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THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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## **PRESS RELEASE**

3041st Council meeting

### **Foreign Affairs**

Luxembourg, 25 October 2010

President

**Catherine ASHTON**

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and  
Security Policy

# **P R E S S**

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## **Main results of the Council**

*The Council discussed the situation in the **Sahel** and the role that the EU could play to help stabilize the region. It agreed to work closely with the states in the region, the United Nations, the African Union and other international partners in promoting security, stability, development and good governance in the region. It asked the High Representative, in association with the Commission, to draw up a strategy on the Sahel for the beginning of next year.*

*The Council discussed the situation in the **Middle East**, following the High Representative's visit to the region and her contacts with the parties involved in the peace process. It also took stock of the situation in **Lebanon**.*

*Ministers discussed recent developments in **Cuba** and asked the High Representative to explore the possibilities on the way forward for relations with Cuba.*

*The Council adopted further **restrictive measures against Iran**, as agreed in principle in July, targeting technologies related to Iran's nuclear and missile programmes. The restrictive measures comply with and go beyond the latest measures called for by the UN Security Council.*

*The Council also renewed restrictive measures against **Belarus** and the **Republic of Guinea**, and adopted conclusions with regard to the Republic of **Moldova**, **Uzbekistan**, **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and on the EU's **Eastern Partnership**.*

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<sup>1</sup> Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks. Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>). Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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Member

**ITEMS DEBATED****CUBA**

Ministers held an exchange of views, over lunch, on recent political and economic developments in Cuba and on the options for the EU's policy towards Cuba.

They welcomed the on-going release of political prisoners and expressed the hope that the process would lead to the release of all political prisoners in the country. They also welcomed the announcements regarding economic reforms, and considered that these should aim to improve the living conditions of the Cuban population.

Ministers agreed to start a reflection and to ask the High Representative, within the framework of the EU's common position on Cuba, to explore the possibilities on the way forward for relations with Cuba, and to report back to the Council as soon as possible.

The Council's aim is to identify the most effective way to promote EU values and interests in Cuba.

## **PREPARATIONS FOR FORTHCOMING SUMMITS**

Ministers held a brief discussion over lunch on preparations for:

- the EU-United States summit, in Lisbon on 20 November;
- the EU-Ukraine summit, in Brussels on 22 November; and
- the Union for the Mediterranean summit, scheduled for 20 and 21 November in Barcelona.

## **GEORGIA**

The High Representative reported over lunch on her recent visit to Georgia, during which she launched negotiations on an EU-Georgia association agreement.

Ministers discussed the situation in Georgia, as well as its relations with neighbouring countries and with the EU.



**SAHEL**

The Council discussed the situation in the Sahel region and the security risks it poses, both within the region and for Europe, as well as the role that the EU could play in helping to stabilise the region.

It adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. As the Council emphasised in its conclusions of 27 October 2009 and its declaration of 26 July 2010, the development of cross-border threats such as terrorism and organised crime, coupled with extreme poverty, unresolved internal conflicts and the weakness and fragility of the States concerned, constitutes a growing challenge for the stability of the region and for the European Union. These threats directly affect the local populations and States of the region, particularly Mauritania, Mali and Niger. They also have an impact on the security of European nationals.
2. In close cooperation with the States of the region, the United Nations, the African Union and other international partners, and in support of the efforts already undertaken by the Sahel States, the European Union, following up the work being done by the Commission and the Council Secretariat to formulate a holistic and integrated approach, intends to make use of various instruments at its disposal in a coherent way to foster security, stability, development and good governance in the Sahel-Saharan strip. The EU is also encouraging the strengthening of dialogue and cooperation between the countries of the region.
3. To this end, the Council invites the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in association with the Commission, to draw up a strategy on the Sahel for the beginning of next year."

**MIDDLE EAST**

The Council held an exchange of views on the Middle East, including on the situation in Lebanon.

The High Representative reported on her recent visit to the region and on her contacts in connection with the international community's efforts to encourage Israel and the Palestinians to continue their direct negotiations and keep the peace process on track.

## **EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY**

The Council held an exchange of views on the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy, as part of a review of the policy and a reflection on its further development.

The ENP review is expected to culminate in a ministerial conference together with the ENP partners in February 2011.

The Council also adopted conclusions on the Eastern Partnership set out in *doc. 15364/1/10*

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED****COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY****Restrictive measures against Iran**

The Council adopted a decision and a regulation implementing a fourth round of restrictive measures against Iran, targeting the development of sensitive technologies in support of Iran's nuclear and missile programmes.

The measures cover the areas of trade, financial services, energy and transport, and extend the list of entities and individuals subject to a freeze of assets and economic resources.

The package of measures was agreed in principle by the Council in July this year. They confirm the restrictive measures taken since 2007 and provide for additional measures in order to comply with UN Security Council resolution 1929 (2010). They also provide for measures in response to the European Council declaration of June 2010 calling for accompanying measures by the EU, which are in addition to and go further than the UN measures.

In particular, the restrictive measures include additional restrictions on trade in dual-use goods and technology, as well as equipment which might be used for internal repression, restrictions on trade in key equipment and technology for, and restrictions on investment in the Iranian oil and gas industry, restrictions on Iranian investment in the uranium-mining and nuclear industry, restrictions on transfers of funds to and from Iran, restrictions concerning the Iranian banking sector, restrictions on Iran's access to the insurance and bonds markets of the EU and restrictions on providing certain services to Iranian ships and cargo aircraft.

Additional categories of persons are also to be made subject to the freezing of funds and economic resources.

The restrictive measures will be published in the Official Journal on 26 October.

## **Restrictive measures against Guinea**

The Council extended the restrictive measures against the Republic of Guinea for a further year. The restrictive measures were first imposed on 27 October 2009 following the violent crackdown by security forces on political demonstrators on 28 September 2009 and the subsequent human rights violations.

They consist of an arms embargo and a visa ban aimed at preventing entry into EU territory of members of the National Council for Democracy and Development and individuals associated with them who were responsible for the violent repression or for the political stalemate in the country.

The measures will apply until 27 October 2011 and will be kept under constant review. The Council decision will be published in the Official Journal on 26 October.

## **Belarus - Restrictive measures against certain officials - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted a decision extending, until 31 October 2011, restrictive measures against certain officials of Belarus (laid down in common position 2006/276/CFSP), on account of the absence of tangible progress in areas identified by the Council ([14627/10](#)).

However, the suspension of travel restrictions imposed on certain leading figures in Belarus, with the exception of those involved in the disappearances which occurred in 1999 and 2000 and of the president of the central electoral commission, is also extended until 31 October 2011. At the end of that period, the Council will review the restrictive measures in the light of the situation in the country. The Council may decide to reapply or lift travel restrictions at any time, in the light of actions by the Belarusian authorities in the sphere of democracy and human rights.

The Council also adopted the following conclusions

- "1. The Council reiterates the importance of the EU's critical engagement policy towards Belarus and notes the continuation of high-level EU–Belarus political dialogue, the intensified technical cooperation and participation of Belarus in the Eastern Partnership, as ways of building mutual understanding and creating opportunities to address issues of concern. Recognising the importance of enhanced people-to-people contacts and recalling the Council Conclusions of 17 November 2009, the Council looks forward to receiving Commission proposals for the negotiating directives for visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Belarus.

2. The Council reaffirms its readiness to deepen its relations with Belarus depending on developments in Belarus towards democracy, human rights and the rule of law as well as its readiness to assist the country in attaining these objectives. Subject to progress in Belarus in these areas, it stands ready to take steps towards upgrading contractual relations with Belarus. The Council will continue its discussions on a joint interim plan to set the priorities for reforms, inspired by the Action Plans developed in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, to be implemented with Belarus. The EU could consider providing macro-financial assistance to Belarus, should the necessary preconditions be met, including the conclusion of a new program with the IMF.
3. Nevertheless, the Council remains concerned over the democracy and human rights situation in Belarus. It deeply regrets the lack of progress in the areas expressed in its previous conclusions, including the need for further reforms of the Electoral Code, the freedom of expression and of the media, the freedom of assembly and association. The Council looks forward to further rounds of Human Rights dialogue. Recalling the European Union's firm opposition to the death penalty, the Council deplores the execution of two Belarusian citizens carried out in March 2010, regrets the recent death sentences in Belarus and continues to urge Belarus to introduce a moratorium on the use of death penalty with a view to its abolition.
4. In the light of this situation, the Council is not able to lift the restrictive measures in place against certain officials of Belarus and therefore decides to extend them until 31 October 2011. However, in order to encourage progress in the areas identified by the EU, the Council decides at the same time to extend the suspension of the application of the travel restrictions until the same date. At the end of that period, the Council will review the restrictive measures in the light of the situation in Belarus. The Council may decide to reapply or lift travel restrictions at any time, in light of actions by the Belarusian authorities in the sphere of democracy and human rights.
5. The EU will continue to provide support to Belarus' civil society in order to promote the development of a pluralistic and democratic environment in Belarus.

6. The Council takes note of the announcement that presidential elections in Belarus will take place on 19 December 2010. It calls on the Belarusian authorities to ensure that the elections are conducted in line with international norms and standards for democratic elections and Belarus' commitments in the OSCE and the UN. The Council welcomes the decision by the Belarusian authorities to invite an OSCE/ODIHR-led international election observation mission and invites the Belarusian authorities to fully cooperate with the OSCE-ODIHR. It also urges the responsible Belarusian authorities to fully implement the recommendations repeatedly made by the OSCE/ODIHR. The EU will closely monitor the developments and assess the situation after the elections. Clear and visible progress in the conduct of the elections would give new impetus to the European Union's engagement policy towards Belarus."

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

#### **"BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

1. The Council welcomed the increased turnout and the orderly conduct of the 3 October elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which, according to the preliminary assessment of the OSCE/ODIHR and their International Election Observation Mission, were generally in line with international standards.
2. The EU reiterated its unequivocal commitment to the European perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also reaffirmed its unequivocal commitment to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country.
3. Fifteen years after the signature of the Dayton-Paris Peace Agreements, Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens deserve a qualitative step forward of their country on the path towards European integration.
4. The political leaders need now to engage constructively in a political dialogue and form new governments that will have the EU agenda at the heart of their programme.

5. The political leaders have the prime responsibility to achieve concrete and tangible progress, including on the road towards EU integration, in a spirit of compromise and collective constructive action, while refraining from divisive rhetoric and actions that would harm the interests of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina has already shown that it is able to deliver on commitments when the political will is there. The EU stands ready to offer its support for the urgently needed reforms, including through its future reinforced presence. Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot afford to lose more time.
6. Reiterating its support to the objective of visa liberalisation on the basis of fulfilment of all benchmarks and recalling the European Parliament's vote on this issue on 7 October, the Council underlined its intention to take a decision on 8 November.
7. Recalling its Conclusions of 25 January on Operation ALTHEA, the Council confirmed the EU's commitment to a continuing executive military role to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to maintain the safe and secure environment, under a renewed UN mandate; and, building on Althea's achievements, to the continuing provision of non-executive capacity-building and training support in order to contribute to strengthening local ownership and capacity. The Council agreed to keep the operation under regular review, including on the basis of the situation on the ground."

### **Republic of Moldova - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. The Council acknowledges the European aspirations of the Republic of Moldova and welcomes its efforts towards political association and economic integration with the European Union. It underlines the very positive dynamics in EU-Republic of Moldova relations during the last year as well as the active contribution of the Republic of Moldova to it.
2. The Council welcomes interest and active participation of the Republic of Moldova in the Eastern Partnership. It expresses satisfaction that negotiations on the future EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agreement are making very good progress. The Council also welcomes the ratification of the Rome statute of the International Criminal Court by the Republic of Moldova.
3. The Council welcomes the achievements of the Republic of Moldova as reflected in the Commission's Progress Report of May 2010, which highlighted the country's efforts to effectively implement structural reforms, based on a government programme fully aligned with the objectives of the EU-Republic of Moldova Action Plan. The Council looks forward to the Republic of Moldova continuing to address important challenges such as strengthening democracy and the rule of law, improving the investment climate, pursuing EU approximation in all areas of the EU-Republic of Moldova Action Plan, fighting corruption and organised crime, and tackling the problem of poverty. The Council stresses the EU's readiness to continue to deepen its relationship with the Republic of Moldova and to provide appropriate technical and financial assistance to support reform efforts.



4. The Council re-affirms the EU's readiness to continue to support the Republic of Moldova, including with macro-financial assistance and high-level advice to the government. Substantial macro-financial assistance - €90 million in the form of grants - will start being delivered to the state budget of the Republic of Moldova in the coming weeks.
5. The Council notes also that the Commission will deliver soon to the government of the Republic of Moldova its key recommendations in view of preparing the country for a deep and comprehensive free trade area. This will provide companies of the Republic of Moldova substantially improved access to the EU market, following the existing Autonomous Trade Preferences granted by the EU. This will also help to create an attractive investment climate for EU companies in the Republic of Moldova. The Council invites the Commission to prepare directives for a deep and comprehensive free trade area to be negotiated as an integral part of the Association Agreement. Such negotiations will start as soon as the necessary conditions are met.
6. The Council reiterates the importance of people-to-people contacts and welcomes the opening in June 2010 of the visa dialogue examining the conditions for visa-free travel of citizens of the Republic of Moldova to the EU as a long-term goal. On the basis of the exploratory phase of the dialogue, the Council underlines the achievements made so far, the existing challenges and the importance of further reform efforts by the Republic of Moldova, and invites the Commission to prepare a draft action plan, in line with the approach set out in paragraphs eight and nine of the Council Conclusions on the Eastern Partnership of 25 October 2010, setting out all the conditions to be met by the Republic of Moldova before the possible establishment of a visa-free travel regime, with a view to the visa dialogue entering a fully operational phase as soon as appropriate. Through the Council, EU Member States will be fully associated in the different steps of the process, including by being consulted on the draft action plan and both sets of benchmarks. The effective implementation of the readmission agreement will remain important in this context.
7. The Council notes that the Republic of Moldova has taken important steps during the past year in consolidating democracy. In this regard, the conduct of the constitutional referendum of 5 September in line with democratic standards was an encouraging sign. It is important that the parliamentary elections announced for 28 November take the country further forward on this path and fully meet international standards for free and fair elections.
8. The Council also welcomes the policy of constructive engagement of the Republic of Moldova in the Transnistria settlement efforts, including through the support of the Republic of Moldova to confidence-building measures. The Council underlines the continued efforts of the EU to contribute to a sustainable settlement of the Transnistria conflict, based on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. It re-affirms the EU's call for a resumption of official settlement talks in the 5+2 format as early as possible.

## Uzbekistan - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council has assessed the situation in Uzbekistan in the area of human rights, respect for democratic principles and the rule of law as well as the state of EU-Uzbekistan cooperation. The Council considers that substantial progress is still needed in order for the EU's relationship with Uzbekistan to reach its full potential.
2. The Council appreciates the constructive approach taken by the Uzbek authorities in response to the humanitarian crisis, which resulted from the spate of ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan in June. The Council encourages Uzbekistan to foster good neighbourly relations with Kyrgyzstan and other countries in the region, in particular by developing cross-border cooperation and people-to-people contacts, and thus contribute to the overall stability of Central Asia.
3. The Council welcomes the constructive cooperation between the EU and Uzbekistan in a number of areas, such as the Rule of Law Initiative, border management, education, environment and energy, including in the framework of the EU Strategy for Central Asia. In this context, the Council looks forward to progress on opening an EU Delegation in Tashkent which would allow for enhanced dialogue and contribute to strengthening cooperation.
4. The Council takes note of efforts made by the Uzbek authorities to address some of the serious shortcomings as regards the human rights situation in Uzbekistan, in particular, through enhanced cooperation with the EU, UN agencies, the OSCE and other international organisations in a number of key areas such as criminal justice reform, the fight against human trafficking, human rights education and prison reform. The Council welcomes the release of Mr. Sanjar Umarov, the encouraging cooperation by the Uzbek authorities with the EU on concrete projects in the field of judiciary reform, as well as their expressed interest in developing cooperation to combat torture.

5. The Council, however, remains seriously concerned by the overall situation regarding human rights, democratisation and the rule of law in Uzbekistan and by the lack of substantial progress in the areas of concern outlined in the Council conclusions of October 2009. The Council calls on the Uzbek authorities to urgently undertake effective measures to make progress in those fields, in particular by releasing all imprisoned human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience, allowing unimpeded operation of non-governmental organisations in the country, cooperating fully with all relevant UN Special Rapporteurs, guaranteeing freedom of speech and the media, proceeding with practical implementation of conventions against child labour and by fully aligning its election processes with international standards. The Council reiterates the EU's readiness to assist the Uzbek authorities in these efforts and to share EU experience, particularly through the EU-Uzbekistan human rights dialogue.
6. The Council recalls the willingness of the EU to strengthen relations with Uzbekistan in a comprehensive manner, as set out in previous Council conclusions, and underlines that the depth and quality of the cooperation and dialogue at all levels continue to depend on Uzbek reforms and progress in the areas mentioned above. The Council will continue to follow the situation in Uzbekistan closely."

## **COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY**

### **Protection of Civilians in CSDP missions and operations**

The Council approved revised guidelines on the protection of civilians in missions and operations under the EU's common security and defence policy.

The revised guidelines replace guidelines from 2003 on the protection of civilians in EU-led crisis management operations. They assess the extent to which protection concerns and implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1894 (2009) are considered during planning and conduct of CSDP missions and operations.