

SUMMARY

REGIONS

AFRICA

I **ECOWAS**

- ▶ 13th ECOWAS- EU Ministerial Troika Meeting (28/04/2008)

T **Burundi**

- ▶ Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union concerning the attacks at Bujumbura (23/04/2008)

T **Chad**

- ▶ Human Rights: Turmoil in Chad (24/04/2008)
- ▶ Javier SOLANA, Haut Représentant de l'Union européenne pour la PESC, salue les derniers développements politiques au Tchad (24/04/2008)

T **Zimbabwe**

- ▶ Human Rights: Zimbabwe: democracy must prevail, say MEPs (24/04/2008)
- ▶ Council Conclusions on Zimbabwe (29/04/2008)
- ▶ EU Presidency Statement on Zimbabwe (2/05/2008)

AMERICAS

I **EU/ LAC**

- ▶ MEPs demand the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages in Colombia ahead of key summit (24/04/2008)
- ▶ Council Conclusions on EU-Latin America relations (29/04/2008)

T **USA**

- ▶ Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU concerning the death penalty in the USA (25/04/2008)

ASIA

I **Afghanistan**

- ▶ Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, confirms EU's commitment to Afghanistan (21/04/2008)

- ▶ Council Conclusions on Afghan troika (29/04/2008)

T **Burma/Myanmar**

- ▶ Burma: broadened and more targeted sanctions needed, say MEPs (24/04/2008)
- ▶ Council Conclusions on Burma/Myanmar (29/04/2008)

T **China/Africa**

- ▶ China's policy in Africa: MEPs on the alert (23/04/2008)

T **China/ Tibet**

- ▶ EU Presidency statement on the People's Republic of China's announcement of dialogue with a representative of the Dalai Lama (25/04/2008)

T **Japan**

- ▶ 17th Japan-EU Summit: Joint Press Statement (23/04/2008)
- ▶ EU and Japan committed to further strengthening strategic partnership, says Slovenian PM Janša (23/04/2008)

I **Pakistan**

- ▶ Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, commits to deeper relations with Pakistan (22/04/2008)
- ▶ Council Conclusions on Pakistan (29/04/2008)

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

I **Armenia**

- ▶ Council of Europe and OSCE welcome agreement to change recently-amended assembly law in Armenia (22/04/2008)
- ▶ Council of Europe: Report on Armenia by the Human Rights Commissioner (30/04/2008)

T **Belarus**

- ▶ EU Presidency statement on the renewed imprisonment and the harassment of political opponents in Belarus (29/04/2008)
- ▶ Council of Europe: PACE rapporteur; sentences against young demonstrators in Belarus are 'harsh and unjustified' (25/04/2008)

T **Croatia**

- ▶ Fourth meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Council between the European Union and Croatia (28/04/2008)

Georgia

- ▶ Council of Europe: Democratic conduct of upcoming elections in Georgia crucial to restore trust in the democratic process, say PACE observers (28/04/2008)
- ▶ Council of Europe: Conflicts in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; Statement by Ján Kubiš, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (24/04/2008)

T Kosovo

- ▶ EP delegation to Kosovo welcomes new constitution (21/04/2008)

T Russia/Georgia

- ▶ Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the escalation of tension between Georgia and Russia (2/05/2008)
- ▶ Council of Europe: Commissioner Hammarberg meets Putin and Medvedev (25/04/2008)

T Turkey

- ▶ Foreign Affairs Committee urges faster pace of reform in Turkey (21/04/2008)
- ▶ Council of Europe: Chair of PACE Migration Committee calls for investigation into “deaths of irregular migrants caused by forced returns” (28/04/2008)

T Uzbekistan

- ▶ Council Conclusions on Uzbekistan (29/04/2008)

T Western Balkans

- ▶ Council Conclusions on Western Balkans (29/04/2008)

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

I Gaza Strip

- ▶ EU Presidency statement on fuel shortage in Gaza (24/04/2008)

T Iran

- ▶ Human Rights: Iran: continuing concern about women's rights and executions (24/04/2008)
- ▶ EU Presidency Statement on the imminent Execution of Behnoud Shojaee (4/05/2008)

T Iraq

- ▶ Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the Expanded Meeting of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq (22/04/2008)

T Israel

- ▶ Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, voices concern at the Israeli raids on two orphanages in Hebron (27/04/2008)

T **Middle East**

- ▶ Quartet Statement - London (2/05/2008)

THEMATIC

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

I **Fight against crime and terrorism**

- ▶ Fighting crime and terrorism while safeguarding privacy (22/04/2008)

EXTERNAL RELATIONS & DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ISSUES

I **EU Troika/OSCE**

- ▶ Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel chairs meeting of EU Troika with OSCE delegation (28/04/2008)

EU / UN REFORM

I **Lisbon Treaty/ Denmark and Austria**

- ▶ Slovenian Presidency welcomes the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by the parliaments of Denmark and Austria (24/04/2008)

T **Lisbon Treaty/ Portugal**

- ▶ Slovenian Presidency welcomes the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by the Portuguese parliament (24/04/2008)

MISCELLANEOUS

I **EU Guidelines on Torture**

- ▶ Council Conclusions on Review of the EU Guidelines on Torture (29/04/2008)

T **Council of Europe/Ireland**

- ▶ Report on Ireland by Human Rights Commissioner (30/04/2008)

T **Council of Europe/Violence against women**

- ▶ Violence domestique contre les femmes: Conférence de Vienne (30/04/2008)

IMPORTANT COMING MEETINGS

EU - THIRD COUNTRY MEETINGS

I EU Troika- Turkey

- May, 6, 2008 (Turkey)

T EU Troika- Ukraine

- May, 22, 2008 (Brdo)

T EU Troika- European Economic Area

- May, 27, 2008 (Brussels)

T EU Troika- Republic of South Africa

- June, 3, 2008 (Brdo)

T Summit EU-Latin America and the Caribbean

- May, 16, 2008 (Peru)

T Summit EU-Cariforum; Chile; Mexico; Mercosur; Central America

- May, 17, 2008 (Peru)

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEETINGS

I Committee on Development

- May, 5-6, 27-28, 2008

I Committee on Foreign Affairs

- May, 6, 27-28-29, 2008

I Subcommittee on Human Rights

- May, 26-27, 2008

I Subcommittee on security and defence

- May, 5, 26-27, 2008

I Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and home affairs

- May, 5-6, 28-29, 2008

I Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

- May, 26-27, 2008

Committee on budgetary control

- May, 5-6, 2008

CONFERENCES / EVENTS

I **Women and War**

- May, 6, 2008, 15.30-18.00: **Situation of women in armed conflicts** (Brussels)

II **Tibet**

- May, 6, 2008, 15.30-18.00: Discussion with Kesang YANGKYI Takla, Minister for Information and International Relations of the Central Tibetan Administration of Dalai Lama (Brussels)

REGIONS

AFRICA

ECOWAS

- ▶ **13th ECOWAS- EU Ministerial Troika Meeting** (Luxembourg, 28/04/2008)

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/100203.pdf

Burundi

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union concerning the attacks at Bujumbura** (23/04/2008)

The European Union has learned with dismay of the attacks and ensuing firefights taking place since 17 April 2008 in the immediate vicinity of Bujumbura and in Kayanza province.

The European Union deplores the attacks and urges all parties, first and foremost the Palipehutu FNL, to call an immediate halt to the hostilities, which are endangering the civilian population and the peace process as a whole.

The European Union urgently calls for the resumption of dialogue as the sole means of making progress towards peace and reconciliation, which is a fundamental expectation of the Burundian people, and here calls on the Palipehutu FNL to resume work as soon as possible in the joint verification and monitoring mechanism for the ceasefire agreement of 7 September 2006.

The European Union reaffirms its support for the South African facilitation and for the regional initiative and remains resolved, as part of the political directorate, to play an active part in removing obstacles to implementation of the action plan adopted in Cape Town (22 and 23 February 2008) and to assist in all efforts to reactivate negotiations and consolidate peace in Burundi.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/April/0423MZZ_Bujumbura.html

Chad

- ▶ **Human Rights: Turmoil in Chad** (24/04/2008)

Parliament's resolution on Chad, adopted by 50 votes to 1, with 5 abstentions, highlights the scale of the problems facing the country, with internal political unrest as well as a huge influx of refugees from neighbouring countries. MEPs call for dialogue between the government and rebel groups and urge the international community to boost its aid to Chad.

There are more than 250,000 Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad, over 57,000 refugees from the Central African Republic and 180,000 internally displaced persons. The government faces rebel groups (one of which briefly penetrated the capital, N'Djamena, in February) but has itself been accused of widespread human rights abuses.

Persecution of opposition condemned

Today's resolution condemns the persecution and arbitrary arrest of opposition politicians and journalists. It calls on the Chadian Government to clarify the situation of any who are still being detained and highlights the case of opposition leader Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh, who was arrested on 3 February 2008 and has not been heard of since.

Although crises in neighbouring Darfur (Sudan) and the Central African Republic have had a huge impact on Chad, with large numbers of refugees spilling over the borders, the EP "denounces any attempt by the Chadian Government to use Sudan and Darfur as a smokescreen for hiding political dissent within Chad".

Inclusive approach the best solution to political impasse

It "stresses the need for politics in Chad to become more ethnically and geographically representative", argues that "no lasting solution can be found without a genuine process of national reconciliation and of global dialogue" and "reaffirms that a real and comprehensive, all-inclusive inter-Chadian dialogue must be convened as soon as possible", "bringing the rebel groups into the political process".

The EP acknowledges the usefulness of the UN-approved EUFOR TCHAD/RCA military mission for guaranteeing the safety of camps for refugees and displaced persons and of humanitarian organisations. However it "regrets that, in terms of troop composition, EUFOR does not sufficiently reflect the diversity of the European Union, and calls on the Member States which have not yet done so to contribute to providing the necessary troops and matériel so as to guarantee its European identity".

More aid needed from international community

Turning to the increasingly serious humanitarian and security situation in Chad, Parliament "calls on the international community to scale up its aid to meet the 2008 Humanitarian Appeal for Chad" and "stresses that donor contributions are urgently required to ensure that purchases are completed in the coming months so that food reaches eastern Chad on time".

Lastly, Parliament calls for human rights violations to be prosecuted and punished in accordance with international human rights law. And it backs the MINURCAT mission tasked with supporting the Chadian courts and prisons systems and with training the 'Chadian police for humanitarian protection'.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/015-27571-112-04-17-902-20080423IPR27467-21-04-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

T **Chad**

- ▶ **Javier SOLANA, Haut Représentant de l'Union européenne pour la PESC, salue les derniers développements politiques au Tchad** (24/04/2008)

Javier SOLANA, Haut Représentant de l'Union européenne pour la Politique étrangère et de sécurité commune (PESC), est encouragé par les derniers développements politiques intervenus au Tchad: **la nomination d'un nouveau premier ministre et la formation d'un gouvernement qui réserve une place substantielle à des personnalités respectées de l'opposition politique.**

Le Haut Représentant estime en effet que seul un approfondissement du dialogue politique initié par l'accord du 13 août 2007 est de nature à rétablir, de manière durable, la concorde civile au Tchad et à raffermir les fondations de l'État tchadien. À cet égard, Javier Solana appelle instamment tous les Tchadiens qui ne l'ont pas encore fait à se joindre au processus en cours, dans l'intérêt non seulement du Tchad, mais aussi de la stabilité régionale.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/declarations/100105.pdf

T **Zimbabwe**

- ▶ **Human Rights: Zimbabwe: democracy must prevail, say MEPs** (24/04/2008)

In a resolution on Zimbabwe supported by five EP political groups but not the Socialists, Parliament calls for the immediate release of all the original results of the recent elections and for the democratic wishes

of the Zimbabwean people be respected. Other African and international actors must play their part too, say MEPs.

In the wake of the elections of 29 March, the resolution "insists that the democratic wishes of the Zimbabwean people be respected" and "urges all those who wish to participate in the future of Zimbabwe to cooperate with the forces of democratic change".

It "calls on the Zimbabwean Electoral Commission immediately to release all the original election results". A similar request has been made by the South African Development Community (SADC). In addition, the Zimbabwean Government is urged "to honour its own commitments to democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law" as a signatory to various international treaties.

The post-electoral political violence against supporters of opposition parties is strongly condemned, as is the arrest of foreign journalists. MEPs call for the lifting of all restrictions on freedom of the press and assembly and for the release of the 36 citizens arrested in the course of a peaceful protest against the delayed publication of results.

The role of the international community

Parliament welcomes the recent acknowledgement by South Africa's ruling African National Congress party that Zimbabwe has entered a 'state of crisis' and "trusts that this will lead to positive action". It also calls on the African Union to help resolve the crisis.

South African dockers are commended for refusing to unload arms bound for Zimbabwe's security forces from the Chinese cargo ship *An Yue Jiang*. The resolution calls on all SADC countries to refuse to unload the cargo. The Chinese Government is urged to cease arms exports to Zimbabwe and to order the return of the *An Yue Jiang* to Chinese waters.

Lastly Parliament calls on the EU Council "to ensure that all Member States rigorously apply existing restrictive measures", but also to accelerate preparation of the emergency measures that will be put in place as soon as the democratic transformation in Zimbabwe has taken place.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/015-27571-112-04-17-902-20080423IPR27467-21-04-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm *

T **Zimbabwe**

► **Council Conclusions on Zimbabwe** (29/04/2008)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The Council closely follows the situation in Zimbabwe after the elections on 29 March and expresses its deep concern over the delay in announcing the result of the presidential elections as well as over acts of intimidation, human rights abuses, and violence.

2. The EU considers unacceptable and unjustifiable that four weeks after the people of Zimbabwe exercised their fundamental democratic right, no results of the Presidential elections have yet been published. The EU calls for the results of the Presidential elections to be released immediately and to be a genuine reflection of the free and democratic will of the Zimbabwean people, as the delay raises serious concerns about the credibility of the process.

3. The EU condemns the post-election violence and intimidation against Zimbabweans and calls for its immediate end. The EU considers that these serious incidents appear to be targeted and politically motivated attacks against supporters of democratic change. The EU also underlines that recent arrests have demonstrated that the Government of Zimbabwe is not committed to allowing the Electoral Commission in Zimbabwe to function as an independent institution.

4. The EU notes that respect for freedom of assembly and of the media, as well as an atmosphere free from intimidation and violence, are crucial to the holding of free and fair elections, and calls for the electoral process to be completed in a context which respects these principles.
5. The countries in the region, Southern African Development Community and the African Union have a crucial role and a responsibility to continue their engagement to resolve the current crisis in Zimbabwe. The EU shares the concern of the SADC about the situation and reiterates full support for its efforts to resolve the current crisis. In this context, the Council commends the holding of the extraordinary Summit in Lusaka.
6. The Council remains concerned about the possible effects on the stability of the region as a consequence of the ongoing events and therefore calls upon SADC to engage with renewed determination with the Zimbabwean authorities to implement the outcome of the Lusaka Summit including the decision to remain actively involved till the end of the electoral process.
7. The EU welcomes the statement by African Union Commission President Konaré reiterating the AU's willingness to work in concert with all the parties concerned, SADC, and the international community to ensure the successful completion of the electoral process in Zimbabwe.
8. The EU recalls that it does not supply or sell arms, related materials or equipment which could be used for internal repression in Zimbabwe. It encourages others to exercise similar restraint at this time by introducing a de facto moratorium on all such sales and welcomes actions which have already been taken in this respect.
9. The EU will continue to closely monitor the situation and to explore further options for increasing pressure on those who direct and engage in state-sponsored violence and intimidation in the post-election period.
10. The Council recalls its continued commitment to the people of Zimbabwe and emphasises that the EU remains the most important donor to Zimbabwe. The EU also wishes to confirm its willingness to continue to make use of any opportunity provided to engage in the dialogue with a democratically elected Government of Zimbabwe and, as soon as conditions allow, to begin working towards the resumption of full cooperation.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/100215.pdf

T **Zimbabwe**

► **EU Presidency Statement on Zimbabwe** (2/05/2008)

The Presidency of the European Union takes note of the announcement of the result of the presidential election that took place on 29 March.

The Presidency reiterates its call for an immediate end of violence, intimidation, and human rights abuses against Zimbabweans and expresses its concern over increasing number of reports on state sponsored actions since polling day.

Nearly five weeks' delay of the announcement as well as post-election violence has raised serious concerns about the credibility of the process. The Presidency wishes to emphasise that for any second round of the Presidential election to be considered free and fair and to be a credible reflection of the free and democratic will of the Zimbabwean people, end of violence as well as presence of the international observers is of crucial importance.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0502MZZ_Zimbabwe.html

EU/LAC

- ▶ **MEPs demand the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages in Colombia ahead of key summit** (24/04/2008)

In adopting a joint resolution on the Fifth EU-LAC Summit in Lima, the European Parliament reiterates its belief that action to combat terrorism must be carried out with full respect for human rights, civil liberties and the rule of law. The House demands the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages in Colombia, with priority being given to those who are sick.

Parliament considers that their release should be effected by unilateral decision of the FARC or any other organisation by which they are being held or, failing that, under an emergency humanitarian exchange agreement. The resolution was adopted with 542 votes in favour 12 against and 12 abstentions.

MEPs propose that in the economic and commercial field the creation of the Euro-Latin American global interregional partnership area should be based on a model which is compatible with both the WTO and regionalism, to be applied in two stages:

(a) a first stage involving the conclusion, at the earliest opportunity, of the negotiations on the EU-Mercosur, EU-Andean Community and EU-Central America Interregional Partnership Agreement and the deepening of the existing EU-Mexico and EU-Chile agreements;

(b) a second stage, to be completed in 2012, involving the conclusion of a global interregional partnership agreement ensuring legal and institutional support and full geographical coverage for the various strands of the strategic partnership and providing for the free movement of persons and biregional trade through a deepening of both the integration agreements within Latin America and the Union's partnership process with all countries and regional groupings.

Strengthening institutional promotion and forecast mechanisms

MEPs recommend:

(a) establishing a Euro-Latin American Foundation, of a public-private nature, for the promotion of dialogue between the partners on similar lines to those already existing for other geographical areas such as Asia or the Mediterranean; calls on the Commission to draw up a detailed proposal in this sense;

(b) establishing a Biregional Centre for Conflict Prevention, dedicated to the early detection of the causes of potential violent and armed conflicts and to seeking how best to prevent them and stop them from escalating;

(c) repeats its suggestion to create a Migration Observatory responsible for permanently and closely monitoring all issues in connection with migratory flows in Latin America.

Size of the Eurolat Assembly

MEP consider it essential to strengthen the parliamentary dimension of the strategic partnership and supports the Latin American request in which the number of Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly members required in order to facilitate the inclusion of the recently constituted Mercosur Parliament is put at 150.

Finally, the House considers it essential to strengthen the parliamentary dimension of the strategic partnership and ensure suitable inclusion of the recently constituted Mercosur Parliament in the Euro-Latin American Assembly.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-27283-112-04-17-903-20080422IPR27271-21-04-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

EU/ LAC

► Council Conclusions on EU-Latin America relations (29/04/2008)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council approved draft agendas and draft joint declarations and communiqués, as a basis for further negotiations, with a view to a series of summits to be held in Lima, on 16 and 17 May, namely."

- summit of the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC);
- summits between the EU troika and LAC partners from Chile, Mexico, the Andean Community, Central America, Mercosur and Cariforum."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/100217.pdf

T USA

► Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU concerning the death penalty in the USA (25/04/2008)

On September 11, 2007 the Ambassadors of the European Union in Washington appealed to the Governor of Kentucky, the Honorable Ernie Fletcher to spare the life of Mr. Ralph Baze, whose execution would have broken a de facto moratorium that was in place within the State of Kentucky since 1999.

On 16 April 2008, the United States Supreme Court issued a ruling in Mr. Baze's case which will allow the continued use of lethal injection as practiced by the State of Kentucky. The European Union notes with disappointment the United State Supreme Court's decision in this case and renews its call on Governor Fletcher to commute the sentence of Mr. Baze.

The EU reiterates its longstanding position against the death penalty in all circumstances and accordingly strives to achieve its universal abolition, seeking a global moratorium on the death penalty as the first step. We believe that the elimination of the death penalty is fundamental to the protection of human dignity, and to the progressive development of human rights.

The EU recalls that on 18 December 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on a Moratorium on the use of the death penalty, which explicitly calls upon all States that still maintain the death penalty to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

The EU recalls that any miscarriage or failure of justice in the application of capital punishment represents an irreparable and irreversible loss of human life. No legal system is immune from mistakes and there is no reliable evidence that the death penalty provides added value in terms of deterrence.

In light of this US Supreme Court decision, we strongly encourage the continuation of the de facto moratorium in place within the United States allowing the ongoing debate on the complex issues involved to be thoroughly deliberated.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/April/0424MZZ_Death_Penalty.html

ASIA

I Afghanistan

► Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, confirms EU's commitment to Afghanistan (21/04/2008)

Javier SOLANA, European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), visited Afghanistan on Monday 21 April 2008. In Afghanistan, on Monday, Mr SOLANA met H.E. Mr. Hamid KARZAI, President of Afghanistan, H.E. Dr. Rangin Dadfar SPANTA, Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, H.E Prof. Hazrat Sibghatullah MOJADEDDI, Speaker of the Upper House of the Parliament and H.E Mr. Younous QANOONI, Speaker of the Lower House of the Parliament. Mr. SOLANA was accompanied by EU Special Representative for Afghanistan Mr. Francesc VENDRELL.

The High Representative and his interlocutors had a very fruitful exchange of views on the latest developments in Afghanistan. In a joint press conference with President Karzai, **Mr Solana underlined the progress that had been made in the fields of health and education and confirmed that "the European Union will continue to help the people of Afghanistan in the long term"**.

Mr. Solana recalled the successful meeting on Afghanistan which took place in Bucharest and signalled the importance of the Paris Conference, 12 June, with regards to analysis of the Afghanistan Compact of February 2006. **The High Representative said the international community is ready to work with local authorities towards Afghan ownership of the stabilisation process and commented that "with good governance comes responsibility and accountability"**.

In addition to the considerable progress achieved so far, Mr Karzai highlighted a proposal presented during the Burcharest Conference in which Afghan forces would take responsibility for security in Kabul city from this summer. In Kabul, the High Representative also visited the headquarters of the European Union Police Mission to Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan). The EUPOL Afghanistan mission, launched in 2007 as part of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), is designed to help the Afghan Ministry of Interior develop an effective police force throughout the country. The success of the mission can be seen in its deployment throughout Afghanistan.

Mr. Solana was briefed by Head of EUPOL Mission Jürgen SCHOLZ and held further meetings with the EU Heads of Mission. Mr SOLANA also met Kai EIDE, UN Secretary-General Special Representative for Afghanistan and COMISAF General Mc NEILL.

Mr. Solana's visit to Afghanistan demonstrates the support of the EU for the people and the government of Afghanistan and shows EU's commitment to the stabilisation and further development of the country.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/declarations/100086.pdf

T **Afghanistan**

► **Council Conclusions on Afghan troika (29/04/2008)**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The European Union warmly welcomes the Afghan Government representative to the EU/Afghan Troika and would like to re-iterate its support to the Government of Afghanistan and for its National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS). It recalls the primary responsibility of the Government of Afghanistan in tackling the narcotics problem. The EU remains committed to assist in tackling the narcotics trade and the diversion of precursors, which threatens both Afghanistan's stability and prosperity, and the security of the wider region. We strongly welcome the recent Afghanistan Joint Co-ordination Monitoring Board (JCMB) meeting in Tokyo and the Afghan Governments commitment to accelerate and improve implementation of the NDCS through:

- (i) provision of force protection for eradication in targeted areas;
- (ii) re-structuring and reform of the counter-narcotics trust fund;
- (iii) provincial based planning for CN policy implementation based on the Provincial Development Plans;
- (iv) expansion and effective delivery of programmes to promote licit development, including economic support for licit cash crops and rural industries;
- (v) strengthening of justice and other legal institutions and interdiction efforts;

- (vi) further strengthening of cross-border, regional, and international co-operation for CN activities; and
- (vii) mainstreaming CN into all government policies

We consider this implementation vital. Efforts to improve the rule of law with an effective police and justice system are essential. Bringing to justice those involved in narcotics, improving security and provincial governments control, and fighting corruption are also pivotal in tackling the narcotics problem in a long term way. Afghan leadership and delivery is critical and the EU stands ready to assist by pursuing its comprehensive strategy in combating the opium economy, through a combination of improved economic opportunities, social development and better security and governance. EU assistance 2007-2013 focuses on these issues.

Concerning security, the EU fully supports the work of the ESDP police mission, EUPOL, and calls on Member States and international partners to continue the deployment of quality police personnel. The EU also stresses the paramount importance of the programme of measures under the Instrument for Stability to support Afghanistan in promoting rule of law through support to the reform of the Justice Sector.

The EU acknowledges there are no quick fixes. The experience of Pakistan and Thailand show that the fight against poppy cultivation takes time and that the application of a comprehensive and coordinated approach is essential. In line with the Afghan National Drug Control Strategy, combining the fight against drug trafficking, strengthening rural livelihoods, reducing demand, and strengthening state institutions, particularly criminal justice and law enforcement are priorities. We also welcome the inclusion of the aspect of countering corruption as a complementing element in the fight against drugs in Afghanistan, as put forward in the report to the JCMB on the implementation of the NDCS. As part of this long-term endeavour UNODC will have to consider broadening and strengthening its range of reporting. This could help the Government of Afghanistan and the international community determine the success of all pillars of the NDCS. The EU acknowledges and supports the Government of Afghanistan's opposition to licit opium cultivation.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/100207.pdf

T **Burma/Myanmar**

- ▶ **Burma: broadened and more targeted sanctions needed, say MEPs** (24/04/2008)

Broadened and more targeted sanctions, a worldwide arms embargo and the release of political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi, recipient of the 1990 Sakharov prize, are among the demands of MEPs in a resolution adopted today by the House. The Burmese military junta led by General Than Shwe intends to hold a referendum on a new Constitution on May 10, 2008.

According to the new Constitution, 56 military officers will be guaranteed places in the 224-member lower house of parliament. And 110 seats out of 440 in the upper house are also reserved for the military.

MEPs deplore the fact that the constitutional referendum process is devoid of any democratic legitimacy and condemns the rejection by the Burmese Government of the proposals made by the UN Special Envoy, Mr Ibrahim Gambari, to allow an open and inclusive campaign in the run-up to the constitutional referendum. The resolution was adopted with 551 votes in favour, 7 against and 8 abstentions.

Broadened and more targeted sanctions

MEPs urge the Council to renew its targeted sanctions, and to broaden them, focusing on restrictions on access to international banking services for military-owned companies, conglomerates and businesses closely linked to the military or whose earnings benefit the military, and restrictions on access to personal business opportunities, health care, shopping, and foreign education for their children for selected generals and their immediate families. The resolution also urge the Council to comprehensively and explicitly prohibit selected individuals and entities from making any financial transactions that pass through clearing-house banks or otherwise using financial services in the EU's jurisdiction.

MEPs also call on the Council to consider further targeted sanctions, such as a complete ban on new investment, a ban on the provision of insurance services for investment in Burma, and an embargo on trade in key commodities that provide significant revenue to the military government.

Political prisoners and September crackdown

The resolution calls for the "immediate and unconditional release" of political opponents of the regime and more than 1,800 political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, the leaders of the '88 Generation Students, and the leaders of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy arrested in 2005.

MEPs calls for the regime to account for all casualties and missing persons from last September's crackdown on protests by Buddhist monks and democracy activists and to establish the whereabouts of missing monks and nuns.

The resolution calls on the Council to review sanctions against specific human rights benchmarks such as: the release of political prisoners and all other persons arbitrarily detained for exercising their basic human rights to free expression, association and assembly; an accurate official accounting of the numbers, whereabouts and conditions of individuals killed, arrested, and detained by the security forces.

Worldwide arms embargo

MEPs urge the EU to campaign for a worldwide arms embargo on Burma. The EU arms embargo on Burma is ineffective, as the military government purchases its military goods in China, Russia and India, says the resolution.

On the current trade negotiations with ASEAN countries, the resolution urges ASEAN to put substantive pressure on the Burmese authorities to bring about democratic change. MEPs support the efforts of the EU's special envoy on Burma, Piero Fassino, to promote dialogue with ASEAN countries.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-27565-112-04-17-903-20080423IPR27459-21-04-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

T **Burma/Myanmar**

► **Council Conclusions on Burma/Myanmar (29/04/2008)**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The European Union continues to be deeply concerned by the situation in Burma/Myanmar and again urges the authorities to take rapid steps for transition to a legitimate, civilian government and for national reconciliation.

2. The Council notes the report by UN Special Adviser on Myanmar, Ibrahim Gambari, on the absence of any immediate, tangible results of his recent visit to Burma/Myanmar. The EU reiterates its full support for the Good Offices Mission of the UN Secretary General and calls on partners, in particular the neighbours of Burma/Myanmar, to do likewise.

3. The Council commends the work of EU Special Envoy Piero Fassino in support of UN efforts and in co-ordinating with Asian partners. The EU will intensify its close consultations with ASEAN members and other neighbours of Burma/Myanmar, including those that are represented in the UN Security Council.

4. The Council remains convinced that only a process that involves the full participation of all stakeholders in the country, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and ethnic groups, will lead to national reconciliation and stability. Thus the Council believes the draft constitution, referendum and elections, as currently conceived, will not address the many problems facing Burma/Myanmar.

5. The Council calls on the authorities to allow a free and open debate by all political actors on the constitution prior to the referendum on 10 May, and to rescind the laws prohibiting criticism of the National Convention and

the referendum. The EU calls on the authorities to guarantee that the referendum will be free and fair as well as to invite international monitoring. The Council urges the authorities to ensure the political process is transparent, and to give the people of Burma/Myanmar clarity about the future political process and the 2010 elections.

6. The Council expresses concern that the draft constitution would foresee restrictions on the eligibility for high political office, allow the military to suspend the constitution at will as well as fail to accommodate the country's ethnic diversity.

7. The Council reiterates its call for the immediate release of all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and deplores the intensified intimidation and violence in the run-up to the referendum. The Council reiterates its call for the authorities to co-operate fully with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, and implement his recommendations.

8. The Council notes today's adoption of the Common Position, renewing for a further twelve months restrictive measures targeted against those responsible for human rights abuses and lack of development in Burma/Myanmar. Recalling the Council Conclusions of 15 October 2007, the Council reiterates its readiness to review or amend these measures or to introduce further restrictive measures in light of developments on the ground.

9. The Council recalls that as part of its restrictive measures against Burma/Myanmar the sales, supply, transfer or export of arms and related material of all types are prohibited. The Council would like to encourage the international community to adopt similar measures.

10. The EU recalls its unwavering, strong commitment to the welfare of the people of Burma/Myanmar. The EU and its Member States provide substantial assistance to their country. The EU continues to stand ready to respond positively to genuine progress towards democracy by engaging with Burma/Myanmar in its development and by finding new areas of cooperation."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/100220.pdf

T **China/Africa**

► **China's policy in Africa: MEPs on the alert** (23/04/2008)

MEPs point the finger at investments made by China with no strings attached in African countries ruled by oppressive regimes, in a report on the effects of China's growing presence in Africa adopted with 618 votes in favour, 16 against and 17 abstentions. This policy helps perpetuate human rights violations, say MEPs who also highlight Beijing's role in the spread of arms and the conditions under which natural resources are being exploited.

According to Ana Gomes (PES, PT) who drafted the report: "China's growing presence in Africa, with its positive and negative impacts, is challenging EU-Africa relations. The EU must therefore develop a coordinated response to the Chinese 'go out' policy, which is aimed at procuring oil and other natural resources. We need to engage in dialogue with China and Africa. At the same time, the EU should remain committed to its own approach towards development cooperation, making aid conditional on compliance with respect for human rights".

The EU should devise a strategy to meet the new challenges raised by emerging donors in Africa, such as China, including a coordinated approach between different Member States and EU institutions. It should also enter into a dialogue with China, in order to discuss methods and aims of development policy, says the report.

Investment in Africa

Unlike the EU, which ties its investment to respect for human rights and good governance, China makes most of its investments without laying down any particular conditions. Such investment in countries suffering from bad governance by oppressive regimes helps perpetuate human rights abuses, say MEPs.

The EU should encourage Chinese export-credit agencies, including the Exim Bank, to conduct systematic environmental assessments of infrastructure projects in Africa, such as dams, roads and mines, believes the House.

The report also calls on the EU to actively promote transparency regarding revenue generated by natural resources. MEPs argue that a clause requiring the investment of "a percentage of profit in local community development" should be included in international conventions on energy resources extraction or exploration.

MEPs call on the EU and China to discuss, develop and formulate, whenever possible, their African strategies with a view to a responsible commitment, aimed at fostering sustainable development and the pursuit of the MDGs. The House stresses the importance of formulating constructive dialogues within a multilateral framework with all relevant actors in the continent, in particular the AU and NEPAD. In this context, MEPs call on the EU to encourage the creation of an African Partnership Forum engaging all major donors and investors and China.

Arms and conflicts in Africa

MEPs urge the EU to call on China "to suspend any arms trade deals with those governments that are responsible for human rights violations, are involved in conflicts or on the brink of war", such as Zimbabwe, Sudan, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

In addition, says the report, China should increase the transparency of its national arms export control regime, namely by ensuring complete reporting on exports to the UN Register on Conventional Arms Exports.

The EU should maintain its arms embargo on China, adds the House, for as long as China continues to export arms to armed forces and armed groups in countries, many of them in Africa, that fuels and perpetuates conflicts and perpetrate gross violations of human rights.

Peacekeeping and non-interference

MEPs call on the EU to encourage China to continue increasing its participation in UN or African Union (AU) peacekeeping missions in Africa "by also supplying combat troops, when necessary". The EU is also urged to encourage China to assume its responsibilities as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, including the "responsibility to protect" civilians.

Role of parliaments

Lastly, MEPs stress that the European Parliament is willing to engage with the Chinese National People's Congress, the Pan-African Parliament and African national parliaments in a dialogue aimed at fostering sustainable development and enhancing their scrutinising capabilities.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/028-27281-112-04-17-903-20080422IPR27269-21-04-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

T **China/ Tibet**

- ▶ **EU Presidency statement on the People's Republic of China's announcement of dialogue with a representative of the Dalai Lama** (25/04/2008)

The Slovenian EU Council Presidency welcomes the People's Republic of China's announcement of a planned meeting with a representative of Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama. The decision was announced on the occasion of the visit to Beijing by European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and other Commissioners. The readiness to hold talks was explicitly stated in a letter sent on 16 April by the Premier of the People's Republic of China, Wen Jiabao, to the European Council President, Janez Janša.

The Slovenian Presidency also welcomes the readiness of both sides to strengthen cooperation between the European Union and China, as confirmed on the occasion of the European Commission's visit to China. The Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia and President of the European Council, Mr Janez Janša, is pleased to

see that the European Union's efforts during the Slovenian EU Council Presidency have helped strengthening confidence in the international community, a factor which will contribute to respect for human rights and to the successful preparation and staging of the Olympic Games in Beijing. The Slovenian EU Presidency will continue to make every effort to further enhance comprehensive dialogue between the EU and the People's Republic of China, as the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia Janez Janša and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao also advocated at their meeting in Beijing last year.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/April/0425KPV_tibet.html

T **Japan**

- ▶ **17th Japan-EU Summit: Joint Press Statement** (23/04/2008)

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/April/0423EU_Japan_Statement.html

T **Japan**

- ▶ **EU and Japan committed to further strengthening strategic partnership, says Slovenian PM Janša** (23/04/2008)

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia and President of the European Council, Mr Janez Janša, together with the President of the European Commission, Mr José Manuel Barroso, today attended the 17th EU-Japan Summit in Tokyo. In a statement after the meeting, the Slovenian Prime Minister said that at today's EU-Japan Summit a very broad consensus had been reached on a number of important issues, which could be summarised as three areas: **the global fight against climate change, promotion of international peace and security and commitment to achieving greater prosperity and quality of life.** Both sides took the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to further strengthening the strategic partnership between the EU and Japan.

The Slovenian Prime Minister gave assurances that the EU and Japan would continue to work together to promote the stability of financial systems aiming at diminishing negative effects on developed and developing countries and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, with special reference to the development of Africa.

The talks at the EU-Japan Summit also generated a clear message about promoting international peace and security. "There was a common understanding that, by coordinating efforts in areas such as water management, health, human resources, human rights and democracy, we shall contribute to stability and prosperity in Central Asia. A special commitment was made with respect to further cooperation on assistance to Afghanistan," said the Slovenian PM. Regarding the Middle East Peace Process, the European Union and Japan fully support the political process launched at Annapolis. "Only a negotiated solution can bring peace to this region," said Mr Janša.

The European Union and Japan remain determined to cooperate closely for greater prosperity and quality of life. "The European Union and Japan will work towards greater consumer safety and protection. We will intensify cooperation in civil aviation, which should lead to easier and safer travel between the European Union and Japan," said the President of the European Council, Janez Janša, and added that both sides were committed to making progress in the field of visa waivers. "I would like to stress our determination to enhancing mutual cooperation in the fields of science and technology," said the Premier, explaining that an agreement encompassing all these arrangements would soon be signed between the European Union and Japan.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/April/0423KPV_EU-Japonska.html

T **Pakistan**

► **Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, commits to deeper relations with Pakistan** (22/04/2008)

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), visited Pakistan on Tuesday, 22 April 2008. Mr SOLANA met President Pervez MUSHARRAF, Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza GILLANI and Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mehmood QURESHI. The High Representative also had meetings with Mr Asif Ali ZARDARI, Co-Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party, Mr Nawaz SHARIF, Chairman of Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) and Mr Asfandiyar Wali KHAN, Chairman of Awami National Party.

Mr Solana expressed the EU's strong support for the development of the democratic process in the country and underlined the importance for Pakistan to move forward on the path of reform and to continue strengthening the rule of law. Mr. Qureshi expressed the gratitude of the Pakistani people to the EU observers who monitored general elections in February 2008.

Mr. Solana underlined the important role that Pakistan can play to ensure the stability of its neighbour, Afghanistan, and of the region as a whole. Mr. Solana commented in particular on his determination to deepen the co-operation between Pakistan and the EU in the trade and economic spheres as well as in terms of political dialogue. "The relationship between Pakistan and the EU are very good but we are going to try to make it deeper" he said. "We discussed all areas in which the relationship between Pakistan and the EU can be made more profound".

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/declarations/100088.pdf

T **Pakistan**

► **Council Conclusions on Pakistan** (29/04/2008)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The Council welcomes recent progress made in the democratic process in Pakistan. The elections of 18 February 2008, generally seen as competitive and having achieved increased public confidence, provided both Pakistan and the EU with new opportunities to improve and deepen the existing relationship. The Council welcomes the transition to new governments at federal and provincial levels and the initial steps taken to restore judicial independence.

2. The EU fully supports the Government of Pakistan in countering terrorism, insurgency and violent opponents of a peaceful and democratic society. The Council recognises the sacrifices made by the Pakistani population and security forces in the struggle against a radical minority, out to disrupt progress and opposed to moderation. The Council calls upon the Government of Pakistan to address underlying causes of radicalisation, through a coherent approach that includes democratisation, socio-economic development, education and inter-cultural dialogue.

3. The Council underlines the EU's commitment to continuing support for the people and government of Pakistan. The Council welcomes the EU's dialogue with Pakistan and reiterates its wish to strengthen EU-Pakistan relations further, in full respect of international law and UN Security Council Resolutions. Particular focus will be given to economic development and trade, counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, human rights, migration, education, inter-cultural issues and regional cooperation as well as issues of wider international importance.

4. At the heart of the EU's cooperation with Pakistan is enhancing long-term development, including in the fields of rural development and education. The EU will look for ways to expand its support for education, including adult literacy and vocational training. The European Commission, which has substantially increased financial assistance to Pakistan over the 2007-10 period, will continue with the regular dialogue under the 2004 Cooperation Agreement.

5. Based on the recommendations of the EU Election Observation Mission, the EU will approach the Pakistani authorities to explore jointly ways to support strengthening of democratic institutions, the electoral framework with

particular focus on institution building, legislative reform and voter participation. Progress in that sector is essential to the security and long term stability of Pakistan. The Council reiterates the importance of enhanced EU assistance to and dialogue on the rule of law.

6. One of the EU's main priorities is the promotion of human rights, paying special attention to women's and children's rights. The bi-annual exchange on human rights between EU Heads of Mission in Islamabad and the Government of Pakistan underlines this commitment.

7. The Council reaffirms its support for broad and substantial co-operation between Pakistan and its neighbours. In this respect, the EU fully endorses initiatives aimed at fostering better crossborder ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan, including in the framework of the G8, through the Ankara Process, and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. The Council also reiterates its support for the continuation of the composite dialogue between Pakistan and India. The EU further recognises the value of supporting opportunities for strengthening regional trade integration through SAARC/SAFTA. The EU will continue to explore ways to enhance trade with Pakistan and trade within South Asia.

8. The Council underlines its commitment to work together with Pakistan on non-proliferation and disarmament of Weapons of Mass Destruction in international forums. Support from Pakistan for the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to begin negotiations on a Fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) would be a strong signal in that respect. The Council stresses the importance of Pakistan's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency in order to have more information on outstanding issues related to the Iranian nuclear programme.

9. The Council will regularly review EU policy towards Pakistan."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/100222.pdf

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

Armenia

- ▶ **Council of Europe and OSCE welcome agreement to change recently-amended assembly law in Armenia** (22/04/2008)

The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission today welcomed the agreement reached with leading Armenian state representatives to make changes to the recently-amended assembly law.

"We see this agreement as another step in the long-standing cooperation between the Armenian authorities, the ODIHR and the Venice Commission on the legislative regulation of public assemblies," said Ambassador Christian Strohal, ODIHR Director.

"The Venice Commission and the ODIHR look forward to receiving the drafts of the new amendments and stand ready to review them in light of relevant international standards," added Gianni Buquicchio, Secretary of the Venice Commission.

In a legal opinion published on 28 March, the ODIHR and the Venice Commission raised serious concerns about the amendments to the *Law on Conducting Meetings, Assemblies, Rallies and Demonstrations* which were passed shortly after the violent events of 1-2 March.

During a visit to Yerevan on 15-16 April, a delegation from the ODIHR and the Venice Commission met Tigran Torosyan, Speaker of the National Assembly, Gevorg Danielyan, Minister of Justice, and presidential adviser Gevorg Mheryan.

It was agreed to repeal or change the amendments introduced to tighten provisions for peaceful assemblies, in particular with regard to spontaneous gatherings. These changes would bring the law closer to its original content, which had been assessed positively by the ODIHR and the Venice Commission.

Based on the agreement reached, new amendments will be drafted and submitted to the ODIHR and the Venice Commission for another review. ODIHR and Venice Commission experts suggested that sufficient time be allowed for public discussion of the amendments.

http://www.coe.int/t/dc/press/topics_en.asp#

T **Armenia**

- ▶ **Council of Europe: Report on Armenia by the Human Rights Commissioner** (30/04/2008)

[https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CommDH(2008)4&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FD)

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[C864&BackColorLogged=FDC864](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CommDH(2008)4&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FD)

T **Belarus**

- ▶ **EU Presidency statement on the renewed imprisonment and the harassment of political opponents in Belarus** (29/04/2008)

The Presidency of the European Union condemns the severe sentencing of Syarhei Parsyukevich and Andrei Kim on 22 and 23 April 2008 in Minsk, for their participation in the entrepreneurs' demonstrations of 10 and 21 January.

The Presidency recalls that participation in demonstrations is an inalienable democratic right. In the light of the fact that the trials against them have been politically motivated and that the sentences passed on them seem disproportionate to the charges, the Presidency urges the Belarus authorities to re-examine the sentences and to immediately release Mr Parsyukevich and Mr Kim.

Furthermore, the Presidency expresses its great concern over the increased harassment of human rights defenders and independent media representatives in Belarus. In particular it condemns the detention of Pavel Levinov and the search of Vadim Borchtchevsky's apartment.

The Presidency reminds Belarus of its commitment to respect the rights of human rights defenders and to create an environment where they may carry out their work without constraints. They also need to be protected against attacks and threats of non-State actors.

The Presidency regrets that, due to the increasing number of political prisoners, the continuous imprisonment of Mr Kazulin and the increased pressure on and harassment of the civil society and independent journalists, the Belarus government hinders the renewal of a constructive and mutually beneficial dialogue between Belarus and the European Union.

The Presidency reiterates that the unconditional release of all political prisoners would be considered by the EU as a concrete step towards Belarusian compliance with core European values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This would provide for a possibility to review the restrictive measures in place against certain officials of Belarus, and to enable the EU to progressively re-engage with Belarus, in connection with further steps by Belarus in that direction.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/April/0429MZZ_Belorusija1.html

T **Belarus**

- ▶ **Council of Europe: PACE rapporteur: sentences against young demonstrators in Belarus are 'harsh and unjustified'** (25/04/2008)

Commenting on the outcome of the trials against Andrei Kim and nine other young people in Belarus who were arrested after taking part in the entrepreneurs' demonstration of 10 January 2008, Andrea Rigoni (Italy, ALDE), the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's rapporteur on the situation in Belarus, said: "The sentences handed down against these young political activists are harsh, unjustified, and constitute an abuse of the criminal justice system for political purposes."

"I respect these courageous youths for engaging in political activities and defending their ideas in spite of the risks that they run," the rapporteur said.

"Personally, I continue to support dialogue with the broadest spectrum of actors in Belarus, including the authorities. But they should not have any illusions: unless they prove, through consistent acts, that they respect human rights and democratic principles, they will contribute to deepening their own isolation."

"The liberation of six political prisoners some weeks ago showed that the authorities have a clear understanding of what steps they should take to bring Belarus closer to Europe. But Europe will never content itself with mere tactical or cosmetic changes. Only clear and tangible signs of sincere, resolute and irreversible willingness on the part of the authorities to endorse European values can successfully break their isolation," he added.

http://www.coe.int/t/dc/press/topics_en.asp#

T **Croatia**

- ▶ **Fourth meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Council between the European Union and Croatia** (Luxembourg, 28/04/2008)

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/100200.pdf

T **Georgia**

- ▶ **Council of Europe: Democratic conduct of upcoming elections in Georgia crucial to restore trust in the democratic process, say PACE observers** (28/04/2008)

The democratic conduct of the upcoming parliamentary elections in Georgia, scheduled for 21 May 2008, is crucial to restoring public confidence in the democratic process in the country, according to a four-member "pre-electoral" delegation of observers from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

In a statement issued at the end of a two-day visit to the country (24-25 April 2008), the delegation welcomed the efforts by the authorities to improve the administration of the elections, but said the low level of public trust in the electoral process was a point of concern. "The democratic conduct of these elections will squarely depend on the full implementation of the electoral framework, in good faith, by all stakeholders, during all stages of the electoral process," it said.

The delegation – composed of Mátyás Eörsi (Hungary, ALDE), Kastriot Islami (Albania, SOC), Andres Herkel (Estonia, EPP/CD) and Ganira Pashayeva (Azerbaijan, EDG) – noted that the campaign climate was less tense than during the Presidential election but said the continuing highly polarised political climate in Georgia "hinders a constructive issue-based campaign, which would allow the voters to make a choice between distinct alternatives". It welcomed the fact that there were fewer reports of intimidation than for the Presidential election, but called for the full investigation of any allegations reported.

The delegation welcomed the agreement between the Central Election Commission and the main domestic observer groups about what constituted an abuse of administrative resources and what did not, but said concerns remained about the active participation of local and regional state officials in the campaign of the ruling party,

which could raise the perception that the abuse of administrative resources is still not completely barred from political life.

It also welcomed efforts to improve the voters' lists, but noted that problems still exist with regard to its accuracy, especially a large number of duplicate entries, which could be problematic if inking procedures are not implemented consistently on election day.

The delegation also called on the media to provide balanced coverage of the campaign and said no contesting party should boycott media debates.

http://www.coe.int/t/dc/press/topics_en.asp#

T **Georgia**

- ▶ **Council of Europe: Conflicts in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; Statement by Ján Kubiš, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (24/04/2008)**

Seriously concerned by recent developments in the Georgian conflict areas, Ján Kubiš, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, reiterates his firm commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally-recognised borders as reaffirmed in UNSC resolution 1808 of 15 April 2008. **He welcomes repeated statements by the Russian authorities and the State Duma of the Russian Federation confirming their respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders.** He also takes note of the assurances given by the Russian Federation that it will continue to strictly abide by the rules of international law prohibiting the supply of weapons to the conflict zones.

The Chairman of the Committee of Ministers also takes note of the approval by the President of the Russian Federation of a package of measures for the normalisation of relations with Georgia that will further contribute to the economic and social development of the region, the free movement of people and co-operation between nations.

The Chairman of the Committee of Ministers affirms his continued support for international efforts towards reaching a peaceful settlement to the protracted conflicts on the territory of Georgia and welcomes the fact that the Georgian President has proposed new peace initiatives for the settlement of these conflicts. In this context, the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers considers that the recent decision of the Russian Federation, announced by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 16 April 2008, to establish official ties with institutions of the *de facto* authorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia without the consent of the Government of Georgia risks further increasing tensions in the conflict zones and undermines the international peace efforts in which the Russian Federation is also participating. He calls on the Russian Federation to reconsider and not to implement its decision and on all parties to refrain from any action that may lead to an escalation of tensions.

http://www.coe.int/t/dc/press/topics_en.asp#

T **Kosovo**

- ▶ **EP delegation to Kosovo welcomes new constitution (21/04/2008)**

A Foreign Affairs Committee delegation visiting Kosovo for the first time since it declared independence welcomed its new constitution, urged it to step up the fight against corruption, and stressed that convening local elections in Kosovo's Serb municipalities is a prerogative of the UN Mission in Kosovo, not Belgrade

"We congratulated the leaders and the people of Kosovo on their maturity. We have encouraged them to continue to show understanding in dealing with the problems and needs of other communities" said delegation leader Doris Pack (EPP-ED, DE).

Constitution for a multi-ethnic Kosovo

The delegation also welcomed the new Constitution, which enters into force in June, and is based on a plan by former UN Envoy Marti Ahtisaari. "This constitution is a model in terms of protection of minorities' rights. It proves that the Kosovar government and Assembly understand the importance of maintaining and even strengthening the multi-ethnic character of Kosovo", said Hannes Swoboda (PES, AT), adding that "they must now implement rigorously its provisions".

Fight corruption

In talks the delegation stressed the need to pursue the fight against corruption and organised crime by taking legislative measures and providing the police and the judiciary with the necessary means and expertise. They also urged the government to come up with a comprehensive action plan to relaunch the country's economy, which could provide the basis for the forthcoming Donors' Conference.

Convening local elections is an UNMIK prerogative

The delegation backed the view of the head of UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) chief Joachim Ruecker, that Belgrade's request to hold local elections in Kosovo's Serb municipalities on 11 May is totally unacceptable. "Belgrade cannot invoke Resolution 1244 only when it suits its purposes. 1244 clearly states that the convening of elections is a prerogative of UNMIK. This prerogative must be respected" commented Ms Pack, adding that "the Serb community should open its eyes. They are the victims of political posturing in Belgrade. They should think about their future instead and recognise that the EU stands by their side and is committed to helping them lead a dignified life in Kosovo".

The delegation met President Fatmir Sejdiu, Prime Minister Hasim Thaci, National Assembly Speaker Jakup Krasniqi, Head of the UN Mission in Kosovo Joachim Ruecker, and representatives of the main political parties, minorities and the Serb Community.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-27173-108-04-16-903-20080421IPR27171-17-04-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

T **Russia/Georgia**

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the escalation of tension between Georgia and Russia (2/05/2008)**

The EU remains seriously concerned by the recent series of events that have raised tensions between Georgia and the Russian Federation. **This includes the announcement by the Russian Ministry of Defence on 29 April to increase the number of CIS peacekeepers in Abkhazia and to establish 15 additional check-points along the administrative boundary-line and the incident involving the downing of a Georgian unmanned aerial vehicle in Georgian airspace on 20 April.**

The EU calls on all sides to refrain from any steps that could increase tensions and urges the sides to take action to rebuild confidence.

The EU reiterates its firm commitment to the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders as most recently reaffirmed in the UNSC resolution 1808 of 15 April 2008.

The EU reconfirms its support to international efforts aimed at a peaceful settlement of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts, in particular those of the United Nations and its Special Representative in Georgia, with the assistance of the United Nations Secretary General's Group of Friends and the OSCE.

The European Union Special Representative and the European Commission will continue to implement the package of confidence-building measures in support of resolving the conflicts.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0502MZZ_Gruzija.html

T **Russian Federation**

- ▶ **Council of Europe: Commissioner Hammarberg meets Putin and Medvedev** (25/04/2008)

Today, following his visit to the North Caucasus, Commissioner Hammarberg was received successively by the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, and the President elect, Dmitry Medvedev, at the Kremlin.

Mr Hammarberg underlined a number of positive developments he observed in the region, in particular in Chechnya, and expressed the wish that further efforts be done to clarify the issue of missing persons.

Discussions also focused on structural measures needed all over the Federation to continue implementing human rights standards, as well as on the ratification of Protocol 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights and the complete abolishment of the death penalty.

http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/Activities/news2008/080425Putin_en.asp

T **Turkey**

- ▶ **Foreign Affairs Committee urges faster pace of reform in Turkey** (21/04/2008)

"Transform priorities and time-lines into reform plans," the Foreign Affairs Committee urged Turkey, in its latest progress report adopted on Monday evening. The committee welcomed several recent legislative activities of Turkey, while insisting that the speed of reforms must pick up.

The report, drawn up by Ria Oomen-Ruijten (EPP-ED, NL), "welcomes the commitment of Prime Minister Erdogan that 2008 is going to be the year of reforms" and "urges the Turkish government to fulfil its promises" by implementing them. While the committee stresses that "modernisation is first and foremost in Turkey's own interest," it also notes that "further delays will seriously affect the pace of negotiations."

The role of the judiciary and the military in modern Turkey

The committee is "concerned about the implications of the AK Party closure case," and "expects the Turkish Constitutional Court to respect principles of the rule of law, European standards and the Venice Commission guidelines on the prohibition of political parties." The report also "considers the amendment on Article 301 of the Penal Code sent by the government to the parliament as merely a first step towards a fundamental reform of this article as well as other articles" and "urges the government and the parliament to carry out this reform without delay so that none of these articles can be used for arbitrary restriction of freedom of expression."

The report "welcomes the fact that in 2007 democracy prevailed over attempts by the military to interfere in the political process," and encourages the government to "make further systematic efforts to ensure that the democratically elected political leadership bears full responsibility for formulation of domestic, foreign and security policy" and that "the armed forces fully respect this responsibility by fully and unambiguously acknowledging civilian control."

The Kurdish question

The report urges the Turkish government to launch "a political initiative favouring a lasting settlement of the Kurdish issue," including a "comprehensive master plan to boost the socio-economic and cultural development of the south-east of Turkey." It also calls for "real possibilities to learn Kurdish within the public and private schooling system" and its use in broadcasting, public life and public services. While considering that a possible ban of the DTP would be "counterproductive to a political solution," and deploring the "many court cases brought against elected mayors and other politicians for using the Kurdish language," as well as the recent conviction of

Leyla Zana, the report "calls upon the DTP party, its members of parliament and mayors to distance themselves clearly from the PKK," and calls on the PKK to declare and respect an immediate ceasefire.

Gender issues

In light of the drafting of a new constitution, the committee stresses that it should "ensure gender equality, avoid the use of vague criteria such as general morality, refrain from perceiving women primarily as family or community members and reaffirm women's human rights." It also notes "the disappointment and concern of part of the population that the lifting of the ban on wearing headscarves in universities was not part of a broader package of reform based on a wide ranging consultation of civil society."

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-27142-112-04-17-903-20080421IPR27141-21-04-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

T **Turkey**

- ▶ **Council of Europe: Chair of PACE Migration Committee calls for investigation into "deaths of irregular migrants caused by forced returns"** (28/04/2008)

The Chair of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) Migration Committee, Corien Jonker (Netherlands EPP/CD) today called on the Turkish authorities to launch an immediate investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of four irregular migrants who were reported to have been drowned when they were allegedly forced to swim across the river border between Turkey and Iraq in Simak province.

"The right to life is at the cornerstone of the European Convention on Human Rights and if the allegations are confirmed, this is unfortunately another example of reckless disregard to the right to life of irregular migrants," said the Chair of the Migration Committee. "Last year we saw irregular migrants left clinging to tuna fish nets in the Mediterranean while states squabbled over responsibility, this year we see river drownings. States have a duty to protect the right to life of irregular migrants and to comply with the 20 Guidelines on Forced Return of the Council of Europe," she concluded.

http://www.coe.int/t/dc/press/topics_en.asp#

T **Uzbekistan**

- ▶ **Council Conclusions on Uzbekistan** (29/04/2008)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. Recalling its previous Conclusions and especially the Common Position 2007/734/CFSP of 13 November 2007, the Council welcomes the progress achieved in Uzbekistan in recent months in the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law, notably the abolition of the death penalty, the introduction of habeas corpus and the ratification of the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The Council looks forward to the effective implementation of these measures and stands ready to assist Uzbekistan in that regard. The Council also reiterates its willingness to strengthen cooperation with Uzbekistan in all priority areas outlined in the EU Strategy for Central Asia.

2. The Council welcomes the release by the Uzbek authorities of four human rights defenders in February 2008, namely Saidjahon Zainabidinov, Ikhtior Khamraev, Ulugbek Kattabaev and Bobomurod Mavlanov, and the cancellation of the probation period of two other human rights defenders, Gulbahor Turaeva and Umida Niazova, who were released from prison last year.

3. The Council was also pleased that the Uzbek government has reached an agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the resumption of visits by the ICRC to prisons in Uzbekistan. The Council will pay close attention to the effective implementation of this agreement.

4. The Council looks forward to continuing comprehensive and results-oriented dialogue with the Uzbek authorities and in that context welcomes the Uzbek agreement to conduct a second round of the EU-Uzbekistan Human Rights dialogue in May/June this year. The Council also looks forward to the holding of an EU seminar on media freedom in Uzbekistan and encourages the Uzbek authorities to take further steps to guarantee the freedom of expression and to allow further liberalisation of mass media in Uzbekistan.

5. Nevertheless, the Council remains seriously concerned about the situation of human rights and the rule of law in a number of areas in Uzbekistan and urges the authorities to fully implement their international obligations in that regard. In particular, the Council calls on the Uzbek authorities to take the following steps, as requested earlier by the EU: to ensure the early release of the imprisoned human rights defenders and to cease harassment of human rights defenders; to finalise without delay the accreditation of the new Country Director of Human Rights Watch and to allow the unhindered operation of that organisation; to cooperate fully and effectively with the UN Special Rapporteurs on Torture and on Freedom of the Media; and to revoke restrictions on the registration and operation of NGOs in Uzbekistan.

6. With a view to encouraging the Uzbek authorities to take substantive steps to improve the human rights situation and taking into account their commitments, the Council decided that the visa restrictions for individuals listed in the annex of Common Position 2007/734/CFSP would not apply for another period of six months. After three months, the Council will review the progress made by the Uzbek authorities towards meeting the conditions set out in Common Position 2007/734/CFSP and further specified in paragraph 5 of these Conclusions, and in light of any other action that demonstrates the readiness of the Uzbek authorities to adhere to the principles of respect for human rights, rule of law and fundamental freedoms. The Council will assess the outcome of this review and present its recommendations to the Uzbek government on possible further steps to be taken in order to improve the respect of human rights and rule of law in Uzbekistan. The Council will closely and continuously monitor and assess, in light of the conditions set out above, the human rights situation in Uzbekistan and may lift, amend or re-apply the visa restrictions as appropriate."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/100211.pdf

T **Western Balkans**

► **Council Conclusions on Western Balkans (29/04/2008)**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"SERBIA

The Council welcomes the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) and of the Interim Agreement with Serbia as an important step on the country's path towards the EU. It looked forward to intensifying co-operation with Serbia through the comprehensive framework offered by these agreements and the other mechanisms of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The Council recalled articles 2, 4 and 133 of the SAA and articles 1 and 54 of the Interim Agreement and stated that full co-operation with the ICTY, including all possible efforts to arrest and transfer indictees, is an essential element of these Agreements.

Accordingly, Ministers agreed to submit the SAA to their parliaments for ratification and the Community decided to implement the Interim Agreement as soon as the Council decides that Serbia fully co-operates with the ICTY.

The Council and the Commission will regularly monitor that Serbia continues to fully co-operate with the ICTY. The EU and its Member States will assist Serbia in this respect.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The Council welcomed the conclusion of the first phase of the police reform by the recent adoption of the two police laws. The Council recalled that agreement on police reform in line with the EU's three principles is one of

the necessary conditions for further progress towards the conclusion of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA).

The Council acknowledged BiH's progress on all the four conditions for the signing of the SAA as set out in the Council conclusions of 12 December 2005. While Bosnia and Herzegovina will need to undertake further efforts to address reforms, the Council expressed its readiness to sign the SAA. Technical preparations are underway.

The Council highlighted the importance of the future SAA as the essential framework of the relations between EU and BiH, as well as an important element to ensure stability and strengthen dialogue within BiH. Therefore it encouraged all the political forces of BiH to unite their efforts to pursue with strong determination its reform agenda including the priorities set out in the European Partnership.

Recalling its Conclusion of 10 March 2008, the Council called on the European Commission to launch a visa dialogue with BiH as soon as possible.

COMMISSION COMMUNICATION ON WESTERN BALKANS

The Council welcomed the Commission's Communication: "Western Balkans: enhancing the European perspective" as a basis for the discussions held at the informal EU Foreign Ministers Meeting (Gymnich) and the EU-Western Balkans Forum in Brdo on 29 March 2008.

Progress achieved in the recent years through the Stabilisation and Association Process must be sustained and made irreversible. The European perspective needs to be tangible and more visible to the people across the Western Balkans.

To this end, the Council welcomed the launch of the dialogue on visa liberalisation and looked forward to discuss roadmaps for all the countries in the region. It welcomed the Commission's intention to further increase the number of scholarships granted to students from the Western Balkans to study in the EU, initiative to step up support to civil society and to enhance coordination with international financial institutions and with bilateral donors in order to support socio-economic development in the region. It expressed support to the proposed enhanced cooperation on disaster prevention, preparedness and response in the region and called for further participation of the Western Balkans in Community programmes and agencies, as well as for the development of the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) into a fully fledged school as of early 2009. The Council is committed to support the full implementation of these measures. The Council also invited other Council formations to take the work forward in the fields such as transport and energy, as set out in the Communication.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/100219.pdf

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

Gaza Strip

- ▶ **EU Presidency statement on fuel shortage in Gaza (24/04/2008)**

The Presidency of the EU expresses its grave concern at the reports that humanitarian work by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has been suspended due to a lack of fuel supplies needed for its work.

The EU is a major provider of assistance to the population of Gaza, both through support for UNRWA and direct assistance (the entire supply for the Gaza power station and social hardship payments).

While welcoming the recent resumption of fuel supplies, the Presidency urges regular and unrestricted delivery of fuel supplies to the Gaza Strip in order not to aggravate further the humanitarian crisis there. The Presidency reiterates the EU's call on all parties to work urgently for the controlled re-opening of the crossings in and out of Gaza for both humanitarian reasons and commercial flows.

Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza have their share in aggravating the humanitarian situation, including through carrying out the attacks on the Nahal Oz and Kerem Shalom crossings. The Presidency condemns such actions which only lead to further suffering of the population.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/April/0424MZZ_Gaza.html

T **Iran**

- ▶ **Human Rights: Iran: continuing concern about women's rights and executions** (24/04/2008)

In its resolution on Iran, Parliament criticises the deteriorating human rights situation in the country, including the sharp increase in executions, although it welcomes the release of a women's rights activist and another woman sentenced to death for adultery. The role of the Supreme Leader and the Head of the Judiciary in these and other decisions is mentioned and the Iranian parliament is urged to keep up the momentum by reforming the penal code.

MEPs first welcome the release of Khadijeh Moghaddam, a prominent women's rights and environmental activist (albeit on the high bail of 1 billion rials = €50,000), and Mokarrameh Ebrahimi, who was sentenced to death for having an extra-matrimonial relationship. They note the role of the Supreme Leader and the Head of the Judiciary in these and other cases.

Freedom of expression and women's rights

Next, however, the resolution condemns the repression of civil society movements in Iran, including women's rights defenders such as those involved in the One Million Signatures Campaign. It also urges the authorities to end the persecution of those peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and to release all prisoners of conscience.

MEPs also want the Iranian Parliament and Government "to change the discriminatory Iranian legislation which, among other things, excludes women from the most senior State offices and appointment as judges, denies them equal rights with men in marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance, and determines that any evidence they give before a court carries only half the weight of that given by a man".

Death penalty: Iran executes more children than any other country in the world

In addition, the EP "reiterates its strong condemnation of the death penalty in general, calls for an immediate moratorium on executions in Iran and is appalled that that country continues to have the highest number of executions of child offenders in the world and that the moratorium on stoning is still not fully implemented".

A ray of hope is seen in "directives recently issued by Head of Judiciary Sharoudi on banning public executions without prior consent and detentions for long periods without charge". MEPs want the newly elected Majlis (parliament) to go further, and "speedily to pass the pending reform of the Iranian Penal Code, with the aim notably of abolishing stoning and executions of child offenders" and "to move towards a moratorium on the death penalty".

EU action

Lastly, the resolution calls on the Council and the Commission to monitor the human rights situation in Iran and to submit to Parliament in late 2008 a report with proposals for funding projects under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/015-27571-112-04-17-902-20080423IPR27467-21-04-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

T **Iran**

- ▶ **EU Presidency Statement on the imminent Execution of Behnoud Shojaee** (4/05/2008)

The Presidency of the European Union is deeply concerned by the news of the imminent execution of Behnoud Shojaee, who was convicted and sentenced to death for a crime committed when he was a minor.

The Presidency notes that this juvenile death sentence is in direct contravention of the Islamic Republic of Iran's international obligations and commitments, specifically as set out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both clearly prohibiting the execution of minors or people who have been convicted of crimes committed when they were minors.

The Presidency urges the Islamic Republic of Iran to comply with International Law and to immediately halt the execution of Mr Shojaee and of all other juvenile offenders on the death row, taking in consideration alternative sentences for juvenile offenders and respect for international norms and standards that provide safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty.

The Presidency avails of this opportunity to reiterate the European Union's longstanding position against the death penalty in all circumstances, regardless of what crimes have been committed by the individuals concerned. The EU considers the death penalty to be a cruel and inhuman punishment and that it is not effective in terms of deterrence.

The Presidency again urges the Iranian authorities to immediately cease all executions and apply a moratorium on executions, with a view to abolishing the death penalty, as called for in the United Nations General Assembly resolution on a Moratorium on the use of the death penalty, as adopted in December 2007.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0504MZZ_Shojaee.html

T **Iraq**

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the Expanded Meeting of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq (22/04/2008)**

The EU welcomes the holding of the Expanded Ministerial of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq, which took place in Kuwait on 22 April and would like to thank the Government of Kuwait for hosting this important event.

The EU reaffirms its strong support for the Neighbouring countries process and underlines the mutual benefits of continuing dialogue and co-operation between Iraq, its neighbours and the International Community. Constructive engagement of Iraq's neighbours and partners in the region remains essential to achieve peace and stability in Iraq and in the region as a whole. The expanded Neighbouring countries process offers an excellent forum for regional dialogue and co-operation. The EU reiterates its clear commitment to contribute to the success of this process. We encourage the three working groups on refugees, security co-operation and energy to make further progress on technical co-operation.

The EU urges all partners in the region to contribute to the political stabilisation and reconstruction of Iraq by implementing commitments made during the neighbours' process and other mechanisms such as International Compact with Iraq and the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI); and through advancing discussions on the provision of debt relief.

Therefore, we welcome the decision by Bahrain to reopen its Embassy in Baghdad and we encourage those neighbours who have not already done so to take advantage of the improved security situation and commit to sending Ambassadors to Baghdad and opening diplomatic missions to facilitate direct bilateral diplomatic relations. The international community, and in particular the States in the region, have a responsibility to support and promote the difficult process of national reconciliation and stabilization in Iraq, and to prevent outside interference that could undermine this process. We urge them to use their influence to promote support for the statement released by the Iraqi Political Council for National Security on 6 April.

The EU reaffirms its support for a secure, stable, democratic, prosperous and unified Iraq and reiterates its commitment to the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq. The EU reaffirms its support for the legitimate, democratically elected Government of Prime Minister al-Maliki and the democratically elected

institutions of Iraq. Any aid to groups that attack Iraq and coalition forces and undermine the security and stabilisation of Iraq is wholly unacceptable. We encourage further efforts by Iraq and its neighbours to prevent the transit of foreign fighters and arms to and from Iraq.

The EU underlines its support for the central role of UN/UNAMI in Iraq and encourages continued close cooperation between UNAMI and the Iraqi authorities on the implementation of UNSCR 1770.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/April/0422MZZIraq.html

T **Israel**

- ▶ **Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, voices concern at the Israeli raids on two orphanages in Hebron** (27/04/2008)

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), voiced his concern today following the raid by the Israeli Defence Forces on two orphanages in Hebron.

Mr SOLANA said he was very concerned about the incident in Hebron last night when the Israeli Defence Forces raided and looted two orphanages run by the Islamic Charitable Society and threatened to close them. He urged the Israeli authorities not to close the orphanages and thereby leave 240 children homeless.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/declarations/100229.pdf

T **Middle East**

- ▶ **Quartet Statement - London** (2/05/2008)

Representatives of the Quartet -- U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, High Representative for European Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel -- met today in London to discuss the situation in the Middle East. They were joined by Quartet Representative Tony Blair.

The Quartet expressed its strong support for ongoing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and encouraged the parties to make every effort to realize the shared goal of an agreement on the establishment of a Palestinian state by the end of 2008. Commending the parties further continuous and intensive negotiations, the Quartet emphasized the urgent need for progress and called on the international community to remain constructively engaged in support of negotiations with the goal of the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza and an end to the conflict.

The Quartet emphasized the importance of visible progress on the ground to build confidence and create an atmosphere supportive of negotiations. The Quartet welcomed concrete steps by both sides in the wake of the trilateral meeting between Secretary of State Rice, Prime Minister Fayyad and Defense Minister Barak, and stressed the urgent need for rapid and continued implementation of these and previous commitments to improve conditions on the ground. While taking note of some positive steps, including the removal of some roadblocks and an outpost by Israel, and improved security performance by the Palestinian Authority, the Quartet noted that much more remained to be done to improve the situation on the ground in order to change the conditions of life in the West Bank and to keep the political process on track.

In this context, the Quartet expressed its support for Quartet Representative Tony Blair, and underscored the urgent need for progress and close donor coordination. It also expressed its strong backing for the planned Bethlehem Conference on Private Sector Investment in May as well as the parties' agreement to improve security and economic conditions in Jenin, which can offer a model for important progress on the ground. Noting the particular importance of justice sector reform, the Quartet looked forward to the meeting that will take place in Berlin in June to promote and coordinate donor assistance in this area.

The Quartet called upon both sides to fulfill their obligations under the Roadmap. It also called on both sides to refrain from any steps that undermine confidence or could prejudice the outcome of negotiations. In this context, the Quartet expressed its deep concern at continuing settlement activity and called on Israel to freeze all settlement.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/declarations/100232.pdf

THEMATIC

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Fight against crime and terrorism

- ▶ **Fighting crime and terrorism while safeguarding privacy** (22/04/2008)

The European Parliament adopted a non-binding report on a proposal for closer cooperation between EU Member States in the fight against terrorism and cross-border crime. The EP backs the plans but wants to beef up the rules on personal data protection. The report was adopted with 529 votes in favour, 65 against and 24 abstentions.

The draft Council decision under consideration - put forward by Germany - seeks to incorporate into Community law the Prüm Treaty, adopted on 27 May 2005 outside the EU framework, initially by Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Austria. The treaty strengthens cross-border cooperation on terrorism, crime and illegal immigration and provides for exchanges of DNA data, fingerprints and other information as well as joint police operations. If it is incorporated into EU law, there will be guarantees on data protection, which is the weak point of the Prüm treaty.

MEPs wary over data protection

The European Parliament (whose report by Barbara Dührkop (PES, DE) approves the proposal but wants data transfers under the new decision to be governed by the future framework decision on data protection. MEPs believe transfers should be subject to control by the European Data Protection Supervisor. The Parliament's report also introduces a clear definition of "personal data" and calls for a ban on exchanging DNA and fingerprints of innocent people.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/019-27083-112-04-17-902-20080418IPR27071-21-04-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

EXTERNAL RELATIONS & DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ISSUES

EU Troika/OSCE

- ▶ **Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel chairs meeting of EU Troika with OSCE delegation** (28/04/2008)

Kosovo, the South Caucasus, the Transnistrian region and Afghanistan were the main topics of the meeting between the EU Troika and the OSCE chaired by the President of the General Affairs and External Relations Council, Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel. The OSCE delegation was led by Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb, who presides over this organisation this year. Minister Rupel highlighted that both the EU and the OSCE endeavour to ensure peace and stability in all these areas, and that cooperation between the organisations is of utmost importance; regular meetings contribute to this objective.

As regards Kosovo, Minister Rupel emphasised the significance of international coordination, in particular during the transition period. He expressed the desire that the OSCE mission should continue to work and cooperate with the EULEX mission, as well as the special EU representative to be deployed to Kosovo

by the EU. Minister Rupel also drew attention to the role played by the OSCE mission in Kosovo, especially to the interests of the Serbian community.

As regards the situation in the South Caucasus countries, Minister Rupel pointed out the issue of elections to be held in the region this year. The EU is greatly interested in free and fair elections and supports the work of international missions conducting election supervision. In connection with solving conflicts in the area of the South Caucasus, Minister Rupel confirmed that the EU supports OSCE endeavours within the Minsk Group aimed at a peaceful, lasting and fair resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue; he further expressed the hope that a meeting between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan would be held in the near future.

As regards Transnistria, Minister Rupel informed his counterparts about the topics discussed during the recent visit of Moldova's Deputy Prime Minister, Andrei Stratan, to Ljubljana, and expressed his satisfaction over the recent meeting between Moldova's President Vladimir Voronin and the Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov.

The discussion about Afghanistan also included issues of the central Asian region. In this context, Minister Rupel emphasised the leading role of the EU in the transition of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, among other things in relation to programmes concerning border security. Afghanistan is undoubtedly one of the EU's priorities, and Minister Rupel stressed the importance of cooperation between the EU and the OSCE and the representations of both organisations in the region.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/April/0428GAERC_EU_OVSE.html

EU / UN REFORM

I **Lisbon Treaty/ Denmark and Austria**

- ▶ Slovenian Presidency welcomes the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by the parliaments of Denmark and Austria (24/04/2008)

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/April/0424SVEZ_ratifikacijaLP-Danska.html

T **Lisbon Treaty/ Portugal**

- ▶ Slovenian Presidency welcomes the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by the Portuguese parliament (24/04/2008)

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/April/0424SVEZ_Pogodba_Portugalska.html

MISCELLANEOUS

I **EU Guidelines on Torture**

- ▶ Council Conclusions on Review of the EU Guidelines on Torture (29/04/2008)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The Council welcomes the review of the Guidelines on Torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and adopts the updated version of the guidelines as set out in doc. 8590/08.

2. The Council confirms that the promotion and protection of the right not to be submitted to torture is a priority of the EU's human rights policy. To work towards the prevention and eradication of all forms of torture and ill treatment within the EU and worldwide is a strongly held policy view of all EU member states.

3. The Council recalls the EU's firm position to fully comply with obligations in respect of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, in the fight against terrorism, in particular the absolute prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

4. The Council underlines the importance of further strengthening the implementation of the torture guidelines through follow-up of the lessons identified during the review, in particular through strengthening the cooperation with UN mechanisms and regional actors.

5. The Council further stresses the importance of the new implementation measures and underlines that the effective implementation of the guidelines i.a. depends on active awareness raising measures, but also on the cooperation between government bodies and civil society.

6. The Council recalls the importance to complement diplomatic action with financial support for torture prevention and rehabilitation programmes and welcomes efforts aimed at improving the impact of these programmes. The Council acknowledges the important work by the European Commission in this regard and calls on Member States to support torture rehabilitation centres."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/misc/100209.pdf

Council of Europe/Violence against women

- ▶ **Violence domestique contre les femmes: Conférence de Vienne** (30/04/2008)

DECLARATION DE VIENNE

“Parlements : agissez maintenant pour stopper la violence domestique !”

Nous, les participants à la Conférence finale de la dimension parlementaire de la campagne du Conseil de l'Europe pour combattre la violence à l'égard des femmes, y compris la violence domestique, organisée conjointement par l'Assemblée parlementaire du Conseil de l'Europe (APCE) et le parlement autrichien:

- remerciant le parlement autrichien pour l'excellente organisation de la Conférence finale;
- réaffirmant que la violence domestique faite aux femmes est une violation grave des droits de la personne humaine, incompatible avec les valeurs du Conseil de l'Europe;
- convaincus que les parlements nationaux ont un rôle majeur à jouer pour lutter contre ce fléau par l'adoption de législations visant à renforcer la protection des victimes, punir les auteurs de violence, prévenir ce fléau et mobiliser les ressources nécessaires à la mise en œuvre et au suivi de l'application des lois adoptées;
- se félicitant de l'impulsion donnée par l'Assemblée parlementaire pour lancer la campagne du Conseil de l'Europe "Stop à la violence domestique faite aux femmes", et soulignant l'implication de l'Assemblée parlementaire et des parlements nationaux dans la mise en œuvre de la dimension parlementaire de la campagne du Conseil de l'Europe pour combattre la violence à l'égard des femmes, qui a notamment permis d'impliquer davantage les hommes dans la lutte contre la violence faite aux femmes;
- saluant en particulier le travail réalisé par les parlementaires de référence nommés par les parlements nationaux qui, durant deux années, ont assuré la mise en œuvre de la campagne au sein des parlements nationaux et ont réalisé un travail remarquable de sensibilisation des parlementaires et de réformes législatives, en étroite liaison avec les délégations nationales auprès de l'APCE;
- soulignant la coopération fructueuse établie avec l'Union interparlementaire, le Parlement européen et le Conseil nordique au cours de cette campagne;

- convaincus qu'une action conjointe des autorités nationales (parlementaires et gouvernementales), locales et régionales et de la société civile est fondamentale pour éradiquer la violence domestique faite aux femmes qui découle d'un rapport d'inégalité entre les femmes et les hommes dans la société;
- saluant la campagne pour l'élimination de la violence contre les femmes (2008-2015) lancée par les Nations Unies, et soulignant la contribution utile que pourra y apporter le Conseil de l'Europe, et en particulier son Assemblée parlementaire;

adoptons la Déclaration suivante:

1. Nous réaffirmons l'engagement des parlements nationaux des Etats membres du Conseil de l'Europe et des parlements dotés du statut d'observateurs auprès de l'Assemblée parlementaire à combattre la violence à l'égard des femmes, y compris la violence domestique, et à prendre toutes les mesures nécessaires pour assurer la protection des victimes, la poursuite des auteurs de violence et la prévention de cette violation des droits de la personne humaine.
2. Dans cette perspective, nous invitons les parlements des Etats membres à poursuivre le travail engagé pour adopter et/ou suivre l'application des lois pour lutter contre la violence domestique faite aux femmes, et au minimum l'adoption et/ou le suivi des sept mesures phares identifiées par l'Assemblée parlementaire dans sa Résolution 1582 (2007).
3. Nous invitons l'Assemblée parlementaire du Conseil de l'Europe et les parlements nationaux à poursuivre la mise en réseau de parlementaires issus des 47 Etats membres et engagés dans la lutte contre la violence à l'égard des femmes et à continuer à impliquer les hommes dans cette lutte. Nous nous engageons à poursuivre le suivi des mesures prises au niveau national, à en rendre compte à l'APCE et à lancer, le cas échéant, d'autres initiatives qui seraient nécessaires.
4. Nous invitons le Conseil de l'Europe à rédiger une Convention-cadre européenne pour lutter contre la violence faite aux femmes, y compris la violence domestique, en y associant les parlementaires et les organisations non gouvernementales. Cet instrument devrait prendre en compte la dimension spécifique liée à l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes et devrait viser à protéger les victimes, poursuivre les auteurs de violence et prévenir cette violation des droits de la personne humaine.

Vienne, le 30 avril 2008

<http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/APFeaturesManager/defaultArtSiteView.asp?ID=773>

T **Council of Europe/Ireland**

- ▶ **Report on Ireland by Human Rights Commissioner** (30/04/2008)

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