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- May 21, 2007

#### **Committee on Foreign Affairs**

- May , 24 (Strasbourg), 2007

#### **Subcommittee on Human Rights**

- June 5, 2007

#### **Subcommittee on security and defence**

- June 5, 2007

#### **Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and home affairs**

- May 14, 21(Strasbourg), 2007

#### **Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality**

- June 4,5, 2007

#### **Committee on budgetary control**

- June 4,5 2007

### **CONFERENCES / EVENTS**

**REGIONS:**

**AFRICA**

**Mali**

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU concerning the presidential elections in Mali (16/05/2007)**

Following publication of the final results of the presidential elections held in Mali on 29 April 2007, which demonstrate how firmly democracy has become established there, the Presidency of the European Union wishes to pay tribute to the smooth conduct of the elections. It welcomes the calm, peaceful way in which the election campaign and polling took place and commends the maturity shown by Mali's institutions and political forces.

It congratulates President Amadou Toumani Touré on being re elected as the country's leader and wishes him every success in the continuation of his task.

[http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP\\_Statements/May/0516Mali.html](http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/May/0516Mali.html)

**AMERICAS**

**ASIA**

**Viet Nam**

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the sentencing of human rights defenders in Viet nam (15/05/2007)**

**The EU has noted with great concern that several peaceful human rights defenders have been arrested and given long prison sentences on charges of "conducting propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam".** On 30 March, Father Nguyen Van Ly, Nguyen Phong and Nguyen Binh Thanh were sentenced to 8, 6 and 5 years' imprisonment respectively by the People's Court of Thua Thien Hue Province. On 10 May, Nguyen Bac Truyen, Huynh Nguyen Dao and Le Nguyen Sang were sentenced to 3, 4 and 5 years' imprisonment respectively by the People's Court of Ho Chi Minh City. On 11 May the People's Court of Hanoi sentenced lawyers Nguyen Van Dai to 5 years' imprisonment plus 4 years' "administrative probation" (house arrest) and Le Thi Cong Nhan to 4 years' imprisonment plus 3 years' "administrative probation". On 15 May, Tran Quoc Hien was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment and 2 years "administrative probation" by the People's Court of Ho Chi Minh City.

**The EU reiterates its plea to the Government of Viet Nam to release all non-violent political activists who have simply exercised their rights to freedom of expression and association as guaranteed in article 69 of the Vietnamese Constitution and in articles 19 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Viet Nam is a party.**

The EU will continue its ongoing dialogue process with Viet Nam, of which the established EU-Viet Nam Human Rights Dialogue is an integral part.

[http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP\\_Statements/May/0515Vietnam.html](http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/May/0515Vietnam.html)

**Timor-Leste**

► **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the second round of the presidential election in Timor-Leste (16/05/2007)**

The EU congratulates the population of Timor-Leste for the calm and orderly way in which the final round of the Presidential election was conducted on 9 May with the support of the UN Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT). With their high turnout the Timorese people have once again demonstrated their commitment to the democratic process. The EU regards this Presidential election as an important step towards strengthening democratic structures and accountable democratic institutions.

The peaceful conduct of the election is a testament to the faith that the Timorese people have placed in a peaceful solution to the current crisis. It represents a powerful appeal by the Timorese people to their leaders to overcome antagonism and polarisation and to refrain from inflammatory language in the run-up to the Parliamentary election in June. The EU calls on all political forces to conduct the next election in the same peaceful and democratic spirit as the Presidential election, and to work together to overcome political grievances and national divisions.

The EU remains fully committed to supporting Timor-Leste in this endeavour and assisting Timor-Leste in completing this year's election process in June by providing an EU Election Observation mission. The EU will continue to offer its support to Timor-Leste in addressing the challenges it faces in rebuilding the security sector, re-establishing the rule of law and bringing about the further socio-economic development of the population of Timor-Leste.

[http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP\\_Statements/May/0516TimorLeste.html](http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/May/0516TimorLeste.html)

**EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE ) AND CIS**

**Russia**

► **EU-Russia relations in spotlight ahead of Summit (14/05/2007)**

**Democratic values and human rights must remain at the core of the relationship between Russia and the European Union - despite the importance of Russia as an energy partner.** This is the message MEPs delivered in a resolution last week ahead of the EU-Russia summit this Friday. Recent disputes over everything from Polish meat to the moving of a Soviet statue in Estonia have marred current relations. In the resolution MEPs also voiced concern over the break-up of recent anti-Kremlin protests.

The Summit - due to be held in the Russian city of Samara on 18 May will see discussions on the state of play of a new EU-Russia agreement to replace the current Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Also on the agenda are climate change, cooperation on energy issues, Russia's ambitions to join the WTO and new visa agreements between the two sides.

**Resolution to put human rights at heart of relationship**

Meeting last week in Brussels MEPs passed - by a substantial majority - a resolution on EU-Russian relations. It welcomed measures to ease visa restrictions between the Union and Russia as well as expressing support for Moscow's accession to the WTO.

The resolution also reflected the importance of energy cooperation with Russia. At present 30% of the EU's oil and 40% of its gas comes from Russia. Some EU members, notably Poland, Slovakia and Hungary - are heavily dependent on Russian oil. In the resolution MEPs called for "interdependency and transparency" to be the watchwords of cooperation in this field. In the last two years state-owned Russian energy companies

have been embroiled in disputes with neighbouring Ukraine and Belarus over supply and pricing. In January this year Russia cut oil supplies to Poland, Germany and Ukraine amid a dispute with Belarus.

**MEPs were critical of several aspects of Russian behaviour - in particular in relation to freedom of expression. The resolution expresses concern over "restrictions on democratic freedoms in the run-up to the Duma elections in December 2007 and the Presidential elections in March 2008". In addition to this it voices concern over the recent breaking up of anti-Kremlin demonstrations. Although not mentioned in the text one of those arrested was chess champion turned Kremlin critic Gary Kasparov - who has been invited to the Parliament by its President Hans-Gert Pöttering.**

In international affairs MEPs called on Russia to move quickly to a final decision on the final status of Kosovo. With regards to the US plan to deploy anti-missile batteries in the Czech Republic and Poland, the House expressed concern at recent negative comments by President Putin. It also called for the US to "consult and explain" its actions so that the EU and NATO can remain united

#### **Disputes over Soviet war memorial, Polish meat**

The build-up to the Samara summit has hardly been auspicious. Poland has been vetoing negotiations on a new Partnership Agreement in response to a Russian ban on imports of Polish agricultural products. Added to this have been Lithuania's claims that Russia has been blocking supplies to a power station for the last 10 months.

However, the most high-profile confrontation has been between former Soviet Republic turned-EU member Estonia and Russia. The decision by the Estonian government to move a Soviet war memorial provoked a furious war of words between Tallinn and Moscow. Estonians see it as a symbol of Soviet rule, Russians see it as monument to liberation from the Nazis. Parliament's resolution called for the EU to "demonstrate solidarity" with Estonia and "speak with one voice". The importance of respecting diplomatic missions was also stressed after Estonia's Ambassador to Moscow was publicly harassed by youths.

In the debate last week the leader of the European People's Party and European Democrats told fellow MEPs that "we are all Estonians now" - a view which reflected feeling across the House. For the Socialist PSE Group Estonian MEP Marianne Mikko called for an end to the "cyber war" between the two sides as Russian hackers are apparently targeting Estonian news websites

Despite the criticism contained in the resolution and recent controversies. MEPs did not want the Samara summit cancelled and believe dialogue with Russia is the best way to resolving differences. However, not all MEPs shared this view. Leader of the Liberal ALDE Group Graham Watson said "when intimidation triumphs over negotiation...it can no longer be business as usual between the European Union and Russia. The Russians need a clear signal that enough is enough".

In a move to show solidarity with non-EU members MEPs also called for the lifting of a Russian embargo on certain products from Moldova and Georgia. In particular a Russian ban on imports of Moldavian wine and spirits has taken its toll on the economy. Wine exports account for 25% of Moldova's GDP and 80% of its production is exported to Russia

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and the EU's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, are among the EU delegation meeting President Putin.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story\\_page/026-6598-127-05-19-903-20070514STO06590-2007-07-05-2007/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/026-6598-127-05-19-903-20070514STO06590-2007-07-05-2007/default_en.htm)

**Russia**

► **EU-Russia Summit: Despite difficulties a common path** (18/05/2007)

Despite considerable differences of opinion, particularly on the subject of human rights, the EU is firmly committed to a strategic partnership with Russia. In the energy sector, on climate protection, in research and in efforts to resolve international conflicts both sides are keen to cooperate more closely in future.

"There are many areas where we can work together," Chancellor Angela Merkel, the current President of the European Council, noted at the end of the working session. In this connection she highlighted the economic relations between the EU and Russia.

The EU is Russia's number one trading partner and Russia is the EU's third largest trading partner. Under these circumstances both sides have a strong interest in good relations and a favourable climate for investment.

The EU accounts for 52% of Russia's foreign trade and with over 60% of foreign direct investment in Russia is also the biggest investor in the country. Russia for its part is the EU's third largest trading partner after the United States and China. In 2005 aggregate trade between Russia and the EU was worth 166 billion euro. Since Russia's exports to the EU are mainly natural gas, oil and other commodities and commodity prices are currently high, the country has a foreign trade surplus vis-à-vis the EU (2005: 50.3 billion euro). Russia supplies 20% of the EU's oil and 40% of its natural gas. The EU's main exports to Russia are capital goods and transport equipment, chemicals, agricultural products and textiles.

### **Human rights a hot topic**

**The President of the European Council also expressed her concern over the human rights situation in Russia.** "I hope those who want to demonstrate in Samara will be able to do so" she commented. While she could understand the authorities taking steps to stop violence, she added, if people were behaving peacefully and simply on their way to a demonstration, that was "a different story".

### **Early warning system for energy security**

Despite the difficulties, the talks had nevertheless been very constructive, the Chancellor reported. Both sides, Russia and the EU, were interested in negotiating a successor to the partnership agreement due to expire shortly. Even if Samara had produced no concrete results, on energy issues negotiations had already begun. In this sector Europe and Russia plan to develop jointly an early warning system for energy bottlenecks. Another issue covered was border cooperation. Putin gave an assurance that steps would be taken to deal with the problem of long queues at border checkpoints. In the field of research, too, cooperation is to be intensified. Both sides agreed that there is considerable scope for collaboration on the European satellite navigation system Galileo. European Commission President Manuel Barroso was very pleased with the progress made on freedom of movement. On 1 June an EU-Russian agreement on visa facilitation is due to enter into force. The partners are currently negotiating on the partial abolition of visas for travel purposes.

### **Remain talking, tackle the problems**

The backdrop to the talks was not trouble-free. Besides the recent Russian ban on Polish meat imports, there remain many bones of contention between Russia and the EU. One such issue was the recent removal to another site of a Soviet war memorial in the centre of the Estonian capital of Tallinn, a step that was criticized by the Russian Government.

"It is not always possible to convince one another," Angela Merkel noted. But to discuss matters frankly and honestly with one another was of itself of great value, she added. As far as the outcome of the many talks

ahead was concerned, the Chancellor expressed confidence, adding "I believe the difficulties can be overcome."

Already on Thursday evening European Commission President Barroso, President Vladimir Putin and the President of the European Council had met for dinner in a fishing village on the banks of the Volga. The working sessions were attended on behalf of the German EU Presidency also by Federal Economics Minister Michael Glos and Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

[http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Press\\_Releases/May/0518AASamara.html](http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Press_Releases/May/0518AASamara.html)

## MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

### Syria

- ▶ **EU Presidency Statement on the sentencing of intellectual Michel Kilo and political activist Mahmoud Issa in Syria (14/05/2007)**

**The Presidency of the European Union expresses its profound concern over the three-year prison terms to which Michel Kilo, a Syrian intellectual, and Mahmoud Issa, a Syrian political activist, were sentenced by a criminal court in Damascus on 13 May 2007.**

The Presidency regrets that Michel Kilo and Mahmoud Issa have been sentenced merely for expressing their political views.

**The Presidency calls on the Syrian Arab Republic to respect freedom of opinion and the right to a fair trial as laid down in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ratified by Syria in 1969. The Presidency urges the relevant Syrian bodies to reverse the judgements, drop the charges still pending in the Military Court of Damascus and release both Michel Kilo and Mahmoud Issa.**

[http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP\\_Statements/May/0514Syrien.html](http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/May/0514Syrien.html)

### Palestina

- ▶ **EU Presidency statement on the escalation of inter-Palestinian clashes (16/05/2007)**

The Presidency of the European Union is deeply concerned about the escalation of violence between Palestinian factions which during the last few days has claimed more than 30 lives, including civilians, and left many injured. The Presidency calls upon leaders on all sides to renounce the use of violence immediately, to restore the cease-fire and to resume their dialogue.

The Presidency condemns in the strongest possible terms the Kassam missile attacks launched from the Gaza Strip against Israeli territory which have caused many injuries during the last few days and appeals to Palestinian leaders to do everything in their power to stop them. An escalation of violence must be prevented.

The Presidency encourages Egypt and Saudi Arabia to continue their efforts to reconcile the Palestinian factions, a prerequisite for progress in the Middle East peace process.

[http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP\\_Statements/May/0516Palaestina.html](http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/May/0516Palaestina.html)

**THEMATIC :**



## FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

## JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

## EXTERNAL RELATIONS & DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ISSUES

## EU / UN REFORM

## MISCELLANEOUS

### EU Foreign Ministers Council

- ▶ EU Foreign Ministers: Relations with Russia and the Middle East peace process dominant themes (15/05/2007)

The General Affairs and External Relations Council held on 14 and 15 May was an occasion not only for EU foreign ministers to come together but also for the EU's defence and development ministers to hold talks in parallel.

The highlight of the meeting was the first joint session of EU foreign ministers and their Arab League colleagues to discuss the Middle East peace process.

### EU-Russia Summit

In connection with the preparations for the Summit to be held on 18 May 2007 in Samara, the foreign ministers discussed in depth the EU's relations with Russia. Foreign Minister Steinmeier emphasized the need particularly in difficult times to reach out to and endeavour to talk with one another. The ministers discussed current problems in EU-Russian relations. They gave assurances of mutual solidarity and expressed their clear desire to resolve existing problems in cooperation with Russia.

The European Union will play its part, Frank-Walter Steinmeier noted, to make such a discussion possible. The Summit in Samara would be an opportunity for a dispassionate and objective stocktake of the Union's relations with Russia. On that basis their relations would then have to be further developed in a constructive spirit. Russia and the EU, he added, were not only important partners for each other in the economic field, they were also strategic partners. On a host of international policy issues the EU needed the Russian Federation's support, and by the same token Russia needed the EU.

### The Middle East peace process

For the first time EU foreign ministers met with representatives of the Arab League (AL) on the margins of the General Affairs and External Relations Council. The meeting was convened by the Council Presidency to enable the Arab League's new peace initiative to be discussed by all EU foreign ministers. The Arab League reaffirmed in Brussels its willingness in principle to conclude peace with Israel, pointing out that the Arab peace initiative offered a historically unique opportunity for peace and the normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab countries.

After the meeting Minister Steinmeier noted that the initiative represented a significant step forward for the Middle East peace process and emphasized that the European Union remained committed to work for

peace in the region. What was important now, he added, was for the League to enter into a direct dialogue with Israel. Direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians also needed to be intensified. That was the only way that life for the Palestinians and security for Israel could be improved and political progress towards a two-state solution could become a real prospect.

Also in future, he noted, the European Union would use its close ties with both partners to move the peace process forward. Foreign Minister Livni of Israel had accordingly been invited to attend the next Foreign Ministers Council in June in Luxembourg.

## **Uzbekistan**

**The EU continues to view the human rights situation in Uzbekistan with profound concern. The EU's yardstick in the field of human rights remains improvements in the situation of the people on the ground.**

The Uzbek Government has taken some initial small steps pointing in the right direction. The EU acknowledges these signals and expects this course to continue. **Progressive modifications to the sanctions are intended to demonstrate to Uzbekistan the EU's willingness in principle to negotiate. To emphasize this willingness, four names were removed from the list of persons banned from obtaining visas and it was agreed to review the sanctions regime once again in six months' time.**

### **Joint session of EU foreign and defence ministers**

The EU foreign and defence ministers convened for their regular six-monthly joint meeting. The main focus of their discussions were the ongoing missions in which the EU is participating.

On **Kosovo** the EU is seeking the adoption in the near future of a United Nations Security Council Resolution. In anticipation of its adoption shortly, intensive preparations are under way for the biggest ever European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission, which is intended to ensure security and strengthen the rule of law in Kosovo. In the long term the plan is to enable the security organs in Kosovo to progressively take over responsibility for security there.

### **Joint Action Plan with South Africa**

On the margins of the Council the EU Troika held a meeting with South Africa. With the signing of a Joint Action Plan an important project of the German Presidency was brought to a successful conclusion. The cooperation between the EU and South Africa will be intensified and developed into a strategic partnership. According to Minister Steinmeier, this will give a whole new quality to relations between South Africa and the EU.

[http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Press\\_Releases/May/0515AARAA.html](http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Press_Releases/May/0515AARAA.html)

## **EU Troika-Africa Union**

### **► EU Troika meets African Union (16/05/2007)**

In Brussels on Tuesday, the EU Troika came together with the African Union (AU) for the eighth time. The parties adopted a common strategy, which will serve, not least, as preparation for the EU-AU Summit to be chaired by the upcoming Portuguese Presidency at the end of 2007.

The Joint EU-Africa Strategy Outline lays a solid basis for a wide-ranging and long-term strategic partnership between the EU and Africa.

The specific objectives of the partnership are:

To extend and intensify political relations

To promote peace, security, sustainable development, **human rights** and neighbourly relations in Africa

To jointly address global challenges

To intensify relations between civil societies in the EU and Africa.

In a second phase, the objectives will be further developed in an action plan in time for the next Troika meeting. For the first time, civil societies are to be included in this process. The action plan will be presented at the EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon.

Minister of State Gernot Erler said that the strategy brought a new quality to cooperation between the EU and Africa. Discussions in future, he explained, would no longer need to focus solely on the important issue of development cooperation; rather, the EU and AU would be able to meet on an equal footing to find ways to meet the challenges of the future, such as energy security, climate protection, migration and security.

The meeting was attended by High Representative Javier Solana, Minister of State Gernot Erler on behalf of the German EU Presidency, as well as the EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn. The African Union was represented by Ghanaian Foreign Minister and current Chair of the AU (AU Executive Council) Nana Addo Dankwa Akudo-Addo, as well as the Ambassador of the Republic of the Congo, Raymond Serge Bale, the AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs, Maxwell M. Mkwezalamba, and the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Said Djinnit. The meeting was also attended by Foreign Minister Luis Amado on behalf of Portugal's upcoming Presidency of the EU Council.

[http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Press\\_Releases/May/0516AAEUtroika.html](http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Press_Releases/May/0516AAEUtroika.html)

### **EU Statement at OSCE**

► **OSCE: Statement of the European Union on Death Penalty in the USA** (18/05/2007)

**The EU reiterates its longstanding and active opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances. We consider that the abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and the progressive development of human rights.** On the other hand, the death penalty does not serve as an effective deterrent, and any miscarriage of justice, which is inevitable in any legal system, would be irreversible.

**While aiming for the universal abolition of the death penalty the EU seeks a moratorium in all countries that retain capital punishment as a first step towards this end.** The EU is therefore concerned about an imminent breach of the de facto moratorium in the State of Arizona. The EU has learned that Mr. Robert Charles Comer is to be executed on 22 May 2007. This would be the first execution in that state since November 2000. The EU wishes to encourage the appropriate authorities in the State of Arizona to continue the moratorium on the death penalty and urges them to grant clemency to Mr. Comer.

The EU trusts that the competent authorities in the State of Arizona will be informed of this statement.

On a different matter the EU has learned that the Nebraska Supreme Court has stayed the execution of Carey Dean Moore on 2 May 2007 over concerns about a new electrocution protocol. Nebraska is the only US federal state which still relies solely on the electric chair for capital punishment. The EU has intervened in this case on the basis of the breaking of a de facto moratorium in the state.

[http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Statements\\_in\\_International\\_Organisations/May/0518DeathPenalty.html](http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Statements_in_International_Organisations/May/0518DeathPenalty.html)

### **EU Statement at OSCE**

- ▶ **OSCE: Statement of the European Union in response to the Head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabad, Ambassador Djikic (18/05/2007)**

The European Union welcomes Ambassador Djikic back to the Permanent Council, and thanks him for his comprehensive report.

The European Union notes several positive developments in Turkmenistan since the taking of office of President Berdymukhammedov, including encouraging moves in the fields of education, health, and agriculture. The European Union has taken note of the demonstrated readiness of Turkmenistan to intensify its dialogue and co-operation with the OSCE, including ODIHR, as exemplified by the visit of the CiO to the country. We have also taken positive note of the recent visit of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights.

**However, the European Union encourages Turkmenistan to fully implement its OSCE commitments, and to further intensify its efforts on democratic reforms, especially on guaranteeing adherence to internationally accepted human rights standards.** The recommendations of the Report of the UN Secretary General on the Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan of October 2006, as well as the recommendations of the OSCE Rapporteur's Report on Turkmenistan of March 2003 remain important milestones in further implementing efforts.

The European Union fully supports the OSCE Centre in Ashgabad and commends the Centre for its achievements. The Centre has an important potential to assist Turkmenistan in implementing OSCE commitments in all three OSCE dimensions. We welcome the continued efforts of the Centre to enhance the dialogue with Turkmen authorities. We would like to underline that improved dialogue and increased responsiveness on the Turkmen side could considerably enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the assistance of the Centre. In particular this could be achieved by granting the Centre more direct access to relevant Turkmen ministries and institutions. The EU believes that the activities of the Centre could be further expanded in order to adequately address all three dimensions.

The European Union continues to stand ready to assist Turkmenistan in its reform efforts, and to further intensify dialogue and co-operation in particular through the contacts of the EU Special Representative on Central Asia. The upcoming EU-Turkmenistan Trade and Co-operation Joint Committee, as well as the first EU Turkmenistan seminar on social development, which will take place this coming June, will provide other opportunities in this regard.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Ambassador Djikic and his team for their dedicated and successful work, and we wish them every success in their future activities.

[http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Statements\\_in\\_International\\_Organisations/May/0518AmbassadorDjikic.html](http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Statements_in_International_Organisations/May/0518AmbassadorDjikic.html)