



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



15240/07 (Presse 262)

PROVISIONAL VERSION

PRESS RELEASE

2831st Council meeting

General Affairs and External Relations

External Relations

Brussels, 19-20 November 2007

President **Mr Luís Amado**
Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal

* Some external relations items were adopted without debate at the 2830th meeting on General Affairs (15240/07).

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Main results of the Council

*The Council had a strong focus on **security and defence** and on **development** issues, with Africa-related issues figuring prominently throughout the agenda. In particular, ministers reviewed preparations for the Lisbon **Africa-EU summit**.*

*The Council held its six-monthly review of the **European security and defence policy (ESDP)**. In that context, it*

- *took note of preparations for the future operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA in Eastern Chad and Northeastern Central African Republic;*
- *extended the mandate of the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina for another two years until the end of 2009;*
- *noted with satisfaction the progress made on military capabilities and approved the "Progress Catalogue 2007";*
- *welcomed the fact that member states have committed the required EU Battlegroup packages up to and including the first semester of 2010;*
- *endorsed the declaration of the ministerial Civilian Capabilities Improvement Conference 2007 held in the margins of the Council and welcomed the adoption of the "Civilian Headline Goal 2010".*

*Meeting together for the first time within the Council, defence and development ministers jointly discussed how to achieve policy coherence between **security and development**. Recalling that there cannot be sustainable development without peace and security, and that without development and poverty eradication there will be no sustainable peace, the Council invited member states, the Commission and the Council Secretariat to take the work on security and development forward under the guidance of future presidencies.*

*On **Kosovo**, the Council reaffirmed its full support to the Troika and to Ambassador Ischinger. In view of the imminent conclusion of the Troika process on 10 December, it looked forward to the intensification of the negotiations and urged the two parties to show greater flexibility, to respond positively and constructively to the Troika's initiatives, making every effort to secure a negotiated settlement of the status of Kosovo. The Council confirmed that the EU stands ready to play a significant role in Kosovo in the future and is preparing accordingly.*

*Regarding the **Middle East**, the Council reiterated its strong support for the upcoming international meeting at Annapolis and the efforts of Palestinian President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert. It looked forward to the achievement of concrete results leading to meaningful final status negotiations. It welcomed the EU Action Strategy submitted by the EU High Representative in full association with the Commission, which will be the basis for further work by the EU taking into account the results of the Annapolis meeting.*

*Its six-monthly review of development issues, the Council adopted conclusions on the **economic partnership agreements** being negotiated with ACP countries and regions, in the run-up to the 31 December 2007 deadline for completion of these agreements.*

*The Council adopted strengthened and additional restrictive measures against **Burma/Myanmar**, following the brutal repression of peaceful protestors and continuing human rights violations by the Burmese authorities. The measures include an extension of the list of persons subject to an entry ban and freeze of assets, and an extension of the ban on investments in Burmese state-owned companies. Additional measures are targeted at the sources of the regime's revenue, such as the logging, timber and mining industries (see "General Affairs" press release, doc. 15238/07).*

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- 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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OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

none

PARTICIPANTS

The governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr André FLAHAUT Minister for Defence

Bulgaria:

Mr Ivailo KALFIN Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Vesselin BLIZNAKOV Minister for Defence

Czech Republic:

Mr Alexandr VONDRA Deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for European Affairs
Ms Vlasta PARKANOVÁ Minister for Defence

Denmark:

Mr Per Stig MØLLER Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Søren Gade JENSEN Minister for Defence

Germany:

Mr Frank-Walter STEINMEIER Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Franz-Josef JUNG Federal Minister for Defence

Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Jaak AAVIKSOO Minister for Defence

Ireland:

Mr Dermot AHERN Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Willie O'DEA Minister for Defence

Greece:

Ms Dora BAKOYANNI Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Evangelos MEIMARAKIS Minister for Defence

Spain:

Mr Miguel Ángel MORATINOS Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
Mr José Antonio ALONSO SUÁREZ Minister for Defence

France:

Mr Jean-Pierre JOUYET Minister of State with responsibility for European Affairs
Mr Hervé MORIN Minister for Defence

Italy:

Mr Massimo D'ALEMA Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Arturo PARISI Minister for Defence

Cyprus:

Ms Erato KOZAKOU-MARCOULLIS Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Christodoulos PASIARDES Minister for Defence

Latvia:

Mr Maris RIEKSTINS Minister for Foreign Affairs

Lithuania:

Mr Petras VAITIEKŪNAS Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Antanas VALYS Deputy Minister for Defence

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Mr Jean-Louis SCHILTZ Minister for Cooperation and Humanitarian Action,
Minister with responsibility for Communications

Hungary:

Ms Kinga GÖNCZ Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr József BALI State Secretary, Ministry of Defence

Malta:

Mr Anthony ABELA

Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister

Netherlands:

Mr Maxime VERHAGEN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Eimert van MIDDELKOOP

Minister for Defence

Mr Franciscus Cornelis Gerardus Maria TIMMERMANS

Minister for European Affairs

Austria:

Ms Ursula PLASSNIK

Federal Minister for European and International Affairs

Mr Norbert DARABOS

Federal Minister for Defence

Poland:

Mr Radosław SIKORSKI

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Bogdan KLICH

Minister for Defence

Portugal:

Mr Luís AMADO

Ministro de Estado, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Nuno SEVERIANO TEIXEIRA

Minister for Defence

Mr Manuel LOBO ANTUNES

State Secretary for European Affairs, attached to the
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr João MIRA GOMES

State Secretary for Defence and Maritime Affairs

Romania:

Mr Adrian CIOROIANU

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Teodor MELEȘCANU

Minister of Defence

Slovenia:

Mr Dimitrij RUPEL

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Karl Viktor ERJAVEC

Minister for Defence

Mr Janez LENARČIČ

State Secretary at the Government Office for European
Affairs

Slovakia:

Mr Ján KUBIŠ

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr František KAŠICKÝ

Minister for Defence

Finland:

Mr Ilkka KANERVA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Jyri HÄKÄMIES

Minister for Defence

Mr Paavo VÄYRYNEN

Minister for Foreign Trade and Development

Sweden:

Mr Carl BILD

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ms Cecilia MALMSTRÖM

Minister for European Affairs

Mr Sten TOLGFORS

Minister for Trade

United Kingdom:

Mr Des BROWNE

Secretary of State for Defence and Secretary of State for
Scotland

Mr Jim MURPHY

Minister of State for Europe

Commission:

Mr Olli REHN

Member

Mr Louis MICHEL

Member

Ms Benita FERRERO-WALDNER

Member

Mr Peter MANDELSON

Member

General Secretariat of the Council:

Mr Javier SOLANA

Secretary-General/High Representative for the CFSP

ITEMS DEBATED

RELATIONS WITH CHINA

The Council was briefed on preparations for the 10th EU-China summit, that will take place in Beijing on 28 November.

The summit is likely to cover China-EU relations, including negotiations on a partnership and cooperation agreement, climate change and energy cooperation, product safety, human rights and Taiwan, as well as international and regional issues, including Africa, Burma/Myanmar, North Korea, the Middle East, the Iranian nuclear issue, Kosovo and the 2008 Asia-Europe (ASEM) summit.

RELATIONS WITH INDIA

The Council was briefed on preparations for the 8th EU-India summit that will be held in New Delhi on 30 November.

The summit is likely to cover India-EU relations, including the India-EU strategic partnership and joint action plan and trade and economic relations, as well as global issues, including energy, development and climate change, the WTO's Doha Development Agenda, disarmament and non proliferation and combating terrorism, and international issues, including the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and western Asia.

PREPARATION OF THE AFRICA-EU SUMMIT

The Council reviewed preparations for the EU-Africa summit in Lisbon on 8 and 9 December.

The summit will be called upon to adopt a joint Africa-EU strategy and action plan (2008-2010). The Council noted the draft strategy and action plan, which will be finalised at an Africa-EU ministerial meeting in Sharm-el-Sheik on 5 December.

The strategy rests on the premise that Africa and Europe are bound together by history, culture, geography and a common future, as well as by a community of values. It also seeks to take into account the considerable change that has taken place on both continents since the first Africa-EU summit in Cairo in 2000, including in terms of democratisation and reform processes in both Africa and Europe, and the acceleration of integration processes on both continents. The strategy is aimed at providing a comprehensive framework for EU-Africa relations.

EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY - Council conclusions

The Council, in the presence of defence ministers, held its six-monthly review of developments in the ESDP. It adopted the following conclusions:

"ESDP Operations and Missions

EUFOR Tchad/RCA

1. Following the unanimous adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1778 (2007), which approved the deployment in Chad and the Central African Republic of a multidimensional presence and authorised the EU to provide the military element of it, the EU decided to take action. The operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA is taking place in the framework of a comprehensive EU effort to facilitate a long lasting solution to the conflict in Darfur and to promote regional stability.
2. The deployment of EUFOR Tchad/RCA is a concrete expression of the EU's comprehensive commitment to actively work for the improvement of the security situation in Eastern Chad and North-Eastern Central African Republic, by contributing to the protection of refugees and IDPs, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance, helping to create the conditions for displaced people to return to their places of origin voluntarily, as well as contributing to ensure the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) security and freedom to operate.
3. The Council recalls the appointment of General Patrick Nash as Operation Commander and supports his efforts to complete the operational planning phase for a bridging military operation in Eastern Chad and North Eastern Central African Republic (EUFOR Tchad/RCA) in the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy, for a period of one year from the date that its initial operational capability is declared. EUFOR Tchad/RCA is neutral, multinational and independent and deployment has been welcomed by both the Governments of Chad and of the Central African Republic.
4. The Council emphasised that the planning of the operation is taking place in full coordination with the UN and in consultation with African partners.

5. Non-EU European NATO members and other countries which are candidates for accession to the EU have been informed on the EU intentions concerning the operation from the earliest stages of Council discussions, by means of SG/HR letters and through exchanges of views in meetings with the PSC. Other third States, including European partners, received information from the Council Secretariat, as appropriate. The Council looked forward to third States contributions to the operation.
6. The Council welcomed the Commission's intention to contribute substantially to the UN programme for the establishment of the UN Police force, and, following the requests made by the governments of Chad and the Central African Republic, to implement transitional programmes of recovery and rehabilitation covering reconciliation oriented activities, support to the voluntary return of IDPs and to the rehabilitation in their places of origin, and support to local governance.

Civil-military supporting action for AMIS in Sudan/Darfur

7. The EU reaffirmed that it strongly supports the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) ongoing efforts to solving the conflict in Darfur within a comprehensive and regional approach and welcomed the setting up of the UN/AU hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID).
8. The Council noted that it is crucial that AMIS receives the support it needs from the international community to enable it to carry on its mission during the transition to UNAMID. In this context, the Council reaffirmed the EU's intention to ensure the continuation of its current support to AMIS, up to the transfer of authority to UNAMID.

RD Congo

9. The Council noted that the re-launching of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process, stalled since December 2006, did not materialise during the last 6 months. The Council therefore encouraged all involved actors to make every effort to surmount current obstacles and find solutions enabling, in particular, the completion of the demobilisation process.

10. Further progress in security sector reform (SSR) remains necessary to reach a sustainable stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Whilst the security concerns in the East of the country require immediate attention, in-depth reforms across the whole security sector (defence, police, justice) should remain a priority in order to allow a long-term stability and return to normality. Improved security conditions, as well as the implementation of national development strategies, continue to be essential to restoring confidence among economic actors and investors.
11. Concerning the reform of the defence sector, the Council underlined the importance of elaborating a detailed concept for the future armed forces that is sustainable. In the field short-term reconstruction of the defence sector, short term priorities should be implemented taking into account the broader requirements for reforming the defence sector as identified by the Congolese authorities assisted by their partners, in particular the ESDP mission EUSEC RD Congo.
12. The Council recalled its support to the work conducted by EUSEC RD Congo.
13. EUPOL RD Congo, the new ESDP police mission and its interface with justice sector, took over from EUPOL Kinshasa, which was successfully concluded on 30th June 2007. The Council noted that the mission is assisting the Congolese authorities in the reform and restructuring of the “Police Nationale Congolaise”, and in the improvement of the overall functioning of the criminal justice system, through a justice interface. The Council expressed its appreciation for the fact that the mission is also contributing to the overall efforts in support of the Security Sector Reform (SSR) in DRC, in close coordination with the other actors engaged in SSR, especially the other ESDP mission EUSEC RD Congo and the European Community activities. The Council further urged the Congolese authorities to move forward on reform of the police and of the justice system.

Guinea Bissau

14. The Council noted that, following an initial joint Council-Commission information gathering mission in May 2007 to Guinea Bissau, consideration has been given to a possible option for an ESDP advice and assistance mission consisting of a small number of civilian and military technical experts in support of the national Security Sector Reform process. The Council considered that an ESDP action in the field of Security Sector Reform in Guinea Bissau would be appropriate, in coherence with and complementary to European Development Fund and other Community activity. The Council welcomed the progress on planning, including the elaboration of the draft General Concept following a Fact Finding Mission that took place in mid-October.

EUPOL AFGHANISTAN

15. EUPOL AFGHANISTAN, launched on 15th June 2007, aims at contributing to the establishment under Afghan ownership of sustainable and effective civilian policing arrangements that ensure appropriate interaction with the wider criminal justice system. Furthermore the Mission supports the reform process towards a trusted and efficient police service which works in accordance with international standards, within the framework of the rule of law and respect for human rights. The Council noted that the Mission is currently in a build-up phase and will reach its full operational capability by March 2008.

BiH (Operation ALTHEA)

16. The Council welcomed the successful reconfiguration of Operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The force now numbers some 2500 troops on the ground, backed up by over-the-horizon reserves. The Council welcomed the contribution of the European Gendarmerie Force to the Integrated Police Unit of Operation Althea. While noting that the security situation remains stable, the Council follows with concern recent political developments in BiH. The Council reiterated that EUFOR continues to provide reassurance and remains ready to respond to possible security challenges throughout the country. The Council welcomed the continuing excellent co-operation between the various EU actors in the field. It noted that co-operation with NATO in respect of Operation ALTHEA continued to work well.

17. The Council reiterated that, as part of the EU's overall engagement in BiH, the EU would retain a military presence in the country for as long as necessary in order to continue to contribute to the maintenance of a safe and secure environment.

EUPM

18. The EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUPM) has made progress in developing sustainable policing arrangements under BiH ownership in the past years. Its aim, through mentoring, monitoring and inspecting, is to establish in BiH a sustainable, professional and multiethnic police service operating in accordance with European and international standards. Considering that, at the end of EUPM's second mandate, the desired end-state will not have been fully reached the Council has decided to extend the Mission until the 31st December 2009.

EUPT Kosovo

19. The Council welcomed the progress made in planning for a possible ESDP Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. The Council decided the extension of EUPT's mandate until 31st March 2008.

EUPOL COPPS

20. The Council confirmed its support to the Palestinian Civil Police (PCP) through the reengagement of the EUPOL COPPS. The main goal of this mission is to contribute to the establishment of sustainable and effective policing arrangements under Palestinian ownership in accordance with best international standards. The Council calls on Israel to provide accreditation to the Mission without delay.

EUBAM Rafah

21. The Council reiterated its commitment to the EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (EUBAM Rafah), to the Agreements concluded and to the region, in particular the Gaza population. It underlined the importance of the implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access by all parties. The Council noted that the Mission, despite the closure of the Rafah Crossing Point since 14 June 2007, preserves its operational ability to redeploy at short notice.

EUJUST LEX

22. The EU has been contributing towards strengthening the rule of law in Iraq and promoting human rights through its Integrated Rule of Law Mission for Iraq (EUJUST LEX) since July 2005, by providing training courses and work experience secondments in EU member States for senior Iraqi police, judicial and penitentiary personnel. The Council welcomed the extension of EUJUST LEX, which will continue its work in partnership with Iraqi Authorities and international bodies, until 30th June 2009.

Military Capabilities

23. The Council noted with great satisfaction the progress made in implementing the qualitative approach to the EU military capabilities development process in the framework of the Headline Goal 2010.
24. The Council approved the Progress Catalogue 2007 (PC07). This catalogue is based on the requirements set in the Requirements Catalogue 2005 (RC05) and on Member States scrutinised contributions for 2010 gathered in the Force Catalogue 2007 (FC07). In addition to a broad confirmation of the findings of the Helsinki Progress Catalogue (HPC03), it provides a structured assessment of capabilities and offers a systematic evaluation of the identified capability shortfalls. The most critical shortfalls relate to the areas of force protection, deployability and information superiority. In addition, PC07 presents an expression of potential operational risks for ESDP operations with an initial orientation based on the severity of the impact of the capability shortfalls. It concludes that the EU can conduct the full spectrum of military ESDP operations within the parameters of the Strategic Planning Assumptions, with different levels of risk caused by the recognised shortfalls.

25. The Council urged taking forward the follow-on work recommended in PC07, including the need for additional information on ongoing plans and initiatives. It encouraged Member States to undertake the appropriate actions in order to address the identified capability shortfalls, including through good use of opportunities for co-operation aiming at improving the EU's capability to act and the European Defence Agency (EDA) to continue being actively involved in capability development in close cooperation with the EU Military Committee (EUMC).
26. The Council noted that the PC07 and the follow-on work on prioritisation will be used as a significant input to the Capability Development Plan (CDP), which participating Member States are elaborating through the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the EU Military Committee (EUMC). The Council welcomed the active co-operation between the EUMC and the EDA, particularly their joint effort aiming at supporting the development of the Capability Development Plan as a tool to orientate the Member States in their investments to improve their military capabilities.
27. The Council looked forward to a possible way ahead to be agreed by the end of 2007 for the remaining European Capabilities Action Plan Project Groups, including their deliverables.
28. The Council recognised the continued need for cooperation between EU and NATO at different levels, including on issues of military capability development. The EU-NATO Capability Group continued to provide a forum for exchanging information on the development of military capabilities in the EU and NATO where requirements overlap. All Member States were informed of these issues. The Council welcomed that, at the initiative of the Presidency, the PSC had concluded work on finding ways to improve the modalities of functioning of the Capability Group, while noting that the participation of all EU Member States to the Group would further facilitate the exchange of information between the two organisations in the domain of military capabilities.

29. The Council noted the work on Information Exchange Requirements (IER), including a Global Overview and a Roadmap noted by the PSC in July 2007, aimed at defining operational requirements for exchanging information between all entities, both civilian and military, that may interact in support of ESDP operations with a view to a comprehensive approach. All stakeholders are encouraged to take forward work on identifying an agreed set of IER in close co-ordination with the work undertaken on the Network Enabled Capabilities (NEC), for consideration by the Council bodies, including the PSC.

EUMS ability to conduct planning at the strategic level

30. The Council welcomed the report by the SG/HR on the EU Military Staff's ability to conduct planning at the strategic level for EU-led operations, as requested by the Council in May 2007, and approved the recommendations to implement, as a package, the four measures, together with the actions identified in the military advice.
31. The Council will revert to this issue as soon as practicable during the course of 2008, including the need for any additional personnel, on the basis of an evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the measures and actions in responding to the Council request to the SG/HR.

EU Operations Centre

32. The Council noted with satisfaction that the EU Operations Centre, which reached operational capability on 1 January 2007, has been successfully activated for the first time during MILEX 07 in June 2007. It welcomed the initial lessons learned and looked forward to the subsequent identification of possible actions to be taken for improving this capability, taking into account the impact of the activation of the Operations Centre in the daily work of the EUMS, the weaknesses of the EU Operations Centre manning model and the SG/HR report on the military strategic planning capacity of the EUMS, as appropriate.

Rapid Response

33. The Council noted work on a possible revision of the EU Military Rapid Response Concept, from a joint perspective and following a comprehensive approach to crisis management, bearing in mind the EU's level of ambition as laid down in the Headline Goal 2010 process. This review shall be concluded in 2008. It will take due account of the Battlegroup concept and the ongoing work on the Maritime Rapid Response and Air Rapid Response Concepts. The aforementioned concepts have to be coherent with the overarching EU Military Rapid Response Concept. The revised EU Military Rapid Response Concept should be tested and exercised.
34. The Council welcomed the outcome of the Battlegroups Co-ordination Conference (BGCC) on 11 October, where Member States have committed the required Battlegroup packages up to and including first semester 2010. The period is further consolidated by confirmation of the EL-BG-RO-CY Battlegroup. The Council encouraged volunteering Member States to make new offers at next BGCC in April 2008 and fill in particular the vacant slot in second semester of 2010. The Council looked forward to suggestions on standardisation in support of Member States-led preparatory activities, based on a methodology and a roadmap which were agreed by the EUMC in October.

Civilian Capabilities

35. The Council welcomed the adoption of the Civilian Headline Goal 2010 and underlined the importance placed on continuing to develop the civilian crisis management capabilities, in particular to strengthen internal EU co-ordination. It expressed satisfaction for the successful conclusion of the Civilian Headline Goal 2008 as part of the further operational development of ESDP. It endorsed the Policy Paper on a Civilian ESDP Capability Planning Process. The Council also endorsed the Ministerial Declaration of the Civilian Capabilities Improvement Conference 2007.
36. The Council expressed satisfaction for the progress made in the implementation of the Guidelines for Command and Control Structure for EU Civilian Operations in Crisis Management, and in particular the establishment of the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability.

EDA

37. The Council noted the report by the Head of the Agency of its activities and welcomed the results achieved, in particular in the areas targeted in the Council Guidelines for the EDA's work in 2007. The Council approved the guidelines for the Agency's work in 2008.
38. The Council noted with satisfaction the results achieved in developing long-term strategies:
- continued progress on the elaboration of a Capability Development Plan, with agreement on a Methodology and a Roadmap for this purpose. The CDP will aim at identifying priorities for capability improvement and at bringing out opportunities to pool resources and to cooperate. More particularly, decisive progress was made on the two strands under the Agency's lead: work on the identification of longer-term trends beyond the Headline Goal 2010, and collection of pMS' national plans and programmes in a common database in view of identifying early opportunities for collaboration;
 - implementation of the strategy for developing a European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB), with agreement on roadmaps including clear milestones (on issues such as ensuring Security of Supply, increasing competition and cooperation, identifying the key industrial capacities to develop or preserve in Europe, etc);
 - adoption of a Framework for developing a European Defence Research and Technology (EDRT) strategy by the Steering Board on 19 November;
 - agreement on enablers for enhancing cooperation to underpin the Armaments strategy to be developed in 2008.
39. Furthermore, the Council encouraged the EDA to consider opportunities for proposing the establishment of cooperative armament programmes.

40. The Council also welcomed the progress made in a number of policies, programmes/projects and initiatives:
- generally effective functioning of the regime on defence procurement - operated through the Electronic Bulletin Board, with a good degree of transparency among subscribing Member States. The Council underlined the importance of ensuring that more cross-border contracts are awarded;
 - adoption by the Steering Board in National Armaments Directors' formation of a Code of Conduct for promoting transparency and encouraging coordination of investments in the field of defence test and evaluation facilities, in order to improve cooperation among pMS and reduce overcapacities;
 - successful implementation of the first Defence Research and Technology Joint Investment Programme, in the area of Force Protection – with five proposals already selected by contributing Members for contracting;
 - continued progress towards the identification of common defence capability requirements in association with the competent Council bodies, in particular in the area of Network Enabled Capabilities (NEC); Operational Intelligence (installation of the Tactical Imagery Exploitation Station - TIES - demonstrator at the EU Satellite Centre); 21st Century Solder Systems (agreement on a new category B programme for Combat Equipment Dismounted Soldier); strategic transport (work initiated to identify solutions for improving the future capability of the EU);
 - - the approval by the Steering Board of collective benchmarks regarding expenditures on equipment procurement and defence research and technology, including European collaborative expenditures. These benchmarks can be used for national target setting, on a voluntary basis and without timelines.

41. The Council noted with interest the Agency's efforts to seek synergies between military and civilian activities, in consultation and coordination with the European Commission (in relation to its research activities), especially in the areas of SDR (ongoing efforts to develop a next-generation SDR system), UAV (initiated work on their Insertion in General Air Traffic) and Maritime Surveillance.
42. The Council invited the Agency to continue their support for collecting the IER (Information Exchange Requirements) for ESDP operations.

Exercises

43. The Council welcomed the preparatory work undertaken for the EU crisis management exercise to be held in 2008 (CME 08), which provides a good opportunity to exercise and evaluate a range of EU crisis management structures, procedures and consultations arrangements in the context of a crisis management operation without recourse to NATO common assets and capabilities. This exercise is undertaken with a view to improving the EU capacity, including the EU decision-making process, to manage crises with civilian and military instruments, including their coordination within the EU. The EU OHQ for this exercise will be at Mont Valérien and will be provided by France. This will be the first time that the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability will be participating in an exercise.
44. The Council welcomed the successful conduct of the EU military Exercise 2007 (MILEX 07). This second EU military exercise took place from 7 to 15 June 2007 and focused mainly on the interaction between the EU Operations Centre in Brussels and the EU Force Headquarters in Enköping, provided by Sweden.
45. The Council welcomed the preparatory work undertaken for the EU Military Exercise to be held in 2008 (MILEX 08), focusing on military aspects of crisis management at the military strategic and operational level for an envisaged EU-led crisis management operation without recourse to NATO common assets and capabilities. The OHQ for this exercise will be at Rome, and will be provided by Italy.

Human Rights Issues and Gender Issues

46. The Council welcomed the fact that Human Rights issues and Gender issues continued to be systematically included in the planning and conduct of all ESDP operations, and subsequently evaluated in the lessons learned process. It recalled the importance of Human Rights issues and Gender mainstreaming and called for reinforcement of efforts in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 1612 and relevant EU documents on human rights issues and gender issues in ESDP, particularly with a view to achieving more concrete progress in this field on the ground.
47. The Council also called for closer co-operation on these issues with EU Special Representatives (EUSRs), whose mandates now contain specific provisions to address Human Rights issues and Gender issues. The Council recalled its invitation to Member States in this context to nominate more female candidates for CFSP/ESDP senior management positions, including for EUSRs as well as for ESDP missions and operations in general.

EU-UN

48. The Council welcomed recent steps to ensure greater mutual understanding of the decision-making and planning processes of the EU and UN, in particular the ongoing implementation of the Joint statement on UN-EU Co-operation in Crisis Management signed on 7 June 2007.
49. Furthermore, the Council welcomed the continued close co-operation between the EU and the UN regarding support to the AU Mission in Darfur, Sudan (AMIS), including the ongoing implementation of the UN support package to AMIS and the transition to a hybrid mission (UNAMID). The Council acknowledged that this close co-operation will also be of crucial importance in the context of EUFOR Tchad/RCA.

50. The Council repeated that the EU is committed to further strengthening co-operation with the UN on crisis management, building in particular on experience gained so far and, in this context, welcomed recent high-level dialogue between them. The Council expressed its intention to further enhance regular political dialogue and exchanges of views between senior officials and experts, including in the area of SSR.

EU/AU Cooperation - Strengthening African Capabilities

51. The Council reaffirmed the importance it attaches to cooperation with African partners in the framework of the EU-Africa Strategic Partnership, and underlined its wish to see its further development in the context of the forthcoming EU-Africa Summit to be held in Lisbon on 8 and 9 December. One of the main objectives of this strategy will be to promote peace, security, sustainable development, democratic governance and human rights, and regional and continental integration in Africa. The Council welcomed the forthcoming opening of the EU delegation to the African Union, which will be an important step to achieve the EU's comprehensive policy objectives in relation with the AU.
52. The Council encouraged all stakeholders involved in the Action Plan on strengthening the partnership between Africa and the EU in the field of African capabilities for the prevention management and resolution of conflicts, adopted by the Council in May 2007, to make all necessary efforts with a view to its effective and timely implementation. This includes the development of EURO RECAMP, which will play a key role in the implementation of the African Standby Force (ASF) Training Plan. The EURO RECAMP cycle will focus on the development of the AU Peace Support Operation Department capacities and will provide a Command Post-Exercise in 2010 at a continental level in order to support the AU review process of the ASF.

Mediterranean Partners

53. The Council welcomed further enhancement of the dialogue and co-operation among the Euro-Mediterranean Partners on ESDP. Ministers of Defence at their informal meeting in Évora on 28-29 September discussed the co-operation with Mediterranean partners on ESDP and were briefed on the multilateral co-operation in the framework of the "Initiative 5+5", presented to them at a session involving Ministers for Defence from Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. Under the aegis of the European Security and Defence College, a special edition of the ESDP Orientation Course with a specific focus on ESDP and security in the Mediterranean area (Barcelona process' new challenges, instability and threats to security in the Mediterranean area, transnational communities and security in the Mediterranean area) was co-organised by Cyprus, France, Greece, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain, with the support of Italy, in Brussels from 5 to 9 November, involving participants from Mediterranean partners."

PAKISTAN

At lunch, ministers held an exchange of views on recent developments in Pakistan, expressing concern at the situation and calling for the lifting of emergency rule, in line with a recent EU presidency declaration. In that declaration, the presidency asked the Pakistani authorities to take urgent action to restore the Constitution, to hold free and fair parliamentary elections on schedule, to release all political prisoners, to pursue reconciliation with the opposition, to relax restrictions on the media and to honour President Musharraf's commitment to step down as chief of the armed forces.

MIDDLE EAST

Middle East peace process - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council reiterates its strong support for the upcoming international meeting at Annapolis and the efforts of Palestinian President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert. It looks forward to the achievement of concrete results leading to meaningful final status negotiations. These should result in a two state solution with the establishment of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours. The Council reaffirms that this is a crucial opportunity for regional and international partners to effectively support a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. In this context, the Council calls for a continued broad and positive involvement by Arab partners, building on the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Council expresses its full commitment to further support the parties in their ongoing negotiations and subsequent implementation. In this context, the Council welcomes the EU Action Strategy submitted by the EU High Representative in full association with the Commission, which will be the basis for further work by the EU taking into account the results of the Annapolis International meeting.

In order to consolidate progress achieved so far and to fulfil the potential of the current process, the Council urges both parties to take additional steps to meet previous commitments, including those under the Road Map and the Agreement on Movement and Access. The Council calls upon the parties to desist from any actions that threaten the viability of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement, in conformity with international law.

The Council also emphasizes the importance of the Paris Donors' Conference, in December, and supports its goals of securing funding for the building of the institutions and economy of the future Palestinian state. In this context, the Council calls for the mobilisation of significant international financial support."

Lebanon - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council expresses its growing concern that it has not yet been possible to elect a new President in Lebanon and the parliamentary session has been postponed for the third time until November 21st. It welcomes, however, the spirit of dialogue that has been observed in recent weeks and reaffirms the desire for successful Lebanese Presidential elections. It reiterates its call for the holding of free and fair presidential elections, without foreign interference and in conformity with the agreed schedule and the Constitution.
- 2 To this end, the Council strongly encourages the Lebanese parties to reach a solution through dialogue and in a spirit of consensus and in full respect of the Lebanese democratic institutions and constitutional norms. Such a solution is the only way to break the political deadlock in the country.
3. The Council recalls previous statements and remains determined to reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty, independence territorial integrity, unity and stability, according notably to UNSC Resolutions 1559, 1680, 1701 and 1757."

IRAN

At lunch, ministers discussed developments regarding the Iranian nuclear issue, following the International Atomic Energy Agency director-general's 15 November report, and on the basis of a briefing by high representative Javier Solana on his contacts with the Iranians.

IRAQ

Ministers discussed the situation in Iraq and held an exchange of views with Iraqi foreign minister Hoshyar Zebari.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council warmly welcomes the attendance of Foreign Minister of Iraq, H E Hoshyar Zebari, and the opportunity to enhance the political engagement of the EU with Iraq and to reiterate the commitments made by the EU to support Iraq. Following discussions with FM Zebari and taking into account the views of the Government of Iraq, the Council, recalling its current actions, agreed that the EU should work closely with the UN to further identify and deliver support for it to fulfil its role as set out in UNSCR 1770; identify further contributions to help alleviate the humanitarian situation in Iraq and the region; identify and take opportunities to provide further human rights support; and assist the Iraqi authorities in meeting their responsibilities in accordance with the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) and identify and provide further support.
2. The EU welcomes the holding of the Expanded Ministerial Conference of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq in Istanbul on 2 - 3 November 2007. The Council underlines the importance of continuing the dialogue and co-operation between Iraq and its neighbours and notes with satisfaction that the next Ministerial Conference will be held in Kuwait. It recalls that constructive engagement of Iraq's neighbours and partners in the region remains essential to achieve peace and stability in Iraq and in the region as a whole and encourages all partners in the region to live up to the commitments made in the Final Communiqué of the Istanbul meeting. The EU remains ready to offer its support in this endeavour.
3. The Council emphasises the obligation of neighbouring countries to contribute to the political stabilisation of Iraq, whose territorial integrity should be preserved. It encourages the Government of Iraq to undertake all necessary measures to promote stability through an effective national reconciliation process.
4. The Council welcomes the decision by the Government of Iraq to form an "ad-hoc expanded neighbours support mechanism" to deal with substantive, technical and organizational issues concerning this process and the endorsement of this decision by the Ministerial Conference in Istanbul. The Council expects the Neighbours process, and in particular this support mechanism, to result in concrete steps forward, and emphasises the crucial role of constructive relations between Iraq and its neighbours at the political and technical level.

5. The Council emphasizes the importance of the essential input and recommendations provided by the three working groups on energy, security and refugees and internally displaced persons, which were established by the Expanded Ministerial Conference on 4 May in Sharm El Sheikh. It notes with satisfaction the decision by the Ministerial Conference of Istanbul to convene the next sessions of these groups and calls for those meetings to be held as soon as possible. It encourages all neighbouring countries to participate constructively in this work and reiterates its readiness to participate, assist and provide expertise to these working groups.

6. The Council recalls the obligation of the Government of Iraq, its neighbouring countries and the international community, as expressed in Istanbul, to protect and assist displaced Iraqis by addressing their immediate and foreseeable needs and ensure their safety. It calls upon the Iraqi Government to assist vulnerable groups, including refugees and internally displaced persons and to promote the protection of human rights. The EU reiterates that it stands ready to support the Iraqi authorities in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms, underlining the need to protect the rights of all Iraqis, including those of women and persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities. The Council calls upon the Iraqi Government to suspend the practice of the death penalty as a step towards abolition. The EU especially welcomes work of UNAMI in the field of human rights and calls upon all relevant parties to support UNAMI in this endeavour. The EU will continue to identify in a concerted way possibilities for further assistance to the Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries and internally displaced persons. It recalls the commitment made by participants in the Istanbul Conference to deliver assistance in coordination with the Government of Iraq also by contributing to the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI).

7. The Council is encouraged by and considers of utmost importance the continued dialogue and co-operation between Iraq and Turkey on the combat of terrorism. It calls on the Iraqi Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to take the appropriate measures to ensure respect for the Turkish border and guarantee that the Iraqi territory is not used for violent action against its neighbours. "

WESTERN BALKANS - Council conclusions

The Council reviewed the situation in the Western Balkans, focusing on Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It adopted the following conclusions:

"KOSOVO

The Council welcomed the fact that elections in Kosovo took place in an orderly and peaceful manner and that the Council of Europe Election Observation mission, in its preliminary statement, has assessed that the elections were conducted generally in line with international and European standards for democratic elections. The Council expressed its disappointment of the low overall voter turnout. It regretted the low participation by the Kosovo Serb community and Belgrade's call for a boycott and stressed the importance of the inclusion of all communities in political life in Kosovo. The Council looked forward to an early formation of a new Government to strengthen the reform agenda to the benefit of all communities in Kosovo.

The Council was briefed by Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, the EU representative in the Troika facilitating negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina on the future status of Kosovo, on the state of play of the process.

Reaffirming its full support to the Troika and to Ambassador Ischinger, and in view of the imminent conclusion of the Troika process on 10 December, the Council looked forward to the intensification of the negotiations and urged the two parties to show greater flexibility, to respond positively and constructively to the Troika's initiatives, making every effort to secure a negotiated settlement of the status of Kosovo. The Council reiterated the necessity of rapidly finding a solution to the Kosovo status issue. The Council confirmed that the EU stands ready to play a significant role in Kosovo in the future and is preparing accordingly.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The Council welcomed the Statement of the PIC meeting on 30 and 31 October 2007. The Council expressed grave concern over the deteriorating political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It underlined the responsibility of the political leaders of the country to stop undermining the foundations of the State, to ensure the full functioning of State institutions and to advance reforms which are essential for Bosnia and Herzegovina to move forward. The Council reiterated its full support for HR/EUSR Miroslav Lajcak and underlined the need for all parties, including those in the Republika Srpska, to fully respect and promptly implement his decisions.

The Council welcomed the Mostar Declaration of 28 October 2007 which can serve as the starting point for a positive re-engagement of the government coalition parties, and urged the signatories to take the necessary follow-up action.

Recalling its conclusions of 15 October 2007, the Council reiterated that police reform remains the key priority and one of the four necessary conditions for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement."

GEORGIA

The Council held an exchange of views on recent developments in Georgia, in the run-up of presidential elections and a referendum on early parliamentary elections, as announced by President Sakashvili for 5 January 2008. While the state of emergency has been lifted, media freedom remains of concern. The importance of ensuring all the conditions for due democratic process regarding the electoral campaign and the conduct of the elections was underlined. The Council will continue to keep the situation under close review.

SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT - *Council conclusions*

The Council discussed, in the presence of development and defence ministers, how to achieve coherence between security and development in policy and concrete terms. It adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The 2003 European Security Strategy and the 2005 European Consensus on Development acknowledge that there cannot be sustainable development without peace and security, and that without development and poverty eradication there will be no sustainable peace.
2. The Council firmly believes that this nexus between development and security should inform EU strategies and policies in order to contribute to the coherence of EU external action, whilst recognising that the responsibilities and roles of development and security actors are complementary but remain specific.
3. The Council recalls that the EU, as an important global actor, can avail itself of a wide array of instruments to contribute to long-term development and poverty eradication, to prevent and manage violent conflict and to build peace in developing countries. The EU will endeavour to improve the coherence, efficiency and visibility of its external policies and build synergies between them, with due regard for cross-cutting issues such as human rights, gender, including the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, promotion of democracy, governance, the rule of law and environmental sustainability.
4. The Council fully recognises the important role of the UN in strengthening the inter-linkages between security, development and human rights. The Council also underlines the contributions of other international and regional organisations in this field, and the need to ensure coherence between work undertaken by the EU and those organisations.
5. The Council, underlining that conflict prevention should be pursued as a priority goal in particular by fostering and strengthening development cooperation, invites the Community, within the respective competences of its Institutions, to further enlarge and improve channels of dialogue and cooperation with civil society, NGOs, local authorities and the private sector.

6. Increasing coherence between security and development, both at a policy and an operational level, is a process that requires short-term improvements and longer term action. As a step in this process the Council has identified initial pragmatic actions for increased coherence in some of the areas spanning the security-development nexus: strategic planning, Security Sector Reform, partnerships with regional and sub regional organisations, and humanitarian aid and security. This is without prejudice to other important areas of the nexus, where work also should be taken forward in the future.
7. In addressing these areas, the Council also recalls its Conclusions on an EU response to situations of fragility.

I. Pragmatic Actions

Strategic Planning

8. The EU is addressing insecurity, and conflicts and their root causes, through a wide range of instruments. Inter-linkage between security and development should be seen as an integral part of the ongoing EU efforts, including those to enhance Civil-Military Coordination (CMCO) in order to address complex crises in a coherent manner.
9. To enhance coherence and consistency, the Council calls for further intensified cooperation within and between Council bodies, Commission services and Member States, in particular by improving the sequencing in the strategic planning of their short term and longer-term actions. This should be promoted by:
 - a more systematic consideration by the relevant Council bodies of the potential synergies between security and development, for example through joint meetings where appropriate, including across pillars;
 - systematically carrying out security/conflict sensitive assessments and conflict analysis, where appropriate, in the preparation of country and regional strategies and programmes;

- taking into account the development dimension in the preparation of CFSP/ESDP activities, and taking into account security aspects, including the CFSP/ESDP dimension, in the preparation of development activities;
- engaging in in-depth consultations, strategic political and conflict analyses and screenings with a view to planning and acting consistently on early signs of tension, instability and fragility;
- ensuring coordination across the pillars through consistent planning arrangements (Member States, Commission and General Secretariat of the Council (GSC)), sequencing and implementation arrangements, including joint Fact Finding Missions and the joint establishment of a Crisis Management Concept (CMC) 1 for a given crisis, where appropriate;
- promoting joint training courses and joint Assessment Missions;
- intensifying cooperation with international institutions, in particular the UN, during the strategic planning process, especially on the basis of the Joint Statement on EU-UN Cooperation in Crisis Management.

Security Sector Reform (SSR) ²

10. Ongoing SSR activities have demonstrated the need for whole-of-government coordination between short and long-term planning and actions. Based on the EU Policy Framework for SSR and taking into account the work undertaken in the OECD/DAC regarding the whole-of-government approach, the Council calls on Member States, the Commission and the GSC to further improve coordination and information exchange and to pursue joint assessments by:

¹ Reference is made to the recent experience in preparing for the Chad mission.

² EU Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform, doc. 9967/06.

- enhancing information flows on policy developments and ongoing and planned SSR activities;
- pursuing field coordination between all actors, including non-EU actors;
- when appropriate, carrying out joint assessments and analyses covering all necessary components in the area of SSR to ensure timely and well coordinated engagement in the broader context of democratic governance;
- sharing experience on pooled funding and mechanisms for rapid deployment of experts and flexible support;
- boosting Commission and GSC in-house SSR expertise, including through joint training and secondment of national experts to assessment missions;
- pursuing joint efforts to build SSR capacity in regional organisations.

The Council notes that Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) is closely linked to SSR and the EU should continue its work on strengthening the EUs support to DDR on the basis of the EU Joint Concept.

Partnerships with regional and subregional organisations

11. The Council commends the work undertaken in the framework of the EU/Africa Partnership as a way forward for a coherent and holistic approach towards security and development challenges. It is built on the partnership with a regional organisation and based on the principle of ownership, while pursuing respective security priorities. The complementarity between EU security and development priorities is supported by the necessary interaction with other policy areas like governance or regional integration, all acting in a mutually reinforcing way.

12. The Council therefore underlines that frameworks agreed with regional and subregional organisations should be considered when designing future actions related to security and development. In this context, the Council stresses the importance of the framework of the future Joint EU-Africa Strategy and its Action Plan, particularly the Peace and Security cluster.

Humanitarian aid and security

13. The Council recalls that the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid sets out the principles and internationally agreed norms and guidelines applicable to EU humanitarian aid, which contains, inter alia, elements for developing future action. The Council underlines that, while humanitarian, development and military/security actors have different but complementary roles and mandates, interaction and cooperation must be ensured. The Council believes that the impartiality, humanity, neutrality and independence of the humanitarian action in such circumstances must and can be safeguarded, and that the effectiveness of the respective interventions can be improved by:

- consulting humanitarian actors from the outset during the planning process and follow-up of military missions;
- ensuring coordination with humanitarian actors in the field, including through coordination mechanisms, when military activities are needed to secure the humanitarian space; in this regard, civil-military coordination and liaison officers should be deployed, where and when needed.

II. Way forward

14. The Council underlines that the importance of the security and development nexus warrants its particular attention in the future. The Council therefore invites Member States, the Commission and the GSC to take the work on security and development forward under the guidance of future Presidencies, including in the framework of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD).

15. The Council calls on the Commission and the GSC, in close cooperation with Member States, to prepare an Action Plan with a view to implementing the actions set out in these Conclusions, and to submit this Plan to the Council.
16. The Council firmly believes that lessons learned from past experiences, and concrete steps in a few specific countries are needed to inform the Action Plan and future policies. The Council therefore calls for an analysis focusing on countries where ESDP missions and operations are being planned or conducted or where CFSP, Community and bilateral Member State activities are being conducted, with a view to finding ways to improve the sequencing and coordination of EU activities. This should be done with due regard for the EU Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour in Development Policy. This work should start in 2008 and be reported to the Council in a timely manner.
17. Finally, the Council believes that future work on security and development should include a more detailed approach to the development perspective of security challenges, dialogue processes (political dialogue, mediation, human rights promotion, governance, democracy support), DDR and the inter-linkages with SSR, the security and development implications of climate change, environmental and natural resource management issues and migration, as well as aspects related to financing. In this context, particular attention should be paid to African-led peace support operations, without prejudice to initiatives in other regions."

EFFECTIVENESS OF EXTERNAL ACTION - THE JOINT EU-AFRICA STRATEGY

The Council held its annual policy debate on the effectiveness of EU external action, which this year focused on implications for the EU's development cooperation policy of the joint EU-Africa strategy and action plan, which are due to be finalised at an EU-Africa ministerial meeting in Sharm-El-Sheik on 4-5 December, and adopted at the EU-Africa summit in Lisbon on 8-9 December.

The Council held an exchange of views on the basis of a paper prepared by the presidency that highlights the following issues:

- consequences of the new joint strategy and action plan from the perspective of development ministers;
- the synergies to be established regarding the institutional framework and financial instruments for development cooperation policy;
- the promotion of policy coherence to ensure an integrated and global vision of the EU-Africa dialogue.

Since it was first mooted by the European Council at Evian in July 2000, the annual policy debate has served to review the coherence of the Union's external policies and assistance, to consider how the effectiveness of EU external action might be enhanced and to propose guidelines for the year ahead.

EU RESPONSE TO SITUATIONS OF FRAGILITY

Ministers discussed the EU's response to situation of fragility and held an exchange of views with Robert Zoellick, president of the World Bank. The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council underlines that situations of fragility constitute a major challenge to sustainable development and peace. Fragility may exacerbate the risk of failing to reach the Millennium Development Goals and also involve regional and global security risks. Therefore it is of paramount importance that the EU develops a response to situations of fragility, within the framework of the European Consensus on Development.
2. The Council acknowledges that fragility refers to weak or failing structures and to situations where the social contract is broken due to the State's incapacity or unwillingness to deal with its basic functions, meet its obligations and responsibilities regarding the rule of law, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, security and safety of its population, poverty reduction, service delivery, the transparent and equitable management of resources and access to power. The Council recognizes that situations of fragility, including at State level, differ and present specific features, which require adapted policy responses.
3. In addressing situations of fragility, the Council highlights the importance of democratic governance, rule of law, respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the eradication of poverty, as well as of climate change and migration issues.
4. The Council welcomes the Commission Communication "Towards an EU response to situations of Fragility - engaging in difficult environments for sustainable development, stability and peace" which takes into account the ongoing international debate, identifies major issues and proposes lines for action.
5. The Council endorses, on behalf of the EU, the Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations, emphasizes the need for a "whole-of-government" approach when addressing fragility and invites the Community and its Member States to adapt and coordinate their approaches in line with these Principles.

6. The Council expresses its appreciation for the work on situations of fragility being carried out by the United Nations, in particular the Peace Building Commission, the World Bank and the African Development Bank, underlining that the EU will seek to further strengthen its strategic partnerships with the UN and other multilateral actors dealing with issues of fragility.
7. The Council recognises that the EU should make more effective use of the full range of existing EU policy tools and external action instruments to address, in a coherent and timely manner, situations of fragility in partner countries. The EU response should therefore combine political, diplomatic, development, security and humanitarian instruments.
8. For specific features of fragility related to humanitarian aid and security, particularly in situations of crisis and conflict, the Council refers in particular to the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and the Conclusions on Security and Development.
9. For other features of fragility, the Council strongly believes that development and political instruments have an equally important role to play with a view to ensuring effective preventive responses and addressing situations of fragility. The EU should stay engaged with the appropriate combination of EU instruments, while respecting the principle of ownership.
10. In situations of fragility, political dialogue is especially important and should be further developed and reinforced. Where no such dialogue exists, confidence building measures should be considered. The Council also believes that a dialogue should be pursued with civil society and local authorities.
11. The Council confirms that issues concerning fragility should be part of the dialogue with emerging donors, including in the framework of both EU and bilateral dialogue with those countries, with regional and sub-regional actors that can bring a positive influence to bear, and with other international actors.

Preventing and addressing situations of fragility

12. The Council underlines that the comprehensive and forward-looking use of Community and Member States' development instruments is required to progress in achieving the MDGs and in preventing and addressing situations of fragility, including the following issues:
- Address democratic governance as a key element to prevent and overcome fragility;
 - Support the strengthening of the capabilities of States to fulfil their core functions, as well as the strengthening of constructive linkages between State institutions and society, including Non-State Actors (NSA), with a view to building effective and legitimate political systems;
 - Improve existing diagnostic and assessment tools, in particular through joint analysis (based for example on the Community Governance profile, the Community root causes of conflict checklist and other tools) and exchange of information between Member States, the Commission and the General Secretariat of the Council (GSC);
 - Recognise the essential role played by women and promote gender equality, in particular by promoting the integration of women into decision making processes, in order to improve their political, social and economic empowerment;
 - Address gender based and sexual violence, in particular by paying continued attention to the violation of the rights of women and children in conflict situations, and support the prevention and prosecution of related crimes;
 - Address climate change and migration issues;
 - Take into account and address specific needs of vulnerable groups;

- Develop early warning mechanisms on the basis of information related to democratic governance issues, rule of law, human rights, poverty levels, and use conflict sensitive approaches. The contribution from civil society in this context is important;
- Strengthen the role of Country Strategy Papers (CSPs), in line with national development strategies, as the preferred framework to prevent and address fragility;
- Make better use of the EDF and the Community financing instruments (DCI, ENPI, IfS, EIDHR), in particular by:
 - Applying specific (more needs-based) country and regional allocation criteria, and ensuring that unforeseen needs can be met adequately;
 - Integrating fragility in the review process of the Governance Initiative for ACP countries and developing similar tools for DCI countries.
 - Making financial tools and procedures more flexible and capable to provide quick responses;
- Enhance the “Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development” (LRRD) strategic framework, in particular by integrating democratic governance and institutional developments;
- Make use of the EU Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour, in particular with regard to:
 - Agreeing on the most suitable option to channel extra funding to States in a situation of fragility, in particular “aid orphans”;

- Identifying substantial overlaps and gaps at country level in order better allocate existing and additional funds;
- Ensuring predictable and sustainable funding;
- Addressing poverty, as well as social and gender inequalities, by adapting existing instruments with a view to helping to achieve the MDGs in situations of fragility (e.g. to ensure donors' engagement in social sectors);
- Testing the EU response to situations of fragility in pilot cases.

Organisational issues

13. The EU as a whole needs to ensure that its support to partners' efforts in addressing fragility is more responsive, quicker and more flexible. The approach should be tailor-made, articulated and holistic, combining diplomatic action, humanitarian aid, development cooperation and security. This requires:
- Regular and increased coordination between the Commission, the GSC and Member States at headquarters level and in the field;
 - Regular exchanges of risk analyses and relevant responses at the field level through EU Heads of Mission meetings and at headquarters through desk-to-desk dialogues between Institutions and Member States and across Council groups;
 - An improved framework for joint analysis and exchange of information, both at headquarters level and in the field;

- An analysis of donors' comparative advantages should be conducted in the framework of the Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour;
- Adapting staff management, in particular through joint training and appropriate incentives to work in fragile situations.

14. Furthermore, this should involve the establishment of ad hoc “Country and Thematic Teams” (CTTs), involving Commission, Member States and GSC, with the Commission acting as facilitator. Such CTTs could start as soon as possible for a number of “pilot” cases and address specific situations of fragility with a view to:

- Working towards more coherent and coordinated action at country level, in particular by making use of all possibilities for a joint analysis and for joint programming as provided for in the Common framework for Country Strategy Papers (CFCSP);
- Ensuring that CSPs are regularly reviewed and adapted to the evolution of the situation;
- Identifying modalities of budget support in situations of fragility;
- Addressing “post crisis reconstruction”, with focus on the LRRD strategic framework;
- Using Governance profiles;
- Exploring the possibilities of topping up CSPs, including through a governance-linked incentive “tranche”.

Follow-up

15. The Council calls on the Commission, in close cooperation with the Member States and the GSC, to map Community and bilateral financial instruments, as well as Member States' intervention possibilities.

16. The Council requests the Commission to present by 2009 an implementation plan based on the above Conclusions on an EU response to situations of fragility and on the experience acquired through the CTTs and the "pilot" cases. This plan should be prepared in close cooperation with Member States and the GSC, taking into account the work being carried out on fragility by international organisations and in dialogue with civil society and other stakeholders."

POLICY COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Migration and development - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted conclusions on coherence between EU migration and development policies, on the basis of the Commission's biennial report on implementation of "policy coherence for development" (PCD) objectives.

In its conclusions, the Council identifies areas where enhanced action is required in order to increase the coherence and efficiency of the EU's migration and development policies, namely:

- support to developing countries in strengthening their migration management capacities, with a view to improving their performance in aspects such as protecting the human rights of migrants and tackling illegal migration and the trafficking of human beings;
- addressing mobility, including well-managed legal migration, initiatives of "circular" migration and the promotion of "decent" work;
- facilitating the transfer of remittances and promoting a more relevant role of diaspora and migrant communities in the development of their countries of origin;
- further developing voluntary tools and mechanisms intended to increase coherence between migration and development policies, such as migration profiles, cooperation platforms, migration observatories, co-development initiatives and mobility partnerships.

The EU is paying increased attention to the interrelationship between migration and development. It considers that migration is an integral part of the development agenda and that the development aspects are an important element in migration policies. The links are complex, but migration, when managed effectively, can have a substantial positive impact both on the country of destination and the country of origin.

Migration is one of twelve policy areas identified in conclusions adopted May 2005 whereby the Council committed itself to pursuing PCD objectives, setting priorities for action as a means for contributing to poverty reduction and to achieving the UN's millennium development goals.

The Council's conclusions can be found in document [14559/07](#).

Climate change alliance with developing countries - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted conclusions on a communication from the Commission on the building of a "global climate change alliance" between the European Union and poor developing countries most vulnerable to climate change, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing states.

The proposed alliance will provide a platform for dialogue and exchange as well as targeted cooperation in the following areas: adaptation to climate change, reducing emissions from deforestation, enhancing participation in the "clean development mechanism", promoting disaster risk reduction and integrating climate change into poverty reduction efforts.

On the financing of the global alliance, the Council conclusions recognise that, in order to meet the twofold challenge of adaptation and mitigation, the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable countries are such that significant resources must be mobilised as soon as possible, including through the efficient use of existing funds. The conclusions therefore welcome an initial additional allocation by the Commission of EUR 50 million for the start-up of the initiative.

The conclusions emphasise that support to the alliance will be complementary to United Nations funds (the global environment facility, the least developed countries' fund and the special climate change fund). The initiative should be seen in the broader context of policy coherence for development, which is aimed at enhancing synergies between development cooperation and other policies.

EU coordinated action in the framework of the global alliance will be in line with existing initiatives on aid effectiveness and the code of conduct on the division of labour. The conclusions are a contribution to the EU's participation in the UN climate change conference to be held in Bali from 3 to 14 December.

The Council's conclusions can be found in document [15078/07](#).

Policy coherence for development - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"Introduction

1. The Council recalls the EU commitment to strengthening Policy Coherence for Development (PCD), as expressed in the 2005 EU Joint Development Policy Statement 'The European Consensus on Development', as well as the EU overall objective of improving the coherence, efficiency and visibility of the Union's external policies. The Council emphasises that EU policies other than development can make a substantial contribution in assisting developing countries' efforts in their poverty reduction strategies and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
2. The Council recalls that the EU takes account of the development objectives in all policies that are likely to affect developing countries. More specifically, the Council recalls its Conclusions of May 2005 in the following relevant areas: Trade, Environment, Climate change, Security, Agriculture, Fisheries, Social dimension of globalization, employment and decent work, Migration, Research and innovation, Information society, Transport and Energy. The Council further recalls its commitments on integrating development concerns in Council decision making.

The first biennial EU Report on PCD

3. The Council welcomes the submission by the Commission of the first EU biennial report on the application of PCD, which was prepared in close collaboration with all Member States. The report provides valuable information on progress made by the EU in promoting a higher degree of policy coherence and contains a comprehensive list of outstanding issues for further action. It gathers different pieces of information on PCD under a single umbrella, establishing links between development and other policy areas for which information was until now fragmented.
4. The preparation of the report in itself played an important role in raising awareness, both at national and at EU levels, of the effects of EU policies on the political, economic, social and environmental situation in developing countries. The Council invites the Commission and the Member States to draw on the report to generate debates on PCD issues at the European and the national level, as well as with all development partners.

Horizontal and organisational issues

5. PCD requires, in addition to political commitments, a clear approach providing adequate information on the impact of other policies on developing countries, appropriate fora for dialogue across policy areas, sufficient expertise and enhanced accountability and transparency.
6. The Council notes with satisfaction that a number of organisational PCD mechanisms have been put in place at Council, Member State and Commission levels, but acknowledges the Report's finding on the need to pursue efforts to ensure that EU's commitments continue to be met. The Council invites all parties to develop and improve such mechanisms and use them in a more systematic manner, when necessary.

7. Within the Council, noting that PCD is not yet systematically pursued at the different stages of the decision making process, the Council invites future Presidencies, with the support of the General Secretariat of the Council (GSC) and the Commission, with due respect to their respective competences, to continue their efforts to ensure that development concerns are taken into account across the relevant policies. Experience has shown that the screening of Council agendas and joint meetings of different Council bodies are often useful procedures to be encouraged .
8. The Council recalls its invitation to each Presidency to carry out an update of the PCD rolling Work Programme, in light of the EU and the international agenda, to serve as a check list for PCD. This work should be done with the assistance of the GSC and the Commission and in accordance with these Conclusions as well as the Council Conclusions of October 2006 .
9. The Council underlines the role it has assigned to the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) in its Rules of Procedure, in particular Article 19 (1), in ensuring the consistency of the Union's policies and actions. In this context, COREPER should continue to be the main forum for ensuring PCD, while efforts to enhance policy coherence should start at national level and furthered at Council Working Parties.
10. The Council underlines the role it has assigned to the GSC in its Rules of Procedure, in particular Article 23 (3), by involving it in organising, coordinating and ensuring the coherence of the Council's work. The GSC shall assist the Presidency in ensuring that PCD relevant issues are identified and discussed according to existing Council procedures in relevant Working Parties. Recent experience in implementing priority themes for PCD has shown that this support is crucial.
11. At national level, Member States are invited, as appropriate, to reinforce and use PCD procedures where they already exist and to develop, if needed, mechanisms of dialogue between development and other departments, in order to increase awareness among the latter of the importance of PCD in all policies that are likely to affect developing countries, while adopting capacity building measures if necessary.

12. At Commission level, while a number of PCD mechanisms are already in place, the Council encourages the Commission to use PCD instruments in a systematic way and continue its efforts to ensure that development concerns are taken into account in the preparation and implementation of policies; in particular asks the Commission to improve and better use the Impact Assessment process to evaluate the impact of EU policies on developing countries. The revised Impact Assessments guidelines should give more attention to the external impacts on developing countries.
13. The Council invites the Member States and the Commission to strengthen dialogue with developing countries, at national, regional and global level, on the effects of EU policies as well as on the relevance of PCD to developing countries' own policies; to that end, the Commission and Member States should better integrate the PCD approach into Country and Regional Strategy Papers (CSPs and RSPs).
14. The Council underlines the importance of establishing a constructive and fruitful exchange with non-state actors, both in the EU and in developing countries on PCD-related issues. The Council also stresses the importance of the involvement of the European Parliament in PCD.

Policy areas relevant to PCD

15. The Council notes with satisfaction progress in certain policy areas that are very important for developing countries, such as Trade, Agriculture and Fisheries, while noting that the development potential of areas such as Migration, Security, Climate change, Energy, Environment and Research should be further exploited. The Council invites the Member States and the Commission to continue monitoring and improving PCD in the twelve policy areas, with a view to promoting synergies between Development and other policies.
16. In the area of Trade, the Council emphasizes:
 - The importance of reaching an ambitious , balanced comprehensive and development oriented outcome of the WTO/DDA negotiations;

- The important step which the General System of Preferences (GSP) schemes, in particular the duty-free and quota-free access for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) provided by the “Everything but arms” (EBA), represents;
- The need to ensure a strong development dimension in the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the ACP countries;
- The importance of taking into account development objectives and needs in Association and Free Trade Agreements with all countries and regions, take into account the development level of the countries involved;
- The need to further explore the potential for improving trade relations with developing countries where those agreements are not yet in place;
- The need to take into account the development dimension in the ongoing revision of preferential rules of origin;
- The EU’s firm intention to do its utmost to fulfil its trade-related assistance (TRA) commitments and to implement the EU Strategy on Aid for Trade, including the wider Aid for Trade agenda.

17. In the area of Environment, the Council:

- Reaffirms that the EU is keen to pursue the broad agenda defined by the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the 2005 World Summit, because halting and reversing environmental degradation is not only a global environmental objective, but is also key to poverty reduction, economic growth and security and it is therefore crucial for the achievement of the MDGs and Sustainable Development for all;

- Underlines the need for all countries to intensify efforts to enhance sustainable consumption and production patterns and sustainable management of natural resources;
 - Reaffirms that, to be sustainable, poverty reduction strategies must integrate environmental commitments to better manage the natural resource base of economic and social development;
 - On international environmental governance, recalls the EU's readiness to work to strengthen International Environment Governance (IEG) and to explore possibilities for a more coherent institutional framework of environmental governance. While significant strengthening of the IEG system can be achieved through short- and medium- term reform, the EU firmly believes that an ambitious reform is required in order to achieve the desired strengthening of the IEG system and feels encouraged to work for the establishment of a UN environment organization, in Nairobi, based on UNEP, with a revised and strengthened mandate, supported by stable, adequate and predictable financial contributions and operating on an equal footing with other UN specialised Agencies.
 - Encourages the Member States and the Commission to intensify dialogue on environment and development with partner countries.
18. In the area of Climate Change, the Council refers to its Conclusions on Climate Change of 30 October 2007. and its Conclusions on a Global Climate Change Alliance with the most vulnerable developing countries
19. In the area of Security, the Council refers to its Conclusions on Security and Development and its Conclusions on "An EU response to situations of fragility".

20. In the area of Agriculture, the Council:

- Notes with satisfaction that the process of CAP reform is making an important contribution to coherence between agricultural and development policies, and therefore to the objectives of PCD;
- Emphasises the importance of taking into account, in the context of trade negotiations, the developing countries' needs, including in the areas of rural development, food security and the livelihoods of the poorest.

21. In the area of Fisheries, the Council:

- Recognizes the vital contribution fisheries can make to national economies, to food and livelihood security;
- Underlines the relevance of earlier ex-ante impact assessments and of making better use of scientific committees;
- Encourages the relevant bodies to continue reinforcing the sustainability objectives of the Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs), which play an important role for the development of coastal States, and to strengthen the regional dimension of the FPAs;
- Invites the Commission to encourage partner countries to use the financial contribution of the FPAs in line with the development objectives of the country and make better use of the joint committees to this end;
- Further invites the Commission and Member States to encourage partner countries to use donor support for the development and good governance of the fisheries sectors where this can make an important contribution to poverty reduction;

- Invites the Commission and the Member States to encourage developing countries' participation in international fora, including the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

22. In the area of Social dimension of globalization, employment and decent work, the Council:

- Welcomes the growing attention paid to employment, decent work and social cohesion in the debate on development and calls for a strengthening of these dimensions in the dialogue and cooperation of the EU and Member States with the developing countries;
- Highlights the importance of promoting gender equality, gender mainstreaming and combating all forms of discrimination and social exclusion as an integral part of the decent work agenda;
- Welcomes the increasing interest of developing countries and regions in the EU's experience of integrated development combining economic performance and social justice, in particular their increasing interest in the EU Lisbon Strategy;
- Invites the Commission to further develop its dialogue with developing countries and regions on employment and social policies as part of the efforts to promote decent work and the external dimension of the Lisbon Strategy;
- Welcomes the EU's increased cooperation with the UN, the ILO and others relevant actors and supports in particular the ILO initiative on Decent Work Country Programmes.

23. In the area of Migration, the Council refers to its Conclusions on Coherence between EU Migration and Development Policies.

24. In the area of Research, the Council considers that:

- The ability to generate, absorb and apply new knowledge is an increasingly important factor for sustainable development; however, developing countries often lack the human and institutional resources to address those issues;
- The EU research policy, both at EC and national level, should contribute to overall development policy objectives by supporting research activities in areas of interest for developing countries, and continue supporting specific international cooperation projects involving research centres, universities and other stakeholders from developing countries;
- The European Space Policy (ESP) should also contribute to increased cooperation between Europe and developing countries regarding the use of space assets and research for sustainable development;
- The Commission and Member States should support developing countries' efforts to build Science and Technology capacity so that they can carry out their own research and be better placed to take advantage of the opportunities available for international cooperation, such as those offered by the EU Research Framework Programmes;
- The brain drain effect of EU research policy, by attracting researchers from third countries, may be a matter of concern for some developing countries. The Council invites the Commission to fully exploit the return mechanisms offered by the "People" Specific Programme in the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) 2007-2013 to enable researchers to continue their own research activities in their countries. The Council invites Member States to monitor possible brain drain activities of their research policies and to balance them with support for research activities carried out in developing countries.

25. In the area of Information society, the Council considers that:

- Given the substantial potential that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have for development, a balanced approach, combining private investment and government action, including public-private partnerships, should be further supported through cooperation actions, notably at regional level;
- Supporting policy dialogue and capacity building, encouraging greater participation in FP7 and extending the access to research and education networks, in particular GÉANT, can play an important role in bridging the digital divide between developed and developing countries and in the developing countries;
- Increasing Internet connectivity through initiatives supporting lower costs and better management can dramatically enhance the availability of broadband in developing countries, especially for priority applications such as health, environment and education.

26. In the area of Transport, the Council:

- Notes that there is a need to raise awareness on PCD issues among EU practitioners. This would in turn allow for an improved dialogue on policy coherence with partner countries, particularly with LDCs and land-locked countries, and for increased integration of PCD into partner countries and regions' sector programmes.

27. In the Energy area, the Council:

- Invites the Commission and the Member States to attach priority, as appropriate, to energy in country programmes, to facilitate dialogue with partner countries and to implement specific actions, including by strengthening the EU Energy Initiative for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development (EUEI) and by launching the EU-Africa Partnership for Energy;

- Highlights the importance of poor people's access to energy services for the achievement of the MDG's and the need to enhance energy security in developing countries through renewable energy and energy efficiency;
- Underlines the importance of addressing cross-cutting issues, such as environment, climate change, good governance, gender and HIV/AIDS in energy initiatives in developing countries;
- Stresses that the EU should strive to ensure that developing countries benefit from the EU's efforts to diversify energy supply and to develop energy efficient technologies and renewable energies.

Follow up

29. The Council reaffirms the great importance of closely monitoring all of the 12 EU PCD areas and invites the Commission and the Member States, within the scope of their competences, to give particular attention to the outstanding issues identified in the Report while continuing their efforts to promote PCD, in close consultation and collaboration. The Council looks forward to receiving the next PCD Report in two years time, which should build upon the experience and findings of the first report and include an assessment of progress on the outstanding issues.
30. Recognizing the need to identify complementarities between development and other policies, the Council invites the Commission and the Member States to further develop work on clarifying the role of development cooperation in promoting PCD and in supporting developing countries to reap the benefits of more coherent EU policies."

ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS- *Council conclusions*

The Council reviewed progress in the negotiation of economic partnership agreements with the African, Caribbean and Pacific group of states and regions, in the run-up to the 31 December deadline for completion of these agreements. It adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council confirms its commitment to the ongoing negotiations on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), as expressed in its Conclusions on EPAs of April 2006 and May 2007 and reiterates its position of EPAs as being development instruments. EPAs are going to be WTO compatible agreements, supporting regional integration and promoting the gradual integration of the ACP economies into the rules-based world trading system, thereby fostering their sustainable development and contributing to the overall effort to eradicate poverty and to enhance the living conditions in the ACP countries.
2. The Council recalls the need to conclude negotiations in time for the entry into force of the EPAs by 1 January 2008, in accordance with Article 37.1 of the Cotonou Agreement and taking into account the expiration of the current preferential trade provisions applied under a WTO waiver. In this respect, the Council recalls and welcomes the endorsement by the ACP-EC Council of Ministers on 25 May 2007 of the Review of the negotiations pursuant to Article 37.4 of the Cotonou Agreement, with the expression of the political commitment by the parties to the above referred deadline.
3. The Council expresses its concern over the slow pace of the negotiations in some regions, while welcoming the significant progress made in those regions that are close to concluding an EPA. It underlines that the conclusion of mutually satisfactory EPAs can only be the result of a joint effort, which requires strong political commitment from all parties.

4. The Council considers that the Commission Communication on the Economic Partnership Agreements provides a useful assessment of progress and challenges at a crucial stage of the negotiations, and is a pragmatic indication of the best way forward with respect to WTO requirements. The Council endorses the two-step approach proposed in the Communication to negotiate WTO compatible agreements including market access for goods as an interim solution for ACP regions or sub-regions. In this regard, recalling that EPAs aim at establishing WTO compatible agreements between the parties on the basis of the development objectives of the Cotonou Agreement, the Council will examine, in view to its adoption, the draft Regulation proposed by the Commission aiming at applying as of 1 January 2008 as a first step the arrangements for goods originating in certain states which are part of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) provided in agreements establishing, or leading to the establishment of, Economic Partnership Agreements.
5. The Council maintains that, in order to maximise the development potential of the EPAs, all WTO compatible flexibility must be allowed for the ACP liberalisation processes. In this context, it emphasises that any EPA should allow asymmetry between ACP and EU market access commitments, including in the provision of appropriately long transition periods, and in very exceptional cases even longer periods, which take account of the development needs of the ACP countries. The Council further recognises the need for improved Rules of Origin in EPAs, making them simpler, more transparent, easier, improved and predictable in order to ensure that ACP States can fully benefit from preferential market access, whilst preventing circumvention.
6. The Council respects the right of all ACP States and regions to determine the best policies for their development and it acknowledges that the ambition for the scope of an EPA may differ from one region to the other. At the same time the Council, in conformity with its Conclusions of May 2007, considers that the EPAs should include trade in services, investment and other trade related areas. It believes that such agreements fulfil the objectives of economic and trade cooperation as set out in the Cotonou Agreement and contribute to release the full development benefits of EPAs. The Council supports a flexible and phased approach in trade-related areas.

7. The Council further recalls that, in light of Cotonou obligations, new trading arrangements should be established by 1 January 2008, in order to improve the situation for ACP countries and to avoid negative effects on the trade flows between them and the EU. Hence, while it appeals on all parties to advance as much as possible in all aspects of the EPA, the Council urges them to focus their negotiating efforts especially on the segment of trade in goods. The Council considers that an interim agreement covering WTO compatible trade in goods agreements and other aspects that have already been agreed at this stage should be considered as a first step in a process that should lead to a full EPA. In this respect, it underlines its position that all parties should agree to pursue negotiations within agreed timeframes in outstanding areas if agreement on these issues cannot be reached before the end of 2007. The Commission should inform the Council on regular basis on the progress achieved on these issues.
8. The Council acknowledges the specific interests of the outermost regions. It assures that these interests will be taken into account in the final stage of the EPA negotiations.
9. One of the main objectives of the EPAs is to support and foster regionally owned integration processes. The Council acknowledges that the level of existing regional integration varies within the six ACP regions and that in some regions not all countries are yet in a position to enter into an EPA in the agreed timeframe. At the same time, the Council firmly holds that EPAs, as development and regionally inclusive instruments, can serve the interest of all ACP States more than any other WTO compatible option currently accessible. In this context, in those cases where the only possible option to conclude an agreement within the mandatory deadline is to sign at sub-regional level in order to avoid negative impacts on any ACP country, the Council emphasises that such agreements should include accession clauses that ensure the full possibility to join in for all countries of the region willing to participate at a later stage. These agreements should be consistent with regional economic and political integration processes.

10. The Council stresses the importance of remaining engaged in helping the ACP adjust to the changes linked to EPAs and enhance regional integration to seize the new trade opportunities they bring. The Council is therefore determined to ensure optimal interaction and coherence between EPAs and development cooperation. The Council notes that it has been agreed with all regions that development cooperation provisions should be included in the EPAs and that the programming of the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) offers a unique opportunity to synchronise trade policy decisions taken in the EPAs and programming of EDF resources. The Council recommends that priority is given to finalise with the ACP countries and regions the identification of key accompanying measures and programmes, using, to the maximum extent possible, the outcome of the work of the Regional Preparatory Task Forces. Of particular concern will be that each ACP region is given adequate support, based on needs prioritised by the region. For those regions concluding interim agreements, the Council recognizes that development finance will be needed already at this stage to accompany adjustment linked to liberalisation and as a complementary instrument amplifying the development dimension of the agreements.
11. The Council recalls the adoption in October 2007 of the EU strategy on Aid for Trade. The strategy made a commitment that, in the context of efforts to increase the collective EU trade related assistance to € 2 billion annually by 2010, in the range of 50% of the increase will be available for the needs prioritised by the ACP countries. The provision of increased, high quality Aid for Trade (AfT) had been promised by the EU in order to support ACP regions, countries and local communities, including small producers, to take full advantage of increased trade opportunities and maximise the benefits of trade reforms, including those of the EPAs, while the collective EU delivery of AfT does not depend on the outcome of the negotiations. The Council underlines that all ACP regions should receive a fair share of this overall amount.
12. The Council urges all parties to redouble their efforts in order to reach agreement on these negotiations in this last crucial period. In this context, it underlines the need to agree, before the end of the year, WTO compatible solutions, in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement, that provide to non-LDC ACP countries improved access into the EU market and guard against trade disruption. To that end, the General Affairs and External Relations Council will revert to this issue in December 2007, on the basis of a report and recommendations from the Commission.

13. The Council underlines that suitable review clauses, as well as clauses that establish appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and review implementation as well as development impacts, with special attention to the most vulnerable ACP countries and communities, will be a key part of the EPA's texts. In order to uphold the development dimension of the EPAs, the monitoring system should be based on objective and transparent criteria agreed through a broad and inclusive participatory approach, including Parliaments and non-State actors from both ACP states and the EU. Overseeing and monitoring should be an integral function of the EPA institutions.

14. The signature of the EPAs will be the beginning of a process, with a view to reinforcing regional integration and promoting the advancement of the ACP economies. The Council will continue to follow this matter in order to ensure that EPAs effectively contribute to improve prospects for development in the ACP countries."

ADVANCING AGRICULTURE IN AFRICA - Council conclusions

The Council adopted conclusions on a communication from the Commission on agriculture in Africa, welcoming the objectives and principles set out for cooperation on agricultural development at regional and continental levels in Africa.

Agriculture is the main economic base for the majority of Africans and accounts for about one third of Africa's gross domestic product. The Council's conclusions recognise the crucial importance of broad-based sustainable agricultural growth for poverty reduction and food security and for attaining the UN's millennium development goals in Africa. They welcome the decision by African heads of state to increase the share of national budgets allocated to agriculture and rural development and appeal to them to honour their commitments.

The conclusions welcome the increased attention given to agriculture, food security and rural development for Africa under the EU's 10th European development fund. With respect to cooperation on agricultural development at the continental and regional levels, the conclusions endorse the Commission communication. Specific areas on which to focus collaboration will be decided in consultation between the EU and the African Union.

These considerations will be reflected in the joint strategy and action plan to be adopted at the EU-Africa summit in Lisbon on 8 and 9 December as regards implementation of the EU-Africa strategic partnership.

The Council's conclusions can be found in document [14914/07](#).

OTHER BUSINESS

Ratification of the revised ACP-EU partnership agreement

Ministers, over lunch, were briefed by the Commission on the state of ratification of the revised ACP-EU partnership agreement and an EU internal agreement on the tenth European development fund.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED
