

SUMMARY

REGIONS

AFRICA

- ♦ **Central African Republic**
 - ▶ Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, visited the Central African Republic (6/05/2008)
- ♦ **Chad**
 - ▶ Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, visited Chad (6-7/05/2008)
- ♦ **Somalia**
 - ▶ Declaration on Somalia (9/05/2008)
- ♦ **Sudan**
 - ▶ Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, condemns the attack in Khartoum and recalls that there can be no military solution to the problems in Sudan (11/05/2008)

AMERICAS

- ♦ **Bolivia**
 - ▶ EU Presidency statement on Bolivia (7/05/2008)

ASIA

- ♦ **Burma / Myanmar**
 - ▶ EU Presidency Statement on the cyclone in Burma/Myanmar (6/05/2008)
- ♦ **China**
 - ▶ EU Presidency Statement on the Earthquake in China (12/05/2008)

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

- ♦ **Belarus**

- ▶ EU Presidency statement on the recent developments in the relationship between Belarus and the United States (6/05/2008)
- ◆ **The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**
 - ▶ EU Presidency Statement on signature of the Code of Conduct for Free and Fair Parliamentary Election in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (8/05/2008)
- ◆ **Georgia**
 - ▶ MEPs debate the situation in Georgia amid escalating tension in the region (7/05/2008)
 - ▶ EU ministers in Georgia for a peaceful resolution of conflicts and endorsement of its territorial integrity and sovereignty (12/05/2008)
- ◆ **Russia**
 - ▶ Agreement on start of negotiations for new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russian Federation (11/05/2008)
- ◆ **Serbia**
 - ▶ EU Presidency Statement on General Elections in Serbia (11/05/2008)
 - ▶ Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, congratulates the Serbian people on the peaceful conduct of the Parliamentary elections in Serbia (12/05/2008)
- ◆ **Turkey**
 - ▶ Ankara: Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel heads EU Troika-Turkey meeting (6/05/2008)

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

- ◆ **Iran**
 - ▶ EU Presidency statement on recent anti-Israeli remarks by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran (9/05/2008)
- ◆ **Lebanon**
 - ▶ EU Presidency statement on violence in Beirut (8/05/2008)
 - ▶ Statement by Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, on the situation in Lebanon, following his conversation with Prime Minister Fouad Siniora (9/05/2008)

- ♦ **Syria**

- ▶ Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the sentencing of Kamal Labwani (8/05/2008)

THEMATIC

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

EXTERNAL RELATIONS & DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ISSUES

EU / UN REFORM

- ♦ **Lisbon Treaty / Latvia and Lithuania**

- ▶ Slovenian Presidency welcomes the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by the parliaments of Latvia and Lithuania (8/05/2008)

MISCELLANEOUS

- ♦ **Women and Armed Conflicts**

- ▶ Women in front line of armed conflicts (6/05/2008)

- ♦ **Human Rights**

- ▶ EU election observation missions: objectives, practices and future challenges (8/05/2008)
- ▶ MEPs review progress on human rights in the world in 2007 (8/05/2008)

IMPORTANT COMING MEETINGS

EU - THIRD COUNTRY MEETINGS

- ♦ **EU Troika- Nigeria**
 - May, 20, 2008 (Brdo)
- ♦ **EU Troika- Ukraine**
 - May, 22, 2008 (Brdo)
- ♦ **EU Troika- European Economic Area**
 - May, 27, 2008 (Brussels)
- ♦ **EU Troika- India**
 - May, 30, 2008 (India)
- ♦ **EU Troika- Republic of South Africa**
 - June, 3, 2008 (Brdo)
- ♦ **Summit EU- Latin America and the Caribbean**
 - May, 16, 2008 (Peru)
- ♦ **Summit EU- Cariforum; Chile; Mexico; Mercosur; Central America**
 - May, 17, 2008 (Peru)
- ♦ **EU-China Human Rights Dialogue**
 - May, 14-16 2008 (Brdo)
- ♦ **EU- Gulf Cooperation Council**
 - May, 26,2008 (Brussels)
- ♦ **EU- Moldova Cooperation Council**
 - May, 27, 2008 (Brussels)

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEETINGS

- ♦ **Committee on Development**
 - May, 27-28, 2008
- ♦ **Committee on Foreign Affairs**
 - May, 27-28-29, 2008
- ♦ **Subcommittee on Human Rights**
 - May, 26-27, 2008
- ♦ **Subcommittee on security and defence**
 - May, 26-27, 2008
- ♦ **Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and home affairs**
 - May, 28-29, 2008
- ♦ **Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality**
 - May, 26-27, 2008
- ♦ **Committee on budgetary control**
 - May, 5-6, 2008

CONFERENCES / EVENTS

- ♦ **RELEX Conference on European Neighbouring Policy**
 - June, 2-3, 2008 (Rogaška Slatina / Portorož)
- ♦ **Western Balkans Civil Society Forum**
 - June, 4-5, 2008 (Ljubljana)

REGIONS

AFRICA

♦ Central African Republic

- ▶ Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, visited the Central African Republic (6/05/2008)

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), visited the Central African Republic on Tuesday, 6 May 2008, in the context of his first field visit to the EUFOR Tchad/RCA operation currently being deployed.

In Bangui, Mr SOLANA met President François BOZIZE. The High Representative and the President had an exchange on the latest developments in the country and the wider region. Javier SOLANA underlined that the EU was very committed to the Central African Republic in all areas and notably in the field of security through the EU force. The EUFOR detachment in the north-eastern part of the country is deployed in Birao and totals some two-hundred troops.

The High Representative also encouraged President BOZIZE to organise, as soon as possible, the planned inclusive political dialogue with the non-armed opposition, the civil society and the rebels, with a view to securing peace on the entirety of the territory of the Republic.

Javier SOLANA, accompanied by Torben BRYLLE, EU Special Representative for Sudan and for operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA, also met the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, François FALL, several EU ambassadors and other representatives of the international community present in Bangui.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/declarations/100278.pdf

♦ Chad

- ▶ Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, visited Chad (6-7/05/2008)

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), visited Chad on Tuesday, 6 May and Wednesday, 7 May 2008, in the context of his first field visit to the EUFOR Tchad/RCA operation currently being deployed.

In N'Djamena, on Tuesday, 6 May, the High Representative had a meeting with President Idriss DEBY, followed by a working dinner. The President was accompanied by the Prime Minister, Youssouf Saleh

ABBAS, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Moussa Faki, and the Minister of Justice, Jean ALINGUE, and the Defence Minister, General KAMOUGUE.

At the end of the meeting, Mr Solana told the press that the discussions were focused on the deployment of EUFOR Tchad/RCA, the domestic situation in Chad as well as its relations with Sudan after the signature of the Dakar agreement.

The High Representative underlined that "deepening the political dialogue opened with the agreement reached on 13 August 2007 was important for a lasting reconciliation of all Chadians". Mr Solana encouraged the investigating committee on the February events to release its conclusions as soon as possible so as to cast light on what happened. Javier Solana considered as a very positive sign of the ongoing political process the fact that, on the same day of his visit, the new Prime Minister was presenting his programme to the parliament.

On Wednesday, 7 May, in N'Djamena, Mr SOLANA – accompanied by the Operation Commander of EUFOR Tchad/RCA, Lt. General Patrick NASH, the EU Special Representative for Sudan and for operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA, Ambassador Torben BRYLLE, and the Director-General of the EU Military Staff, Lt. General David Leakey – visited Camp Europa, where he was briefed by the Force Commander, Lt General Ganascia, on the ongoing deployment of the operation.

Javier Solana said that he was impressed by the ongoing deployment of the operation in a very difficult environment. To date, some 2,400 troops provided by 18 EU Member States are already on the field and full deployment, totalling 3,700 soldiers, is to be reached in a few weeks.

The High Representative then proceeded to Abeche, where he met representatives of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and NGOs. This meeting took place at a moment of deep grief for the humanitarian workers, just a few days after a member of "Save the Children" had been killed in the Forchana region. A long exchange of views focused on the extremely difficult context in which humanitarian workers are operating and on their security concerns. The Chadian Foreign Minister, who participated in the meeting, acknowledged the security challenge and said that the authorities would do their utmost.

Javier SOLANA thanked the NGOs for the extraordinary work they are carrying out with unfaltering dedication and reiterated the EU's determination to contribute to improve their security, which is one of the objectives of the EU operation.

Also in Abeche, the High Representative visited the "Role 2" Italian military hospital and the Stars Camp under construction. He met EUFOR troops from several Member States. Mr SOLANA then flew to Goz Beida, where he visited the battalion lead by Ireland. From there, he visited a UNHCR camp for refugees from Sudan, and in Gouroukoun a camp for displaced persons in which he had exchange of views with NGOs and local leaders of the camp.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/esdp/100284.pdf

- ♦ **Somalia**

- ▶ **Declaration on Somalia (9/05/2008)**

The EU welcomes the significant progress that has been made in the political process in Somalia since the beginning of the year. It reaffirms its full support to the transitional federal authorities for the action taken by the Transitional Federal Government and to the reconciliation strategy by Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein that has made it possible to start a dialogue with all Somali parties, internal as well as external, and to launch a true reconciliation process.

The EU welcomes the envisaged opening of discussions between the Transitional Federal Government and the Alliance for Reliberation of Somalia in Djibouti. These discussions will be a first necessary step towards the initiation of inter-Somali negotiations.

The EU welcomes the efforts made by the Transitional Federal Government aiming at reforming the security sector and ensuring the rule of law in Somalia.

The EU reiterates its support to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia Ahmedou Ould Abdallah in his efforts to coordinate the action of the international community and to facilitate inter-Somali political dialogue.

The EU expresses its grave concern about the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Somalia and its willingness to support the efforts of the United Nations to provide urgent response to the crisis.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0509MZZsomalia.html

- ♦ **Sudan**

- ▶ Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, condemns the attack in Khartoum and recalls that there can be no military solution to the problems in Sudan (11/05/2008)

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), condemns the attack in Khartoum (Ondurman) by elements of the Justice and Equality Movement, and recalls that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Darfur, in particular, nor to the problems of Sudan, in general.

The High Representative calls on all parties in Sudan, including the Government, to exert in the coming days maximum restraint, in particular towards the civilian populations of the capital, primary victims of this new surge of violence.

Javier SOLANA considers the latest events should provide the opportunity to trigger the strong impulse necessary to find a lasting solution to the crisis in Darfur. This goes through a sincere resumption of the political process, the effective deployment of the hybrid force on the ground and the genuine improvement of relations between Sudan and neighbouring Chad.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/declarations/100288.pdf

AMERICAS

- ♦ **Bolivia**

- ▶ EU Presidency statement on Bolivia (7/05/2008)

The Presidency of the EU expresses its concern about the worrisome situation in Bolivia following the 4 May referendum and calls on all parties to exert their utmost restraint and to refrain from any action that could thwart the finding of a peaceful and lasting solution to the current situation.

The Presidency is convinced that the only way to overcome the present crisis is for all parties involved to engage in meaningful and constructive dialogue, with full respect for the rule of law, territorial integrity and unity, and the legal and institutional framework of the country.

The Presidency welcomes the efforts deployed in the same line by the Organization of American States and by the Group of Friends of Bolivia.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0507MZZ_Bolivija.html

ASIA

♦ **Burma / Myanmar**

▶ **EU Presidency Statement on the cyclone in Burma/Myanmar** (6/05/2008)

The Presidency declares that the EU stands ready to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the people of southern Burma / Myanmar who have been struck by cyclone Nargis. It notes the readiness by Burma / Myanmar's authorities to accept external assistance. Every effort must be made to make sure that assistance is delivered directly to the people most affected by disaster. The EU hopes that, in the interest of the population suffering from the emergency, the authorities will make every effort to co-operate with the international relief organizations. The EU will deliver its aid under the terms provided for in the current Council Regulation on Burma / Myanmar.

The European Commission has already launched a primary fast-track decision to provide emergency relief for victims of the cyclone amounting to € 2 million. Implementation will be the responsibility of the Commission's Humanitarian Aid Directorate General (ECHO), and will be channelled through experienced humanitarian partner organisations working in Burma / Myanmar, including the Red Cross, European NGOs and UN agencies.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0506MZZ_Burma.html

♦ **China**

▶ **EU Presidency Statement on the Earthquake in China** (12/05/2008)

The Presidency expresses its deepest condolences to the people of China for the massive loss of life and devastation caused by earthquake in southwest China's Sichuan Province.

We share the grief of all those who have lost loved ones and express our heartfelt sympathies to those who have been injured and suffered heavy material losses in this catastrophe.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0512MZZ_Kitajska.html

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

♦ **Belarus**

- ▶ EU Presidency statement on the recent developments in the relationship between Belarus and the United States (6/05/2008)

The Presidency of the EU is concerned with recent developments in the relationship between Belarus and the United States. In particular it regrets the decision of the Government of Belarus to declare 10 United States diplomats *personae non gratae*. Such a measure is unjustified and harmful to the interests of the people of Belarus. This decision jeopardises the Embassy's ability to operate and carry out normal diplomatic functions.

The Presidency would like to express its solidarity with the United States and its diplomatic service. It calls on the Government of Belarus to reconsider its decision and to take immediate steps allowing for a normalization of the relationship between Belarus and the United States on the basis of mutually beneficial cooperation.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0506MZZ_Belarus.html

- ◆ **The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

- ▶ EU Presidency Statement on signature of the Code of Conduct for Free and Fair Parliamentary Election in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (8/05/2008)

The Presidency of the EU would like to express its full support following today's signing ceremony of the Code of Conduct for Free and Fair Parliamentary Election, signed for 1 June 2008 in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Code that was prepared by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Citizen's Association MOST and the Macedonian Women's Lobby and signed by more than 30 political parties under the slogan "We Can and We Must – Fair Election 2008".

At the same time the Presidency calls upon all political parties and their leaders to do their utmost to ensure that the electoral campaign and election day will be free and fair, organized in democratic and peaceful atmosphere in accordance with international standards. In doing so they will contribute to the country's continued development into a stable and democratic society and demonstrate that the country is prepared to further its Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations in 2008.

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of democracy. An essential element of such elections is the freedom to campaign. Each person has the right to put forward his or her opinion without fear which also means allowing every other person the same freedom. This demonstrates respect for the rule of law and acceptance of the code of conduct.

The country is capable and willing to execute the elections so that they will be in conduct with all international standards. It demonstrated this in the last parliamentary elections and now it is time to prove this again.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0508MZZmacedonia.html

- ◆ **Georgia**

- ▶ MEPs debate the situation in Georgia amid escalating tension in the region (7/05/2008)

The European Parliament debated the situation in Georgia given the escalated tensions in the region and concerns over build-up of Russian troops. Many MEPs expressed their solidarity and support for Georgia's territorial integrity given the deteriorating situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. MEPs will vote on a resolution on this topic in June.

Council Presidency

"We are particularly worried about the increased number of Russian forces in Abkhazia, and the introduction of 15 additional checkpoints on the border with Georgia." Slovenian State Secretary for European Affairs Janez **Lenarcic** said on behalf of the Council Presidency. "The EU stresses its commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised border according to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1808," he added. On Georgia's internal politics, the State Secretary expressed his hope for free and fair elections, saying "the Georgian authorities must establish the trust of the population in these elections."

Commission

External Affairs Commissioner Benita **Ferrero-Waldner** expressed her "whole-hearted support for Georgia," saying that "the decision by Russia to strengthen links with separatist elements in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia represent an erosion of Georgia's territorial integrity." She urged Russia to rethink this decision, or to at least not implement it. She said "any proposed action should be measured against its capacity to lower the temperature" in the area, given that "the stability of the entire South Caucasus is in danger." She added that "in the past 4 years, Georgia has made tremendous efforts to move towards democratic society," and reminded MEPs of the 2 million euros of electoral aid the Commission has pledged to Georgia for the upcoming polls.

Group speakers

Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Jacek **Saryusz-Wolski** (EPP-ED, PL) said Russian actions "violate existing agreements and the territorial integrity of Georgia, undermining international peace efforts." He urged Russia to reverse its decision to strengthen ties with separatists and to withdraw its forces, called on the UN forces on the ground to become a "truly international peace force" and asked the Council to "consider an ESDP mission" in Abkhazia. "The EU should act in line with its ambitions, to not only be a payer, but also a player in conflict resolution situation," he added.

Hannes **Swoboda** (PES, AT) said "a border has suddenly been drawn in the middle of the country." He nevertheless said Georgia must also show restraint, and refrain from using "war-like terms," such as those by Deputy Prime Minister Giorgi Baramidze yesterday in the Foreign Affairs Committee. He said a "peace mission unilaterally led by one of the parties to the conflict, especially the bigger one," was untenable. He also urged free and fair elections in the upcoming May 21 parliamentary polls in Georgia.

On behalf of the ALDE group, Georgs **Andrejevs** (ALDE, LV) said Russian military troops are having a "destabilising effect," and said "EU supervised troops should be considered." He added that a true democratic political culture in Georgia is important, saying the "administrative bodies of Georgia have not done everything necessary to convince people that they will deal with electoral concerns from the previous elections."

Marie Anne **Isler Béguin** (Greens/EFA, FR), Chair of the EP's Delegation for Relations with the South Caucasus said the situation "is close to annexation." "There is no confidence to be rebuilt, no dialogue; it has been broken off for two years," she added. "History will not pardon us if we do nothing," she warned, adding that the Balkans offered lessons that need to be heeded.

Konrad **Szymanski** (UEN, PL) said "a shameful silence has reigned in the EU about Georgia." He said ethnic cleansing in the 1990s had led to the present situation, and warned that "saying no

to Georgian membership of NATO encourages Russia in its actions." "If we assist Russia in partitioning the region, the new imperialism of Russia will push the region to the brink of war," he added.

"The situation in Georgia is so bad today that 25% of its population has left the country," said Miloslav **Ransdorf** (EUL/NGL, CZ). He said new Russian President Medvedev "will need some time to implement what he has said he will do: to offer a friendly hand to Georgia."

British speakers

Charles **Tannock** (EPP-ED, UK) stated that "Russia has a new President today but Vladimir Putin's new job as Prime Minister will enable him to maintain his grip on power and supervise his protégé, Dimitri Medvedev. As a result, Russian foreign policy will not change. Recognition of Kosovo has opened a can of worms and has given Russia the moral high ground. It would indeed be tragic if through our approach to Kosovo we have irreparably damaged Georgia and precipitated conflict in a country whose territorial integrity we should defend strongly."

Robert **Evans** (PES, UK) said the EU is not doing enough to support Georgia at this time of "Russia's imperialism", that "Russia has never respected the territorial authority of Georgia over Abkhazia" and that we should be doing everything we can to stop the situation "before we have another Balkan crisis".

Response to the debate

Commissioner **Ferrero-Waldner** replied that Georgia "should not fall into the trap of reacting violently, and must also strengthen its own democracy." She added that "there is no question of the EU standing idly by," adding that the Council has already started talks on visa facilitation with Georgia, and more and more Member States see the importance of the issue, although unanimity is not yet reached. She also reminded MEPs that the Commission has given significant aid to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who have fled Abkhazia in previous years.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-28501-128-05-19-903-20080507IPR28481-07-05-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

♦ **Georgia**

- ▶ **EU ministers in Georgia for a peaceful resolution of conflicts and endorsement of its territorial integrity and sovereignty** (12/05/2008)

Five EU foreign ministers headed by GAERC President and Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel (with the foreign ministers of Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia) are meeting in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, today to familiarise themselves with recent developments in the country and the region. They met with the new Georgian Foreign Minister, Eka Tkeshelashvili, President Mikheil Saakashvili, and Prime Minister Lado Gurgendidze, as well as with the Head of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), Jean Arnault.

The main purpose of the visit was for the ministers to acquaint themselves with the latest developments, which were already discussed at the GAERC session on 29 April in Luxembourg. **Already on 18 April, the EU had expressed its concern about the recent events in Georgia and confirmed its support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country. On this occasion, they stated that "the European Union condemns all activities that increase the tension in the region and supports all international initiatives to resolve frozen conflicts"**. At the Luxembourg session, the Council of the EU agreed to the proposal that the Presidency should visit Georgia as soon as possible, perhaps in the form of the EU troika. Minister Rupel spoke about

this issue at his meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov on 29 April. On 7 May, on the margins of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, he met with Georgian Deputy Prime Minister Giorgi Baramidze, and the EU Troika has been visiting Georgia on the subministerial level for the past few days.

Today's talks focused mainly on two issues: the preparations for the parliamentary elections in the country to take place on 21 May and recent incidents involving Abkhazia.

As regards the parliamentary elections, the EU emphasises primarily the need that the Georgian authorities provide for fair and free elections, thus ensuring public trust in the election process and preventing a recurrence of the trouble that erupted following the recent presidential elections, said Minister Rupel. He also stressed the role of free and independent media. The Slovenian Foreign Minister guaranteed support to Georgian representatives in the implementation of reforms and the development of democracy in the country.

As regards the issue of the frozen conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, he assured the authorities that the European Union was closely following all developments. As recent events show, relations between Georgia and Russia are a cause for concern.

While confirming that the European Union supported the UN's mission in Abkhazia and the OSCE's endeavours in South Ossetia, **Minister Rupel assessed that Russia and Georgia should do their best to prevent any destabilisation or an increase in tensions, emphasising, however, that Russia was an important strategic partner for the EU.** "The European Union confirms its full commitment to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia and will continue to strive for a peaceful resolution of the conflicts," added Minister Rupel.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0512MZZ_Gruzija.html

- ♦ **Russia**

- ▶ **Agreement on start of negotiations for new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russian Federation** (11/05/2008)

"We have reached a good agreement, which respects the needs of Lithuania while also taking into account the interests of the EU as a whole." This is how, in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius on 11 May, the President of the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council, Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel, described the consensus reached by the EU Council Presidency, the European Commission and Lithuania on a mandate for the European Commission to start negotiations on a new partnership and cooperation agreement with the Russian Federation. The Slovenian Presidency will submit the agreement to the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council for approval at its next meeting.

Dr Rupel confirmed the news at a press conference after a meeting with the Lithuanian Foreign Minister Petras Vaitiekunas. The Slovenian Foreign Minister, accompanied on this mission by his Swedish and Polish counterparts, Carl Bildt and Radislaw Sikorsky, was also received by the Lithuanian President, Valdas Adamkus. Dr Rupel thanked Lithuania for its efforts to resolve this difficult issue.

The Commission's mandate for negotiations with Russia had previously been discussed at the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council on 29 April in Luxembourg; however, the EU Foreign Ministers had been unable to reach agreement on the text. The agreement reached today at Vilnius is expected to be confirmed at the next Council meeting, scheduled for 26 May in Brussels.

Dr Rupel emphasised that his visit to Lithuania had three important objectives: to clarify Lithuania's standpoint on the European Commission's mandate to start negotiations for a new partnership and cooperation agreement with the Russian Federation, to collaborate with Lithuania to find solutions to the issues relating to specific Lithuanian interests, and to bring those solutions into line with the needs and requirements of the remaining 26 EU Member States.

"The Slovenian Presidency understands the issues Lithuania faces and is aware that its citizens still carry a certain historical burden, but it is the task of the Presidency to find a common approach to all issues," pointed out Dr Rupel, adding that the Presidency had, in cooperation with the Council General Secretariat and the European Commission, drawn up a package of proposals extensively addressing the issues of concern to Lithuania. The draft of the Commission's mandate for negotiations with the Russian Federation includes three items to which Lithuania has been calling attention: Russia's attitude to the 'frozen conflicts' in Abkhazia and Trans-Dniester with emphasis on the territorial integrity of Georgia and Moldova, its effective cooperation in the field of justice and law enforcement, and its standpoint on energy. "Thus, in drawing up the agreement, we have respected Lithuania's vital interests in the context of the general interests of the EU," stressed the Slovenian Foreign Minister, stating that he had asked Lithuania to show solidarity with the other 26 EU Member States on precisely that basis. Dr Rupel stressed that the EU was particularly interested in a new partnership agreement with Russia, adding that those who would benefit the most from the agreement would be its neighbour countries, including Lithuania. On this basis the Slovenian Presidency asked Lithuania to show solidarity with the other 26 EU Member States. "The European Union is based on solidarity," underscored the Slovenian Foreign Minister.

Dr Rupel pointed out that Slovenia and Lithuania share a long-standing friendship. The two countries commenced their political dialogue long before Slovenia and Lithuania gained international recognition. The Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, when it was still part of Yugoslavia, adopted a resolution recognising Lithuania as early as 16 May 1990; in turn, Lithuania was the second State to recognise Slovenia on 30 July 1991. The two countries established diplomatic relations on 22 November 1991. The Slovenian Foreign Minister recalled that his visit to Lithuania was one of the first official visits abroad after Slovenia's declaration of independence. Dr Rupel also stressed that both countries have been very successful in joining Euro-Atlantic alliances and remarked on their frequent cooperation.

Dr Rupel concluded by announcing that on Monday 12 May he, together with the ministers attending the Vilnius meeting, will visit Georgia where he is to meet senior representatives of the Government and the Head of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG).

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0511MZZrusija.html

♦ **Serbia**

▶ **EU Presidency Statement on General Elections in Serbia** (11/05/2008)

The EU Presidency warmly welcomes the clear victory of pro-European forces at the Serbian general elections. It welcomed the peaceful and orderly conduct of the elections, which were, according to the first assessment, carried out in a free and democratic manner.

It hopes that a new Government will soon be composed with clear European agenda.

Provided that the necessary conditions are met and as stated in Council Conclusions of 29 April 2008, this should enable Serbia to advance further on its EU path, including the candidate status.

The EU looks forward to the new Government to engage constructively in regional cooperation.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0511MZZsrbija.html

- **Serbia**

- ▶ **Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, congratulates the Serbian people on the peaceful conduct of the Parliamentary elections in Serbia**
(12/05/2008)

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) welcomed today the free and orderly conduct of the Serbian Parliamentary elections held on Sunday 11 May 2008.

"I would like to congratulate the Serbian people on the free and peaceful parliamentary elections held yesterday in Serbia. I hope that a new government can be formed rapidly, which would be strongly committed to reforms and to meeting the necessary conditions for further progress towards Europe. The European Union would give such a government all its support. After the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement the country is now well positioned to advance rapidly".

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/declarations/100291.pdf

- **Turkey**

- ▶ **Ankara: Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel heads EU Troika-Turkey meeting**
(6/05/2008)

President of the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, headed the ministerial EU Troika meeting with Turkey in Ankara today. The Turkish delegation was led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Ali Babacan. The Troika meeting was also attended by European Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn and Jean-Pierre Jouyet, Secretary of State for European Affairs, representing the next EU Council Presidency holder, France.

The first part of the Troika was devoted to reviewing the state of EU-Turkey relations. Special attention was given to Turkey's progress in the EU negotiation process and to the implementation of Accession Partnership priority tasks. GAERC Council President, Dr Rupel, stressed that the Slovenian Presidency is working hard to open two chapters at the negotiation conference in June. He pointed out that the year 2008 is important for the continuation of the reform process in Turkey. He welcomed the amendment of Article 301 of the Penal Code, a constructive step towards ensuring freedom of expression, as a sign of readiness to pursue reform. EU expects Turkey to make progress both in aligning national law with European legislation and in implementing it. Dr Rupel expressed the expectation that Turkey will implement the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement in respect of all EU Member States. On a settlement to the issue of Cyprus, the EU welcomed Turkey's commitment to contribute to the process of seeking a comprehensive solution.

The second part of discussions focused on an exchange of positions on topical international issues in the wider neighbourhood – Iran, progress in the Middle East peace process after Annapolis, and the situation in the Southern Caucasus.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0506EUTrojka_Turcija.html

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

- ♦ **Iran**

- ▶ **EU Presidency statement on recent anti-Israeli remarks by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran** (9/05/2008)

The Presidency condemns in the strongest possible terms the recent statements made by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr Ahmadinejad. His comments directed against Israel are unacceptable, damaging and uncivilised. Such statements are improper for representatives of the Iranian authorities. The Presidency calls on the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran to stop the hostile rhetoric and refrain from all threats towards other states and nations, members of the international community.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0509MZZiran.html

- ♦ **Lebanon**

- ▶ **EU Presidency statement on violence in Beirut** (8/05/2008)

The EU Presidency deeply regrets that violence has erupted in Beirut today.

The Presidency calls upon the parties to cease immediately these riots, stop siege of the roads, open the airport and refrain from any further violent acts.

We urge opposition led by Hezbollah to stop all disruptive activities and start playing a constructive role in the country.

We believe that the parties will solve the crisis only by peaceful means and preserve sovereign, stable and independent Lebanon.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0508MZZbeirut.html

- ♦ **Lebanon**

- ▶ **Statement by Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, on the situation in Lebanon, following his conversation with Prime Minister Fouad Siniora** (9/05/2008)

Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, is following with concern the events in Lebanon. After talking to Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, he made the following statement: "I am following the events in Lebanon with great concern. Today, I have been talking to Prime Minister Siniora, who briefed me on the situation in Beirut and the whole country. The EU condemns the last acts of violence in the strongest terms and reaffirms its full support to the Lebanese government, that has acted to uphold the law and to ensure the integrity and the sovereignty of Lebanon. I call all parties to act responsibly and find a solution to the crisis through dialogue and within the national institutions."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/declarations/100287.pdf

- ♦ **Syria**

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the sentencing of Kamal Labwani (8/05/2008)**

The European Union condemns the recent decision of a Syrian court to extend Kamal Labwani's 12 year prison sentence by three years, for allegedly spreading information aimed at undermining the morale of the nation, under article 286 of the penal code.

This decision clearly violates the principles of the rule of law and contradicts Syrias international obligations and commitments, specifically as set out in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Syria signed and ratified in 1969, that clearly set out the right to freedom of expression, the right to freedom of assembly and the right to be treated with humanity and respect when deprived of liberty.

Therefore, the European Union urgently calls upon the relevant Syrian authorities to lift this sentence and release Mr Labwani immediately.

Pending this decision, the European Union urges the Syrian Government to guarantee adequate treatment and conditions while in imprisonment.

The European Union avails of this opportunity to call on the Syrian Government to reconsider all cases of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in accordance with its national Constitution and its international human rights obligations and commitments and to immediately release all such prisoners.

The European Union encourages the Syrian authorities to re-establish dialogue with Syrian civil society.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0508MZZsirija.html

THEMATIC

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

EXTERNAL RELATIONS & DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ISSUES

EU / UN REFORM

- ♦ **Lisbon Treaty / Latvia and Lithuania**
 - ▶ **Slovenian Presidency welcomes the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by the parliaments of Latvia and Lithuania** (8/05/2008)

Slovenian Presidency welcomes the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in the parliaments of Latvia and Lithuania. The two countries have thus joined the other Member States that had already endorsed the Treaty in their parliaments.

The Treaty of Lisbon certainly represents a solid and relevant basis for further shaping of our common European future. It will enable the European Union to face the challenges of the 21st century, not only internally, but also in its external relations, which will bring additional benefits to all EU citizens and Member States. Upon the entry into force of the new Treaty, the EU will become more efficient and its functioning more transparent. Moreover, through instruments, such as civil initiative, participation of national parliaments in the supervision of respecting the principle of subsidiarity and the extension of co-decision procedure to practically all areas of EU activity, the Union will come closer to its citizens and become more democratic.

Each ratification is an important step forward on the path to the ultimate goal. The Presidency is closely following the ratification procedures in the Member States; it takes note that they are well underway and that the Treaty enjoys the necessary support. Altogether, the Treaty has been endorsed by parliaments of thirteen Member States so far. Apart from Latvia and Lithuania, it has already been ratified by Hungary, Slovenia, Malta, Romania, France, Bulgaria, Poland, Slovak Republic, Portugal, Denmark, and Austria. The backing the Treaty enjoys is a positive incentive for reaching the common goal of all EU Member States – that the Treaty would take effect on 1 January 2009.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0508Lizbonska_Latvija_Litva.html

MISCELLANEOUS

♦ **Women and Armed Conflicts**

▶ Women in front line of armed conflicts (6/05/2008)

The tragic situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and sexual violence were the main issues discussed at a hearing on women in armed conflicts held jointly by the EP development and women's rights committees on Tuesday. More consistent implementation of UN Resolution 1325 by the Member States and a European strategy were among the proposals made by MEPs.

Marie-Arlette Carlotti (PES, FR) said that women are in the front line because conflicts are often civil wars. "Nowadays 90% of the casualties are civilians, mainly women and children, because of their social status and their gender". "Increasingly, rape and sexual violence are becoming tactics of war. We must move from words to deeds", she added, stressing that international humanitarian law is often a dead letter.

International humanitarian law is intended to "reduce suffering in armed conflicts" by distinguishing between civilians and combatants, explained Florence Tercier of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Nevertheless, "there are women who take up arms, some forced to do so, some not", she acknowledged.

Grace Lula Hamba of the League of Women for the Development and Education in Democracy (DRC) said that women were regarded as "trophies, war booty and the warrior's prize" in the conflict raging in Kivu since 1996.

Luisa Morgantini (GUE/NGL, IT) emphasised that "accumulated violence in armed conflicts often leads to domestic violence" in the post-conflict period when women have an important role to play.

Recommendations

"The EU's development programmes deal with gender equality and the problems of armed conflicts separately", acknowledged Dubravka Sekoranja, speaking on behalf of the Council Presidency-in-Office. **"The EU has a range of tools and policies but it needs a global strategy"**, she added. **"To improve the EU's response to armed conflicts, the Slovene presidency has requested a study that will be used as a discussion document for a debate at the Council in May"**.

"Precisely because international law must not remain a dead letter, the Spanish government has

implemented a national action plan based on UN Resolution 1325 on "women, peace and security". At present, only 6 EU Member States out of 27 have applied this resolution", said Silvia Escobar, ambassador for human rights issues at the Spanish foreign ministry. Ana Gomes (PES, PT) urged the Slovene presidency "to call on the Member States to apply this resolution".

"Women in armed conflicts must be seen both as victims but also as actors in conflict prevention", was the view of Anja Ebnöther of Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), who criticised the low number of women in the police and army.

According to Kasereka Lusi, director of the organisation HEAL Africa in the DRC, "the EU must play a role on the international stage to restore peace". He called for "zero tolerance of sexual violence". And although the law exists to punish such crimes, "an effective judicial system is often lacking".

Winding up the debate, Anna Záborska (EPP-ED, SK), chair of the Women's Rights Committee, urged that the next EU presidencies follow up the study commissioned by Slovenia. She also called for concrete, targeted EU aid for women who are victims of sexual violence to ensure that "zero tolerance is not just a slogan".

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/015-28166-127-05-19-902-20080505IPR28163-06-05-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

♦ **Human Rights**

▶ EU election observation missions: objectives, practices and future challenges (8/05/2008)

The report on election observation missions is the first of its kind, and supports the EU's observation missions, underlining how crucial they are, especially in developing countries. **The European Parliament wants to increase its role especially in the immediate post-election period when the new parliaments are called, and legislators need advice on how to function in a democracy.**

The report was drafted by José Ignacio **SALAFRANCA SÁNCHEZ-NEYRA** (EPP-ED, ES) and Véronique **DE KEYSER** (PES, BE) and considers that in absolute terms the holding of elections cannot be regarded as the sole indicator of democracy, but that, nevertheless, it has a positive effect on the democratisation process as measured by improvements in civil liberties, provided that political pluralism, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of expression, equal access to the media, secret ballots and respect for human rights are secured.

European Consensus on Democracy

The European Parliament regrets that the EU still lacks a common, comprehensive strategy for promoting democracy, and urges all EU institutions and Member States to continue their efforts to make possible the adoption of such a strategy. The House, in this regard, urges all EU institutions and Member States to agree to establish a European Consensus on Democracy.

The report condemns the recent imposition by certain OSCE participating States of restrictions on the duration of Election Observation Missions (EOM) and their refusal to issue, or delay in issuing, visas for observers, which has made it impossible for the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to fulfil its mandate.

Public statements and press conferences

The report stresses, in particular, the importance of coordinating all public statements related to the findings of EU EOMs and avoiding the issue of any statement in advance of the presentation by the EU EOM of its preliminary statement, and underlines the key role played in terms of visibility and credibility by the press conference, where the preliminary statement is presented for the first time. The report calls for both the press statements and reports of findings to be released in accordance with a timetable which takes into account the electoral sensitivities on the ground.

"Business as usual"

The report condemns past examples of practices consisting of a "business as usual" attitude towards countries in respect of which EU EOMs have been severely critical of the electoral process, regrets, on the other hand, that democratic elections are not always legitimated by the EU, and believes that these inconsistencies undermine the fragile idea of democracy in these countries and the image of the EU.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/015-28226-128-05-19-902-20080430IPR28011-07-05-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

♦ Human Rights

▶ [MEPs review progress on human rights in the world in 2007 \(8/05/2008\)](#)

The European Parliament adopted by an overwhelming majority on Thursday its 2007 annual report on human rights in the world. **One positive development identified in the report is the UN's call for a moratorium on the death penalty. However, human rights abuses in many countries, notably China, Iran and Russia, continue to give cause for concern. The report also evaluates EU's efforts to promote human rights through its own policies.**

The report, drafted by Marco Cappato (ALDE, IT), was approved by 533 votes to 63 with 41 abstentions.

Death penalty, women's rights and children's rights

The death penalty is one of the main topics highlighted. The adoption in 2007 of a UN resolution calling for a global moratorium on the use of the death penalty is seen as a huge step forward. However, MEPs still want to see "the eradication of capital punishment in Europe" and ultimately its universal abolition.

Women's rights is another key issue, which Parliament says should be raised in all EU human rights dialogues, with the aim of combating "discrimination and violence against women and girls, including, most prominently, gender-selected abortion, all forms of harmful traditional or customary practices, for example female genital mutilation and early or forced marriage".

Among other subjects addressed are children's rights (including the special problem of children and armed conflict), torture, the protection of human rights defenders and the rights of minorities and the disabled.

China, Iran and Russia

Several countries are singled out for special attention. The EP "expresses its disquiet at the serious human rights violations in **China** and stresses that, despite promises made by the regime with a view to the forthcoming Olympic Games, the situation on the ground regarding human rights has not improved". Moreover, China "still carries out the greatest number of executions worldwide".

MEPs are "deeply concerned that respect for fundamental rights in **Iran**, especially freedom of expression and assembly, continued to deteriorate in 2007". Iran is condemned for its "increasing use of capital punishment" and the arrest of thousands of men and women for "immoral behaviour", and is urged to resume the human rights dialogue with the EU interrupted in 2004.

In **Russia**, the situation in Chechnya is highlighted, together with the persecution of journalists, human rights defenders and political prisoners, and Russia's unwillingness to admit election observers. There is disappointment at the "lack of results from the European Union-Russia consultations on human rights".

Among other countries highlighted are Sudan (Darfur), Uzbekistan, Burma and Pakistan. MEPs also call on **Cuba** to allow two past winners of the EP's Sakharov Prize for human rights to come to the EP.

Human rights work of the UN and international community...

Turning to the work of international actors, the EP stresses "the crucial role" of the new UN Human Rights Council within the overall UN architecture as "the sole body monitoring and addressing human rights violations"

In the belief that the international community should do more to support democracy, MEPs call for the creation of "a genuine network of democracies around the world" by strengthening existing institutions.

... of the European Union ...

The German and Portuguese EU presidencies are congratulated on their achievements in 2007, such as progress towards finalising EU guidelines on the rights of the child. However, Parliament says "the European Union is still far from conducting a coherent and hard-hitting policy to uphold and promote human rights around the world". Moreover, assessing the human rights impact of its policies is not easy, partly owing to a lack of data. The committee calls for "quantifiable indices and benchmarks" to measure their effectiveness.

More broadly, Mr Cappato's report argues that the "non-violent" defence of human rights should be specifically promoted as "a priority objective in EU human rights and democracy policy".

All EU states that have failed to sign certain international human rights conventions are urged to do so, including the Czech Republic as "the only remaining EU Member State not to have ratified the Rome Statute" on the International Criminal Court. **Romania** is urged to rescind its Bilateral Immunity Agreement with the USA on the ICC.

...and of the European Parliament

Lastly, human rights play a prominent role in the work of the European Parliament itself. A high-profile example last year was the report of the EP temporary committee on the alleged use of European countries by the CIA for "rendition flights". Another is the holding of regular "urgency" debates and resolutions on human rights. The report calls on the Council to attend these debates and for the resolutions be translated into the languages spoken in the target areas. Finally, it calls for the EP to be involved in the EU's human rights dialogues and consultations with partner countries.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/015-28225-128-05-19-902-20080430IPR28010-07-05-2008-2008-true/default_en.htm

