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IMPORTANT COMING MEETINGS

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEETINGS

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- February, 26, 27, 2008

Committee on Foreign Affairs

- February, 18, 2008 (Strasbourg)

Subcommittee on Human Rights

- February, 27, 28, 2008

Subcommittee on security and defence

- February, 27, 2008

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and home affairs

- February, 27, 2008

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

- February, 27, 28, 2008

Committee on budgetary control

- February, 25, 26, 2008

CONFERENCES / EVENTS

REGIONS:

AFRICA

Sudan

- ▶ **Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, condemns the escalating violence in Darfur** (14/02/2008)

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security policy (CFSP), condemns the renewed and escalating violence in Western Darfur causing thousands of civilians to flee and further deteriorating the already critical humanitarian situation in Darfur.

The High Representative urges the Government of Sudan to refrain from any action affecting the civilian population and preventing the humanitarian operations.

The ramifications on the situation in Eastern Chad and the North East Central African Republic call for the earliest possible deployment of EUFOR Tchad/RCA to improve the security of the thousands of refugees from Darfur and internally displaced persons in these areas.

Javier Solana confirms the resumption of the EUFOR Tchad/RCA deployment which should reach Initial Operational Capability by mid March.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/declarations/98732.pdf

AMERICAS

ASIA

Pakistan

- ▶ **MEPs to observe elections in Pakistan** (14/02/2008)

The European Parliament is to send an electoral observation mission to Pakistan, to monitor the parliamentary and provincial elections of 18 February.

The delegation is chaired by Robert Evans (PES, UK), and will complement the long-term EU observation mission, also headed by an MEP - Michael Gahler (EPP-ED, DE).

The six other Members of the delegation are: Ivo Belet (EPP-ED, BE), Lilli Gruber (PES, IT), Jo Leinen (PES, DE), Marianne Mikko (PES, ET), Nickolay Mladenov (EPP-ED, BU) and Baroness Emma Nicholson of Winterbourne (ALDE, UK).

The delegation will be in Pakistan from 15-20 February and will hold meetings with political figures and officials before observing the events of election day, 18 February. Initial conclusions will be announced at a joint press conference of the EU and the EP observation missions to be held on 20 February in Islamabad.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-21213-046-02-07-903-20080213IPR21211-15-02-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

Pakistan

► **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the general elections in Pakistan** (1502/2008)

The EU welcomes the public commitment made by President Musharraf that elections in Pakistan to National and Provincial Assemblies on 18 February will be held in a free, fair, transparent and peaceful manner. The EU understands that technical preparations for the polls are on schedule. The EU has deployed an Election Observation Mission to Pakistan which will offer an independent assessment of the conduct of the elections in accordance with international standards for democratic elections.

At the same time, the EU has concerns about a number of issues relating to the conduct of the elections. The EU urges the authorities to take all possible steps in the remaining days to improve the conditions in which the elections are being held.

The transparency of the electoral process will be essential to restoring public confidence and ultimate progress towards national reconciliation. This can be promoted through an open and consultative election administration, the strict neutrality of caretaker governments at national and provincial levels, and freedom for the media to cover all aspects of the election process.

The EU appreciates assurances given by the election administration that all counting and tabulation processes are fully open to scrutiny by candidates, their agents and observers. However, in order to ensure transparency of the results process, it is vital that the authorities issue and enforce instructions to display detailed results in polling stations, immediately after counting is complete, and to publicly display a detailed breakdown of polling station results at the constituency level as soon as the tabulation process is complete. A further positive measure would be to swiftly post the detailed polling station results on the internet.

The EU urges the Pakistan authorities to ensure that complaints and appeals are dealt with in a timely, effective and transparent manner. There should be access to an independent means of redress. The EU renews its call for the immediate release of political detainees including judges and lawyers as an essential step in restoring confidence in the independence of the judiciary, rule of law and democratic process. This would represent an important step in creating a free and open pre-electoral environment.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/February/0215MZZ_Pakistan.html

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

Uzbekistan

► **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the release of human rights defenders in Uzbekistan** (14/02/2008)

The European Union welcomes the release in Uzbekistan of four human rights defenders between 2 and 4 February 2008, namely Saidjahon Zainabitdinov, Ikhtior Khamraev, Ulugbek Kattabaev and Bobomurod Mavlanov and the cancellation of the probation period concerning two other human rights defenders, Gulbahor Turaeva and Umida Niazova, who were released from prison last year. This is a positive step concerning the promotion and protection of human rights in Uzbekistan.

Nevertheless, the European Union notes that a number of human rights defenders remain in custody. In particular, the EU remains gravely concerned regarding the imprisonment of Mutabar Tadjibaeva. The European Union reiterates its call to the Uzbek Government for the early release of all imprisoned human rights defenders. The European Union encourages Uzbekistan to make further progress to ensure the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as for the rule of law.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/February/0214MZZ_Uzbekistan.html

Kosovo

► Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the CSP welcomes the appointments of Pieter Feith as EU Special Representative in Kososvo and Yves de Kermabon as Head of Mission of EULEX Kosovo (16/02/2008)

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) made today the following statement on the decision by the Council to appoint Pieter FEITH as the EU Special Representative in Kosovo and Yves de KERMABON as EULEX KOSOVO Head of Mission.

"I am very pleased that the Council has decided on the basis of my recommendation to appoint Pieter Feith as EU Special Representative in Kosovo and Yves de Kermabon as Head of Mission for the rule of law mission in Kosovo, EULEX KOSOVO. These appointments further illustrate the EU's enhanced engagement in the Western Balkans.

Pieter Feith will in particular offer the EU's advice and support in the political process and promote overall EU coordination in Kosovo. I have known him for a long time and we have always worked very well together. I wish him all the luck in his new position.

As Head of Mission for the biggest civilian EU mission ever, Yves de Kermabon, will have a crucial role in assisting the Kosovo police and justice enforcement agencies in their progress towards European standards. He has my full trust and support and I look forward to working with him.

Both have an in-depth knowledge of the region and of EU policies there."

The European Council on 14 December 2007 stated the EU's readiness to assist Kosovo in the path towards sustainable stability, including by an European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission and a contribution to an international civilian office as part of the international presences in Kosovo.

Today the Council also decided to launch the EULEX KOSOVO mission in the wider area of Rule of Law.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/98772.pdf

Kosovo

► Council establishes an EU Rule of Law Mission and appoints an EU Special representative(16/02/2008)

The Council has decided to launch the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo - "EULEX Kosovo". The mission's operational phase is foreseen to start after a 120-day transition period from the decision to launch.

The Council adopted, by written procedure, a joint action on EULEX Kosovo.

The mission, which will be conducted under the European security and defence policy (ESDP), will assist Kosovo authorities, judicial authorities and law enforcement agencies in their progress towards sustainability and accountability and in further developing and strengthening an independent multi-ethnic justice system and multi-ethnic police and customs service, ensuring that these institutions are free from political interference and adhering to internationally recognised standards and European best practices.

The mission will include a police component, a justice component and a customs component, co-located with the relevant services and ministries.

EULEX Kosovo, in full co-operation with the Community assistance programmes, will carry out its mandate

through monitoring, mentoring, and advising, while retaining certain executive responsibilities.
The financial reference amount intended to cover the expenditure related to an initial period of 16 months will be EUR 205 million.

- The Political and Security Committee decided on 7 February 2008 to appoint Yves de Kermabon as Head of the EULEX Kosovo mission.

- In parallel with the joint action establishing EULEX Kosovo, the Council also adopted a joint action establishing an EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Kosovo and appointing Pieter Feith to this position.
The mandate of the EUSR will be notably to offer the EU's advice and support in the political process; to promote overall EU coordination in Kosovo; to provide local political guidance to the Head of the EULEX Kosovo mission; and to contribute to the development and consolidation of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Kosovo.

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.ASP?lang=en>

see also Fact Sheet on EU in Kosovo

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/98770.pdf

Kosovo

- ▶ Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the CFSP on the latest developments in Kosovo (17/02/2008),

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy(CFSP) made today the following remarks following the extraordinary session of Parliament in Kosovo:

"I am in permanent close contact with Kosovo and leaders in the region. I want to underline that stability in Kosovo as well as of the whole Balkan region is essential. Therefore, I urge everybody to act calmly and in a responsible way. I am convinced that the Kosovar leaders will be up to their responsibilities in this crucial moment. European Union Ministers of Foreign Affairs will convene tomorrow and will consider the issue."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/declarations/98777.pdf

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Fundamental Rights Agency

- ▶ **Civil Liberties Committee backs Morten Kjaerum for director of the Fundamental Rights Agency (12/02/2008)**

MEPs in Civil Liberties Committee unanimously selected Morten Kjaerum from Denmark as their first choice for director of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency on Monday, after a public hearing with the two candidates shortlisted by the European Commission. The other candidate was Dario Carminati. Parliament's Conference of Presidents now needs to approve this recommendation, with the final choice being made by the Agency's Management Board.

The first applicant interviewed was Dario Carminati (born in Italy, 1952), a senior UNCHR member with 27 years of experience, currently representative of the Angola delegation. "The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) can become an important step forward to reinforce a global EU vision towards Human Rights", he said. Mr Carminati felt that the agency's priorities should be to provide suggestions and advice on EU legislation and the implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, to address emerging national human rights issues and to reduce the gap between citizens, EU institutions and national parliaments by engaging all parties in a fruitful dialogue.

Morten Kjaerum (born in Denmark, 1957), has 23 years of human rights experience and currently directs the Danish Institute for Human Rights. He felt that "the FRA is a good possibility to strengthen human rights" and should be "highly interactive" with the institutional and civil society networks. "I would like to create a focal point for innovative work, a place you turn to for an inspiring debate", he said. Mr Kjaerum also stressed that, if appointed as director, he would seek new ways to step up dialogue with MEPs, including holding informal workshops on sensitive topics.

National minorities

Asked by Henri Lax (ALDE, FI), and Viktoria Mohacsi (ALDE, HU), about what role the agency should play in improving protection and understanding of national minorities, both candidates agreed that this issue should become one of the FRA's priorities. "Linguistic, cultural, ethnic discrimination... they are all different angles of the same problem. The agency should address all forms of discrimination with a global strategy", said Mr Carminati. Mr Kjaerum added: "we should team up with the related European committees, develop a joint programme and create new mechanisms to promote the rights of minority communities".

Do you dare to name and shame?

Asked by Kathalijne Buitenweg (Greens/EFA, NL), about what to do when a national government breaches human rights and how to deal with criticism of individual EU Member States, Mr Carminati believed that "it is more important to promote the Agency's positive role, developing a constructive dialogue, than to point fingers". Mr Kjaerum observed that "naming and shaming is important but it would never be my first approach. I would only use it if dialogue fails and there are no other means to address the problem".

Counter-terrorism and privacy right

Magda Kósáná Kovács (PES, HU) asked the Danish candidate about the Agency's justice and security priorities. Mr Kjaerum replied that he was very happy to see that privacy rights are part of the FRA's mandate, noting that "privacy rights are being squeezed by the fight against terrorism" and "we need a profound discussion on this".

For Kinga Gal (EPP-ED, HU) and Ewa Klamt (EPP-ED, DE), key concerns were how to ensure the agency's independence vis-à-vis the Council and other EU institutions and how to improve co-operation with NGOs and civil society. Other issues discussed by various members include how to best to address children's rights, the case of Roma discrimination and the fight for equal opportunities.

The Committee's opinion will now be on the agenda of Thursday's meeting of the EP Conference of Presidents for approval. The EU Council was to hold similar hearings with both candidates on Monday afternoon. The FRA's management board will make the final appointment, taking the Council's and Parliament's opinions into account. The FRA was created in March 2007.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/017-20964-042-02-07-902-20080211IPR20868-11-02-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm