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REGIONS:

AFRICA

Burundi

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the acquittal of five accused persons in Burundi** (19/01/07)

The European Union, which had expressed its concern when the accused were arrested, welcomes the acquittal and release of the public figures implicated in the preparation of a putative attempted coup in Burundi. It also welcomes the recent release of the journalists and activists from civil society. These releases contribute to a positive climate which strengthens the rule of law and democratic institutions.

The European Union hopes that these moves represent an encouraging step towards a democracy in which freedom of expression is respected.

The European Union would emphasise that respect for the democratic values which we share is the cornerstone of the relationship between the European Union and Burundi.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/92461.pdf

Guinea

- ▶ **Presidency statement on the situation in Guinea** (19/01/07)

The European Union is following with great concern the increasing tensions in the Republic of Guinea. The loss of human lives during protests in Conakry, Labé and Mamou on 17 and 18 January is particularly alarming.

The EU Presidency calls upon all parties involved to avoid any acts of intimidation or actions that could lead to violent clashes.

It appeals to the Government of the Republic of Guinea, the unions, the security forces, the political parties and the leaders of civil society groups to continue their dialogue and do their utmost to ensure that the political changes deemed necessary are carried out peacefully and in keeping with the constitution.

The European Union reaffirms its desire to support the process of democratization and the strengthening of the rule of law in Guinea.

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/January/1901Guinea.html

AMERICAS

Bolivia

- ▶ German Presidency statement on the violent clashes in Cochabamba (16/01/07)

The Presidency noted with great concern the recent violent clashes in Cochabamba. The loss of life that occurred as a result is particularly alarming.

The Presidency **calls upon all parties to resolve their differences in a spirit of tolerance and dialogue while fully respecting human rights, democratic principles and institutions, and to refrain from acts of violence.**

The Presidency **emphasizes its continued support for national efforts towards a democratic, prosperous, socially inclusive and united Bolivia, based on the internationally recognized principles of human rights and the rule of law.**

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/January/0116cochabamba.html

ASIA

Bangladesh

- ▶ Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the recent political developments in Bangladesh (16/01/07)

The European Union is monitoring events in Bangladesh closely following the latest developments, including the decision by President Iajuddin Ahmed to impose a state of emergency and to relinquish his post as Chief Advisor in the Caretaker Government.

The EU hopes that the newly appointed Chief Advisor and his Caretaker Government concentrate their efforts to create the conditions conducive to the holding of credible democratic elections as soon as possible.

The EU urges all election stakeholders to carry their responsibility to ensure national and international confidence in the democratic process in Bangladesh.

The EU underlines **the need for a judicious approach by the Caretaker Government to the present restrictions imposed on fundamental rights and media freedom and welcomes the neutral position of the Armed Forces and expects them to maintain it.**

The EU urges the full restoration of civil and political rights to the people of Bangladesh at the earliest opportunity.

(...)

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_applications/applications/newsroom/loadDocument.ASP?cmsID=363&LANG=EN&directory=en/cfsp/&fileName=92391.pdf

Burma / Myanmar

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the release of five student leaders** (17/01/07)

The European Union welcomes **the release of former student leaders and civil society actors Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zeya and Pyone Cho in the early morning of 11 January 2007 by the authorities of Burma/Myanmar.** These individuals had been kept in detention without any charges since late September 2006, having previously spent several years in prison. The EU hopes that in future the five student leaders will be able to freely exercise their democratic rights.

Likewise, the EU takes positive note of the amnesty granted to around 50 prisoners of conscience, including journalists, members of political parties and student activists, on the occasion of the 9th anniversary of the Independence Day of Burma/Myanmar on 4 January 2007.

The EU takes this opportunity **to reiterate its call for the speedy release of all political prisoners from detention, particularly those who are old and in frail health.** The EU encourages the Government of Burma/Myanmar to enter into a genuine dialogue with all other political and civil society forces about the democratization process. In this regard, in particular, the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest would create a favourable atmosphere.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/92400.pdf

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS
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Turkmenistan

- ▶ **Presidency statement on the assassination of the Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink** (19/01/07)

The Presidency was shocked to learn of the assassination of the respected Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in Istanbul.

Hrant Dink was a courageous man whose journalism was marked by his strong commitment to democracy and freedom of expression and who was prepared to take great personal risks for his work. He always strove to present a balanced picture and avoided provoking confrontations. He staunchly supported the democratic reforms in Turkey.

As a result, Hrant Dink was held in high esteem in various sections of Turkish society, as well as in Europe.

The Presidency is appalled by this abominable killing and would like to express its deepest sympathy to the victim's family and friends. The Presidency is convinced that the Turkish authorities will solve this case as quickly as possible and has no doubt that Turkey will steadfastly continue along the path towards fully realizing freedom of expression.

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/January/1901HrantDink.html

Belarus

► **Statement by the European Union on the local elections in Belarus** (18/01/07)

646th Meeting of the Permanent Council of the OSCE

The European Union regrets that it has to raise its concerns about the local elections in Belarus held on 14 January 2007. Numerous reports of serious flaws lead us to the conclusion that the Belarusian authorities failed once again to ensure the fundamental conditions for free, fair and transparent elections according to OSCE commitments and other international standards.

Representatives of opposition parties were denied access to election commissions. A number of candidates affiliated with opposition parties were not registered or deprived of their registration at a late stage. Reports of police raids on campaign offices, seizures of campaigning material, and detentions of political activists and election observers are equally worrying. The use of administrative resources by the authorities to support pro-government candidates as well as to coerce voters into voting early also raises concerns.

The European Union therefore calls on the Government of Belarus to accept the offer by OSCE / ODIHR to support it in conducting elections in line with OSCE commitments and other international standards. The European Union also hopes that Belarus will engage constructively with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media as well as the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE which have also presented valuable proposals for closer co-operation with Belarus.

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Statements_in_International_Organisations/OSCE/0118EUStatementBelarus.html

Turkmenistan

► **Statement by the European Union on the presidential elections in Turkmenistan** (18/01/07)

646th Meeting of the Permanent Council of the OSCE

The EU has taken note of the announcement of the Presidential elections to be held in Turkmenistan on 11 February 2007 and looks forward to cooperation between relevant Turkmen authorities, the OSCE Centre in Ashgabad and the ODIHR in this regard. We appreciate the opportunity provided to the ODIHR to conduct an needs assessment mission on possible election support and will carefully study ODIHR's report on this mission. In conformity with the Copenhagen Document of 1990, the EU stresses that all elections must be opportunities for the people to freely express their political will. **The release of all political prisoners and their relatives from custody, allowing freedom of movement, including the freedom to leave the country and to freely return, facilitating the free functioning of printed and electronic media and creating the conditions necessary for the legal functioning of political parties are necessary steps to meet this end.** The EU calls upon Turkmenistan also to allow access to the international media to cover the elections, thus contributing to transparency.

The EU hopes that following these elections, the new government will intensify its efforts on democratic reforms in accordance with OSCE commitments and other international obligations, including through increased cooperation with the OSCE, and underlines that it attaches particular importance to respect for fundamental human rights. The EU stands ready to assist the Turkmen authorities in its efforts to comply with all OSCE commitments.

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Statements_in_International_Organisations/OSCE/0118EUStatementTurkmenistan.html

Albania

► **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on local elections in Albania** (16/01/07)

The EU welcomes the consensual agreement reached by the political parties on 12 January on the modalities of the forthcoming local elections, and the subsequent adoption of the legal amendments to the Constitution and the Electoral Code by the Albanian Parliament on 13 January. The EU commends President Moisiu for his decisive role in mediating the agreement. The EU stresses that all Albanian political forces must now implement the agreement by working together constructively and in good faith and by proceeding with the electoral preparations without further delay. The EU reminds that the holding of free and fair elections is an essential requirement for closer relations with the EU.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/92415.pdf

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

THEMATIC :

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Rights of the child

- ▶ **European Commission takes new initiatives in favour of missing and sexually exploited children** (17/01/07)

Vice-President Franco Frattini, Commissioner responsible for Justice, Liberty and Security, and Viviane Reding, Commissioner responsible for Information Society and Media, are in Paris today attending an international meeting on the issue of missing, abducted and sexually exploited children. Also present are the members of the Honorary Board of the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC), including Her Majesty the Queen of the Belgians, Her Majesty the Queen of Sweden, Mrs Laura Bush, Mrs Lyudmila Putin and Mrs Margarida Sousa Uva-Barroso

Protecting children's rights is a priority of the European Commission, and the Paris meeting will help keep this topic at the forefront of the European agenda and move forward the implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child.

"If Europe truly aspires to be an area of freedom and rights, it must serve as a guardian angel to our children", declared Vice-President Franco Frattini. "In particular, the 26 other Member States would do well to set up abduction alert systems, as France has done. Because child abductions are an international phenomenon, such a system at European level would be extremely useful. The European Commission is prepared to serve as a catalyst and initiate the necessary meetings between the relevant parties in order to fight child abduction more effectively at European level".

"Information and communication technologies open up the world to our children", added Commissioner Reding. "This entails new risks, however, such as predators in online fora and the unsolicited dissemination of content dangerous to children. But these same technologies also give us new tools to combat child abduction and track paedophiles. For years, the European Commission has been introducing and supporting initiatives that use information and communication technology to protect children. With today's launch of the 116 000 telephone number, Europe will have a single hotline number for reporting missing children".

Calling 116 000 will be free of charge, and the number should be operational throughout Europe by the summer of 2007. Citizens will know that they can dial a single number anywhere in the Union to report a missing child. It will be up to the individual Member State government to select an association or authority to manage this service. This strategy places all Community activities within a coherent framework, with the rights of the child guiding policy rather than merely being its outcome.

The European Forum for the Rights of the Child, to be launched during the first half of 2007, will serve as a lasting instrument for joint effort and discussion. Its task will be to broaden and fine-tune the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child introduced by the Commission on 4 July 2006. The Forum will bring together representatives from the Member States and NGOs, national mediators for children's rights and children themselves, making it the ideal arena for such discussions.

The Forum will address issues relating to violent, undesirable content disseminated via digital technologies such as the Internet, game consoles and online games. It will examine how much monitoring is necessary in

order to safeguard our children's future. The European Commission's "Safer Internet" initiative has already made possible the setting up of free assistance centres in several Member States.
(...)

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/55&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

EXTERNAL RELATIONS & DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ISSUES

EU / UN REFORM

MISCELLANEOUS