



Brussels, 15 May 2009

BACKGROUND¹
GENERAL AFFAIRS and EXTERNAL RELATIONS COUNCIL
Monday 18 and Tuesday 19 May in Brussels

*The Council will start at 10.00 on Monday with a session on general affairs, focusing on preparations for the June **European Council**. A session on external relations will follow, including substantial segments on **security and defence** and on **development cooperation** policies, in the presence of defence and development ministers respectively.*

*Amongst the agenda items for the external relations session, foreign ministers will discuss preparations for the **EU-Russia summit**, and the political situation in the **Republic of Moldova**.*

*In the presence of defence ministers, they will discuss **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, including operation **EUFOR Althea**, and **Somalia**, including operation **EUNAVFOR Atalanta**.*

*Defence ministers will also meet separately and will discuss **ESDP operations**, notably **EUFOR Althea**, **EUNAVFOR Atalanta** and **EUFOR Tchad/RCA** and the development of capabilities. Prior to the Council meeting, they will also meet within the steering board of the **European Defence Agency**.*

Lunch discussion items will include:

- *foreign ministers: **Iran, Georgia, Sri Lanka and Burma/Myanmar**;*
- *defence ministers: **cooperation with partners**, notably **EU-UN**, **EU-NATO** and relations with the African Union.*

*Development ministers will meet as from 17.00 on Monday, continuing on Tuesday morning (9.00-12.30). They will discuss how to support developing countries in **coping with the economic crisis**, as well as implementation of **economic partnership agreements** with ACP countries, **democratic governance**, **climate change** and the situation in **Kenya**. At dinner on Monday they will discuss **transatlantic cooperation** in the field of development.*

Presidency press conferences:

Monday:

- *on defence issues (after lunch, around 15.00);*
- *on issues discussed by foreign ministers (after lunch, around 16.00).*

Tuesday:

- *on development issues (around 13.00).*

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office

In the margins of the Council:

Monday:

- 16.00 Meeting of defence ministers with non-EU European allies and candidate countries;
- 17.00 EU-New Zealand ministerial troika;
- 18.15 EU-Albania Stabilisation and Association Council, *with press conference after dinner.*

Tuesday:

- 11.00 EU-EEA European Economic Area Council;
- 15.30 EU-Turkey association council, *to be followed by a press conference.*

Press conferences and public events can be followed by video streaming:

<http://video.consilium.europa.eu/>

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SESSION ON GENERAL AFFAIRS

Preparation of the June meeting of the European Council

The Council will briefly examine an annotated draft agenda prepared by the presidency for the European Council meeting to be held in Brussels on 18 and 19 June. ([9666/09](#))

The issues to be addressed by the European Council are:

- Institutional issues, in particular the necessary guarantees in response to the concerns of the Irish people presented by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister);
- Economic, financial and social situation (in particular: measures taken so far aimed at promoting stability, measures to strengthen the regulation and supervision of the financial sector, measures taken to support the real economy and employment, and the implementation of the steps agreed at the G20 London Summit);
- Climate change and sustainable development (in particular the preparation of the Copenhagen Conference on climate change, as well as the implementation of the sustainable Development Strategy and the Strategy for the Baltic Sea);
- External relations.

The annotated draft agenda will serve as the basis for draft European Council conclusions to be prepared by the presidency.

SESSION ON EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Preparations for the EU-Russia summit

The Council will discuss preparations for the EU/Russia summit to be held in Khabarovsk, Russia, on 21 and 22 May.

The summit will start with an informal dinner on 21 May, continuing on 22 May with a working session (followed by a press conference).

The Summit will focus in the global financial and economic crisis and the need for the EU and Russia to coordinate responses and to resist protectionist measures.

The draft agenda includes the following issues:

- global financial and economic crisis, including a Russian proposal for a new legal framework for co-operation on energy;
- Russia-EU relations;
- European security;
- international issues.

Republic of Moldova

The Council will debate the current political situation in the Republic of Moldova before the presidential elections, and EU's efforts to stabilise the situation including promotion of democratic rules and principles.

The debate should focus also on Moldovan relations with the EU and its Member States.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, including operation EUFOR Althea

The Council will assess the political environment and the security situation in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina (BiH).

It will also assess operation ALTHEA and its contribution to a safe and secure environment in BiH. It is expected to approve the recommendations made by High Representative Javier Solana in his six-monthly report on the operation.

More information:

[EU military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina \(Operation EUFOR ALTHEA\)](#)

Somalia, including operation EU NAVFOR Atalanta

The Council will discuss the situation in Somalia, following new attacks by armed groups in Mogadishu. It will call for an immediate cessation of hostilities to avoid further civilian casualties.

It is also expected to back steps taken by the new transitional federal institutions to consolidate the inclusive political process towards a completion of the transitional federal charter, leading to free and fair elections and a comprehensive solution for Somalia. It is expected to welcome the leadership which President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed has demonstrated in these endeavours.

High Representative Javier Solana recently issued a statement reiterating his full solidarity with and support for the transitional government of Somalia and condemning the attacks.

"I deplore the fact that many civilians have fallen victim to this violence and I am shocked to see Somalis killed by fellow Somalis. I call on the Somali people to unite behind the Djibouti peace process", he declared.

The Council is also expected to underline the important political role taken by the countries in the region, express its appreciation for the commitment shown by the African Union and the importance of continued international coordination within the international contact group on Somalia, under the leadership of the special representative of the UN Secretary General, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah.

It will also reiterate the significance of mutually reinforcing links between security and development, recall the EU's contribution to international efforts against piracy through EU NAVFOR ATALANTA and the continued engagement of the EU, including in the delivery of humanitarian aid as well as aid for reconstruction and development.

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions along these lines.

More information:

[EU naval operation against piracy \(EU NAVFOR Somalia - Operation ATALANTA\)](#)

Lunch items

At lunch ministers will discuss the following items:

- **Iran**, in particular the review of the US policy and possible EU steps in this context. It will also debate the political situation in Iran ahead of the Presidential elections on 12 June and the role of Iran in the Middle East region. High Representative, Javier Solana, will brief ministers about his recent contacts with the Iranians;
- **Georgia**, the situation in the country and EU's efforts to enhance its relations with Georgia, particularly regarding the launching of FTA negotiations and visa facilitation agreement. The perspectives of the presence of international missions (UNOMIG, OSCE, EUMM) in Georgia can be debated as well;
- **Sri Lanka**, the continuously deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country; and
- **Burma/Myanmar**, particularly the call to Burma/Myanmar's authorities to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and engage in an inclusive process of national reconciliation.

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

As usual once every six months, the Council will include a substantial ESDP component, with the participation of defence ministers.

A European Defence Agency (EDA) steering board meeting, chaired by the High Representative Javier Solana, will be held in the margins of the Council.

Within the Council, defence ministers will discuss ESDP operations and missions, capabilities, including battle groups, and issues involving the EDA.

Regarding EU operations and missions, the Council is due to discuss:

- *military operation EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina;*
- *the naval operation against piracy EU NAVFOR Somalia - Operation ATALANTA;*
- *military operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA in eastern Tchad and in the north-east of the Central African Republic.*

At lunch, defence ministers will discuss cooperation with partners, namely EU-UN, EU-NATO and relations with the African Union.

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions covering a range of current ESDP issues and developments, including the following:

ESDP missions and operations

The Council is expected to welcome the work done by the **EUMM Georgia** mission in contributing to stabilising, normalising and building confidence within Georgia. It will reaffirm its determination that the mission will continue to implement its mandate with the same level of engagement over the coming months, in close co-operation with other international actors on the ground.

With regard to **operation ALTHEA** in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina (BiH), the Council will approve the recommendations made by the High Representative Javier Solana in his six-monthly report on the operation. It is also due to welcome progress on the preparatory work for a possible evolution of Operation ALTHEA towards a non-executive capacity-building and training operation.

The Council will welcome the declaration, on 6 April, of full operational capability for the EU rule of law mission in Kosovo, **EULEX Kosovo**. It will commend efforts to ensure a successful deployment of all components of the mission throughout Kosovo.

Concerning BiH, the Council is due to welcome efforts by the EU police mission, **EUPM**, to achieve its mandate. It will note the important role played by the mission as part of overall efforts by the EU to stabilise the country with a view to its European perspective.

The Council will underline the continued and increased deployment of the mission **EUPOL Afghanistan** (in Kabul and 16 provinces in Afghanistan, as well as the planned deployment of the mission in two other provinces in eastern Afghanistan). It will note progress made by the mission in recent months at strategic, operational and tactical levels, in particular as regards the anti-corruption strategy for the Ministry of the Interior and the Afghan National Police, intelligence-led policing, criminal investigations and linkages with the broader rule of law.

The Council is expected to agree that the **EUJUST LEX** mission in Iraq be extended for one year and that the mission prepare the first pilot activities on Iraqi territory to provide training, strategic advice and mentoring to senior officials of the Iraqi criminal justice sector, as security conditions allow. It will reiterate the EU's strong commitment to support the rule of law in Iraq, more specifically in the police, penitentiary and judiciary.

With regard to the Palestinian Territories, the Council will welcome work so far by the **EUPOL COPPS** mission in the area of police and criminal justice. It will recall that it agreed to take work forward on addressing broader action on the rule of law in the Palestinian Territories. Furthermore, it will confirm the EU's readiness to redeploy at the **Rafah** crossing point, should circumstances allow.

The Council is expected to commend the achievements to date of the operation **Atalanta-EUNAVFOR**, particularly the protection of world food programme vessels delivering food aid to displaced persons in Somalia, its contribution to the protection of vulnerable vessels sailing in the Gulf of Aden and off the Somali coast, including ships sustaining the African Union mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and its contribution to the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast. The Council is also expected to express concern at the resurgence of piracy acts occurring at ever greater distances from the coastlines of East Africa. In addition, it will welcome the exchange of letters between the EU and Kenya for the transfer of piracy suspects detained by Operation Atalanta.

Following the successful and timely transfer of authority, on 15 March, between **EUFOR Tchad/RCA** and the UN mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (Minurcat), the Council will welcome the fulfilment of EUFOR's mandate. It will underline the exemplary cooperation at all levels between the EU and the UN during the conduct phase of the operation.

The Council is due to underline the importance of the **EUSEC RD Congo** mission, in particular its key tasks of providing advice and assistance for security sector reform with the aim of contributing to Congolese efforts to restructure and reform the Congolese army. Furthermore, the Council will welcome the work of the **EUPOL RD Congo** mission in supporting the reform of the Congolese national police and its interaction with the judiciary.

The Council will welcome the work accomplished by the **EU SSR Guinea-Bissau** mission, recalling its decision to extend the mission by six months, until the end of November.

Civilian and military crisis management capabilities

The Council is expected to welcome the adoption of the **civilian capability improvement plan** in January 2009. It will welcome progress made by member states in the development of **military capabilities**, which will contribute to enhancing the EU's crisis management capacity. The Council will take note of the 2009 Force Catalogue, which includes revised contributions by member states. It will welcome the revision of the military rapid response concept, which defines the military rapid response time as a period from 5 to 30 days from the approval of the crisis management concept to the moment when operations commence in the joint operations area. The Council will also underline the results of the six-monthly **battlegroup** coordination conference held on 23 April, where member states committed in detail to the required battlegroup packages until the second half of 2010, and committed further packages until the second half of 2011.

European Defence Agency

The Council is expected to welcome good progress made in implementing the European Defence Agency strategic framework, which was completed last year, with the establishment of concrete projects and initiatives and associated policies.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Development ministers will hold their six-monthly meeting within the Council, focusing on the global economic and financial crisis and its impact on developing countries.

Developing countries and the global economic crisis

The Council will be called on to adopt conclusions on how to support developing countries in coping with the crisis.

These conclusions will outline the EU's response, which is built on both quantitative and qualitative elements.

Quantitative elements include:

- honouring aid commitments;
- mobilising all possible sources of financing for development as instruments to leverage assistance;
- counter-cyclical and accelerated actions by the European Investment Bank (EIB);
- support for measures dealing with infrastructure, energy and water.

In its qualitative components, the EU's response should ensure the optimal purveyance of assistance. This will be achieved, *inter alia*, by:

- accelerating progress in the implementation of the "aid effectiveness" agenda;
- targeting assistance;
- increasing coordination between member states, the Commission and the EIB, in cooperation with international institutions and partner countries.

The EU's response will also constitute the framework for the position it will take at the UN high-level conference on the world financial and economic crisis and its impact on development (New York, 1-3 June).

Economic Partnership Agreements

The Council will take stock of progress on economic partnership agreements (EPAs) with ACP countries and regions.

Negotiations towards full EPAs are ongoing, in parallel to the process towards signature of several interim agreements; important developments are expected in the coming months. For an update, see [9318/09](#).

The Council will also prepare the discussion on EPAs with the ACP partners at the ACP-EC Council of Ministers, to be held in Brussels on 28-29 May.

Democratic governance

Addressing a specific priority of the Czech presidency, the Council will be called on to adopt conclusions entitled "*Support to democratic governance - Towards and enhanced EU framework*" ([9047/09](#)).

It will renew its support to the governance initiative, a mechanism to back ACP partner countries' efforts to strengthen democratic governance on the basis of dialogue and incentives, and will invite the Commission to consider using the experience and the lessons learned in addressing democratic governance processes in other regions.

In the context of support to democratic governance, ministers will also discuss strengthening and coordinating policy dialogue in development policy.

The discussion will be based on an issues paper ([9465/09](#)), which outlines how budget support to developing countries, where feasible, can achieve local ownership of development programmes, an important prerequisite for achieving sustainable results. Such support is not without conditions, but depends on progress in implementing national poverty reduction strategies. However, even in the case of recipient governments with a good reputation, building on local budget systems and institutions can pose specific challenges that need to be addressed properly. Since budget support operations are currently expanding, EU donors should coordinate their response to those challenges.

Ministers will be invited to focus on the following questions:

- While respecting the Paris and Accra principles of aid effectiveness, do ministers recognise the challenges as described when building aid efforts on partner countries' own budgets and institutions? What points in particular?
- Do ministers agree that an intensive policy dialogue between donors and the recipient government is a crucial element of modern aid relations and a key vehicle for donors to ensure results and accountability when providing on-budget support?

- Which EU instruments could be used to strengthen such a policy dialogue? How do ministers view the relationship between the article 8 political dialogue² and the current broad dialogue that accompanies budget support?
- What do ministers think of the stated suggestions for strengthening policy dialogue and improving feedback on results in the EU context? Are there other options to be considered?

Strengthened Transatlantic partnership on development cooperation

At their dinner on Monday 18 May, development ministers will hold an exchange of views on the potential of EU-US cooperation in the area of development, examining the possibilities of a strengthened partnership on development cooperation, both in the area of policy dialogue and in practical cooperation in the field (see doc. [9809/09](#)).

Other issues

The Council is also expected to adopt:

- conclusions on access to sustainable energy sources in developing countries at the local level, a specific priority of the Czech presidency ([9100/09](#)). The intention is to address a key energy challenge: helping developing countries to access modern energy services in order to ensure basic human needs, accelerate economic growth and improve the livelihoods of their people. Access to sustainable energy is also closely linked to two other energy challenges, namely energy security for all and mitigating climate change.
- conclusions on an EU strategy for supporting disaster risk reduction in developing countries ([8571/09](#)).

² Article 8 of the ACP-EU Cotonou agreement provides for a political dialogue with ACP partner countries.