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Minister for European Affairs  
Minister for Trade

**United Kingdom:**

Mr David MILIBAND

Mr Jim MURPHY

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

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**Commission:**

Mr Olli REHN

Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER

Member

Member

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**General Secretariat of the Council:**

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

**ITEMS DEBATED**

**WORLD TRADE NEGOTIATIONS – DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA - *Council conclusions***

Ministers held a working dinner on 9 March to discuss the latest developments in negotiations under the World Trade Organisation's Doha Development Agenda (DDA), as well as the theme of energy and trade.

The Council was briefed by commissioner Peter Mandelson on the DDA negotiations, ahead of possible WTO ministerial discussions in Geneva in April, and held an exchange of views.

It adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council heard an update from the Commission on the state of play in the WTO DDA negotiations, ahead of possible WTO Ministerial discussions in Geneva. Recalling all its earlier conclusions on this matter, the Council reiterated the crucial importance that the EU has attached to the DDA negotiations since their inception in 2001, and recalled the substantial contribution that the EU has made throughout the negotiations.
2. The Council reconfirmed the importance of achieving a comprehensive, ambitious and balanced final outcome within and across all of the areas of the DDA, in agriculture and non-agricultural market access and also including services, rules, trade facilitation and geographical indications, in conformity with the negotiating directives as defined in its previous conclusions. It also reconfirmed its commitment to a successful result, meeting the main objectives of the EU and the needs and interests of developing countries, in particular LDC's. To that end, the Council urged WTO partners to make meaningful contributions to the negotiations, commensurate with their level of development. For emerging economies, in industrial tariffs in particular, this requires granting additional market access.
3. In this context, the Council expressed its support for the Commission in seeking the further improvements of the Chairs' negotiating texts needed to move the negotiations forward, alongside further progress on the Single Undertaking as a whole, including services and geographical indications.
4. The Council agreed that a special session of the Council, as well as meetings of the Article 133 Committee, would be convened in the margins of the possible WTO DDA ministerial negotiations in Geneva. The date will be determined by the Presidency in the light of developments."

**WESTERN BALKANS - Council conclusions**

At lunch, ministers discussed the situation in the Western Balkans, particularly developments regarding Kosovo since their last meeting on 18 February when they noted the adoption on 17 February by the Kosovo Assembly of a resolution declaring Kosovo to be independent.

The Council also adopted the following conclusions:

**"BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

The Council noted the outcome of the last session of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) Steering Board that took place in Brussels on 26-27 February 2008. The Council welcomed the PIC Steering Board's unanimous decision that the Office of the High Representative (OHR) will remain in place and continue to carry out its mandate under the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement until necessary objectives and conditions as set out in the PIC Steering Board Declaration are met. The Council shared the PIC Steering Board's concern over challenges to the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement. The Council confirmed its agreement to the goals of transition and ownership and reiterated its readiness to continue its engagement.

The Council noted that Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has made progress with regard to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). It urged BiH authorities to make further efforts to ensure swift and effective fulfilment of all the four conditions necessary for signing the SAA. Furthermore, the Council noted that important underlying problems remain and called upon all parties in BiH to work together in order to overcome them as soon as possible.

The Council reiterated its full support to BiH's European perspective. Recalling its conclusions of 28 January 2008, the Council welcomed the intention of the European Commission to launch soon a visa dialogue with BiH.

**STABILITY PACT/REGIONAL CO-OPERATION COUNCIL**

The Council underlined the importance of regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe and welcomed the successful outcome of the joint meeting of the final Regional Table of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the inaugural meeting of the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) on 27 February 2008 in Sofia, which marked the formal handover from the Stability Pact to the RCC. The establishment of the RCC is proof of substantial progress in regional co-operation on democratic, economic and security issues.

The Stability Pact has generated broad acceptance of the view that regional co-operation is necessary and has created shared understanding and strategies for common issues, in particular in the fields of energy, trade, refugee return and border control. The RCC will build on these achievements as a more regionally owned, streamlined and effective regional co-operation framework. The RCC can play its full role only if the entire region is committed to regional co-operation and if all parts of the region take an active stand in its activities. Regional co-operation is important for the European perspective of the Western Balkans.

The EU is committed to support the RCC, co-operating in the context of the SEECP (South-East European Co-operation Process), and looks forward to the RCC providing the framework for increased ownership and leadership by South Eastern European countries, while representing a forum for the continued involvement of the donor community.

The Council thanked Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact Dr Erhard Busek and expressed its support for the Secretary General of the RCC Mr Hido Bišćević and the future activities of the RCC."

**GEORGIA**

The Council had an exchange of views on the situation in Georgia, in particular regarding the upcoming Georgian parliamentary elections in May 2008.

ZIMBABWE - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council remains very concerned about the humanitarian, political and economic situation in Zimbabwe and conditions on the ground, which may endanger the holding of free and fair Parliamentary and Presidential elections. The Council notes that no formal invitation has been made to the European Union to send an official EU Observation Mission.
2. The Council therefore urges the government of Zimbabwe to ensure that the forthcoming elections meet international norms and standards including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) principles and guidelines concerning elections, of which Zimbabwe is a signatory.
3. The Council recognises the efforts of President Mbeki, on behalf of SADC, to improve relations between the Government of Zimbabwe and the opposition and the progress achieved so far. The Council hopes this process will continue in order to settle fundamental issues and that the changes agreed thereby will be implemented in such a way as to allow for the holding of free and fair elections. The Council calls on the SADC countries to remain actively engaged.
4. The Council recalls its continued commitment to the people of Zimbabwe and emphasises that the EU remains the most important donor to Zimbabwe. The Council reiterates that its targeted measures (consisting of a visa ban, an assets freeze and an arms embargo) are exclusively aimed at those leading figures responsible for Zimbabwe's crisis of governance and human rights' abuses and do not penalise the Zimbabwean population.
5. The EU will continue to closely monitor the situation in Zimbabwe and support efforts towards ensuring democracy, stability, economic recovery and respect for human rights. The Council also wishes to confirm its willingness to continue to make use of any opportunity provided to carry on the dialogue with the Government of Zimbabwe and, as soon as conditions allow, to begin working towards the resumption of full cooperation."

**IRAN**

At lunch, ministers had an exchange of views on Iran following the adoption on 3 March of a third resolution by the UN Security Council regarding the nuclear issue. It was noted that the adoption of Security Council resolution 1803 was a clear signal of the international community's unity. At the same time, the representatives of China, France, Germany, Russia, the UK and the United States also expressed on 3 March their continued commitment to an early negotiated solution and reaffirmed their commitment to a dual-track approach.



**MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS**

At lunch, ministers discussed the situation regarding the Middle East peace process as well as Lebanon, notably on the basis of a briefing by High Representative Javier Solana on his recent visit to the region from 2 to 5 March.

**EU-US SUMMIT - STATE OF PREPARATIONS**

At lunch, ministers were briefed on the EU ministerial troika dinner with US Secretary of State Rice held on 6 March.

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

See press release 7425/08.

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