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- March , 19, 20 2007

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- March , 19, 20, 2007

Committee on budgetary control

- March , 26, 27, 2007

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REGIONS:

AFRICA

Côte d'Ivoire

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU concerning the signing of the political agreement in Côte d'Ivoire (09/03/2007)**

The European Union welcomes the signing of the political agreement on 4 March 2007 in Ouagadougou between the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and the Secretary-General of the New Forces. It commends the mediation by President Blaise Compaoré, President-in-office of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States).

The European Union calls upon the signatories to the agreement and the other actors in the Côte d'Ivoire crisis to take decisive action to implement the recommended measures so that the peace process defined in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1721 may be relaunched.

In order to bring the crisis in the country to a rapid end, the European Union calls on the parties to make progress on the crucial issues, namely: identification of the population, DDR (Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration) and the holding of free, democratic and transparent elections as soon as possible.

The European Union will continue to accompany Côte d'Ivoire on the path towards consolidation of the peace process.

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/March/0309Elfenbeinkueste.html

Sudan

- ▶ **EU Presidency Statement on the killing of two AMIS soldiers in Sudan/Darfur (08/03/2007)**

The Presidency of the European Union strongly condemns the attack on a team of the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and the subsequent abduction and killing of two Nigerian AMIS soldiers in Graid, Darfur, on 5 March, which was apparently perpetrated by elements of Minni Minawi's faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement. The Presidency offers its condolences to the families of the two soldiers.

The Presidency joins the African Union in calling on the leadership of the Sudan Liberation Movement to fully cooperate with AMIS in investigating the crime and bringing the perpetrators to justice. The Presidency reiterates that it considers any attack against AMIS to be an intentional violation of the existing ceasefire agreements and the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. In this context, the Presidency recommends that the Cease Fire Commission should transmit its reports to the Sanctions Committee established by UN Resolution 1591.

The killing of the two AMIS soldiers underlines the urgent need for all parties in Darfur to commit themselves to an immediate cessation of all fighting and violence and to work for a political solution to the conflict.

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/March/0308Sudan.html

AMERICAS

ASIA

Lesotho

- ▶ **EU Presidency statement on the appointment of the new Prime Minister and the swearing-in of the new Government in Lesotho** (05.03.2007)

The Presidency welcomes the peaceful conduct of the National Assembly elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho which concluded with the appointment of the new Prime Minister and the swearing-in of the new Government last Friday (2 March).

The elections, whose peaceful conduct and good organization by the Independent Electoral Commission deserve recognition, is another major step towards consolidating the country's democratic structures. The Presidency hopes that even more citizens will cast their votes at the next elections in 2012.

The Presidency notes with satisfaction that the parliamentary elections went off successfully and is confident that any challenges to the outcome will be pursued solely in the courts. The fact that Lesotho's parliamentary elections went off peacefully once more is exemplary.

The Presidency wishes the new Parliament and the new Government every success and urges the people of Lesotho to further the country's democratic process with commitment.

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/March/0305Lesotho.html

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

Georgia

- ▶ **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU concerning the recent so-called "Parliamentary elections" in Abkhazia, Georgia on 4 March 2007** (05.03.2007)

The European Union reiterates its full support for the territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders and emphasises that it does not recognise the legitimacy of the so-called "Parliamentary elections" held in Abkhazia, Georgia, on 4 March 2007 and of the local elections held on 11 February 2007.

The European Union holds the view that elections in this region of Georgia can only be valid after all refugees and internally-displaced persons are given the right to a safe, secure and dignified return to their homes.

The European Union urges the parties concerned to immediately resume negotiations in order to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict.

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/March/0305Abchasien.html

Turkey

► **European Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström meets Turkish leaders to discuss the situation of women** (06/03/2007)

On 7-9 March, Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the European Commission, responsible for Institutional Relations and Communication Strategy, will visit Ankara and Istanbul. The visit coincides with the International Women's Day.

Speaking ahead of her visit Mrs Wallström said: "My key objective for this visit is to underline the need for more dialogue between the institutions and civil society in the EU and Turkish society. This will be the first visit of this kind for the Commission- with the specific aim to raise profile for the rights of women, women's role in society and in the work place.

We need more mutual understanding – in the EU on what the modern Turkey really is; in Turkey on what EU membership really entails. Otherwise we risk a clash of ignorance's on both sides".

In Ankara, Ms Wallström will meet senior representatives of the Turkish government: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Mr Abdullah Gül Deputy Prime Minister Abdüllatif Şener, Minister of Economy and Chief Negotiator with the EU Mr. Ali Babaçan. In the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, she will meet Chairman of the Family, Health, Labour and Social Affairs Committee Mr. Cevdet Erdöl and members of the Committee, as well as, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee Mr Mehmet Dülger and Committee members.

In Istanbul, Ms Wallstrom will take part in a seminar with academics, NGOs and students at Bilgi University on women's rights. She will also visit a Community Centre for women and children in Tarlabasi. The centre is a response to the needs of one of Istanbul's most impoverished neighbourhoods. It targets marginalized urban people affected by rural and urban migration, internally displaced from the South East of Turkey, Roma, illegal immigrants from Africa.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/285&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

Egypt

► **EU-Egypt: European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan adopted** (06/03/2007)

At its meeting today in Brussels, the 3rd EU-Egypt Association Council has adopted the EU-Egypt Action Plan under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) which will set the agenda for the EU-Egypt cooperation for the next 3-5 years. In a separate decision, the Association Council has established eight sub-committees and one working group, under the EU-Egypt Association Agreement, to follow up the implementation of the Action Plan and to take stock of the progress made. The Action Plan sets out the priorities for co-operation in a wide range of sectors jointly agreed between the EU and Egypt. These are based on Egypt's own reform agenda in the economic, social and political areas. The EU will support implementation of the Action Plan with a substantial €558 million assistance package, announced last week by Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner during her visit to Egypt^[1]. It is expected that this package will also help attract lending for investment of an estimated €250 to 300 million, bringing the total value of the Commission support to around €800 million for the period 2007-2010. This demonstrates the EU's commitment to support Egypt in its national priorities and reforms.

Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner emphasised: *"I am delighted that we have today adopted the EU-Egypt ENP Action Plan, which places Egypt among the closest partners of the European Union. The Action Plan opens a new chapter in our relationship, deepening our partnership in a number of key fields of interest to us both, such as the judicial and political areas, economic and social programmes, as well as cultural and people-to-people dialogue."*

She added: *“It is important now that the Action Plan achieves concrete, measurable results, and is seen as relevant to all elements of Egyptian society. Implementation is therefore a key priority on which we will be working together in the years ahead.”*

The EU-Egypt ENP Action Plan will be a key element in reinforcing EU–Egypt relations, underpinning political, economic and social reform in Egypt. With the adoption of this Action Plan, Egypt and the EU agree to enter into intensified political, security, economic, trade, investment, scientific, technological and cultural relations, with shared responsibility for establishing an area of peace and stability, including the prevention and settlement of conflicts in the region and reinvigorating regional and sub-regional cooperation.

Implementation of the priorities will be jointly monitored through eight new expert-level sub-committees, under the Association Agreement: internal market; industry, trade, services and investment; transport; environment and energy; information society and audiovisual, research and innovation, education and culture; agriculture and fisheries; justice and security, customs co-operation; political matters: **human rights and democracy**; international and regional issues. In addition, the Association Council has also established a working group on migration, social and consular affairs.

The Commission will provide financial and technical backing for the implementation of the Action Plan priorities, in particular through the EU twinning instrument.

Background

The European Neighbourhood Policy aims to intensify relations and promote progressive integration between the European Union and its neighbours. The ENP offers economic and social benefits for the countries that border the EU, through co-operation in a range of areas from strengthening democracy, promoting rule of law, and upholding human rights, to trade liberalisation, energy, and transport development. The EU and its neighbours mutually agree on Action Plans which set ambitious objectives based on joint ownership, common interests and shared values, reciprocal commitments and differentiation. The Action Plans support the implementation of partners' own national plans and reform programmes, politically, economically, socially and institutionally.

The funding instrument to support these reforms is the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). Egypt will benefit from a €558 million financial assistance package for the period 2007-2010.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/284&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Iraq

- ▶ **EU Presidency statement on the series of attacks on Shia pilgrims in Iraq** (06/03/2007)

The Presidency of the European Union is deeply shocked by the series of attacks carried out on Shia pilgrims in Iraq today (6 March), killing more than 100 people, many of them women and children.

The Presidency utterly condemns these attacks. It would like to express its sympathy to the victims' families and wishes those injured in the attacks a speedy recovery. The Presidency calls on all Iraqi groups to take a firm stand against violence. Lasting stability can only be achieved in Iraq if there is a comprehensive process of national reconciliation.

The international conferences on Iraq planned for the coming weeks can contribute towards this. The European Union will continue to support the Iraqi Government in its reconstruction and stabilization efforts.

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/March/0306Irak.html

Iraq

- ▶ **EU Presidency Statement on the planned Iraq conference** (11/03/2007)

The Presidency of the European Union welcomes the Iraqi Government's initiative to hold a conference with Iraq's neighbouring States at which other members of the international community will participate.

The international community, and in particular the States in the region, have a responsibility to support and promote the difficult process of national reconciliation and stabilization in Iraq. There must be an end to the violence, terror and lawlessness in Iraq. The European Union reiterates its willingness to support the Iraqi Government in this task.

Yesterday's preparatory meeting in Baghdad was a necessary step on the path towards improved regional cooperation. It is now important that the planned ministerial conference map out this path clearly so that it leads to constructive dialogue between all the parties involved. The Presidency is willing to play an active part in this process.

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/March/0311Irak.html

THEMATIC :

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EU / UN REFORM

MISCELLANEOUS

Gender equality

- ▶ **European Commission proposes a European strategy to promote gender equality in development cooperation** (08/03/2007)

Equal opportunities and equal access to resources for both men and women is key to sustainable development. With the European Strategy to promote gender equality in development cooperation adopted today, the Commission translates into practice the EU commitment to put gender equality at the heart of its development policy. The strategy suggests concrete actions in five key areas for the promotion of gender equality: governance, employment, education, health and domestic violence. It provides guidelines on how to improve gender mainstreaming in development policy and shows the potential of budget support for the promotion of gender equality.

Commissioner Louis Michel said today: "To eradicate poverty, we must give women and men in developing countries equal opportunities and support them to achieve equal access to resources. To make development policy deliver better results, gender issues must be considered more thoroughly at all stages when conceiving such policy, inside the EU and in the dialogue with partner countries."

Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner said: "Women's rights are not a side issue, but central to the future prosperity of any developing country. We support gender equality at all levels - in countries' own national strategies, through work with civil society, parliaments and media. Inequality is not only morally wrong. Neglecting the contribution that half the population can make is an error no country can afford."

Background:

Equal opportunities and equal access to resources for both men and women is a key to sustainable development. In Africa, for instance, women constitute 52% of the total population, but contribute 75 % of the agricultural work and produce and market 60 to 80 % of food. By contrast, over two-thirds of the world's illiterate are women, girls are about 11% less likely than boys to attend secondary school in developing countries. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women earn only 10% of income and own only 1% of assets. Marginalisation of women is also present in decision-making: although women constitute half of the electorate, only 12% of parliamentary seats are held by women. Health statistics show a most dramatic gender gap. In sub-Saharan Africa 60% of HIV-positive adults are women and among young people, 75% of the newly infected with AIDS are girls.

As part of a series of EU policy initiatives aiming to coordinate better the development assistance of Member States and the Commission, the 'Communication on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development Cooperation' draws up for the first time a European strategy for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. To this end, the European Strategy acts on three fronts:

Firstly, it provides 41 concrete suggestions in the areas of governance, employment, education, health and **domestic violence** as examples for how gender equality can best be supported in a specific region or country.

Secondly, the strategy suggests increasing the efficiency of gender mainstreaming in political dialogue with partner countries through the establishment of effective partnerships for a dialogue on gender and development. This includes governments, the civil society, academia and international organisations. Gender issues must also be mainstreamed more effectively in development cooperation itself. This requires that the key role of women for growth and development is better taken into account in the preparation and implementation of development strategies. To make sure that gender issues are more effectively integrated into each development project, the strategy proposes checklists to evaluate each action against its contribution to gender equality. The European Union already has a vast track-record of best practice examples for development projects addressing gender equality. The European Commission has made available for instance 2.8 million EUR per year under the thematic programme for gender equality since 2004.

Thirdly, the strategy explores the added-value for gender equality of support to the general budget of developing countries or to specific sectors such as health or education as opposed to individual project support. Budget support ensures that partner countries develop higher ownership for results and thus are also more sensitive to gender issues. It strengthens public finance management systems and promotes a wider dialogue on the partner countries' policy priorities.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/310&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

International Women's Day

- ▶ **Chancellor Merkel calls for more progress on gender equality at opening of CoR/EESC photo exhibition** (08/03/2007)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel marked the start of International Women's Day (8 March) and her first summit as chair of the EU Presidency by calling for more progress on gender equality. Speaking at the opening of a photo exhibition on great European women at the headquarters of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) organised together with the Goethe Institute, Mrs Merkel said there were still too few women in top management jobs, in the science field and in national parliaments.

(...)

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=CES/07/18&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

International Women's Day

- ▶ **EP: Women politicians, the media and EU action on gender equality** (08/03/2007)

At a seminar on Women Politicians and the Media on 7 March, MEPs and journalists discussed different aspects of gender equality and diversity. The place of women in positions of leadership, in both politics and the media, was the main focus of the debate.

A round table between MEPs and journalists was chaired by Adriana Cerretelli, a journalist on the Italian newspaper *Il Sole 24 Ore*, who described women politicians as a "rare species". There are only 11 female heads of state or government in the world and even in Europe the figures are unimpressive. In the EP, 236 of 785 Members are women but in Europe's national parliaments the situation is generally worse: Sweden ranks second in the world (behind Rwanda) for the proportion of women members but Italy lies in 62nd position and France 86th.

Women in politics

Parliament Vice-President Rodi Kratsa (EPP-ED, GR) described her own experience. While some female politicians had come to the European cause via women's issues, she had come to women's issues through her commitment to Europe, especially to a "social Europe". She believed that "the emergence of women in politics owes a lot to the feminist movement".

According to the co-chair of the Greens/EFA group, Italian MEP Monica Frassoni, "one of the weaknesses of women today is that they are unaware of suffering discrimination in political life." Quotas should therefore be introduced to ensure faire representation of women among political decision-makers. The only man on the panel, Raúl Romeva Rueda (Greens/EFA, ES), endorsed this view but warned against a purely quantitative approach saying it was important to focus more on "feminising politics". This implies a new vision of society in which the redistribution of roles between men and women goes beyond the world of political activity.

Generally it is men who decide the professional position of women because they hold the posts with responsibilities, stressed Lilli Gruber (PES, IT), a journalist and MEP. She was in favour of gender-based quotas for appointments to management positions. Manuela Gretkowska, who set up the Women's Party in Poland five months ago with the aim of changing society in a way outside the traditional ideological clichés, told the meeting of her own personal political experience. "We are trapped between two extremes", she said, "the committed feminists treat me as a conservative catholic but on the right I hear that I'm a baby-killer"

Women politicians in the media

"When they speak of women, they tend to speak of their life outside politics" more than they do with male politicians, was Rodi Kratsa's comment on the media. Monica Frassoni believed that if the image of women had deteriorated in the media in some countries, such as Italy, this was partly due to the failure of women to protest. At any rate, this is part of the problem although, as was emphasised by Anna Záborská (EPP-ED, SK), chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, advertising has also done much to instrumentalise women. She also criticised the fact that journalists "trivialise the commitment of women in politics"

Susan von Lojewski, a journalist at the German TV station ZDF, argued that women in the media are rarely given responsibility for "serious" topics such as defence or finance. They themselves often choose "softer" areas. According to Manuela Gretkowska, "despite support in opinion polls which is greater than that given by voters to two Polish parties represented today in the European Parliament, any information on us is turned into a joke".

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/014-3905-066-03-10-902-20070308IPR03904-07-03-2007-2007-false/default_en.htm

International Women's Day

► EP: International Women's Day: how long to 50/50? (08/03/2007)

The past and present of gender equality were discussed at a Women's Rights Committee seminar marking International Women's Day on 8 March. MEPs reviewed the achievements and persistent inequalities in women's rights and gender equality over the past 50 years, concluding that though much has been done, even more remains to be done. Participants included EP President Hans-Gert Pöttering, employment and equal opportunities Commissioner Vladimír Špidla and former Commissioner Anita Gradin.

The European Parliament has long attached great importance to women's rights, said President Hans-Gert Pöttering in opening the seminar, entitled "1957 - 2007: the European Union and the Advancement of Women. Women Building the Future of Europe". Yet times had changed, he continued, pointing out

that whereas in 1979, one had to fight to establish even an ad hoc committee on women's rights, by 1999 the task of promoting gender equality had been enshrined in the Amsterdam Treaty. Commissioner Špidla also stressed women's importance in European integration, saying that "there are not only founding fathers but also founding mothers".

Women's rights 50 years after signing the Treaty of Rome

Mr Pöttering voiced a broad consensus that "Over the last five decades we have achieved a great deal, nevertheless lots needs to be done." On the plus side, it was noted that the legislation in the EU provides for equality, that the share of women in the European Parliament has increased from 16% in 1970 to 30% in 2004 and that women's employment rates have almost doubled since 1970s. On minus side, participants noted that inequalities persist and that in the developing world the situation is far worse. MEP and former European Parliament President Nicole Fontaine pointed out that "if Member States would respect their commitments, we would not even need the Women's Day". Former Commissioner Anita Gradin, pointing to the seminar posters, demanded: "How long will it take before we get this 50/50?"

General concern was voiced over the pay gap and female poverty, women's under-representation in politics and trafficking in and violence against women and children. Council representative Ms Heidmarie Wieczorek-Zeul noted that 70% of world's poorest are women and that 130 million women worldwide are subject to genital mutilation. She concluded that "as far as inequality persists, we will find that 21st century has not got off on the right foot".

And what does the future hold?

Talking about Europe's demographic challenge caused by lower fertility rates, postponement of first pregnancies and aging, Ms Livia Sz Olah from Stockholm University argued that women's advancement has to be promoted, since: "Societies with higher level of gender equality appear to be in a better position to meet the challenge." The need for a greater role for women in the future, especially in the "Lisbon" jobs and growth strategy, was noted by Dr Serenella Mariani (Pharmaceutical group BRACCO S.P.A), who said that already now her company provides for maternity leaves, paid holidays for children, care for elderly and flexitime if needed in order to attract or keep female employees

MEP Raül Romeva Rueda (Greens/EFA, ES), felt that the only way forward is for men to assume their responsibilities in the reproductive area. He was also in favour of gender quotas in politics and believed that the Member States should put forward two candidates of different sexes for Commission President. Several other participants also admitted that even though they had been sceptical about quotas earlier, they now believe that these serve a purpose.

Ms Denitsa Zlateva, from International Affairs BSP Union for Parity and Solidarity, expressed the hope that by 2057 women will have equal access to political and economic power but she stressed that this can only be achieved "if we all share the vision, have the same goals and are willing to work together to achieve these goals".

Commissioner Špidla also appealed to everyone to contribute to the fight for equal rights, saying "It is not true that there are people who can make a difference and people who cannot. There are only people who are willing to do so or people who are not. Let our souls be an instrument for change!"

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/014-3782-066-03-10-902-20070305IPR03781-07-03-2007-2007-false/default_en.htm