

SUMMARY

REGIONS

AFRICA

Burundi

- ▶ **Burundi: parties asked to respect ceasefire agreement (22/05/2008)**

Nigeria

- ▶ **EU Troika meeting with Nigeria on topical issues of security, energy, climate change, migration and human rights (20/05/2008)**

Somalia

- ▶ **Council conclusions on Somalia (26/05/2008)**

Sudan

- ▶ **Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP concerned by renewed conflict in Abyei, Sudan (21/05/2008)**
- ▶ **MEPs: Sudan' persistent failure to cooperate with the ICC condemned (22/05/2008)**

Zimbabwe

- ▶ **Council conclusions on Zimbabwe (26/05/2008)**

AMERICAS

Colombia

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency, on behalf of the European Union, on the situation of human rights defenders in Colombia (19/05/2008)**

ASIA

Burma / Myanmar

- ▶ **MEPs condemn slow response from Burmese authorities and ask them to open up to international aid (22/05/2008)**
- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on effective international assistance to Burma/Myanmar ahead of the International Conference on 25 May (23/05/2008)**
- ▶ **Council Conclusions on Burma/Myanmar (26/05/2008)**

China

- ▶ **Chinese earthquake: MEPs express solidarity and welcome rapid response (22/05/2008)**

Taiwan

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Cross-Strait Relations (26/05/2008)**

EUROPE (outside of UE) and CIS

Belarus

- ▶ **Call for Belarus to release political prisoners and end intimidation of the opposition (22/05/2008)**

Georgia

- ▶ **Council Conclusions on Georgia (26/05/2008)**

Ukraine

- ▶ **EU Troika-Ukraine meeting discusses topical regional and international affairs and strengthening EU-Ukraine relations (22/05/2008)**

Russia

- ▶ **EU reaches agreement on negotiating positions for Russia agreement (21/05/2008)**
- ▶ **EU Council of Ministers approves mandate for negotiating new framework agreement with Russian Federation (26/05/2008)**

Western Balkans

- ▶ **Council Conclusions on the Western Balkans (26/05/2008)**

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

Afghanistan

- ▶ **Council Conclusions on Afghanistan (26/05/2008)**

Iran

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Baha'i arrests (21/05/2008)**
- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the imminent execution of Behnoud Shojaee and Saeed Jazee (23/05/2008)**

Iraq

- ▶ **Council conclusions on Iraq (26/05/2008)**

Lebanon

- ▶ **EU Presidency statement on the "Doha Agreement" (21/05/2008)**

- ▶ **European Parliament calls for political solution in Lebanese crisis**
(22/05/2008)
- ▶ **Council Conclusions on Lebanon** (26/05/2008)

Middle East Process

- ▶ **Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process**
(26/05/2008)

THEMATIC

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

EXTERNAL RELATIONS & DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ISSUES

EU / UN REFORM

Lisbon Treaty

- ▶ **Slovenian Presidency welcomes the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by the German parliament** (23/05/2008)

MISCELLANEOUS

Fight against discrimination

- ▶ **MEPs call for comprehensive legislation to combat discrimination**
(20/05/2008)

Human Rights of people with disabilities

- ▶ “The full enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities is an important contribution towards a fairer society,” says Slovenian Minister Marjeta Cotman (22/05/2008)

Roma minorities

- ▶ Violence against the Roma goes beyond Italy say MEPs (20/05/2008)

Children’s rights

- ▶ EU General Affairs and External Relations Council welcomes study on children in armed conflicts (26/05/2008)
- ▶ Council Conclusions on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in the European Union’s external action - the development and humanitarian dimensions (26/05/2008)

Council of Europe / Commissioner for Human Rights in France

- ▶ Human Rights Commissioner Hammarberg on official visit to France (19/05/2008)

IMPORTANT COMING MEETINGS

EU - THIRD COUNTRY MEETINGS

EU Troika- European Economic Area

Ø May, 27, 2008 (Brussels)

EU Troika- India

Ø May, 30, 2008 (India)

EU Troika- Republic of South Africa

Ø June, 3, 2008 (Brdo)

EU Troika- Brazil

Ø June, 6, 2008 (Brdo)

EU Troika- African Union

Ø June, 17, 2008 (Luxembourg)

EU- USA Summit

Ø June, 10, 2008 (Brdo)

EU- Gulf Cooperation Council

Ø May, 26, 2008 (Brussels)

EU- Moldova Cooperation Council

Ø May, 27, 2008 (Brussels)

EU- Israel Association Council

Ø June, 16, 2008 (Luxembourg)

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEETINGS

Committee on Development

Ø May, 27-28, 2008

Ø June, 24-25, 2008

Committee on Foreign Affairs

Ø May, 27-28-29, 2008

Ø June, 3, 2008

Subcommittee on Human Rights

Ø May, 26-27, 2008

Ø June, 9, 2008

Subcommittee on security and defence

- Ø May, 26-27, 2008
- Ø June, 9, 2008

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and home affairs

- Ø May, 28-29, 2008
- Ø June, 2, 2008

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

- Ø May, 26-27, 2008
- Ø June, 24-25, 2008

CONFERENCES / EVENTS

RELEX Conference on European Neighbouring Policy

- Ø June, 2-3, 2008 (Rogaška Slatina / Portorož)

Western Balkans Civil Society Forum

- Ø June, 4-5, 2008 (Ljubljana)

OMCT-Europe Weekly Newsletter 2008 N°20, 19.05- 26.05.2008

REGIONS

AFRICA

Burundi

- ▶ **Burundi: parties asked to respect ceasefire agreement (22/05/2008)**

MEPs call on all parties to respect the ceasefire agreement concluded on 7 September 2006 after 14 years of civil war. Since 17 April 2008 fighting has again erupted between government troops and the rebel National Liberation Front in Burundi, forcing thousands of civilians to flee their homes and resulting in the deaths of 50 rebel fighters.

MEPs call on all parties to respect the ceasefire agreement concluded on 7 September 2006, resume negotiations. Negotiations between the government and the National Liberation Front (FNL) broke down in July 2007 when the FNL walked out of the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism created to oversee implementation of the ceasefire accord signed in September 2006.

The House urges the FNL, and its leader Agathon Rwasa, to engage constructively in the peace process.

The latest bout of fighting is part of a series of clashes which have left 35 000 people displaced, bringing the total number of internally displaced persons to over 100 000. The critical humanitarian and socio-economic situation endangers regional stability , according to the resolution.

MEPs call on the neighbouring states to ensure they do not serve as bases for the rebel movement, and welcomes Tanzania's decision to cease acting as a haven for FNL leaders. Tanzania wants to return its Burundian refugees to Burundi, while Burundi is still taking in thousands of Rwandan and Congolese refugees.

The Commission should give priority support to programmes for better governance and democratic state management; health policies, through the creation of health centres and the essential renewal of the hospital network; free primary education and renewing the country's infrastructure, say MEPs.

Peace and reconciliation commission

The House calls for the establishment of a peace and reconciliation commission to help restore a climate of confidence and stability. Governments of the EU Member States should support such an initiative financially and logistically.

The resolution was adopted with 75 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/015-29652-140-05-21-902-20080521IPR29634-19-05-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

- ▶ **EU Troika meeting with Nigeria on topical issues of security, energy, climate change, migration and human rights (20/05/2008)**

Conflict management and prevention, combating the illicit stockpiling of and trade in small arms and light weapons, climate change, energy security, the fight against terrorism, migration and human rights were the main themes of today's meeting between the EU Troika of Foreign Ministers and Nigeria at Brdo pri Kranju in Slovenia. The session was chaired by the President of the General Affairs and External Relations Council, Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel, while the Nigerian delegation was headed by the Nigerian Foreign Minister, Ojo Maduekwe.

On conflict prevention and management, Council President Dimitrij Rupel remarked that the EU was devoting special attention to Africa, the crucial concepts the EU shares with its partners being monitoring, counselling and training. In recent years the EU has achieved significant progress in a number of operations in Congo, Guinea Bissau and Sudan, and lately also in Chad and the Central African Republic. The EU hopes to continue this work and enable the African Union to establish sufficient capacities and know-how for independent conflict management.

Referring to the fight against the illicit stockpiling of small arms and light weapons, Dr Rupel stressed that the EU has been drawing attention to this issue for a number of years. Back in 2005, it adopted a document on a strategy against the stockpiling of and trade in such weapons, which also established that Africa was the continent that suffered most from internal conflicts resulting from the uncontrolled influx of small arms and light weapons. The EU supports the efforts of the UN in this respect. Dr Rupel expressed satisfaction on learning that Nigeria had attended the seminar organised in Lome in April. He went on to encourage Nigeria and other African States to participate in the discussions conducted on this subject by the UN.

The GAERC Council President, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, also devoted particular attention to climate change. Stressing that the issue warranted particular attention, he added that these issues could be addressed only at the global level and pointed out that European leaders had agreed to advocate the start of negotiations on a global and comprehensive agreement for the post-2012 period. The EU reiterates that a leading role should be played by the developed countries since they are the ones that bear the greatest responsibility for emissions. The consequences, however, are felt all over the world, and Nigeria could be particularly affected by rising sea levels, drought and increasing desertification.

Energy security is also an important global challenge. Dr Rupel stressed efforts for

the introduction of new technologies which would help reduce emissions. “The wasting of resources at the production stage should be prevented,” said the Slovenian Foreign Minister and welcomed Nigeria's endeavours to reduce gas flaring. He highlighted the fact that European companies were willing to participate, by making considerable investments, in achieving these goals. Energy security is also an incentive for developing renewable energy sources and Dr Rupel had every confidence that Nigeria had great potential in this respect.

Underlining the European Union's condemnation of terrorism, the GAERC Council President reaffirmed the EU's full support for the United Nations in the fight against terrorism. The EU is involved in this fight at every level. All the actions taken must, however, be compliant with international law, noted Dr Rupel. He also noted that the EU and Nigeria were both multifaith societies and pointed out that intercultural dialogue was an important priority of Slovenia's EU Council Presidency.

Dialogue with Nigeria in the field of migration is very important, he maintained, it being at one and the same time a country of origin, a transit country, and a destination for migrants. The European Union supports dialogue with African countries on this issue and Dr Rupel welcomed Nigeria's cooperation, which had enabled the deployment of an EU mission in this African country. He also welcomed Nigeria's decision to be involved in the activities agreed at last year's EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon. The European Union certainly wishes to continue dialogue with this country.

On the issue of human rights, the EU supports the activities of the UN Human Rights Council, of which Nigeria is a member, stressed Dr Rupel, encouraging his counterpart to be fully engaged in the Council, as all countries share the responsibility for its effectiveness. Dr Rupel also welcomed Nigeria's decision to accept special rapporteurs on human rights. He went on to express his belief that cooperation between countries from different regional groups was essential and that the EU was looking forward to cooperating with Nigeria.

At the end of the meeting a joint message was adopted, summarising all the salient points of the discussion.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0520Nigeria.html

Somalia

- ▶ **Council conclusions on Somalia (26/05/2008)**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. The Council is seriously concerned over the security situation in Somalia and its negative humanitarian and human rights consequences. The Council reaffirms its commitment to a comprehensive approach to a lasting settlement of the Somali crisis, covering its political, security and humanitarian aspects. It reiterates that the only way to restore the situation is through a political process ultimately inclusive of all concerned Somali stakeholders that renounce violence in the interest of the people of Somalia. The Council commends those committed to dialogue in search of common ground.

2. The Transitional Federal Charter provides the only credible framework for an inclusive consultative process and broad-based ownership in shaping the future of Somalia through a permanent Constitution. The Council calls on all parties to engage in a constructive dialogue in shaping the future constitution of Somalia, to be the subject of a popular referendum in 2009, leading to elections.

3. The Council welcomes the continued efforts by the Prime Minister Nur "Adde" Hassan Hussein and his Cabinet, under the leadership of President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, and supported by the Transitional Federal Parliament, to advance the political process. To that end, it welcomes the outcome of the meeting held in Djibouti from 10-15 May 2008 under the auspices of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) Ould-Abdallah and urges all the parties to comply with the engagement to continue further discussions on 31 May and to put aside their differences, facilitate unhindered humanitarian access and the delivery of assistance to the people with immediate effect. The Council also welcomes the ongoing dialogue between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and local leaders in Mogadishu.

4. **The Council is deeply troubled by the extremely serious humanitarian situation in Somalia, due to the combined effects of drought and violence. The Council calls on all parties to comply fully with international humanitarian law and its principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. The Council welcomes the intention expressed by the TFG to create a focal point for the humanitarian crisis as well as the commitment by the TFG to facilitate unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need, and calls on all other concerned parties to do the same, in the interest of protecting the lives of innocent civilians disproportionately victimized in the present fighting.**

5. **The Council urges that all violations of international humanitarian law and human rights be officially denounced and investigated. The Council supports**

the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, including the Independent Expert for Somalia, and encourages them to undertake an independent fact-finding and assessment mission to Somalia to address the human rights situation. This would be a welcome first step towards the creation of a mechanism to investigate systematic human rights abuses by all parties. The EU is ready to increase its support in the field of human rights, notably for capacity building within public institutions and services.

6. The Council commends the work of the AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), currently acting in Somalia on behalf of the international community. The Council commends the commitment of Uganda and Burundi to AMISOM and calls on all African Troup-Contributing Countries and other potential regional partners to provide the units required for the full deployment of AMISOM. The Council welcomes international efforts to enhance financial, logistical and technical support to AMISOM. The Council recalls the readiness of the EU and its Member States to continue to increase their support to AMISOM, inter alia by identifying substantial new financial support. The EU will continue to work, with the AU Commission and other partners, towards mechanisms that will facilitate the receipt and management of contributions for AMISOM and other future peace support missions.

7. The Council welcomes the unanimous adoption on 15 May of UN Security Council Resolution 1814 and emphasises the EU's full support for all its provisions. The Council welcomes the commitment of the UN to continue contingency planning for the possible deployment of a UN Mission to succeed AMISOM and welcomes its willingness to consider taking over from AMISOM at an appropriate time, subject to progress in the political process and improvement in the security situation on the ground. The Council fully supports the integrated and comprehensive approach aligning the political, security and programmatic work of the UN. The EU stands ready to expand its support in this field, including support for the ongoing reconciliation process, in view of achieving the political agreement which is necessary for effective mobilisation of the UN force, and for an agreed comprehensive security sector reform programme.

8. The EU remains firmly behind the initiatives of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) and is ready to provide political, financial and technical support to facilitate a process of dialogue and consultations with key constituencies, fully supports his leadership role, inter alia in facilitating improved multi-faceted coordination of international support for peace, security and development in Somalia. The Council welcomes the reinvigorated role of the International Contact Group on Somalia under the leadership of the SRSG and stays committed to participation in this

mechanism, including at field level.

9. The Council expresses its concern over the upsurge of piracy attacks off the Somali coast, which affect humanitarian efforts, international maritime traffic in the region and contribute to continued violations of the UN arms embargo. The Council greatly appreciates the commitment of the UN Security Council to addressing the problem of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast and looks forward to the early adoption of a Security Council resolution to that effect.

10. The Council commends the sequenced initiatives of some EU member States to provide protection to World Food Programme vessels and welcomes the provisions of paragraph 11 of UN Security Council Resolution 1814 in this regard. The Council stresses the need for wider participation by the international community in these escorts in order to secure the delivery of humanitarian aid to Somali populations.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0526_GAERC-Somalia.pdf

.. Sudan

- ▶ **Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP concerned by renewed conflict in Abyei, Sudan (21/05/2008)**

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), issued a statement today expressing his grave concern at the resurgence of fighting in the area of Abyei:

"I am very concerned by the renewed clashes in and around Abyei. I call on both sides to respect the terms of the ceasefire agreement of 18 May, particularly the immediate withdrawal of their forces.

The only way of resolving the dispute over Abyei is through a lasting political solution as part of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the north and the south of Sudan, which is the basis for returning Sudan to normality."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/declarations/100526.pdf

.. Sudan

- ▶ **MEPs: Sudan' persistent failure to cooperate with the ICC condemned (22/05/2008)**

MEPs urge the authorities in Khartoum to surrender "without further delay" Ahmad Harun and Ali Kushayb, currently subject to arrest warrants of the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity. They condemn Sudan's failure to cooperate with the ICC. The European Council meeting June is asked to adopt "targeted EU punitive measures" against some Sudanese officials.

In April 2007 the ICC issued an arrest warrant against Sudan's former Minister of the Interior Ahmad Harun and former Janjaweed militia leader Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman, also known as 'Ali Kushayb', on 51 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Ahmad Harun is now the Minister for Humanitarian Affairs and Ali Kushayb – who was in Sudanese custody on other charges at the time the warrants were issued – was released from jail in October 2007, says the resolution.

MEPs urge the authorities in Khartoum to arrest and surrender the two ICC suspects without further delay. They urge the Sudanese Government to ratify the Statute of the ICC and to cooperate unconditionally with the International Criminal Court.

The ICC's Chief Prosecutor, Luis Moreno Ocampo, will report on 5 June 2008 for the seventh time to the UN Security Council on the progress of its investigations in Darfur.

The European Council of 19-20 June is asked to adopt targeted EU punitive measures against a clearly identified group of Sudanese officials. These sanctions would include freezing and seizing assets and measures denying access to EU banks for any financial transaction or payment.

EU Member States and the European Commission are asked to ensure that their development aid to Sudan is not delivered via Ahmad Harun's Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs.

MEPs call on the EU to exert pressure on China to join the international efforts to end the conflict. China is also asked to use "its considerable leverage" on the Government of Sudan as the main provider of income for the Government of Sudan from oil sales. China should stop delivering weapons to Sudan.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/

Zimbabwe

► Council conclusions on Zimbabwe (26/05/2008)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. The Council notes the announcement by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission that the second round of the Presidential election will be held on 27 June, nearly 3 months after the first round of the elections.

2. The EU strongly condemns the state-sponsored campaign of violence and intimidation against Zimbabweans that has been increasing throughout the prolonged electoral process and calls for an immediate end to the beatings, tortures, killings and other human rights abuses. The Council calls upon the government of Zimbabwe to ensure a level playing field and a secure environment conducive to ensuring that the results of forthcoming second round will reflect the free and democratic will of the Zimbabwean people. In this respect the Council stresses the importance that all necessary measures be adopted in order to allow all candidates and supporters to participate safely and fully in the electoral process.

3. The second round presents an opportunity for the free and democratic will of the Zimbabwean people to be expressed and respected, opening the way for delivering political stability. **The Council reiterates that the credibility of the electoral processes requires conditions on the ground to be in full accordance with international standards, particularly those adopted by the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), of which Zimbabwe is a signatory, including the freedom of assembly and access to media. In this context the Council underlines specifically the importance of the publication of results outside the polling stations once counting is completed.**

4. The Council emphasises the importance of effective election observation, local as well as international, to ensure regularity and transparency for the second round and reiterates the important role of the countries in the region in achieving this. The Council further welcomes the positive role played by the AU and the SADC Electoral Observation Missions (EOMs) during the first phase of the electoral process. The Council supports the intent of the AU and the SADC to ensure continued

presence of their EOMs until the electoral process is complete and results announced and to deploy, as soon as possible, a significant number of election monitors across Zimbabwe, including rural areas, well in advance of the election day. The EU remains ready to deploy an EU election observation mission, if the right conditions are met, yet the Council notes that no invitation has been made to the EU as of today.

5. The Council calls upon SADC to continue to engage with strong determination with the Zimbabwean authorities to implement the outcome of the Lusaka Summit. The EU shares the concern of the SADC about the situation and reiterates full support for SADC's efforts to resolve the current crisis.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0526_GAERC-Zimbabwe.pdf

AMERICAS

Colombia

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency, on behalf of the European Union, on the situation of human rights defenders in Colombia (19/05/2008)**

The European Union wishes to express its grave concern at the murders and death threats against leaders of social organisations and organisations for the defence of human rights in Colombia over recent weeks.

Organisations which have been cooperating closely with the European Union in Colombia for many years have not escaped this wave of threats and intimidation: since 18 February 2008, five leaders and members of associations involved in Union programmes have paid the ultimate price for their commitment to their communities; in addition, organisations supported by the Union - including the Magdalena Medio peace and development programme - have received e-mail threats in which the NGOs and the community and church leaders involved in these projects are designated "military targets" for illegal armed groups.

The European Union wishes to underline the legitimate efforts of these community leaders to build peace in Colombia and to defend and promote human rights in the country. It is also troubled at the emergence of armed criminal groups which seize and occupy the illegal territorial control structures established by the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia before they were demobilised.

The European Union has already made its concerns known to the Colombian authorities, who have undertaken to continue their struggle against these forms of violence. For its part, the European Union will continue resolutely to support human rights defenders in Colombia.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0519MZZ_Columbia.html

ASIA

Burma / Myanmar

- ▶ **MEPs condemn slow response from Burmese authorities and ask them to open up to international aid (22/05/2008)**

In adopting a resolution on the tragic situation in Burma, **the House condemns the slow response to this grave humanitarian crisis by the Burmese authorities and ask Burma to open cyclone-affected areas to international humanitarian aid operations and to immediately grant visas to aid workers. If the Burmese authorities continue to prevent aid from reaching those in danger, they should be held accountable for crimes against humanity before the ICC, says the resolution.**

MEPs call on the Burmese Government to put its people's lives first and ask South-East Asian nations to use their influence with the Burmese authorities to open Burma for immediate access by all possible humanitarian relief.

MEPs stress the urgent nature of the assistance to be delivered to the suffering population as the weather conditions in the affected area worsen owing to the beginning of the Monsoon. Affected farmers should receive assistance to plant a new crop of rice in time.

Burma is asked to open cyclone-affected areas to international humanitarian aid operations and to immediately grant visas to aid workers. MEPs reiterate that the sovereignty of a nation cannot be allowed to override the human rights of its people as enshrined in the UN principle of the 'responsibility to protect'.

MEPs deplore the distorted priorities of the regime in pushing ahead with its "so-called referendum on the sham constitution".

ASEAN, China and India's influence

The House welcomes the agreement, reached at the summit of ASEAN, India and China in Singapore on 19 May 2008, to allow the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to coordinate the international relief efforts for its . MEPs urge the Governments of China and India to use their influence with the Burmese authorities in order to open Burma for immediate access by all possible humanitarian relief.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/025-29640-140-05-21-903-20080521IPR29591-19-05-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

Burma / Myanmar

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on effective international assistance to Burma/Myanmar ahead of the International Conference on 25 May (23/05/2008)**

The European Union reaffirms its solidarity with the citizens of Burma/Myanmar affected by Cyclone Nargis. The EU expresses its full support for the efforts by the UN, ASEAN countries, and international and local agencies to provide emergency assistance to the victims and to help them rebuild their livelihoods quickly.

The swift and substantial contributions made so far by the European Commission and the EU Member States are proof of the Union's determination to contribute to this common purpose.

The EU urges the authorities of Burma/Myanmar to give the highest priority to overcoming the remaining obstacles to the delivery of immediate humanitarian relief to the worst affected regions of the country.

The European Union expresses its full support for the efforts of the UN Secretary General to address this pressing humanitarian crisis, and welcomes the leadership he and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs OCHA have shown in exerting pressure on the Burmese / Myanmar's authorities and galvanising the local and international response. For the sake of the affected populations, the EU attaches the highest importance to a coordinated and effective international response.

The EU welcomes ASEAN's resolve to expedite assistance to those in need and the arrangements being made to this effect. The EU encourages ASEAN partners to

contribute the necessary resources, and move swiftly to establish an effective delivery mechanism, in co-operation with the UN and other donors.

The EU will work with partners to contribute to concrete outcomes of this Conference, in particular to achieve efficient and prompt delivery of available humanitarian aid and expertise to all those in need and to mobilize further humanitarian assistance. The Union also attaches importance to a solid assessment of needs, in order to pave the way for a credible rehabilitation plan.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0522MZZ_Burma.html

.. **Burma / Myanmar**

▶ **Council Conclusions on Burma/Myanmar (26/05/2008)**

"The Council reaffirms its solidarity with the people of Burma/Myanmar affected by Cyclone Nargis. The Council underlines that the scale of the disaster is so extensive that the combined efforts of UN, ASEAN countries, international and local agencies and NGOs are required in order to bring relief to those who have survived the cyclone. In this context, particular attention should be given to the needs of all vulnerable groups.

The Council reiterates its support for the central role of the UN in response to the disaster and welcomes the decision of ASEAN Foreign Ministers on 19 May to establish a mechanism to expedite the delivery and distribution of aid inside Burma/Myanmar. In this context it notes the outcome of the International Conference in Yangon on 25 May 2008 co-sponsored by the UN and ASEAN and the commitment of the authorities of Burma/Myanmar to participate in the UN/ASEAN mechanism agreed at the Conference. The Council stresses that the most pressing priorities are immediate access and a significant increase in the speed and volume of aid reaching those in most need. It hopes that the Conference will help to deliver this.

The Council welcomes the reports from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon that the authorities of Burma/Myanmar have agreed to grant access to foreign aid workers regardless of nationality, and takes note of the gradual openings made so far. The Council calls on the authorities to implement this commitment and ensure that national and international aid workers and transport will be allowed to deliver aid on the scale the people in the affected areas of the Irrawaddy delta desperately need.

The Council reiterates that full access to these affected areas is urgently required for humanitarian experts of all nationalities, to enable the efficient and prompt delivery of

emergency assistance to all populations in need and to enable a comprehensive needs assessment of the disaster zone.

The Council urges the authorities of Burma/Myanmar to give the highest priority to overcoming obstacles to the delivery of immediate humanitarian relief to all affected regions of the country. The Council calls on the UN Secretary General, the UN Humanitarian Relief Coordinator and the ASEAN Secretary General to remain closely involved to ensure that there is much needed progress on the ground.

Whilst the delivery of emergency aid to the affected populations remains the international humanitarian priority, the Council recognises the importance of a thorough international assessment of rehabilitation and reconstruction needs, which can pave the way for a credible rehabilitation plan.

The EU stands ready to continue to contribute technical and material assistance to humanitarian and rehabilitation needs assessments, within the terms of the Council Common Position."

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/2526_GAERC-Myanmar.pdf

China

- ▶ **Chinese earthquake: MEPs express solidarity and welcome rapid response (22/05/2008)**

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the recent earthquake that hit China, killing tens of thousands of people, expressing its "sincere condolences and solidarity to the people of China and to the numerous victims." MEPs welcome the "prompt response to the disaster by the Chinese authorities by means of their emergency operation," and note "with appreciation China's readiness to accept foreign assistance."

MEPs also welcome "the fact that the Chinese and foreign media are being allowed to provide detailed and accurate information on the disaster." The resolution was adopted with 525 votes in favour, 4 against and 4 abstentions.

Members urge the Council and Commission to provide emergency aid, technical assistance and reconstruction aid through the ECHO programme, and support the

contribution which the EU Member States are making through the 'Civil Protection Mechanism', coordinated by the Commission." The House "underlines the importance of good governance in preventing and preparing for possible natural disasters," and "calls for development of the technology for a comprehensive and effective early warning system to prepare populations to cope with earthquakes and other natural disasters."

In the debate, all political groups expressed their sympathies and condolences, calling on the Commission to help with all means possible to ease the humanitarian disaster. Commissioner Louis Michel noted that the EU has contributed over €10 million already, including €2 million for supplies such as tents and blankets which the Chinese authorities have requested.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-29641-140-05-21-903-20080521IPR29593-19-05-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

Taiwan

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Cross-Strait Relations (26/05/2008)**

The EU welcomes the positive momentum given to the development of cross-Strait relations in the inaugural speech by Taiwan's new leader, Ma Ying-jeou, and in the statement by Chen Yunlin, Director of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the Chinese State Council.

The EU believes that the establishment of a new administration in Taiwan provides a unique opportunity for the two sides to make further progress in their practical relations and opens the possibility for them to take positive steps towards the resumption of a meaningful dialogue which will be of benefit to the people on both sides of the Strait and would enhance regional peace and stability.

The EU reiterates its One China Policy and its firm support for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan question.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0526MZZcross-strait.html

Belarus

- ▶ **Call for Belarus to release political prisoners and end intimidation of the opposition (22/05/2008)**

MEPs urge the Belarusian authorities to release political prisoner Aliaksandr Kazulin and to stop using intimidation and politically motivated prosecutions against activists of the democratic opposition and civil society. The House expresses solidarity with the democratic opposition of Belarus in a resolution adopted this Thursday.

The House condemns the sentences given to Syarhei Parsyukevich and Andrei Kim on 22 and 23 April 2008 in Minsk for their participation in the entrepreneurs' demonstrations of 10 January 2008. They also deplore the reportedly excessive force used by Belarusian security forces against and the arrests of peaceful citizens gathered in Minsk on 25 March 2008 to mark the ninetieth anniversary of the Foundation of the Independent Belarusian People's Republic.

MEPs urge the Belarusian authorities to release immediately and unconditionally the remaining political prisoner, Aliaksandr Kazulin, and to stop using intimidation, harassment, targeted arrests and politically motivated prosecutions against activists of the democratic opposition and civil society in Belarus.

On 21 November 2006 the European Union declared its readiness to renew its relationship with Belarus and its people within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy as soon as the Belarusian Government demonstrates respect for democratic values and for the basic rights of the Belarusian people, recalls the resolution.

Belarus is the only country in Europe which still has the death penalty.

Upcoming parliamentary elections

The House urges the Belarusian authorities fully to implement OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) standards in the organisation of the parliamentary elections scheduled for autumn 2008.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/015-29652-140-05-21-902-20080521IPR29634-19-05-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

Georgia

► Council Conclusions on Georgia (26/05/2008)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. The Council examined the situation in Georgia following the parliamentary elections held on 21 May 2008 which were an important test for democracy. The Council congratulated the people of Georgia on the peaceful conduct of the elections, welcomed the efforts made by Georgian authorities since the last elections and urged them to take all necessary steps to address the shortcomings and problems identified by the OSCE-led International Election Observation Mission.

2. The Council stressed the need for constructive dialogue between the government and the opposition to agree on the way forward. It emphasised the importance of stability in Georgia and in the region and urged all parties concerned to respect the rule of law and to use only democratic and peaceful means in seeking to resolve political differences.

3. The Council reiterated the European Union's serious concern about the recent series of events that have raised tensions between Georgia and the Russian Federation. In this context, the Council reaffirmed its full commitment to the principles of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders, as most recently reaffirmed in the UNSC Resolution 1808 of 15 April 2008. The Council recalled the Presidency Declarations on behalf of the EU of 18 April 2008 and 2 May 2008. It underlined that it is essential now to reduce the risk of further escalation and take steps towards normalisation of relations. The Council emphasised that all parties should tone down public rhetoric and abstain from provocations and implementation of decisions that undermine the above principles.

4. The Council expressed its support for the UNOMIG investigation into the shooting down of a Georgian unmanned aircraft and looked forward to discussing its results as soon as possible. The Council believes that UNOMIG should be reinforced, as recommended in the UN Secretary General's report S/2007/588 of 4 October 2007 and supported in UNSC Resolution 1781 of 15 October 2007.

5. The Council reconfirmed its support for international efforts aimed at a peaceful settlement of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts, especially the efforts by the

UN, the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary-General and the OSCE. The Council welcomed the peace initiative on Abkhazia put forward by the Georgian President, as well as the recent direct talks by the parties, hoping that they will contribute to a constructive dialogue on the issue. The Council affirmed that the EU stands ready to contribute to all these efforts and called on the parties to continue these talks on a higher level in order to reach peaceful and sustainable solutions. The Council underlined the importance of the work of the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus and recalled that the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the European Commission will continue to implement confidence-building measures in support of resolving the conflicts.

6. The Council looked forward to strengthening EU-Georgia relations through active continuation of EU-Georgia political dialogue and implementation of the ENP Action Plan. The Council welcomed the establishment of the EU-Georgia Subcommittee on Justice, Freedom and Security and the results of its first meeting on 30 April 2008. The Council took note of the Georgian wish for visa facilitation, and looks forward to continuing result-oriented work in the area of mobility. The EU is considering means of strengthening economic cooperation with Georgia and, if the necessary conditions are met, the possibility of a deep and comprehensive Free Trade Agreement.

7. The Council will continue to follow closely the situation in Georgia and will revert to it as appropriate.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0526_GAERC-Gergia.pdf

Ukraine

- ▶ **EU Troika-Ukraine meeting discusses topical regional and international affairs and strengthening EU-Ukraine relations (22/05/2008)**

Regional and international issues, conditions within Ukraine, negotiations on a New Enhanced Agreement between the EU and Ukraine and cooperation in the fields of the EU common foreign and security policy were the main subjects discussed at the EU Troika's meeting with Ukraine. The meeting was chaired by the President of the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel. It was also attended, for the European side, by EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Benita

Ferrero-Waldner, Helga Schmid, representing the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, and Jacques Faure, representing the next EU Presidency country, France. The Ukrainian delegation was headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Volodymyr Ogrzyzko.

Discussions on international issues covered cooperation with Russia, evaluation of the course of the elections in Georgia and the situation in the Trans-Dniester region.

In the debate on international and regional issues, the President of the General Affairs and External Relations Council, Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel presented the situation in the Western Balkans and the prospect of a future in Europe for the countries of the region, a prospect that needed to be brought home to the region's population, enabling them to appreciate the real advantages of European integration. The elections that had been held in Serbia on 11 May could also be viewed as a moment of decision for or against the 'European perspective'. The Slovenian EU Presidency had been delighted to hear of the convincing victory of the pro-European side. Dr Rupel also outlined the situation in Kosovo and the activities of the EULEX mission. The Ukrainian Foreign Minister, Mr Ogrzyzko, presented the situation and relations in the wider region.

In connection with Ukrainian home affairs, Dr Rupel congratulated Mr Ogrzyzko on Ukraine's joining the World Trade Organisation, thereby placing it in a new operational framework which would improve its opportunities for action at the global level. The extent to which Ukraine exploited these opportunities would, however, he emphasised, depend on the country's capacities. He also stressed that, for sustainable growth, political measures and reforms are needed, particularly in the judicial field. Dr Rupel also informed the Ukrainians about the process of ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and the subject matter of the next European Council meeting, to be held on 19 and 20 June in Brussels.

On strengthening relations between the EU and Ukraine, Dr Rupel expressed satisfaction with the progress made to date in negotiations on the New Enhanced Agreement. The Presidency is convinced that the Agreement will provide a comprehensive and well-functioning framework for strengthening mutual relations. What progress has been made will be reviewed by the EU and Ukrainian Heads of State at the forthcoming EU-Ukraine Summit. Dr Rupel observed that the European Union appreciated Ukraine's pro-European orientation. It is also aware of Ukraine's objectives associated with the new Agreement.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0522Ukraine.html

Russia

- ▶ **EU reaches agreement on negotiating positions for Russia agreement (21/05/2008)**

The European Union reached an agreement today at the level of ambassadors (COREPER) on negotiating positions for the new partnership and cooperation agreement with the Russian Federation, which has to be endorsed by the foreign ministers at the GAERC meeting in Brussels on Monday.

GAERC President and Foreign Minister Rupel thanked all Member States for their cooperation. The Slovenian Presidency has been actively engaged in reaching a compromise on the mandate for the launch of negotiations on the new partnership and cooperation agreement with Russia, which will significantly strengthen EU-Russia relations.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0521MZZ_EU_Rusija_dogovor.html

Russia

- ▶ **EU Council of Ministers approves mandate for negotiating new framework agreement with Russian Federation (26/05/2008)**

The EU General Affairs and Foreign Relations Council today adopted a mandate to negotiate a new framework agreement between the EU and the Russian Federation. President of the Council, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel underlined that the Presidency had invested substantial efforts at the highest level within the last two months with a view to overcoming obstacles and confirming the negotiating mandate following a standstill of almost two years.

Dr Rupel pointed out that, in the course of the lengthy negotiations, many countries had voiced reservations, which were duly addressed in the negotiating mandate and the enclosed annexes.

The Slovenian Foreign Minister also paid a visit to Vilnius on 11 May and talked about amendments to the original wording with the Lithuanian Foreign Minister. This refers particularly to the unilateral statement of Lithuania on the explanation of the backgrounds of certain historic events and to the annex on the 'frozen conflicts' in Georgia and Moldova. Dr Rupel underlined that it was generally understood that the annex added no new conditions to the mandate.

The Minister expressed satisfaction at the adoption of the mandate, thanking all the Member States for their cooperation in harmonising the text. The adoption of the mandate provides a good basis for the EU-Russia Summit scheduled for the end of June, which will also be the first formal meeting between the highest representatives of the European Union and the new Russian President Medvedev.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0526MZZ_GAERC_Rusija.html

Western Balkans

► Council Conclusions on the Western Balkans (26/05/2008)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"SERBIA

The Council expressed satisfaction with the peaceful and orderly conduct of the elections, which were carried out in a free and democratic manner. It welcomed the strong support for the pro-European forces. The Council hoped that a new Government with a clear European agenda will soon be formed and will engage constructively in the Stabilisation and Association process. Recalling the decisions as mentioned in its Conclusions of 29 April 2008 on the occasion of the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, the Council reiterated that Serbia will be able to advance further on its EU path, including candidate status, once the necessary conditions are met.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The Council is looking forward to the signature of the SAA at the June GAERC meeting. The Council called on Bosnia and Herzegovina to undertake all efforts to start immediately the implementation of the Interim Agreement once it enters into force. It welcomed the launching of the dialogue on visa liberalisation with Bosnia and Herzegovina on 26 May."

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0526_GAERC-WesternBalkans.pdf

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

Afghanistan

► **Council Conclusions on Afghanistan (26/05/2008)**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. Dans la perspective de la Conférence internationale de soutien à l'Afghanistan qui doit se tenir à Paris le 12 juin 2008, et rappelant les conclusions sur l'Afghanistan adoptées par le Conseil européen de décembre 2006, ainsi que différentes conclusions adoptées par le Conseil "Affaires générales et relations extérieures" depuis février 2007, le Conseil souligne que l'UE demeure résolue à apporter au peuple et au gouvernement afghan un soutien s'inscrivant dans le long terme. Le principal objectif visé par l'UE en Afghanistan est d'aider le gouvernement à mettre en place un État viable, qui fonctionne et assure la sécurité, respecte l'État de droit et les droits de l'homme et encourage le développement.

2. Le Conseil salue les progrès importants qui ont été accomplis grâce aux efforts déployés conjointement par le gouvernement et le peuple afghans, d'une part, et la communauté internationale, d'autre part, en particulier en ce qui concerne la mise en place d'institutions politiques, ainsi que dans les domaines de la santé et de l'éducation.

3. Le Conseil prend néanmoins note des problèmes qui subsistent, en particulier dans les domaines du développement et de la gouvernance, et des facteurs sous-jacents qui continuent de nuire au fonctionnement du gouvernement afghan, notamment la corruption et l'insécurité, et, liée à ces deux derniers, la drogue. Il est nécessaire que le gouvernement et la communauté internationale remédient à ces problèmes en s'appuyant sur le Pacte pour l'Afghanistan.

4. Le Conseil se réjouit dès lors de l'occasion qui sera offerte, lors de la Conférence de Paris, d'évaluer les progrès accomplis en Afghanistan et souhaite se concentrer sur les domaines ci-après.

5. Le Conseil demande au gouvernement afghan d'assumer une plus grande responsabilité dans la reconstruction et le développement. Le Conseil estime, par conséquent, qu'il convient de fournir la plus large assistance possible pour soutenir le gouvernement, par le biais de fonds fiduciaires multidonateurs ou de l'octroi d'un soutien budgétaire, en accordant toute l'attention voulue à la capacité d'absorption.

6. Le Conseil souligne qu'une plus grande implication de l'Afghanistan devrait s'accompagner de l'obligation de rendre des comptes. Il convient, d'urgence, d'accomplir des progrès en vue d'atteindre les objectifs de référence énoncés dans le Pacte pour l'Afghanistan, notamment de:

a. mettre en oeuvre une stratégie visant à lutter contre la corruption à tous les

niveaux, en recrutant, sur la base de leurs mérites, des agents compétents et crédibles pour les services publics et en mettant sur pied une administration plus efficace, davantage comptable de son action et plus transparente à tous les niveaux de gouvernement; cela implique d'assurer le bon fonctionnement d'un mécanisme indépendant de nomination des hauts fonctionnaires, comme convenu dans le Pacte;

b. renforcer les ressources et le pouvoir des structures gouvernementales infranationales, en s'appuyant sur les programmes nationaux qui donnent des résultats et sur le nouvel organe indépendant chargé de la gouvernance locale;

c. mettre en oeuvre la stratégie nationale de lutte contre la drogue, sous la direction du gouvernement afghan, ainsi qu'une stratégie efficace en ce qui concerne les moyens de subsistance au niveau rural.

7. En outre, l'UE, conjointement avec la communauté internationale, soutiendra sans réserve la stratégie nationale afghane de développement et la mise en oeuvre des priorités qui y sont énoncées, conformément à la déclaration de Paris sur l'efficacité de l'aide au développement.

8. Le Conseil souligne par ailleurs qu'il importe de réaliser, en pleine coordination avec le gouvernement afghan, une unité de vues au sein de la communauté internationale pour la poursuite d'objectifs communs, en assurant la cohérence entre la dimension militaire et la dimension civile. Dans ce contexte, le Conseil plaide en faveur d'un renforcement des capacités de la Mission d'assistance des Nations unies en Afghanistan (MANUA) et préconise notamment d'appuyer les efforts visant à étendre sa présence dans l'ensemble du territoire, en particulier dans le sud et dans l'ouest du pays. Le Conseil est favorable à un renforcement du rôle de M. Kai Eide, Représentant spécial du Secrétaire général des Nations unies pour l'Afghanistan, dans la coordination des efforts de la communauté internationale et souligne la synergie qui existe entre les objectifs poursuivis par la MANUA, l'UE et la Force internationale de sécurité en Afghanistan (FIAS).

9. Le Conseil rappelle que la promotion du respect des droits de l'homme, notamment de la liberté des médias, et de l'égalité entre les sexes relève au premier chef du gouvernement afghan, qui devrait soutenir pleinement le fonctionnement de ses institutions compétentes dans ces domaines, ainsi que la mise en oeuvre de ses obligations internationales en matière de droits de l'homme. Il conviendrait également de soutenir pleinement l'abolition de la peine de mort en Afghanistan. Il faudrait, dans un premier temps, rétablir un moratoire de fait sur la peine capitale.

10. Le Conseil souligne l'importance que revêt le processus démocratique en Afghanistan, en particulier dans la perspective de l'élection présidentielle, qui doit

avoir lieu en 2009, et des élections législatives prévues en 2010. L'UE est disposée à apporter son soutien à la préparation de ces élections. Le Conseil insiste également sur l'importance d'une extension de l'activité politique dans des conditions bien définies, prise en charge par les Afghans eux-mêmes.

11. La sécurité et l'État de droit demeurent des défis essentiels à relever pour que des progrès puissent être accomplis en Afghanistan. L'insécurité qui règne dans certaines parties du pays est accentuée par la faiblesse des institutions judiciaires et des forces de l'ordre. Le Conseil souligne l'importance que revêtent les programmes communautaires qui ont pour objectif d'aider l'Afghanistan à promouvoir l'État de droit en soutenant la réforme du secteur judiciaire. L'UE attire l'attention sur la nécessité d'adopter une approche cohérente en ce qui concerne le secteur de l'État de droit, en particulier pour ce qui est de l'interface entre les programmes communautaires de réforme du secteur judiciaire et les activités menées dans le secteur de la police.

12. Le Conseil réaffirme qu'il est déterminé à apporter une contribution importante à la réforme de la police, par l'intermédiaire de la Mission de police de l'UE en Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan), en respectant le rôle prépondérant des autorités afghanes et en travaillant en étroite coopération avec d'autres acteurs internationaux, en particulier les États-Unis. La mission EUPOL Afghanistan a progressé dans l'exécution de son mandat et est à présent déployée sur tout le territoire; son déploiement intégral est prévu pour juin 2008. Dans ce contexte, le Conseil tient également à saluer les contributions apportées par les pays tiers à la mission EUPOL Afghanistan.

13. Vu l'ampleur de la tâche, l'UE est déterminée à accroître considérablement les efforts qu'elle accomplit par l'intermédiaire de la mission EUPOL Afghanistan, l'objectif étant de doubler le nombre d'experts qui participaient initialement à la mission. Une telle augmentation de la taille de la mission devrait générer d'importantes capacités supplémentaires permettant de s'attaquer aux questions essentielles de la réforme de la police. En raison de l'environnement opérationnel éprouvant dans lequel se déploie la mission, une préparation minutieuse, une planification en temps voulu, la mise en place au préalable de capacités opérationnelles complètes, ainsi que la fourniture permanente d'un personnel de grande qualité, sont autant d'éléments qui revêtent une importance capitale.

14. Le Conseil est conscient de l'importance des travaux menés par le Conseil international de coordination de la police sur une vision commune, intégrée de la police afghane, à laquelle il conviendrait d'accorder la plus haute priorité.

15. Le Conseil estime que les bonnes relations avec les pays voisins sont

primordiales si l'on veut assurer la stabilité en Afghanistan, étant donné surtout le caractère multidimensionnel de certains problèmes tels que celui de la drogue. Pour cette raison, le Conseil continue à soutenir les efforts visant à améliorer les relations entre l'Afghanistan et ses voisins et à oeuvrer à la pleine intégration du pays dans des structures régionales.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0526_GAERC-Afganistan.pdf

Iran

► **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Baha'i arrests (21/05/2008)**

The European Union is deeply concerned by reports that Ministry of Intelligence officers arrested six members of the Baha'i faith in Tehran on 14 May, who are currently being held in Evin prison.

The EU reiterates its serious concern about the continuing systematic discrimination and harassment of the Iranian Baha'is on the grounds of their religion.

The EU calls on the Islamic Republic of Iran to uphold fully the right to adopt and practise a religion of choice, to end the persecution of the Baha'i community, and to release the detained individuals.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0521MZZ_Iran.html

Iran

► **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the imminent execution of Behnoud Shojaee and Saeed Jazee (23/05/2008)**

The EU is deeply concerned by the news of the imminent execution of Behnoud Shojaee and Saeed Jazee, who were convicted and sentenced to death for crimes committed when they were minors.

The EU notes that these juvenile death sentences are in direct contravention of the Islamic Republic of Iran's international obligations and commitments, as explicitly set out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both clearly prohibiting the execution of minors or people who have been convicted of crimes committed

when they were minors.

The EU urges the Islamic Republic of Iran to comply with International Law and to immediately halt the execution of Mr Shojaee and Mr Jazee and of all other juvenile offenders on the death row, taking in consideration alternative sentences for juvenile offenders.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0523MZZ_Iran.html

Iraq

► Council conclusions on Iraq (26/05/2008)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. The EU reaffirms its support to a secure, stable, democratic, prosperous and unified Iraq and reiterates its commitment to the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, where human rights are respected. It underlines its support for the central role of UN/UNAMI in Iraq and strongly encourages continued close cooperation between UNAMI and the Iraqi authorities on the implementation of UNSCR 1770.

2. The Council welcomes the visit to Brussels by Prime Minister Maliki and members of his government on 16 - 17 April and the opportunity to enhance the EU's political engagement with Iraq.

3. The Council welcomes the Expanded Ministerial Conference of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq in Kuwait on 22 April 2008 and underlines the importance of dialogue and cooperation between Iraq, its neighbours and regional partners. Constructive engagement of Iraq's neighbours and partners in the region remains essential to achieve peace and stability in Iraq and in the region as a whole. The Council encourages all neighbours and partners in the region to live up to the commitments made in the Final Communiqué of the Kuwait meeting and to strengthen their representation in Baghdad. The EU stands ready to support the neighbouring countries process and to provide its expertise where participants deem this helpful.

4. The Council also looks forward to the First Annual Review Conference of the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) in Stockholm, Sweden, on 29 May 2008. An EU Member State hosting the Annual Review Conference is a reflection of the EU's commitment to its partnership with Iraq. The Council urges strong Iraqi leadership and

ownership in the implementation of the ICI, Iraqi sector wide inclusiveness and broad involvement of the international community including Iraq's neighbours and partners in the region. It also

commends the progress made so far on economic aspects of the ICI, the passage of the Justice and Reconciliation, Amnesty, Provincial Powers Laws and the budget.

It encourages the Government of Iraq to make further progress in the political process and in national reconciliation. The EU will continue to develop a close co-operation and partnership with Iraq in accordance with the priorities indicated in the ICI and will do its utmost to assist Iraq in the implementation of the ICI together with the international community.

5. The Council underlines the importance of national reconciliation and welcomes initiatives of all parties to meet this end, including the 15-point statement issued by the Iraqi Political Committee for National Security. The EU encourages all parties to strengthen work in this area, consolidating the rule of law and national reconciliation.

6. The Council welcomes political agreement to hold provincial elections before the end of 2008 and strongly encourages the Government of Iraq and the Council of Representatives to adopt the necessary legislation and provide the funding in support of those elections. It also strongly encourages agreement on the hydrocarbon law as another important contribution towards national reconciliation. It expresses strong hope that the Constitutional Review Committee will be able to contribute to resolving outstanding issues. It welcomes the commitment of Iraq's political leaders to a government of national unity leading to further progress on the legislative and reform programme. It commends efforts made by the UN and others in solving issues related to the disputed internal boundaries.

7. The Council recalls that further improvements in the security situation in Iraq are central to the Government of Iraq's efforts to build a stable and prosperous state. It condemns all acts of terrorism in all its forms in Iraq and calls for the immediate cessation of all such acts. It supports the Iraqi Government's increasing efforts in combating terrorism and sectarian violence and to disarm militia forces.

8. **The Council expresses concern about the displaced Iraqis inside Iraq and Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries, in particular in Jordan and Syria.** It recalls the obligation of the Government of Iraq and the international community, as expressed at the Expanded Neighbours Ministerial Conferences, **to protect and assist displaced Iraqis inside Iraq and in neighbouring countries by addressing their immediate and foreseeable needs and ensure their safety.** It strongly encourages the Iraqi Government to use its resources to help

neighbouring countries to cope with the additional burden of refugees.

9. The Council expresses concern about the human rights situation in Iraq, and supports the work of the UNAMI in this field. The Council reiterates that it is essential for the Government of Iraq to protect and promote the human rights of all Iraqis, paying special attention to vulnerable groups such as children, women and persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities. Increased respect for human rights is essential to achieve reconciliation between Iraq's communities and sustain improvements in the security situation. The promotion and protection of human rights in Iraq will also greatly benefit from strengthening of the rule of law in general, including by ensuring the neutrality and inclusiveness of the Iraqi judiciary and security forces. The Council calls upon the Iraqi Government to suspend the practice of the death penalty as a step towards abolition.

10. The Council recalls its strong commitment to Iraq as reflected in the priorities set out by the GAERC on 19-20 November 2007 for future assistance to Iraq. Taking into account the €829 million already committed by the European Community in reconstruction and humanitarian support since 2003, the additional substantial contributions from EU Member States, and the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, the EU:

- commits to provide further assistance to basic services and to strengthen Iraqi institutions and capacities to unlock Iraq's own resources;
- welcomes the substantial progress on the negotiations on the Trade and Cooperation Agreement and states its determination to conclude negotiations as soon as possible, thereby establishing the first contractual relationship between the EU and Iraq;
- aims to enhance energy co-operation in the mutual interest of the EU and Iraq;
- notes the significant diplomatic EU presence in Baghdad, including the EC Delegation, and expresses intentions for further strengthening the EU presence;
- looks forward to enhancing the current political dialogue at ministerial and senior official level with Iraq, including through regular meetings, and building on the mutual desire to take such a dialogue forward;
- **underlines the importance of establishing a system of rule of law and a culture respecting human rights, welcomes the Commission's programme supporting the rule of law and justice sector and stresses the important role that the EUJUST LEX has played to this end;**
- underlines its readiness to consider ways to build on the significant contribution of EUJUST LEX when its mandate comes to an end;
- will explore possibilities to provide further expert assistance to the secretariat of the International Compact;
- accepts the invitation to the EU, including the Commission, to participate in the three

Expanded Neighbouring Countries of Iraq working groups on refugees, energy and security cooperation and coordination;

- **commits to provide further contributions to help alleviate the humanitarian situation of displaced Iraqis inside Iraq and Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries in particular in Jordan and Syria;**

- welcomes support from the Community budget provided already for the preparations for local elections scheduled to be held before the end of the year.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0526_GAERC-Iraq.pdf

Lebanon

► **EU Presidency statement on the “Doha Agreement”** (21/05/2008)

The Presidency of the EU welcomes the successful outcome of the Doha meeting led by Qatar and the Arab League. The agreement reached by the Lebanese parties in Doha, based on the Arab League's three point plan, which the EU has supported from the start, should enable to elect the new President of Lebanon.

This would be the first important step towards and the basis for the full resumption of the functioning of all democratic institutions of the state of Lebanon.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/May/0521MZZ_Doha.html

Lebanon

► **European Parliament calls for political solution in Lebanese crisis** (22/05/2008)

In the aftermath of the recent wave of violent clashes in Beirut, and the recent agreement on power-sharing in Doha, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on Lebanon. **The House welcomes the Doha agreement, and calls on all forces in the country to respect the Lebanese army and disarm. The resolution notes that "the security of the country and of all Lebanese people is dependent on the disarmament of all armed groups, especially Hezbollah."**

The Parliament's resolution, adopted by 520 votes in favour, 6 against and 13 abstentions, "welcomes the Doha Agreement reached by the parties

on the election of General Sleiman as President of the Republic in the coming days, the creation of a new National Unity government and the adoption of the electoral law." The House "invites all the parties involved to support the Lebanese army so that it can guarantee fully the functioning, security, law and order, sovereignty and stability of Lebanon," noting that "the security of the country and of all Lebanese people is dependent on the disarmament of all armed groups, especially Hezbollah."

The House reiterates its support for the UN forces in the country (UNIFIL), the international tribunal to try those who assassinated former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, and Commission and Council efforts to support reconstruction in Lebanon. The resolution also calls on Syria to "refrain from all interference that can have a negative impact on Lebanese internal affairs and to play a constructive role in seeking to establish stability in the country."

EP President Hans-Gert **Pöttering** made a declaration at the beginning of the voting session, saying: "It is with great relief as well as hopeful and sustained encouragements that we very warmly welcome, as the European Parliament is about to adopt a resolution on the matter, the solid and comprehensive agreement reached by the Lebanese political leaders in Doha. Stressing the positive reactions expressed by neighbouring states and other countries concerned, the European Parliament calls on all the parties to fully implement the agreement. We reiterate our unfading support to the legitimate and constitutional Lebanese political institutions and to the Lebanese army, as well as to their efforts in ensuring Lebanon's stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity."

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-29651-140-05-21-903-20080521IPR29633-19-05-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

Lebanon

► **Council Conclusions on Lebanon (26/05/2008)**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. The Council welcomes the agreement reached in Doha on 21 May that has opened the path towards a full resumption of the functioning of all democratic institutions of the state of Lebanon. The Council welcomes the election of Michel Sleiman as President of Lebanon and looks forward to the full implementation of the Doha agreement based on the Arab initiative and on the principles enshrined in the Lebanese constitution and the Taif Accord.

2. The Council congratulates the parties concerned for their constructive approach and their will to engage in dialogue. It commends the efforts of the Arab League, in particular of the Committee of Foreign Ministers, under the leadership of the Emir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr al-Thani, and Secretary-General Amr Moussa, during both the mediation mission in Beirut and the negotiations in Doha, in ending the recent acts of serious violence and in helping the Lebanese leaders reach an agreement.

3. The Council reaffirms its solidarity with the people of Lebanon and its full support to the government and other democratic institutions. It also commends the Lebanese Armed Forces and their contribution to the stability of the country. It deplores the recent acts of violence in which over 70 people lost their lives and 250 were wounded. The Council reiterates its firm denunciation of all attempts aimed at undermining peace and stability in Lebanon, in particular through the use of force and in this regard it welcomes the agreement reached by the parties in Doha to ban the use of weapons and violence as a means to settle disputes, irrespective of their nature and under any circumstances.

4. The Council recalls its commitment to the full implementation of UNSC Resolutions 1559, 1680, 1701 and 1757 and in this respect looks forward to the start of work of the Special Tribunal. The Council also recalls previous statements and remains determined to reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, unity and stability.

5. The Council welcomes the holding of the International Donor Conference on the reconstruction and recovery of Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp and its surrounding area, which will take place in Vienna on 23 June 2008.

[http://www.eu2008.si/en/News and Documents/Council Conclusions/May/0526 GAERC-Libanon.pdf](http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0526_GAERC-Libanon.pdf)

Middle East Process

- ▶ **Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process**
(26/05/2008)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. The EU reaffirms its commitment to support the parties in the ongoing negotiations on all outstanding issues, including all final status issues, with a view to concluding a peace agreement before the end of 2008 as agreed in Annapolis last November. These negotiations must urgently press ahead. In this context, the EU also welcomes the recent meetings of the Quartet principals including with Arab foreign ministers and of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee of 2 May in London. The EU re-emphasizes the continued and constructive

involvement of Arab partners and the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative as a major element in moving the Middle East Peace Process forward. The Council recalls that peace in the Middle East requires a comprehensive solution and in this regard welcomes the announcement that Syria and Israel have agreed to initiate peace negotiations under the auspices of Turkey.

2. The EU underlines the urgent need for swift and tangible results on the ground in order to sustain Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Action from both sides to implement their Roadmap obligations in parallel to the negotiations is vital in order to retain the confidence and support of the Israeli and Palestinian populations, the region and the wider international community.

3. The EU is deeply concerned by recent accelerated settlement expansion. The EU reiterates that settlement building anywhere in the occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, is illegal under international law. Settlement activity prejudices the outcome of final status negotiations and threatens the viability of an agreed two-state solution. It reiterates its call on Israel to freeze all settlement activity including natural growth, and to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001. 4. The EU condemns the continued firing of rockets from Gaza on southern Israel including the recent attack in Ashkelon and all other activities which are contrary to international law and endanger civilians. While recognising Israel's legitimate right to self-defence, the EU calls for an immediate end to all acts of violence. The EU urges all parties to ensure the protection of affected civilians in accordance with international law. The EU continues to support Egyptian efforts to bring about a cessation of violence and a solution that will allow for the reopening of all crossings.

5. The EU calls for the progressive removal of Israeli restrictions on movement and access in order to improve the situation on the ground and living conditions in the West Bank and revitalise the Palestinian economy. The EU welcomes as a step in the right direction the decision to remove a limited number of roadblocks but underlines the fact that much more remains to be done.

6. The EU remains deeply concerned about the unsustainable humanitarian situation

in Gaza. It reiterates its call on all parties to work urgently for the controlled reopening of the crossings in and out of Gaza for both humanitarian reasons and commercial flows. In this context, it calls on Israel to fulfil its obligations regarding the uninterrupted provision of fuel and electricity supplies, as well as that of all other humanitarian assistance. It condemns the attacks from Gaza against the crossing points and terminals and their negative consequences on the delivery of humanitarian aid and fuel. It reiterates its readiness to resume its border assistance mission at the Rafah crossing point as soon as conditions allow under the provisions of the relevant international agreements related to Access and Movement concluded in November 2005.

7. The EU remains committed to assisting Palestinian state-building efforts across a broad range of areas. It welcomes the Palestinian Authority's efforts to develop an effective and reformed security sector and encourages ongoing efforts towards the fulfilment of its Roadmap obligations in this field. In this regard, the Council expresses its full support to the international conference in support of Palestinian civil security and the rule of law to be hosted by Germany on 24 June 2008. It has decided to expand the EUPOL COPPS mission to support the criminal justice sector namely in the fields of the judiciary and the penitentiary, in co-operation with international partners. It welcomes the recent package of measures agreed by the Quartet Representative with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities, aimed at enhancing both economic activity and the capacity of Palestinian Authority security forces, by improving their ability to operate freely. It emphasises the importance of early implementation of these measures. The Council also welcomes the success of the recent Palestinian Investment Conference in Bethlehem in taking forward the economic development agenda.

8. The EU underlines the need to deliver on pledges made at the International Donor's Conference for the Palestinian State in Paris last December. In this context, it highlights the importance of keeping the institutions of the Palestinian Authority running in the second half of 2008, for which additional budget support is urgently needed. As the largest contributor of financial assistance to the PA, the EU calls on other donors to increase their budget support to the PA, with due regard for equitable burden sharing.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0526_GAERC-BliznjiVZh.pdf

THEMATIC

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

EXTERNAL RELATIONS & DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ISSUES

EU / UN REFORM

Lisbon Treaty

- ▶ **Slovenian Presidency welcomes the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by the German parliament (23/05/2008)**

Slovenian Presidency welcomes the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in the German parliament. Until now, the Treaty has been endorsed by the parliaments of Hungary, Slovenia, Malta, Romania, France, Bulgaria, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Portugal, Denmark, Austria, Latvia and Lithuania. Today, it was also approved by the Upper House of the German parliament. Thus, it has been ratified by one half of the Member States.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0523SVEZ-lizbona_nem_ija.html

MISCELLANEOUS

Fight against discrimination

- ▶ **MEPs call for comprehensive legislation to combat discrimination (20/05/2008)**

The European Parliament adopted a report calling on the Commission to adhere to its commitment to propose a "comprehensive directive" to combat any discrimination in access to goods and services on grounds of sex, race, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation. The own-initiative report adopted with 362 votes in favour, 262 against and 56 abstentions, also demands effective sanctions and support for victims.

Speaking in the debate Liz Lynne (ALDE, West Midlands, UK), called for comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. "We must move away from the piecemeal approach, there can be no hierarchy of discrimination. A new directive must cover discrimination to access and services on all grounds that have not been covered as yet under Article 13 legislation: disability, age, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Race and Gender are already covered, as is employment. The Commission made the commitment to a comprehensive directive in its work programme for 2008: There appears to be some backtracking on this and they might only bring forward legislation on disability and nothing else, this is not acceptable. Every EU citizen must be treated equally."

A comprehensive directive to end hierarchy of protection

The report on the progress made in equal opportunities and non-discrimination adopted on Tuesday reminds the Commission of its commitment to put forward a comprehensive directive to outlaw discrimination in goods and services on all grounds - covering disability, age, religion or belief and sexual orientation - "to complete the package of anti-discrimination legislation".

Discrimination on grounds of gender, and racial or ethnic origin is already covered by two existing directives. Parliament calls for "putting an end to the hierarchy of protection against different grounds of discrimination". It would not "make sense to outlaw discrimination in one area whilst allowing it in another", they say.

Defeat for attempt to block further EU legislation

An amendment tabled by the EPP-ED group which deplored discrimination but said that "a non-specific directive prohibiting discrimination" was not "the appropriate tool for dealing with the complex needs of individuals" was defeated with 284 votes in favour to 371 against.

Combat all forms of discrimination

MEPs stress that any new directive would have to prohibit all forms of discrimination, including direct and indirect discrimination, in all areas that fall under EU competence as well as education, lifelong learning, social protection and social security, housing and healthcare, images of discriminated groups in the media and advertising, physical access for people with disabilities to information, telecommunication, electronic communications, transport modes and public spaces, social advantages and access to and supply of goods and services which are available to the public.

The report also states that future legislation has to include specific provisions to

combat multiple discrimination "which can be invoked on either one or a combination of more than one of the grounds".

Differences in treatment based on nationality or language which may constitute indirect discrimination is also included in the report.

Deficiencies in implementation of existing legislation

Moreover, the Parliament is concerned about the deficiencies in the transposition and implementation of the existing directives on equal treatment in employment and occupation (Directive 2000/78/EC) and of persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin (Directive 2000/43/EC) by some Member States. MEPs, therefore, urge the Commission to continue pressure on Member States through infringement and non-compliance procedures to fully transpose these directives as soon as possible.

Effective sanctions and assistance for victims

Sanctions against a violation of national provisions must be "effective, proportionate and dissuasive", say MEPs. They recall that the burden to act is often on the victim to challenge the perpetrator "often with neither support from any public authority nor access to public funding for legal aid". Therefore, "Member States should ensure that victims of discrimination are automatically assisted in legal proceedings, if necessary by public funding through national legal aid schemes", says the report.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/014-29032-140-05-21-902-20080516IPR29016-19-05-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

Human Rights of people with disabilities

- ▶ **“The full enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities is an important contribution towards a fairer society,” says Slovenian Minister Marjeta Cotman (22/05/2008)**

The full enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities is an important contribution towards a fairer society, pointed out the President of the EU Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, Slovenian Minister Marjeta Cotman, at the conference on the human rights of persons with disabilities, organised under the Slovenia EU Council Presidency by the Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs in cooperation with the European Commission. **The core theme of the conference is the political implementation of the UN**

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, focusing on the progress made by European policy in its implementation.

"Ratification of the Convention within the European Union and the launch, at the same time, of the procedure for the adoption of a Directive prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities will clearly show that the European Union has already reached a level of development that allows it to assume the responsibilities of a world leader also in the affirmation of human rights of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. It will thus meet the expectations of the more than 50 million people with disabilities and their family members in the European Union," said Council President Marjeta Cotman. The Conference is intended to bolster activities aimed at ensuring equal opportunities and preventing discrimination against persons with disabilities.

"The full enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities is an important contribution towards a fairer society. Today's conference is one of the milestones in combating discrimination against persons with disabilities and in achieving equality and equal rights for them at Member State and EU level," underscored Mrs Cotman.

Persons with disabilities constitute the largest minority in the world: according to United Nations data, there are over 650 million persons with disabilities worldwide and, in Slovenia, approximately 165 000. If we add the immediate family members of the disabled to this figure, almost 25% of the world population interfaces directly with disability. Experts point out that, thanks to advances in medicine and increased life expectancy, the number of people with disabilities will increase in the coming decades. Accordingly, the scope of services and programmes needed by persons with disabilities is expected to broaden.

The conference entitled 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – From Words to Reality?' is focusing on the practical implementation of the Convention, living in the community for persons with disabilities, employment and accessibility in the broader sense.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities entered into force on 3 May 2008. By 30 March 2007, it had been signed by 127 countries and ratified by 25. Slovenia was the third European Union Member State to ratify it.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0522MDDSZ_Cotman.html

► **Violence against the Roma goes beyond Italy say MEPs**
(20/05/2008)

Recent violence against the Roma in Italy prompted MEPs to put this issue on its agenda for Tuesday and debate it with the Commission. **MEPs called on Member States to enforce respect for fundamental rights and to facilitate the inclusion of the Roma in society.**

European Commission representative Vladimír ŠPIDLA "vehemently condemned the atrocities against the Roma", and asked the authorities of all Member States to "guarantee their security", pointing out that the previous week's events "are not an isolated case". "Racist violence feeds on populism, as we have seen in many Member States", he said, declaring that "it is the very meaning of European Union to overcome racist hatred, pogroms and destruction by fire".

The Commissioner observed that "the EU and Member States must do their utmost to improve the social inclusion of the Roma and also reiterated that Community law guarantees that Romanian citizens "enjoy the same freedoms as those of other countries of the Union, and that the Commission "will ensure that their rights are respected".

"The situation of the Roma is terrible everywhere in Europe", not just in Italy, said Livia JÁRÓKA (EPP-ED, HU). "All governments are to blame, of right and left, because they have not succeeded in promoting the integration of the Roma in society", she continued, adding that "this is a question that should not be over-politicised (...) it is important that the Italian government should do its best to combat discrimination and not expel the Roma from Italy".

For Martin SCHULZ (PES, DE), "the left, like the right, shares common values" here, and "one cannot touch the dignity of human beings". He too noted that the problem "arises not only in Italy but also everywhere else in the Union, and this is because we have been unable to integrate our minorities". "We must strive to say that the Roma need action by all European citizens to enable them to integrate (...), and I consider that the Roma cannot be victims of those who want to run a right-wing populist policy", he declared.

"I congratulate the Commission on its very fine speech here, said Viktória MOHÁCSI (ALDE, HU). Returning from a visit to Italy, the MEP said that "during the election campaign, a number of stereotypes were used against the Roma, which made them scapegoats. We are now seeing the result of this campaign". She felt that "the Italian government is hard on the weak and weak with the strong: when there are difficulties,

rather than taking on the Camorra, it blames the Roma, instead of tackling the real problems".

"This Parliament is not the place for polemics against such a government. What has happened is hard acts, acts of racism (...). Legislation must give us the solution: the rules must be respected, all the rules. Including those against squatting and forcing children to beg", commented Monica FRASSONI (Greens/EFA, IT).

The European Parliament "would have done better to monitor this harmonised fear which seems to be creeping into all European countries", said Cristiana MUSCARDINI (UEN, IT), adding that "when other countries were shooting at third country nationals, Italy did not allow clandestine migrants to drown in its territorial waters".

"There is a directive (that of 2004) that must apply to all", said Roberto MUSACCHIO (GUE/NGL, IT), adding that "we reiterate this to the current government, whose first acts were scandalous". He noted that "mobility is part of European citizenship" and asked that the Roma be granted the status of a "transnational European minority". He also criticized "those who use fear for electoral ends".

For Gerard BATTEN (IND/DEM, UK), "what is happening is an example of the clash of rivalries", provoked by "putting in place an international state". Whilst criticizing "ethnically motivated atrocities", he urged listeners to "think of the realities engendered by the presence of so many immigrants", since "Europe no has no frontiers". He asked that "each country be able to have the immigration policy that it wishes, according to its needs".

Luca ROMAGNOLI (NI, IT) asked whether the "Spanish socialists" knew "how many crimes can be attributed to nomads" in Italy. He also asked the Union to "create a Roma state in the East, where they could govern themselves autonomously".

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/019-29256-140-05-21-902-20080519IPR29255-19-05-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

Children's rights

- ▶ EU General Affairs and External Relations Council welcomes study

on children in armed conflicts (26/05/2008)

Within the European Security and Defence Policy, the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council today welcomed a study on children in armed conflicts. In this context, the President of the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, underlined the general importance of this subject. "It is not only that children are the most vulnerable group or that their tragic destiny most affects our conscience; these very children, our future generations, are also our greatest hope for peace, stability and development," said Dr Rupel. **The Slovenian Presidency thus has devoted special attention to the further development of instruments in the area of development policy, human rights and crisis management, as well as to the mutual and complementary use of these instruments by strengthening "inter-pillar" cooperation.**

In the **development area**, the study of the European Centre for Development Policy Management highlights the complexity of this issue and contains concrete proposals for future action.

As regards **human rights**, efforts are directed toward updating the ***EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict***; in addition, national strategies for EU activities in six new priority countries are being prepared.

In the area of **crisis management**, an attempt was made to round off the efforts undertaken by amending the *Checklist for the Integration of the Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict into ESDP Operations* and by a conference organised in cooperation with non-governmental organisations, which was devoted to overall implementation and field action. The European Commission also underlined the special role of children in external relations.

"The situation in Congo and the recent escalation in Sudan, to mention only a few examples, clearly indicate that children in armed conflicts are a problem which exists here and now. And the problem concerns regions where the European Union is engaged, both politically and operationally. Our efforts must, therefore, continue. This is a complex issue which requires a long-term vision and tangible efforts. To the benefit of children, our discussions must be supported by real action," stressed the Slovenian Foreign Minister.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0526GAERC_Otroci.html

... **Children's rights**

► **Council Conclusions on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in the European Union's external action - the development and humanitarian dimensions (26/05/2008)**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. Promoting and protecting the rights of the child through the EU's external action is part of the EU's commitment to promote human rights using all available instruments.

2. The Council has established a framework for a comprehensive EU approach towards the protection and promotion of the rights of the child in third countries, that also takes into account the full implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action and the Beijing Platform for Action, both of which contain provisions regarding the rights of children and adolescents: **the EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child and the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. The EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child spell out the priorities and objectives of, and operational tools for, EU action, and elaborate on implementation, monitoring, reporting and assessment. They provide a holistic and universally applicable view of the rights of the child, support the mainstreaming of the rights of the child in EU policy and action, and are the basis for worldwide respect, promotion, protection and fulfilment of the rights of the child. There are also commitments relating to children in the framework of EU relations with geographical regions and international and regional organisations.**

3. Consequently, the Council affirms the importance of a comprehensive and integrated human rights-based approach towards the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, as embodied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its two optional protocols, encompassing all areas of EU external action. **The EU is committed to actively examine how it can best achieve this goal using available instruments in all different formats of political dialogue between the EU and its Member States and third countries, trade negotiations, development cooperation, humanitarian aid and action in multilateral fora.** In this context, the Council welcomes the Commission Communication: A Special Place for Children in EU External Action and its attached staff working documents.

4. **The Council underlines its commitment to supporting the fight against all forms of child labour. The Council also emphasises the need for EC negotiations and EU agreements with third countries to promote the ratification**

and compliance with the ILO Conventions on Child Labour and contribute to the elimination of all forms of child labour. The Council underlines the importance of dialogue with partners on child labour issues, and **calls on the Commission to analyse the impact of positive incentives on the sale of products that have been produced without using child labour and to examine and report on the possibility of additional measures, including trade related measures, on products that have been produced using the worst forms of child labour, in compliance with WTO obligations.** The Commission is also asked to examine how Corporate Social Responsibility, codes of ethical conduct and other actions can help ensuring transparency, including by informing consumers how products are made.

5. The European Consensus on Development includes the rights of the child in the development activities under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda and the economic, social and environmental dimensions of poverty eradication in the context of sustainable development. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid highlights the specific attention required to meet the needs of vulnerable children. **The Council has decided to provide further guidance on specific commitments in relation to the development and humanitarian dimensions.**

Further information are available on

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0526_GAERC-pravice_otrok.pdf

Council of Europe / Commissioner for Human Rights in France

► Human Rights Commissioner Hammarberg on official visit to France (19/05/2008)

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, will carry out a high-level visit to France starting on Tuesday 20 May **to assess a broad range of human rights issues including prison conditions, precautionary detention (*retention de sûreté*), juvenile justice and migrants' rights.**

During the visit, the Commissioner will meet with Justice Minister Rachida Dati, Immigration Minister Brice Hortefeux and Human Rights Secretary of State Rama Yade. Mr Hammarberg's agenda also includes meetings with the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights, the national Ombudsman, the Ombudsman for children and representatives of civil society.

Commissioner Hammarberg will travel to Paris, Lyon and Strasbourg to visit two prisons, a detention centre for migrants and a Roma settlement. He will also discuss

the proposal to establish a Defender of Fundamental Rights, as well as the overall system of human rights protection in France and the need to reinforce independent police control mechanisms.

Mr Hammarberg will also follow up on his January visit to the detention centre for migrants in Roissy to assess measures undertaken to guarantee respect for the rights of asylum-seekers and irregular migrants.

The visit is part of the activities carried out in accordance with the Commissioner's mandate to assess the implementation of human rights commitments by all Council of Europe member states.

[https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=PR357\(2008\)&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=DC&BackColorInternet=F5CA75&BackColorIntranet=F5CA75&BackColorLogged=A9BACE](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=PR357(2008)&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=DC&BackColorInternet=F5CA75&BackColorIntranet=F5CA75&BackColorLogged=A9BACE)

OMCT-Europe aisbl **World Organisation Against Torture - European Office**

Rue du Marteau 19
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
tel/fax: +32.2.218.37.19
mail: omcteuropa@omct.org
website: www.omct.org

OMCT-Europe is the European Office of the World Organisation Against Torture (French acronym OMCT), based in Geneva and today the largest international coalition of NGOs fighting against torture, summary executions, forced disappearances and all other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.