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OMCT-Europe Weekly Newsletter 2006 No. 2, 23-29.01.2007

REGIONS:

AFRICA

2776th General Affairs and External Relations Council Meeting

► Council Conclusions on Somalia (22/01/07)

1 The EU believes that a window of opportunity exists for a sustainable solution to Somalia's difficulties. It considers that the current momentum should be seized by all parties in order to reach a durable political settlement that will enable Somalia to achieve lasting peace, development and prosperity.

2. The EU, however, remains concerned by the current situation of the reconciliation process and in particular the impact on it by recent events, including the vote of the Transitional Parliament under state of emergency to remove the Speaker of the Transitional Parliament. The EU urges the resumption of the full functioning of political institutions and civil society, as soon as possible.

3. The EU remains concerned about **the humanitarian situation, and the difficulties faced by humanitarian organisations working in Somalia in recent years. Access for relief organizations must not be hampered. The EU urges neighbouring countries to do all they can to help in this regard. The EU will continue to provide humanitarian assistance. It urges all parties to end violence and to respect international law, including human rights and humanitarian law.**

4. The Council welcomes past and ongoing efforts aiming at reducing tensions, including those of the African Union (AU), of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and its chair and of the League of Arab States.

5. The EU recalls its already substantial support for the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs), which are now gradually establishing their authority on the whole of Somalia. The EU calls on the TFIs to solve their internal differences and to reach out to all Somalis of good will, in a spirit of national reconciliation. It is of the utmost importance to ensure that all key stakeholders – including clan elders, Islamic leaders, and representatives of the business community, civil society and women – are engaged in an inclusive political and institutional process on the basis of the Transitional Federal Charter. The EU calls for the establishment of conditions allowing the Parliament to resume political activities.

6. An inclusive broad based political process will offer the basis for further international support to stabilisation, already authorised in principle by UNSC Resolution 172. International assistance could support the development and implementation of plans for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR). A stabilisation force would facilitate the functioning of inclusive institutions and the reconciliation process. The EU takes note of the decision of the Peace and Security Council of the AU of 19 January 2007 to authorise the deployment of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), for a period of

six months, and welcomes the current efforts of the AU and member states to identify possible troop providers.

7. The EU stands ready to offer financial support for AMISOM within the framework of a concerted and global international effort stressing the importance of an all-inclusive political dialogue and genuine reconciliation as the basis for stability and the important role of the UN in facilitating longer-term stabilization in Somalia. To this end, the EU is ready to consider positively the scope to provide support through the 15 million EUR from the African Peace Facility for AMISOM as soon as the necessary requirements are met, including authorization by the UN. The EU invites the AU also to explore other possible sources of funding for the continued financing of the stabilisation force.

8. The EU, as Somalia's biggest aid donor, will continue to provide assistance for reconstruction in Somalia, and to strengthen TFIs capacity to implement the Transitional Federal Charter and engage in SSR and DDR activities on the basis of the National Security Stabilisation Plan. However, a genuine political process of reconciliation and sustainable all-inclusive institutions are essential for reconstruction efforts and the foreseen donor round table to be effective."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/92480.pdf

2776th General Affairs and External Relations Council Meeting

► Council Conclusions on Sudan (22/01/07)

"1. The Council remains greatly concerned about the security, humanitarian and human rights situation in Darfur, which is clearly intolerable. It condemns the continuing ceasefire violations by the parties to the conflict and denounces in particular air strikes against civilian targets carried out by the Sudanese Air Force, such as the bombing of villages in North Darfur on 29 December and on January. Stressing the urgent need for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the Council demands that all parties refrain from any form of violence against civilians and organisations providing humanitarian assistance. The Council expects the Sudanese authorities to fulfil its responsibility to provide effective protection to all the citizens and to put an end to impunity in Darfur.

2. An inclusive political process is a condition for sustainable peace in Darfur. To this end, the EU expresses its full support to the efforts of UN Special Envoy Jan Eliasson and AU Special Envoy Salim Salim to revive the political process. The Council urges the parties to the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) and the non-signatories to enter in good faith into negotiations. The Council reconfirms the EU's readiness to continue contributing to these efforts, as well as its support for the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC).

3. An effective and comprehensive cease-fire would inspire confidence in the political process. The Council urges that all parties respect their ceasefire commitments, recalling that UN Security Council Resolution 1591 (2005) determines that those impeding the peace process shall be held responsible and appropriate measures shall be taken accordingly. The Council also reiterates the importance of involving the non-signatories to the DPA in the effective monitoring of the ceasefire and welcomes the efforts by the AMIS Force Commander in this respect.

4. The Council welcomes as an encouraging step the letter of 23 December 2006 from the President of the Republic of Sudan to the United Nations Secretary-General. The EU expects the Government of Sudan, on the basis of an unequivocal acceptance of the full implementation of the UN support packages for the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and in close cooperation with the AU and the UN in the framework of the tripartite mechanism, to work for an early implementation of the light and heavy support packages and finalisation of

the preparations for the hybrid force. The Council expresses its readiness to consider further measures notably in the UN framework against any party which obstructs its implementation.

5. Similarly, the Council encourages the AU and the UN to finalise as soon as possible the necessary plans for the deployment of the hybrid force. In this respect, it looks forward to the appointment of the Joint Special Representative.

6. The EU reaffirms its commitment to continuing support for AMIS in the transition period leading to the agreed hybrid force in Darfur and confirms the extension of the EU civilian-military supporting action to AMIS for a period of up to six months, from 1 January 2007. The Council urges other countries and organisations to provide additional financial and material support for AMIS.

7. The EU welcomes **the decision of the UN Human Rights Council to send an assessment mission to Darfur. It urges the President of the Human Rights Council to accelerate the selection and deployment of an independent and credible team. The EU expects the Government of Sudan to fully cooperate with the mission.**

8. The destabilising effects of the Darfur conflict in the wider region, in particular in Chad and in the Central African Republic, are of continuing concern to the Council. All parties should stop all support for rebel movements active in the region. The EU notes that Central African and Chadian authorities have indicated agreement to a UN presence on their territory and is looking forward to further UN recommendations.

9. The Council notes the second anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which set an end to the armed conflict in Southern Sudan and reconfirmed its full support to the peace process. While important milestones of the CPA have been achieved, the Council observes with great concern that crucial provisions have not yet been implemented and calls on the parties to urgently restore confidence in the agreement by taking effective steps to speed up its implementation."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/92474.pdf

AMERICAS

ASIA

India

► Human rights situation of the Dalits in India (25/01/07)

Parliament will vote on a resolution from the Development Committee on the human rights situation of the Dalits in India. The committee welcomes the various provisions in the Constitution of India for the protection and promotion of the rights of Dalits.

The National Human Rights Commission of India has reported that the implementation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act remains very unsatisfactory, and whereas it has published numerous recommendations to address this problem.

The resolution notes however that, in spite of these provisions, implementation of laws protecting the rights of Dalits remains grossly inadequate, and that atrocities, untouchability, illiteracy, inequality of opportunity, manual scavenging, underpayment of wages, bonded labour, child labour and landlessness continue to blight the lives of India's Dalits.

The Development Committee expresses its concern at the low rate of conviction for the perpetrators of such crimes and calls on the Government of India to improve its criminal justice system in order to facilitate registration of charges against perpetrators of crimes against Dalits, to increase the conviction rate for such perpetrators, to significantly reduce the duration of court procedures; and to take special measures for the protection of Dalit women.

The committee calls on the Government of India to take urgent steps to ensure equal access for Dalits to police stations and all other public institutions and facilities, including those related to its democratic structure such as panchayat buildings and polling booths.

MEPs in the committee urge the Government of India to engage further with relevant UN human rights bodies on the effective elimination of caste-based discrimination, including the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the UN Special Rapporteurs assigned to develop Principles and Guidelines for the Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent. **MEPs in the committee call on the Government of India to ratify the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and to take preventive measures to reduce the risk of Dalits facing torture, to take legal measures to criminalise torture in India, to take punitive measures to prosecute police who commit torture, to consistently provide rehabilitation and compensation for torture victims and to put in place an independent complaints mechanism for victims of torture that is accessible to Dalits.** The Development Committee notes with concern the lack of substantive EU engagement with the Indian Government, notably within the EU-India Summits, on the vast problem of caste-based discrimination. The committee urges the Council and the Commission to raise the issue of caste-based discrimination during EU-India Summits and other meetings as part of all political, human rights, civil society, development and trade dialogues and to inform the committees concerned of the progress and outcome of such dialogues. Lastly, the committee urges the European members of the Joint Action Committee to develop dialogue on the problem of caste-based discrimination in terms of its discussions on democracy and human rights, social and employment policy and development cooperation.

[Click here](#)

Motion for a resolution on the human rights situation of the Dalits in India

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/briefing_page/1972-031-01-05-20070116BRI01971-31-01-2007-2007/default_p001c004_en.htm

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

Turkey

- **OSCE: Statement by the European Union on the assassination of the Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink (26/01/07)**

647th Meeting of the Permanent Council

On 19 January 2007, the Presidency of the European Union released a statement on the assassination of the Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink which I would like to quote here in full:

“The Presidency was shocked to learn of the assassination of the respected Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in Istanbul. Hrant Dink was a courageous man whose journalism was marked by his strong commitment to democracy and freedom of expression and who was prepared to take great personal risks for his work. He always strove to present a balanced picture and avoided

provoking confrontations. He staunchly supported the democratic reforms in Turkey. As a result, Hrant Dink was held in high esteem in various sections of Turkish society, as well as in Europe.

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

In this context, we are impressed by the efficiency with which the law enforcement agencies have pursued the matter, and by Prime Minister Erdogan's statement that the attack was directed against "freedom of thought and democratic life" and would not achieve this aim.

The European Union recalls that it has in the past called for the removal of article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code as has the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. The EU hopes that this tragic event will result in an even stronger commitment to the reform process in Turkey.

The European Union may choose to return to the issues raised by this case at a later point in time.

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Statements_in_International_Organisations/January/0126OSCEDink.html

Belarus

- **OSCE: Statement by the European Union on the Belarus Helsinki Committee** (26/01/07)

647th Meeting of the Permanent Council

The European Union has learnt with deep regret that the Belarus Helsinki Committee has been ordered by the Presidential Administration's property management department to vacate its office in Minsk by the end of this week. The Presidential Administration's department notified the termination of the rental agreement and refused to let other vacant rooms to the Committee. This follows the seizure on 5 December 2006 by Belarusian court authorities of equipment owned by the Belarus Helsinki Committee. The Committee is facing not only eviction from its premises but also the loss of its legal address which could lead to the closure of this, the last remaining human rights NGO registered in Belarus.

The EU also remains very concerned at the request of the Belarusian Ministry of Justice to the Supreme Court of Belarus **to suspend the activities of the Belarus Helsinki Committee for alleged tax evasion in connection with the EU TACIS Programme.** TACIS is exempt from taxation and custom duties according to an agreement signed in 1994 between the European Commission and Belarus.

The EU recalls its previous statements delivered in the Permanent Council on the situation of the Belarus Helsinki Committee. We value the work of this NGO, which plays an important role in promoting in Belarus the principles embodied in OSCE human dimension commitments.

Therefore the EU calls again upon the Belarusian authorities to immediately cease their campaign of harassment against an independent civil society, in breach of their OSCE and other international commitments, and urges them to reconsider the eviction order served on the Belarus Helsinki Committee.

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Statements_in_International_Organisations/January/0126OSCE.html

Lebanon

► **EU Presidency Statement on the violent clashes in Lebanon** (23/01/07)

The Presidency of the European Union is following with great concern the violent clashes in Lebanon, which today claimed at least one life and caused numerous injuries. It appeals to all parties to refrain from all forms of violence and to do everything they can to prevent the escalation of the situation. The current crisis in Lebanon can only be resolved through intra-Lebanese dialogue, by upholding democratic processes and by respecting the democratic legitimacy of the country's institutions.

The European Union, together with its partners, is working tirelessly to ensure a peaceful, stable and prosperous future for all people in Lebanon. It will reinforce this commitment at the Paris conference on Lebanon's reconstruction. The success of the conference must not be jeopardized.

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/January/0123AALibanon.html

THEMATIC :

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

EXTERNAL RELATIONS & DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ISSUES

EU Parliament

► **Arms exports: MEPs want curbs on deadly trade** (23/01/07)

MEPs have given strong backing to report that aims to ensure greater control of the worlds legal and illegal arms trade. Globally, the world spends 15 times more money on arms than on international aid. Much of this is sold to countries that have poor human rights records. A quarter of the trade in small arms - like Kalashnikov rifles and grenades - is illegal. With a third of all arms exports coming from the European Union, MEPs have shown they think the Union has a duty to act.

Meeting last week in their Plenary session in Strasbourg, MEPs adopted an own initiative report on arms exports by Spanish Green MEP Raül Romeva.

The report demands that the EU review the human rights records in arms importing countries and continue the arms embargo against China. It also recommends drawing up a list of countries involved in armed conflict to which arms should not be sold to avoid fuelling the conflict.

Support for new UN Arms Treaty

In terms of what the EU can do internally. The report suggests making the 1998 non-binding "Code of Conduct on Arms exports" legally enforceable. The Code should also be extended to private security companies. The Union should also give full support to the UN's proposed International Arms Trade Treaty, which is currently in the early stages of discussion in the General Assembly.

During last week's debate before the vote in support, Mr Romeva referred to the "fundamental contradictions between arms dealings and the Code of Conduct". **In particular he noted the sale of arms to places with poor human rights records like China, Colombia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Indonesia, Israel and Nepal – places often cited in resolutions by the Parliament which condemn their human rights records.**

Other MEPs who spoke in the debate called for the EU not to become a victim of its own irresponsibility by selling arms. They also drew attention to the contrasting amount of money spent on education and healthcare.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/026-2333-015-01-03-903-20070123STO02332-2007-15-01-2007/default_en.htm

EU Parliament

► Ban Ki-moon and Poettering hold talks in Parliament (25/01/07)

Wednesday saw the UN's new Secretary General hold talks with Parliament's President Hans-Gert Poettering. They held a wide ranging discussion on the role of the UN, the Middle East and in particular continued efforts to find what Mr Poettering called a "lasting peace" in the Israel-Palestinian dispute. Mr Ban was in Brussels to meet leading EU figures en route to a donor's conference on Lebanon in Paris and visits to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Kenya.

Poettering speaks of "shared objectives" of EU and UN

During his time in Brussels Mr Ban expressed his "profound admiration" for the EU's role in the international community. In particular he praised its commitment to "peace and prosperity, protection of human rights, combating climate change and the fight against terrorism". At their meeting President Poettering said he was "convinced that the European Union needs to have a strong voice and presence in international affairs". He noted that the Parliament has always been "a forceful defender of human rights and the dignity of the human person - an objective that we share with the United Nations".

UN, EU working closely in the Balkans/DR Congo

Cooperation between the EU and UN in the international sphere has increased in recent years. They have worked strongly together in the Balkans, specifically Bosnia and Kosovo - where stabilisation and rebuilding have been key. The EU organised extensive police training in the region. In the Democratic Republic of Congo they have also worked together. During the elections there in November the EU sent 2,400 troops to the region - they joined the 17,000 UN troops deployed there. The Parliament also sent a team of election Observers. Last week MEPs voted to back a report on arms exports that strongly supported the UN's proposal for an International Arms Trade Treaty to curb the illegal arms trade. The EU's 2003 "Security Strategy" committed itself to conducting security, peacekeeping operations under the auspices of UN resolutions. The EU has by its nature a very multilateral approach to conflict resolution in international relations. This was followed by an EU-UN joint declaration on "cooperation in crisis management" in late 2003.

UN previously honoured by MEPs with Sakharov prize

Both men are in the first few weeks of their new posts. Ban Ki-moon became the eighth Secretary-General of the UN on the 1st January, whilst Hans-Gert Poettering became the Parliament's 26th President on 16 January.

Four years ago MEPs honoured The UN's staff and its then Secretary-General Kofi Annan by awarding them jointly the annual Sakharov prize for freedom of thought.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/030-2407-022-01-04-903-20070125STO02406_2007-22-01-2007/default_en.htm

EU Parliament

► EP to debate and vote on resolution on a moratorium on the death penalty (25/01/07)

MEPs will debate the moratorium on the death penalty after hearing statements from the Council and the Commission. The House is also due to vote on a resolution on this subject.

During the last plenary session in Strasbourg, MEPs adopted a resolution condemning the verdict of the Criminal Court in Libya on 19 December 2006, convicting, in a re-trial, and sentencing to death five Bulgarian nurses, Kristiana Vulcheva, Nasya Nenova, Valentina Siropulo, Valya Cherveniyashka and Snezhana Dimitrova, and one Palestinian doctor, Ashraf al-Haiui, who have already spent eight years in prison in connection with the 1999 HIV/AIDS case at the Benghazi hospital.

The recent execution of Saddam Hussein and others in Iraq, and the existence of the death penalty in countries outside of the EU are likely to be debated. The EU consistently promotes abolition of the death penalty under guidelines established in 1998. Last December, the EU presented a statement on the death penalty in the UN General Assembly, which was signed by 85 countries from all geographical groups. In February it will actively participate in the third world congress against the death penalty in Paris.

In October 2003, (under the last legislature), the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the initiative in favour of a universal moratorium on the death penalty in the context of the UN. The House urged the EU institutions and the Member States to make every endeavour in the political and diplomatic spheres to ensure the most appropriate support for this resolution within the UN General Assembly.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/briefing_page/1972-031-01-05-20070116BRI01971-31-01-2007-2007/default_p001c003_en.htm

2776th General Affairs and External Relations Council Meeting

- ▶ **Council Conclusions on Middle East 2776th EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting (22/01/07)**

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

1. The Council expresses its full support for President Abbas and his continued efforts for national unity. It calls on all Palestinians to support these efforts and to end internal violence. The EU stands ready to work with a legitimate Palestinian government that adopts a platform reflecting the Quartet principles.

2. The Council welcomes the meeting between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas on 23 December 2006 and emphasises the need for prompt implementation of commitments made at this meeting. It takes note of the partial transfer by Israel of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues. It calls for the early resumption of the 2005 Sharm-el-Sheikh understandings. The Council expresses the hope that this meeting will be the first in a series of meetings in the framework of a renewed political process, which should lead to meaningful negotiations on the final status. The ultimate goal should be an end to the occupation that began in 197 and the creation of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state, living side-by-side with Israel and its other neighbours in peace and security.

3. The Council calls on the parties to consolidate the cease-fire in Gaza and to extend it to the West Bank. It condemns the continued firing of rockets into Israeli territory and urges the Palestinian leadership to do everything in its power to put an end to such acts. While commending Israel for its present restraint concerning Gaza, it calls for an end to Israeli military interventions in the West Bank.

4. The EU calls for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier and commends efforts, including by partners in the region, to that effect. It also calls for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators detained in Israel.

5. The EU stresses the importance of strengthening the Palestinian institutions. It will continue to pursue practical and visible measures, including on access and movement, governance, the security sector and a functioning administration. It welcomes the extension of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) for three months, which – in coordination with the Office of the President – is providing essential relief to a large part of the Palestinian population. It reiterates its call on Israel for the immediate transfer of all withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues. It encourages Israel to consider to do so through the TIM. The Council recalls the utmost importance of the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access and in this regard reiterates its continued commitment to the EU Border Assistance Mission in Rafah. It urges that Rafah and all other crossing points, notably Karni, be re-opened and remain open.

6. The EU is deeply concerned about the recent authorisation of settlement activities by the Israeli government, and the ongoing construction of the barrier on Palestinian land. These developments are contrary to international law and the Road Map. The Council calls on Israel to desist from any action that threatens the viability of an agreed two-state solution. Settlement activities in and around East-Jerusalem as well as in the Jordan valley are of particular concern. The EU will not recognise any changes to the pre-197 borders other than those agreed by both parties.

7. In this context, the EU emphasises its determination to play an active role in the framework of increased Quartet engagement, with a view to urgently put in place a political and diplomatic process offering a political perspective in the quest for a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict, in line with the Road Map and the relevant UNSC resolutions, and also taking into account the Arab League Beirut Declaration. The Council underlines the need to work closely with the parties and regional partners. In accordance with the Road Map, the Quartet, in consultation with the parties, should in due course convene an international conference to realise these goals. At this critical moment, the Council looks forward to an early meeting of Quartet principals.

LEBANON

1. The Council welcomes the international conference in support of Lebanon and the Lebanese people due to take place in Paris on 2nd of January 2007 and stands ready to support it notably through the European Neighbourhood Policy. The EU is actively contributing, in close coordination with the Lebanese government, to the full success of the Conference. The Council commends the ambitious Programme on Recovery, Reconstruction and Reform adopted by the government of Lebanon on January 4th, 2007. The EU also welcomes the decision by the Lebanese Government to adopt the ENP action plan; this opens the path to further intensify cooperation in support of Lebanese national priorities. The Council recognises the need for international assistance, financial and otherwise, to complement the efforts of the Lebanese government to lay a sound foundation for a sustainable and equitable economic and social development in Lebanon.

2. The EU stresses that a solution to the current political deadlock is of the utmost importance for the stability and development of Lebanon and in the interest of all Lebanese people. Such solution should be sought only through dialogue and with full respect for the democratic institutions of the country. In this respect, the Council expresses its appreciation for the mediation efforts by the Secretary General of the Arab League.

3. The Council reiterates its call for the immediate release of the two abducted Israeli soldiers.

4. The Council reaffirms its determination to reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. It urges Israel to stop violation of Lebanese airspace by the Israeli Air Force. The Council calls on Syria and other countries in the region to refrain from interfering in the domestic affairs of Lebanon. They must actively engage in the stabilisation of Lebanon. The Council commends the assistance provided by UNIFIL to the Lebanese armed forces to extend control by the government of Lebanon over all Lebanese

territory, in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1701. It reconfirms its full support to the efforts of Prime Minister Siniora and the legitimate and democratically elected government, aimed at maintaining dialogue with all political actors in Lebanon and at tackling the important challenges it is facing, in particular fully implementing UNSC Resolution 1701 and the other relevant UNSC resolutions, establishing the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1664 and reconstructing the country."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/92487.pdf

2776th General Affairs and External Relations Council Meeting

- ▶ **Council Conclusions on the Death Sentence against five Bulgarian nurses and one Palestinian doctor in Libya** (22/01/07)

The Council of the European Union expresses its grave concern over the unacceptable verdict of the Criminal Court in Libya, on 19 December 2006, convicting and sentencing to death in a re-trial, five Bulgarian nurses and one Palestinian doctor who have already spent almost eight years in prison in connection with the HIV/AIDS case at the Benghazi hospital in 1999. First and foremost this verdict ignores strong evidence from world-renowned international experts as to the innocence of the defendants.

Furthermore, as a matter of principle, the Council reiterates its position that the EU opposes capital punishment under all circumstances. The Council expects an urgent conclusion of the judicial process according to internationally accepted standards. While recalling its conclusions of 11 October 2004, the Council expects the Libyan authorities to ensure that a positive, fair and prompt solution is brought to this case, leading expeditiously to the release of the medical workers. In this context, the relations between the European Union and Libya can further develop.

The European Union continues to demonstrate its compassion and solidarity with the plight of the HIV/AIDS infected children and their families in Benghazi. It recalls the success of the EU Action Plan for Benghazi, launched as a purely humanitarian measure, and the establishment of the Benghazi International Fund, which is ready to be activated."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/92490.pdf

2776th General Affairs and External Relations Council Meeting

- ▶ **Council Conclusions concerning the negotiation of a new enhanced Agreement between the EU and Ukraine** (22/01/07)

"1. The Council and the Commission recall that the European Union has acknowledged Ukraine's European aspirations and has welcomed Ukraine's European choice in the Council conclusions and in the EU-Ukraine Action Plan, both adopted on 21 February 2005. The EU recognises and welcomes the progress Ukraine has made in consolidating democracy.

2. The Council and the Commission declare that:

- The European Union maintains its strong commitment to supporting Ukraine's political and economic reforms, aimed at further strengthening democracy, stability and prosperity in the country, and wishes to reinforce this commitment through a new enhanced Agreement;
- Through this Agreement, the European Union aims to build an increasingly close relationship with Ukraine, aimed at gradual economic integration and deepening of political co-operation;
- A new enhanced Agreement shall not prejudice any possible future developments in EU-Ukraine relations.

3. The Council and the Commission recall the conclusions of the European Council of 14-1 December 2006 reaffirming its resolve to strengthen the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in order to consolidate a ring of prosperity, stability and security based on human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the Union's neighbourhood."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/92469.pdf

EU / UN REFORM

MISCELLANEOUS