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Syria

PRESS RELEASE, 3142nd Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 23 January 2012, 5592/12

The Council discussed the situation in Syria and adopted the following conclusions:

1. 'The European Union remains deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in Syria and the widespread and systematic violations of human rights and calls again for an immediate end to the violence. The EU is particularly concerned by the recent escalation of violence and reiterates its condemnation in the strongest terms of the brutal crackdown by the Syrian government which risks exacerbating even further the spiral of violence, sectarian clashes and militarization. President Assad must step aside immediately to allow for a peaceful and democratic transition.
2. The EU strongly condemns the bombs attacks in Damascus on 23 December 2011 and on 6 January 2012 causing scores of deaths and injuries. Any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation and by who-soever committed. The EU also condemns the attack on 11 January that killed a French journalist and several Syrian civilians, injuring many more people, including a Dutch journalist. The EU calls for light to be shed on this attack. The Syrian authorities have a responsibility to guarantee the safety of journalists in their country. The press must be allowed to carry out its vital role of providing independent information on the events in Syria without fear of violence or repression.
3. The EU welcomes the League of Arab States' resolution of 22 January and its initiative to seek UNSC support for a political solution. The EU is deeply concerned by the Syrian authorities' lack of cooperation and urges them to fully comply with the League of Arab States' Action Plan and their commitments undertaken in that respect, to completely stop acts of violence against civilians, free political detainees, remove troops, tanks and weapons from cities, and allow independent observers and the media, to freely travel in and report on Syria.
4. The EU recalls its support to the League of Arab States' efforts to end the cycle of violence in Syria, and to the deployment of its monitoring mission, including

through the setting up of the LAS situation room. The EU welcomes the UN readiness to provide training and assistance to the League's monitors and encourages the League to accept UN assistance to ensure technical support for the mission.

5. The EU welcomes the League of Arab States' decision to extend its observation mission and to reinforce its capacity to report independently on the situation in Syria. The EU takes note of the League of Arab States' decision to appoint a Special Envoy for Syria.

6. The EU condemns in the strongest terms the attacks on the League of Arab States' mission monitors and calls for an impartial and swift investigation into the events. The mission must be able to act safely and with independence and to access all detention facilities.

7. Given the Syrian regime's continued use of violence against civilians, the EU has today designated further 22 individuals and 8 entities to be subject to restrictive measures. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures against the regime, not to the civilian population, as long as repression continues. Following the assessment of EU Member States, the listing of designated persons who have dissociated themselves from the repressive policy of the regime will be reconsidered. The EU calls on the international community to join its efforts to target those responsible for or associated with the violent repression and those who support or benefit from the regime.

8. The EU reiterates its strong support to the Syrian people and encourages the Syrian opposition to make all efforts to strengthen coordination on the way forward in order to realise an orderly transition to a Syria that is democratic, stable, inclusive and that guarantees minority rights. It supports the efforts of the League of Arab States in this respect. The EU will continue to engage with representative members of the Syrian opposition, such as the SNC, which adhere to non violence, inclusiveness and democratic values.

9. The EU reiterates its strong concerns about the deteriorating living conditions of the Syrian people in a great number of localities affected by the unrest. The Syrian authorities must immediately alleviate the suffering of the population living in these areas, respect and protect the wounded and sick, guarantee unhindered access to medical care without any discrimination or reprisal and refrain from intimidation of those providing medical assistance. The Syrian authorities must allow full and unimpeded access of relief personnel from international humanitarian

organisations for the timely delivery of humanitarian aid to persons in need of assistance.

10. The EU urges all members of the UN Security Council to uphold their responsibilities to end the violence against the Syrian population and support the Syrian people in their desire for freedom and political rights. The EU welcomes the establishment by the UN Human Rights Council of a Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Syria and urges the Syrian Government to fully cooperate with the Rapporteur. The EU recalls the main findings of the report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry which stated that crimes against humanity may have been committed in the country. The EU looks forward to the next debate of the UN Human Rights Council on Syria on the 12 March 2012.'

In response to the continuing human rights violations, the Council reinforced the EU's restrictive measures against the Syrian regime.

Council tightens restrictive measures on Syria

Brussels, 23 January 2012, 5537/12

In response to the unacceptable repression by the Syrian regime on the Syrian people, the Council today reinforced the EU's restrictive measures against those responsible for the human rights violations.

The Council added 22 persons responsible for human rights violations and eight entities financially supporting the regime to the list of those subject to an asset freeze and a ban from entering the EU.

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton said: *'Today's decision will put further pressure on those who are responsible for the unacceptable violence and repression in Syria. The message from the European Union is clear: the crackdown must stop immediately. We will continue to do all we can to help the Syrian people achieve their legitimate political rights.'*

This brings the total number of entities targeted by an asset freeze to 38 and the number of people subject to an asset freeze and a visa ban to 108. In response to the widespread human rights violations, the EU has gradually imposed a comprehensive set of restrictive measures on Syria, including an arms embargo, a ban on the import of Syrian crude oil and on new investment in the Syrian petrol sector.

Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton following the veto of the UNSC Resolution on Syria

Brussels, 4 February 2012, A 44/12

We deeply regret that due to the renewed veto of the Russian Federation and China the Security Council was unable to support the call of the League of Arab States for an inclusive, Syrian-led political process conducted in an environment free from violence. The EU continues to support all efforts of the League of Arab States and calls once more on all members of the UNSC to assume their responsibilities. The time has come to speak with one voice and demand an end to the bloodshed and speak out for a democratic future for Syria. We condemn the ongoing bloodshed and stand by the Syrian people against the repressive regime. We call on President Assad to end immediately the killing of civilians, withdraw the Syrian army from besieged towns and cities and step aside in order to make room for a peaceful transition for the sake of his country.

PRESS RELEASE, 3157th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 22 and 23 March 2012, 7849/12

Syria

The Council discussed the latest developments in Syria and adopted the following conclusions:

‘1. The European Union is increasingly appalled by the unfolding situation in Syria and recalls the European Council conclusions on Syria of 1 and 2 March 2012. The EU strongly condemns the continued brutal attacks and systematic human rights violations by the Syrian regime, including the use of heavy weaponry in civilian areas, which risk exacerbating further the spiral of violence, sectarian clashes and militarisation, and endanger the stability of the region. President Assad must step aside to allow for a peaceful and democratic transition. The EU also condemns recent bomb attacks in Damascus and Aleppo causing scores of death and injuries. Acts of terrorism cannot be justified under any circumstances.

2. The European Union reiterates its deepest concerns at the increasingly worsening humanitarian plight of the Syrian civilian population as a result of continuous and widespread violence. The Syrian authorities must grant immediate, unimpeded

and full access of humanitarian organisations to all areas of Syria in order to allow them to deliver humanitarian assistance and medical care. In this regard, the EU welcomes the recent visit of USG Valerie Amos to Syria and her efforts to agree a clear framework of humanitarian access with the Syrian authorities and takes note of the start of the preliminary humanitarian assessment in Syria. It also welcomes the outcomes of the Syria Humanitarian Forum, held in Geneva on 8 March, as well as the UN Security Council statement of 1 March 2012, deploring the humanitarian situation in Syria. It fully supports measures aimed at ensuring a coordinated, rapid and effective humanitarian response of the international community. In the light of growing needs, the EU and Member States have increased their financial support to humanitarian organisations and will continue to mobilise the necessary assistance. The EU is greatly concerned by reports of anti-personnel land mines being laid along the Syrian borders aiming to prevent Syrians from fleeing.

3. The EU welcomes the recent visit to Damascus of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States Kofi Annan and urges the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully with him. The EU recalls its full support for his mission and his efforts to stop violence and facilitate a peaceful Syrian-led and inclusive dialogue leading to a political solution that meets the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people on the basis of the UN General Assembly resolution of 16 February 2012 and League of Arab States resolutions, in particular those of 22 January, 12 February and 10 March 2012.

4. The EU reiterates its call for the UN Security Council to agree urgently on a resolution on Syria in order to obtain the cessation of violence, immediate and unhindered humanitarian access and leading to a political process in response to the aspirations of the Syrian people. It calls on all members of the Security Council, particularly Russia and China, to work together in an effort to stop the violence and to support fully the implementation of the League of Arab States resolutions. The EU welcomes the UNSC Presidential Statement of 21 March expressing its gravest concern at the deteriorating situation in Syria and full support to the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy of the UN and the LAS, Kofi Annan.

5. The EU welcomes the outcome of the debate of the UN Human Rights Council on Syria on 12 March 2012 and the adoption of the HRC resolution on 23 March 2012 on the human rights situation in the country and the extension of the mandate of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry. There must be a full investigation of the findings of the Commission of Inquiry which pointed to crimes against humanity and other gross violations of human rights committed in the

country. The EU reaffirms that there should be no impunity for the perpetrators of such alleged crimes.

6. The European Union supports the Syrian opposition in its struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy for the Syrian people. The EU stands ready to step up its engagement with all representative members of Syrian opposition which adhere to non violence, inclusiveness and democratic values as they make progress to form a broad and inclusive platform. The Syrian National Council, recognised by the EU as a legitimate representative of Syrians, and other representatives of the opposition must unite now in the peaceful struggle for a new Syria that is democratic, pluralistic, stable and guarantees human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and where all citizens enjoy equal rights regardless of their affiliations, ethnicity, belief or gender. To this end, the EU urges all representative members of the opposition to set up an inclusive coordination mechanism under the auspices of the League of Arab States and to agree on a set of shared principles for working towards an orderly and peaceful transition .

7. Given the Syrian regime's continued use of violence against civilians, the EU approved today further designations of persons and entities to be subject to restrictive measures. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. The EU will also continue to urge the international community to join its efforts, in taking steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures and sanctions on the Syrian regime and its supporters. It calls on all Syrians to disassociate themselves from the repressive policy of the regime in order to facilitate a political transition.

8. As soon as a genuine democratic transition begins, the EU is ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria across all areas of mutual interest, including by mobilising assistance, strengthening trade and economic relations and supporting transitional justice and the political transition.'

Given the Syrian regime's continued use of violence against civilians, the Council reinforced EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime.

PRESS RELEASE, 3159th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg, 23 April 2012, 8772/12

The Council took stock of developments in Syria. It adopted the following conclusions:

1. 'The EU welcomes the unanimous adoption of the UNSC resolution 2042 on 14 April authorising the immediate deployment of an advance team of up to 30 unarmed military observers and of the UNSC resolution 2043 on 21 April establishing the full UN supervision mission in Syria (UNSMIS) with an initial deployment of up to 300 unarmed military observers as well as an appropriate civilian component, to monitor a cessation of armed violence and to monitor and support all aspects of the joint UN-League of Arab States Special Envoy Kofi Annan's six point proposal. The EU calls for an immediate and full implementation of the UNSC resolutions. It also calls on all the Members of the UN Security Council to continue to support Kofi Annan in his efforts and ensure that the fully-fledged UN observation mission in Syria is deployed expeditiously and operationalised without delay. It is crucial that UNSC Members use all their influence to ensure that the UNSC resolutions are fully implemented.

The EU strongly urges the Syrian government to allow the effective operation and deployment of the mission and its advance team and allow full freedom of movement, access and communication including agreement on the use of air assets. The EU and its Member States are ready to provide support that might be requested to guarantee the success of the observer mission.

2. The EU reaffirms its full support to the Joint UN-League of Arab States Special Envoy Kofi Annan's mission and his six point Plan. A complete cessation of violence is an essential step in the full implementation of this Plan. The EU recalls its full support for the Special Envoy's efforts to facilitate a peaceful Syrian-led and inclusive dialogue leading to a political solution that meets the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people on the basis of the UN General Assembly resolution of 16 February 2012 and League of Arab States resolutions, in particular those of 22 January, 12 February and 10 March 2012.

3. Recalling its previous Council conclusions on Syria, the European Union remains deeply concerned about the fragility of the situation in Syria with reports of the use of heavy weaponry in civilian areas. The EU urges the Syrian government to imple-

ment its commitments in their entirety and to show a visible and verifiable sign of change by withdrawing all troops and heavy weapons from population centres to their barracks to facilitate a sustained cessation of violence. The EU strongly condemns the systematic and widespread violations of human rights by the regime. It recalls that all those responsible for human rights violations should be held accountable. It calls upon all parties in Syria to cease immediately violence in all its forms.

4. The European Union reiterates its concerns about the humanitarian plight of the Syrian civilian population. The Syrian authorities must grant immediate, unimpeded and full access of humanitarian organisations to all areas of Syria in order to allow them to deliver humanitarian assistance including medical care. The EU calls on all parties to cooperate fully with the UN and relevant humanitarian organisations to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance. The EU welcomes the efforts made by neighbouring countries to host Syrian refugees who fled violence in Syria. The European Union and its Member States will continue to assist in providing them with dignified living conditions. The EU also welcomes the outcome of the Syria Humanitarian Forum, held in Geneva on 20 April, calling for increased access and scaling up of humanitarian capacities to meet the identified humanitarian needs.

5. The European Union remains committed to the Syrian opposition's struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy for the Syrian people. It reconfirms its engagement with the Syrian opposition seeking non violent, democratic and inclusive change. The EU welcomes efforts by the Syrian National Council (SNC) and other opposition groups to articulate a common vision for the foundations of a new Syria. The EU calls on the SNC and other opposition groups to continue to support fully the Annan Peace Plan, and to put in place an all-embracing opposition platform under the auspices of the Arab League to advance their common vision for working towards an inclusive, orderly and peaceful transition in Syria.

6. The EU approved today further sanctions, imposing restrictive measures on export of further goods and technology which may be used for repression and banning the export to Syria of luxury goods. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. The EU will also continue to urge the international community to join its efforts, in taking steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures and sanctions on the Syrian regime and its supporters. In this context, the EU welcomes the first meeting of the international working group on sanctions which was held in Paris on 17 April.

It calls on all Syrians to dissociate themselves from the repressive policy of the regime in order to facilitate a political transition.

7. As soon as a genuine democratic transition begins, the EU is ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria across all areas of mutual interest, including by mobilising assistance, strengthening trade and economic relations and supporting transitional justice and the political transition.'

In view of the gravity of the situation in Syria, the Council reinforced once more EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime.

PRESS RELEASE, 3166th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 14 May 2012, 9110/12

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Syria:

1. 'The EU reiterates its call on the Syrian authorities to fully and immediately comply with the Joint UN-League of Arab States Special Envoy Kofi Annan's plan as endorsed by UNSC resolutions 2042 and 2043 and abide by all their commitments to the UN. The EU recalls that the main responsibility for the ceasefire and the successful implementation of the plan lies with the Syrian authorities. The Syrian government must ensure without delay the necessary conditions for an effective operation and full and fast deployment of the UN observation mission, including full freedom of movement and agreement on the use of air assets. It must fully withdraw its troops and heavy weapons from population centres. The EU is deeply concerned about the continued violence in Syria, including the recent deadly bomb attacks, notably the ones in Damascus on 10 May. Acts of terrorism cannot be justified under any circumstances.

2. The EU underlines that a complete cessation of violence by all parties is an essential step in the full implementation of Kofi Annan's Plan, whose crucial goal is to facilitate a peaceful Syrian-led and inclusive dialogue leading to a political solution that meets the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council, UN General Assembly and League of Arab States.

3. The EU recalls its full support to Kofi Annan's six point plan, welcomes the progress to date to deploy members of the UN supervision mission to Syria (UN-

SMIS) and urges continued prompt deployment of the full mission. It recalls that the Syrian authorities are responsible for ensuring the security and safety of the mission. The EU and its Member States are providing support to the mission, as requested by the UN. The EU calls on all States concerned, and in particular the Members of the UN Security Council, to continue to support Kofi Annan and use all their influence to ensure that the UNSC resolutions 2042 and 2043 are fully implemented. The EU underlines that the six-point plan is not an open-ended offer and that the plan and the deployment of UNSMIS constitute the best opportunity to support a peaceful solution to the crisis. It recalls that the UNSC remains seized of the matter.

4. The EU remains extremely concerned by the human rights situation in Syria, in particular the systematic and widespread human rights violations committed by the regime. It condemns the Syrian government's increased use of targeted assassinations and arbitrary detentions as a means of repressing all opposition. The Syrian regime must immediately release all political prisoners and human rights defenders, and ensure freedom to demonstrate peacefully. The EU recalls that all those responsible for human rights violations should be held accountable.

5. The EU calls on all sides to respect the safety of humanitarian workers and deplores the death of two humanitarian workers killed on 24 and 26 April. The EU reiterates its call on the Syrian authorities to grant immediate, unimpeded and full access of humanitarian organisations to all areas of Syria in order to provide relief to the one million people identified as in need of humanitarian assistance. The UN Humanitarian Response Plan needs to be implemented immediately and humanitarian capacities in the country strengthened. The EU continues to support the efforts made by neighbouring countries to host Syrian refugees who fled violence in Syria.

6. The European Union remains committed to the Syrian people's struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy. The EU urges all opposition groups to continue to support Kofi Annan's efforts and to be ready to provide leadership and engage in a national political process as foreseen in the six point plan endorsed by UNSC. The Syrian National Council and other opposition groups must pursue their efforts to put aside their differences and to agree on a set of shared principles and mechanism under the auspices of the League of Arab States for working towards an inclusive, orderly and peaceful transition in Syria.

7. The EU approved today further designations of individuals and entities to be subject to restrictive measures. The EU will continue its sanctions policy targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. The EU will also continue to urge the international community to join its efforts, in taking steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures on the Syrian regime and its supporters. It calls on all Syrians to dissociate themselves from the repressive policy of the regime in order to facilitate a political transition.'

In view of the gravity of the situation in Syria, the Council once more reinforced restrictive measures against the Syrian regime.

PRESS RELEASE, 3179th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg, 25 June 2012, 11688/12

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. 'The European Union strongly condemns the brutal violence and massacres of civilians, many of them children and women, such as in the town of Houla on 26 May, and in the villages of Qubair and Maarzaf in Hama province on 6 June. It is also appalled by reports on the use of children as human shields. The EU welcomes the UN Human Rights Council resolution adopted on 1 June, condemning the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria and the horrific killings in Houla. It urges the Syrian regime to end immediately the killing of civilians, withdraw the Syrian army from besieged towns and cities and to allow for a peaceful transition for the sake of the country. President Assad has no place in the future of Syria. The EU looks forward to the outcome of the investigation by the Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria into the massacre in Houla. The EU urges the Syrian authorities to fully and immediately cooperate with the Commission. The EU recalls that all those responsible for widespread, systematic and gross human rights violations must be held accountable.

2. The EU recalls its full support to Joint UN- League of Arab States Special Envoy Kofi Annan's mission and his six-point plan. It welcomes the full deployment of the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), but regrets that the escalation of violence led to the suspension of UNSMIS observation activities on 16 June. It recalls that the Syrian authorities are responsible for ensuring the security and safety of the mission and for facilitating the resumption of the unobstructed work of the mission. It strongly condemns the attacks against UN monitors.

3. The EU condemns all actions aimed at obstructing the implementation of Annan's six point plan. It reiterates that the main responsibility for the ceasefire and the implementation of the plan lies with the Syrian authorities. The EU warns against further militarisation of the conflict and sectarian violence which will bring enormous suffering to Syria and risks having a tragic impact on the region. The EU calls on all parties to refrain from using violence and in particular on the regime to fully implement the Annan plan. The EU recalls that the six-point plan is not an open-ended offer.

The European Union condemns the unacceptable shooting down by Syria of a Turkish military plane on 22 June. It offers its sympathies to the families of the airmen involved, and commends Turkey's measured and responsible initial reaction. The European Union notes that this is a matter which needs to be investigated thoroughly and urgently. It calls on Syria to cooperate fully with Turkey and allow full access for an immediate investigation, and for the international community to give its support to such efforts. The European Union urges Syria to ensure that it complies by international standards and obligations.

4. The EU calls on all the States concerned, and in particular the Members of the UN Security Council, to continue to support Kofi Annan and use all their influence to ensure that UNSC resolutions 2042 and 2043 are fully implemented. The EU calls for united action by the UNSC to add more robust and effective pressure, including the adoption of comprehensive sanctions under Chapter VII. In this respect, it welcomes Annan's efforts to work with key international partners exercising a positive influence in the region to move the political process forward. The EU takes note of the discussion on Syria during the EU-Russia Summit on 3-4 June and reiterates the importance of Russia's engagement in support of a peaceful political process which must lead to a democratic transition.

The EU looks forward to the next meeting of the Friends of the Syrian People Group that will be held in Paris on 6 July to maintain international pressure on the Syrian regime and support Annan's six- point plan.

5. The European Union remains committed to the Syrian people's struggle for freedom, dignity, democracy and human rights. The EU continues to urge the Syrian National Council and other opposition groups to put aside their differences and to agree on a set of shared principles and start working towards an inclusive, orderly and peaceful transition in Syria. A stronger and more united opposition that repre-

sents a credible alternative for all Syrians is essential. The EU calls on all opposition groups to actively and fully support the implementation of the Annan plan.

6. The EU welcomes the outcome of the third Syria Humanitarian Forum held on 5 June. The EU calls on the Syrian authorities to fully cooperate and ensure the rapid implementation of the humanitarian response plan, including immediately allowing full unhindered and safe access to humanitarian workers and delivery of humanitarian aid. The EU fully supports the humanitarian initiative to urgently evacuate non-combatants and the wounded from Homs and calls on all parties to allow the evacuation of children, women, elderly and injured from conflict zones. The EU will continue to support the efforts made by neighbouring countries to host Syrian refugees who fled violence in Syria.

7. The EU approved today the designation of new persons and entities to be subject to restrictive measures. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. The EU will also continue to urge the international community to join its efforts, in taking steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures on the Syrian regime and its supporters. In this context, the EU welcomes the second meeting of the International Working Group on Sanctions which was held in Washington on 6 June. It calls on all Syrians to dissociate themselves from the repressive policy of the regime in order to facilitate a political transition.’

In response to the escalating violence in Syria, the Council once more reinforced EU sanctions against the Syrian regime once more.

Council conclusions on Syria, 3191st FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting

Luxembourg, 15 October 2012

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

‘1. The European Union stands by the Syrian people in its courageous struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy. The use of force by the Syrian regime against civilians, including by heavy weapons and aerial bombardments, has reached unprecedented levels and can only exacerbate further the violence and endanger the stability of the whole region. The EU recalls that the priorities should be to end oppression,

stop all violence, deliver humanitarian aid for all those in need, prevent further regional instability and be prepared for the post-conflict period.

The EU underlines that those whose presence would undermine the political transition should be excluded and that President Assad, in this regard, has no place in the future of Syria.

The EU remains committed to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria.

2. The European Union remains deeply concerned by the spill-over effects of the Syrian crisis in neighbouring countries in terms of security and stability. The EU strongly condemns the shelling by Syrian forces of the Turkish territory, particularly on the border town of Akçakale on 3 October. The EU calls on all to prevent escalation. The EU calls again on the Syrian authorities to fully respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all neighbouring countries.

3. Recalling that the main responsibility for the current crisis lies with the Syrian authorities, the EU warns against further militarisation and radicalisation of the conflict and sectarian violence which can only bring further suffering to Syria and risks having a tragic impact in the region. In this regard, the EU expresses concern about the protection of civilians, in particular vulnerable groups and religious communities. The intensification of violence and the recent series of terrorist attacks demonstrate the urgent need for a political transition that would meet the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people and bring stability in Syria. In this regard, the EU is deeply concerned about the increasing influx of weapons into Syria and calls on all States to refrain from delivering arms to the country.

The continuation and escalation of the crisis in Syria poses a threat to the wider regional stability.

4. The EU reiterates its full support for the endeavours of Lakhdar Brahimi as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria and stands ready to strengthen its cooperation with him. The EU emphasises the need to focus international and regional efforts to solve the Syrian crisis through a political solution and calls on key actors in the region and all members of the UN Security Council to uphold their responsibilities and support Brahimi's efforts.

The EU looks forward to the next meeting of the Friends of Syrian People Group to be held in Morocco to maintain international pressure on the Syrian regime.

5. In view of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and of the approaching winter, the EU recalls the moral imperative to step up assistance to all affected populations throughout Syria and neighbouring countries. The European Union expresses solidarity with the affected populations and neighbouring countries that have welcomed the refugees. The EU will continue to provide assistance and calls on all donors to increase their contributions to the latest UN appeals for funding humanitarian assistance and refugee assistance. The European Union urges donors to report their assistance and coordinate with the United Nations (OCHA) in order to maximise the effectiveness of the aid effort. All parties should allow full and safe access for the delivery of humanitarian aid in all parts of the country, and respect international humanitarian law. The European Union urges all parties to the conflict to respect in full their legal and moral obligations to protect civilians.

Particularly alarmed by the dramatic and growing difficulties in the access in Syria to medical services, the EU urges all parties to commit themselves to respect in full the inviolability of all medical facilities, medical personnel and vehicles in respect of applicable international humanitarian law.

6. The EU is appalled by the deterioration of the situation in Syria and in particular by the widespread and systematic violations of human rights, international humanitarian law and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian authorities. In line with the UN Human Rights Council resolution on Syria adopted on 28 September, the EU calls upon all parties to put an end to all forms of violence and to take special measures to protect vulnerable groups such as children, as well as women and girls subject to gender based violence.

The EU welcomes the extension of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria and its strengthening through the nomination of two new members, Carla del Ponte and Vítit Muntarbhorn. The EU reaffirms its support to the Commission's investigations into alleged violations of international human rights law with a view to hold to account those responsible for such violations, including for those that may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes according to the definition of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The EU underlines the importance of documentation of the widespread, systematic and gross human rights violations and recalls that all those responsible must be held accountable. The EU reiterates its call to the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully with the Commission of Inquiry including by granting it full, immediate and unfettered access to the whole Syrian territory.

7. The EU recalls that an inclusive and coordinated opposition is essential to start a political transition. The EU continues to urge all opposition groups, inside and outside Syria, to put aside their differences and to agree on a set of shared principles and start working towards an inclusive, orderly and peaceful transition in Syria and to build upon the agreement on the “National Pact” and on a “Common Political Vision for transition in Syria”. The EU will continue to work closely with the League of Arab States and facilitate further dialogue initiatives to complement its efforts to encourage the opposition towards forming an inclusive common platform. All Syrians must have a place in the new Syria and enjoy equal rights, regardless of their origin, affiliations, religion, beliefs or gender.

8. The EU commits to strengthening its support in building the capacity of civil society to participate in a future Syria, in line with the legitimate demands of the Syrian people for a more free, open and inclusive political system involving all Syrians. In this context, the EU also acknowledges the importance of the work of the local civilian bodies throughout Syria.

9. The EU approved today additional restrictive measures against Syria. The EU stands ready to engage with those seriously committed to a genuine democratic transition. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. The EU will also continue to urge the international community to join its efforts, in taking steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures on the Syrian regime and its supporters. In this context, the EU welcomes the fourth meeting of the International Group on Sanctions which was held in The Hague on 20 September. It calls on all Syrians to dissociate themselves from the repressive policy of the regime in order to facilitate a political transition.

10. The EU commits to working closely and comprehensively with international partners on planning to ensure the international community is ready to provide rapid support to Syria once transition takes place. In this respect, the EU underlines the importance of the establishment of a transitional body. The EU welcomes the second meeting of the Working Group on Economic Recovery and Development of the Friends of the Syrian People which was held in Berlin on 4 September 2012.

The EU expresses concern about the destruction of Syrian cultural heritage.

As soon as a genuine democratic transition begins, the EU stands ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria across all areas of mutual interest, in-

cluding by contributing to a post-conflict needs assessment, mobilizing assistance, institution building, strengthening trade and economic relations and supporting transitional justice and the political transition.

11. Issues related to pressure created on the EU external borders will be addressed by the next Justice and Home Affairs Council'.

Given the intensifying violence in Syria, the Council reinforced EU sanctions against the Syrian regime.

Mali

PRESS RELEASE, 3157th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 22 and 23 March 2012, 7849/12

Sahel

The Council took stock of the implementation of the EU strategy for security and development in the Sahel region and discussed the challenges for the region.

It adopted the following conclusions:

‘1. One year after the presentation of an EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel and in the context of the turbulent events in the wider region coinciding with a new food crisis, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to contribute to the development of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Sahel region.

2. The Council firmly condemned attempts to seize power by force in Mali. It called for an immediate end of violence and the release of State officials, the protection of civilians, the restoration of civil, constitutional government and for the holding of democratic elections as planned. The EU will work closely with the African Union and ECOWAS. The Council invited the Commission to take precautionary measures in the implementation of EU development cooperation as the situation warrants. The Council underlined that direct support to the population will continue as well as humanitarian aid.

3. Underlining the importance of respect for the territorial integrity of Mali, the Council repeated its call for an immediate ceasefire in northern Mali and for an inclusive dialogue which the EU stands ready to support.

4. The Council expressed deep concern about the deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel region. It underlined its determination to support Sahel countries, in partnership with regional organisations and other international partners, in their efforts to fight against the interlinked challenges of poverty, terrorism, violent extremism and organised crime and to address spill-over effects of the recent crisis in Libya. In this context, the Council welcomed progress over the last 12 months in the implementation of the Strategy and the coordinated use of all EU instruments in

the fields of development, governance, rule of law, migration and security to support the socio-economic development of Mali, Mauritania and Niger and to strengthen their capacities to deal with the scourges of terrorism and organised crime, including the trafficking of drugs and human beings.

5. The Council encouraged the strengthening of ongoing regional cooperation to accompany national strategies to promote the stability and development of the countries concerned. In this context, the Council welcomed the increased engagement of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations in support of regionally-owned processes and stressed the need to continue close consultation with regional organisations including the AU and ECOWAS.

6. In recognition of the particular security challenges faced by the States in the region, the Council approved the Crisis Management Concept for a civilian CSDP Advisory, Assistance and Training mission in Sahel, with an operational focus in Niger, to support Gendarmerie, Police Nationale and Garde Nationale to enhance their level of interoperability and law enforcement capacity, in particular to fight terrorism and organised crime while fully respecting Rule of Law and Human Rights. It underlined the need for taking forward operational planning without delay, with a view to deploy the mission by the end of summer 2012.

7. The fragile security of the region has been further exacerbated both by a deepening food and nutrition crisis affecting 15 million people and the humanitarian consequences of the conflict in northern Mali and the resulting high numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees whose safety and access to humanitarian assistance should be ensured. The EU has provided early humanitarian assistance for an amount of 123.5 million Euros and together with Member States will continue to provide such assistance to respond to the urgent needs of the most affected populations in the Sahel countries and the wider region. To this effect, an additional amount of 9 million Euros is being mobilised to provide emergency assistance to people affected by the conflict in northern Mali.

8. National ownership, regional solidarity, flexible funding, donor coordination and strengthened dialogue between humanitarian and development actors are essential

to overcome the long-standing chronic food and malnutrition problems in the region and to build resilience. Building on national initiatives the EU is committed to stepping up its support to the countries in the region in their efforts to avert this type of crisis in the future and to achieve sustainable food and nutrition security. In this context, the EU plans to allocate an additional 164.5 million Euros to reinforce and complement existing development actions on food security in the region.

9. The Council invited the High Representative and the European Commission to accelerate implementation of the Sahel Strategy and to report regularly on progress.’

The Council also approved the crisis management concept for a possible civilian CSDP mission to improve capacities to fight terrorism and organised crime in the Sahel region, initially focussing on Niger. The mission would advise the authorities on detailed plans to implement the Nigerien security strategy and provide specialised training for all relevant security actors of Niger. The adoption of the crisis management concept launches operational planning for the mission.

Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the coup d'état in Mali

Brussels, 22 March 2012, A 142/12

I condemn the apparent coup d'état in Bamako and the suspension of the republican institutions of Mali. I call for the reestablishment of the constitutional order and the holding of democratic elections as soon as possible. I reaffirm the commitment of the European Union to democratic principles, rule of law, and military subordination to the civil power.

In this crucial period for Mali, marked by a rebellion in the North, I call on all parties to show responsibility to ensure respect for human life, fundamental freedoms and the integrity of the country.

PRESS RELEASE, 3159th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg, 23 April 2012, 8772/12

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. 'The Council recalls its conclusions of 22-23 March 2012 on Sahel firmly condemning the seizure of power by force in Mali and calling for an immediate end to violence, the protection of civilians and the restoration of civil, constitutional government.
2. The Council stands firmly behind the efforts of ECOWAS and the countries of the region to restore constitutional order in Mali and supports the continued engagement of President Ouattara in his capacity as President of ECOWAS and President Compaoré as mediator. In this context, it welcomes the signature of a Framework Agreement on 6 April 2012 for the restoration of constitutional order and urges all Malian stakeholders to ensure its timely implementation.
3. As the first steps towards the restoration of legitimate civilian administration, the Council is encouraged by the inauguration of Dioncounda Traoré as interim President, the appointment of Cheick Modibo Diarra as interim Prime Minister and the release of detained Ministers. The Council expects the rule of law to be respected and that extra-judicial arrests will cease.
4. The EU will monitor closely progress in the transition process in Mali. It stands ready to provide support to the civilian-led transition, including an electoral process involving all the people of Mali, in close cooperation with ECOWAS, the African Union and other international partners. EU development cooperation currently on hold will be resumed in line with progress towards the full restoration of constitutional order. In the meantime, ongoing direct support to the population will continue as well as humanitarian aid.
5. The Council supports the commitment of the interim President, ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations and the international community to preserve the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Mali. It repeats its call for an immediate end to violence and to abuses of human rights in the north of the country. It urges all rebel groups to seek a peaceful solution through a political process that respects the territorial integrity of Mali.

6. The Council is deeply concerned by the growth of Al Qa'ida and close affiliates' presence in the north of Mali and the increased terrorist threat that it implies. It condemns all terrorist activities.

7. The Council is alarmed by the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Mali and the wider Sahel region due to serious food shortages. Exacerbated by insecurity and the lack of access for humanitarian aid, the situation of the civilian population in the north of the country gives rise to particular concern of the risk of a major humanitarian disaster. The Council is gravely concerned by reports that significant numbers of people are being forced to flee the north in circumstances involving frequent violations of human rights. It calls on all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law and human rights and to allow immediate, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian aid and international humanitarian workers. The Council commends neighbouring states for their ongoing assistance in compliance with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

8. Recent developments in Mali and the broader security, development and humanitarian challenges in the region confirm the importance of security sector reform and accelerated implementation of the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel including the deployment of the proposed civilian CSDP mission to Niger by July 2012.'

Council conclusions on the situation in Mali, 3191st FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting

Luxembourg, 15 October 2012

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. 'The European Union (EU) remains concerned about the serious political and security crisis affecting Mali, in particular the situation in the north of the country, marked by the emergence and consolidation of a haven for terrorists, the oppression of local populations, human rights violations, particularly against women, the destruction of cultural heritage and the development of organised crime. This situation poses an immediate threat to the Sahel region and those living there, who are already suffering from an acute food crisis, as well as to West and North Africa and to Europe.

2. The EU welcomes the adoption by the United Nations Security Council of Resolution 2071 and the increasing international attention being focused on the Sahel and Mali, as also evidenced by the high-level meeting held in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly on 26 September 2012 and the development of a UN integrated strategy for the Sahel. It also welcomes the appointment of the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy and declares its intention to work closely with Romano Prodi. The EU calls for the mechanism for coordination with Mali's key partners to be extended in order to increase the effectiveness of support for the transition process on the political, security and economic fronts. To this end, the EU welcomes and stresses the importance of the meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group on Mali scheduled to be held in Bamako on 19 October 2012, at the initiative of the African Union (AU) and in consultation with the United Nations (UN) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

3. The EU is determined to support Mali in restoring the rule of law and re-establishing a fully sovereign democratic government with authority throughout Malian territory, for the benefit of the whole population. The EU welcomes the formation by the President of the Republic of Mali of a new Government of National Unity, as well as the efforts to mobilise the international community, notably the AU and ECOWAS, made by these new authorities in their contacts with all partners, in particular the EU.

4. In accordance with the principles approved by ECOWAS and the Support and Follow-up Group co-chaired by the UN and AU, and by United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2056 and 2071, the EU calls on the Government of National Unity to draw up a consensual road map as soon as possible, in consultation with all the political and civil society groups, to fully restore constitutional order and national unity. In particular this road map should allow the organisation of a democratic and credible electoral process, the prompt start of an inclusive national dialogue, including representatives of the northern populations, to prepare the re-establishment of the authority of the State in the north as peacefully as possible, and the reorganisation of the army under civilian control.

5. The EU reaffirms its commitment to contribute to the efforts being made by Mali to resolve this crisis, in cooperation with its regional and international partners, and accordingly to fully mobilise all its instruments within the framework of the EU strategy for security and development in the Sahel. Further to this:

- As soon as a credible road map has been adopted, the EU will gradually resume its development cooperation in the light of tangible progress. In the interim period, the EU will continue its operations to assist local populations and the democratic transition.
- The EU is prepared to support an inclusive national dialogue within Mali, aimed at the restoration of the rule of law in northern Mali, and to contribute to the stabilisation and reconstruction measures that such a dialogue would help give direction to.
- The EU and its Member States pledge to pursue their humanitarian efforts and will continue to monitor closely developments in the humanitarian situation in Mali and in neighbouring countries. The European Commission is prepared to significantly increase the amount of its aid in order to better meet the people's needs. The EU recalls the obligation to ensure that all humanitarian actors have free and unhindered access to vulnerable groups in the northern areas of the country.
- The Council invites the High Representative (HR) and the European Commission to examine other measures or additional actions which could help reduce the effects of the Mali crisis and its impact on neighbouring countries, and increase the resilience of vulnerable groups.
- The EU recalls the possibility of adopting, in close conjunction with ECOWAS, the AU and the UN, targeted sanctions against those involved in the armed groups in northern Mali and those hindering the return to constitutional order.
- In response to the request received from Mali and ECOWAS, the EU is convinced of the need for a rapid response to the security challenges and terrorist threat, within a framework to be defined by the United Nations Security Council. In this regard, the Council welcomes the HR's preliminary work on ways in which to provide possible support for rebuilding the Malian army's capacities, in line with the political objectives and action plan established by the international community and in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2071.
- The Council invites the HR and the European Commission to examine support for the involvement of regional partners, in particular the AU and ECOWAS, for example by providing rapid support in the field of planning. Subject to ECOWAS submitting a finalised concept, the Council invites the HR and the European Commission to examine the possibility of additional support, including financial support, such as mobilising the Peace Facility for Africa.
- The Council also requests that work on planning a possible CSDP military operation be pursued and extended as a matter of urgency, in particular by developing a crisis management concept relating to the reorganisation and training

of the Malian defence forces, taking account of the conditions necessary for the success of any such mission, which include the full support of the Malian authorities and the definition of an exit strategy. This planning should take place in close collaboration with the organisations, in particular the UN, AU and ECOWAS, States and actors concerned, in order to ensure that their respective actions complement each other. The Council invites the HR to develop the crisis management concept ahead of its meeting on 19 November, and to present her recommendations at that meeting.

- As part of a global approach, the Council calls for use to be made of potential synergies with other EU actions in the region, in particular the EUCAP SAHEL Niger mission and its regional focus.’

Iran

PRESS RELEASE, 3142nd Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 23 January 2012, 5592/12

The Council exchanged views on Iran and its nuclear programme.

It adopted the following conclusions:

1. 'Recalling the European Council conclusions of 9 December 2011 and the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 1 December, the Council reiterates its serious and deepening concerns over the Iranian nuclear programme and in particular over the findings on Iranian activities relating to the development of military nuclear technology, as reflected in the latest IAEA report. The recent start of operations of enrichment of uranium to a level of up to 20% in the deeply buried underground facility in Fordow near Qom further aggravates concerns about possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear programme. Iran's acceleration of enrichment activities is in flagrant violation of six UNSC Resolutions and eleven IAEA Board resolutions and contributes to increasing tensions in the region. The Council calls upon Iran to fully cooperate with the IAEA, including in the context of the planned visit by its Deputy Director General for Safeguards.

2. Iran continues to refuse to comply with its international obligations and to fully co-operate with the IAEA to address the concerns on its nuclear programme, and instead continues to violate those obligations. In this context and in accordance with the Council conclusions of 1 December 2011, the Council has agreed additional restrictive measures in the energy sector, including a phased embargo of Iranian crude oil imports to the EU, in the financial sector, including against the Central Bank of Iran, in the transport sector as well as further export restrictions, notably on gold and on sensitive dual-use goods and technology, as well as additional designations of persons and entities, including several controlled by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).

3. The Council again reaffirms the longstanding commitment to work for a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue in accordance with the dual-track approach. The Council stresses that the restrictive measures agreed today are aimed at affecting

the funding of Iran's nuclear programme by the Iranian regime and are not aimed at the Iranian people. The Iranian regime itself can act responsibly and bring all sanctions to an end.

4. The Council reaffirms that the objective of the EU remains to achieve a comprehensive and long-term settlement which would build international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme, while respecting Iran's legitimate rights to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in conformity with the NPT. Supporting the ongoing efforts by the EU High Representative and reaffirming the importance of close co-operation with the E3+3, the Council urges Iran to reply positively to the offer for substantial negotiations, as set out in the High Representative's letter of 21 October 2011, by clearly demonstrating its readiness to engage in confidence building measures and, without preconditions, in meaningful talks to seriously address existing concerns on the nuclear issue.'

At the same time, the Council adopted a package of restrictive measures targeting the sources of finance for the Iranian nuclear programme.

Council conclusions on Iran, 3191st FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting

Luxembourg, 15 October 2012

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. 'The Council reiterates its serious and deepening concerns over Iran's nuclear programme and the urgent need for Iran to comply with all its international obligations, including full implementation by Iran of UNSC and IAEA Board of Governors' Resolutions.

2. The Council condemns the continuing production of enriched uranium and expansion of Iran's enrichment capacity, including at the Fordow site, and continued heavy-water activities in breach of UNSC and IAEA Board of Governors' Resolutions, as reflected in the most recent IAEA report. The Council notes with particular con-

cern Iran's obstruction of the IAEA work towards the clarification of all outstanding issues, including with respect to the possible military dimension to Iran's nuclear programme. Therefore, the Council welcomes the adoption with overwhelming majority by the IAEA Board of Governors of its Resolution on 13 September 2012 deciding that Iran's cooperation was essential and urgent in order to restore international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

3. Iran is acting in flagrant violation of its international obligations and continues to refuse to fully co-operate with the IAEA to address the concerns on its nuclear programme. In this context, and in coherence with previous European Council and Council conclusions, the Council has agreed additional restrictive measures in the financial, trade, energy and transport sectors, as well as additional designations, notably of entities active in the oil and gas industry. In particular, the Council has agreed to prohibit all transactions between European and Iranian banks, unless authorised in advance under strict conditions with exemptions for humanitarian needs. In addition, the Council has decided to strengthen the restrictive measures against the Central Bank of Iran. Further export restrictions have been imposed, notably for graphite, metals, software for industrial processes, as well as measures relating to the ship building industry.

4. The restrictive measures agreed today are aimed at affecting Iran's nuclear programme and revenues of the Iranian regime used to fund the programme and are not aimed at the Iranian people. The Iranian regime itself can act responsibly and bring these sanctions to an end. As long as it does not do so, the Council remains determined to increase, in close coordination with international partners, pressure on Iran in the context of the dual track approach.

5. The Council reaffirms the longstanding commitment of the European Union to work for a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue in accordance with the dual track approach.

6. The Council reaffirms that the objective of the EU remains to achieve a comprehensive, negotiated, long-term settlement, which would build international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme, while respecting Iran's legitimate rights to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in conformity with the NPT, and fully taking into account UN Security Council and IAEA Board of Governors' Resolutions. The Council welcomes the determination for a diplomatic solution expressed by E3+3 Foreign Ministers on 27 September in New York and fully endorses the efforts led by the High Representative on behalf of the

E3+3 in this regard. E3+3 have made a credible and substantial confidence building proposal for negotiations guided by the agreed principles of reciprocity and a step by step approach. The Council urges Iran to engage constructively, by focussing on reaching an agreement on concrete confidence building steps, negotiating seriously and addressing the concerns of the international community.’

Egypt

PRESS RELEASE, 3179th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg, 25 June 2012, 11688/12

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. 'The EU welcomes the peaceful conduct of Presidential elections and congratulates Mohammed Morsi on his election as President of Egypt. The EU congratulates the Egyptian people for this significant milestone in Egypt's democratic transition and historic moment for the people, the country and the region. The EU looks forward to working with President Morsi and welcomes his statement that he intends to form an inclusive government that governs on behalf of all the Egyptian people and reaches out to all political and social groups.
2. The EU reiterates its full support to Egypt's democratic transition and underlines the need for a full and swift hand-over to civilian authorities, and recalls previous commitments in this regard. The EU stresses the fundamental importance of the democratic process and institutions and separation of powers, as well as the duty to respect the rule of law and to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including freedoms of expression, assembly, and religion or belief. In this context, the EU recalls the important role of an active and independent civil society as a key component of any democratic society.
3. The EU is seriously concerned about recent developments, in particular the dissolution of the Parliament and the Constitutional Declaration by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces of 17 June, which delay and hinder the transition and full handover to civilian rule.
4. The EU emphasises the importance of an inclusive and transparent drafting process of Egypt's new Constitution, which should reflect the aspirations of the Egyptian people for dignity and justice by ensuring human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, and safeguard the democratic separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers.

5. The EU stresses that security and public order should be maintained with restraint and full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. While the end of the State of Emergency on 31 May was an important step forward, the EU is concerned about the decree issued on 13 June granting the military broad powers of arrest and detention of civilians for a wide range of offenses.

6. The EU fully recognizes the serious social and economic challenges Egypt is facing and reiterates the EU's readiness to provide assistance, in close partnership with Egypt's new democratic authorities in coordination with the international community. In this context, the EU underlines the importance for Egypt to engage in the necessary social and economic reforms, to allow the effective use of available international assistance and to improve the business environment.

7. Egypt remains a key partner in the region. The EU stresses therefore the importance of Egypt's continued commitment to the goal of building stability, peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean and Middle East region.'

Middle East Peace Process

Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on further escalation of violence in Israel and Gaza

Brussels, 16 November 2012, A 517/12

I am deeply concerned at the escalating violence in Israel and the Gaza Strip and deplore the loss of civilian lives on both sides. The rocket attacks by Hamas and other factions in Gaza which began this current crisis are totally unacceptable for any government and must stop. Israel has the right to protect its population from these kinds of attacks. I urge Israel to ensure that its response is proportionate.

I spoke with leaders in the region including PM Netanyahu and with the Egyptian President's office and Under Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. I stressed the need to prevent a further escalation and more loss of life. In my discussions I made the point that we must move forward in finding a solution to the Middle East conflict so that millions of people in the region can finally live in peace and security. I hope Egyptian PM Kandil in his visit to Gaza today will be able calm the situation.

Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process, 3209th FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting

Brussels, 10 December 2012

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

‘1. In light of recent developments and taking into account previous Council Conclusions, the European Union firmly believes that now is the time to take bold and concrete steps towards peace. The parties must engage in direct and substantial negotiations without pre-conditions in order to achieve a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ending all claims.

2. The European Union reaffirms its position that clear parameters outlining the basis for negotiations are key elements for a successful outcome. All parties must avoid acts which undermine confidence and the viability of a two-state solution. The European Union underlines the urgency of renewed, structured and substantial

peace efforts in 2013 and, towards this end, it is ready to work with the US and other international partners, including within the Quartet. There will be no sustainable peace until the Palestinians' aspirations for statehood and sovereignty and those of Israelis for security are fulfilled through a comprehensive negotiated peace based on the two-state solution. The European Union recalls that the Arab Peace Initiative provides regional support for a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. The European Union will work with those who are willing to join in such a quest for peace, stability and prosperity.

3. The European Union is deeply dismayed by and strongly opposes Israeli plans to expand settlements in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, and in particular plans to develop the E1 area. The E1 plan, if implemented, would seriously undermine the prospects of a negotiated resolution of the conflict by jeopardizing the possibility of a contiguous and viable Palestinian state and of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states. It could also entail forced transfer of civilian population. In the light of its core objective of achieving the two-state solution, the EU will closely monitor the situation and its broader implications, and act accordingly. The European Union reiterates that settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace.

4. Recalling its parameters for the resumption of negotiations between the parties, as set out in previous Council Conclusions, including in December 2009, December 2010 and May 2011, the European Union reiterates that it will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties. The European Union expresses its commitment to ensure that – in line with international law – all agreements between the State of Israel and the European Union must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, namely the Golan Heights, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Recalling its Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions adopted in May 2012, the European Union and its Member States reiterate their commitment to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing European Union legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products.

5. The European Union calls on Israel to avoid any step undermining the financial situation of the Palestinian Authority. Any such action by Israel would undermine existing cooperation mechanisms between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and thus negatively affect the prospects of negotiations. Contractual obligations, notably under the Paris Protocol, regarding full, timely, predictable and transparent transfer of tax and custom revenues have to be respected.

6. On 29 November, the UN General Assembly voted in favour of resolution A/RES/67/19 on the granting of non-member observer State status in the United Nations to Palestine. The European Union calls on the Palestinian leadership to use constructively this new status and not to undertake steps which would deepen the lack of trust and lead further away from a negotiated solution.

7. The European Union welcomes the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and Israel which followed several days of intense violence and commends the efforts of Egypt and all those who engaged in mediation. This tragic escalation of hostilities underlined very clearly the unsustainable nature of the status quo with regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip. Fully recognising Israel's legitimate security needs, the European Union reiterates its call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip, the situation of which is unsustainable as long as it remains politically and economically separated from the West Bank. It is vital that all parts of the ceasefire agreement are implemented. The European Union is committed to facilitating the social and economic development of the Gaza Strip. Equally, the issue of illegal weapons' transfer into the Gaza Strip has to be effectively addressed as a matter of urgency. The European Union expresses its readiness to make use of its instruments in support of the parties' efforts, including the possible reactivation, in the appropriate way, of the EUBAM Rafah mission. The European Union underlines its readiness to explore further ways to address the situation in the Gaza Strip, including with concerned parties in the region, in line with UNSC Resolution 1860 (2009).

8. The European Union reiterates its call for intra-Palestinian reconciliation behind the strong leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas, in line with the principles set out in his speech of 4 May 2011, as an important element for the unity of a future Palestinian state and for reaching a two-state solution.

9. The European Union reiterates its fundamental commitment to the security of Israel, including with regard to vital threats in the region. The European Union will never stop opposing those who embrace and promote violence as a way to achieve

political goals. The EU finds inflammatory statements by Hamas leaders that deny Israel's right to exist unacceptable. The European Union will never cease its efforts to combat terrorism which seeks to undermine the openness and tolerance of societies through indiscriminate acts of violence against civilians.

10. It is in the fundamental interest of the European Union to support peace and democracy in the entire region and a strategic priority to see an end to this conflict which will continue to undermine peace and security along the EU southern borders, as long as it remains unresolved.'

Afghanistan

PRESS RELEASE, 3166th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 14 May 2012, 9110/12

Ahead of the NATO summit on 20 May, the Council discussed the EU engagement in Afghanistan and adopted the following conclusions:

1. 'The Council welcomes the progress made in Afghanistan's transition process. The upcoming international meetings in Chicago on 20 and 21 May, Kabul on 14 June and Tokyo on 8 July offer the opportunity to shape the further course of transition and international engagement after 2014. The Council affirms the importance of the international community taking a holistic view of post-2014 engagement, given the correlation between security and long-term development in Afghanistan.
2. Recalling its conclusions of 14 November 2011, the Council reaffirms the long-term commitment of the EU and its Member States to support Afghanistan during transition and the decade of transformation. This commitment requires a reciprocal and genuine effort by the Afghan authorities to meet the reform obligations agreed at the Kabul and Bonn Conferences. The Council welcomes the opening of negotiations on the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development, which should provide a framework for relations in the coming years and strengthen mutual accountability.
3. The EU expects the Afghan authorities to reassure the international community regarding implementation of their commitments to improve political and economic governance.

The Council calls on the Afghan Government to ensure the holding of inclusive and credible presidential and parliamentary elections. The EU stands ready to continue supporting Afghan efforts to reform the electoral system and to strengthen the independent electoral institutions.

The EU underlines the importance of an Afghan-led, inclusive peace process and an outcome that respects the principles set out in the Bonn Conference Conclusions of December 2011.

The Council underlines the role of an independent and active civil society for the future of Afghanistan and welcomes the considerable development and scope of non-governmental organizations in the country. The Council recommends to build on the dialogue process initiated at the Bonn conference. Progress on these matters should be regularly evaluated and reviewed.

The Council calls on the Afghan Government to guarantee respect for human rights, in particular those of women and children, and to increase the opportunities for women to participate fully in the labour force.

The Council attaches importance to reinforcing the justice sector, which is essential as the counterpart of a strengthened civilian police force; as a guarantee that human rights will be respected; and in order to establish a legal system capable of protecting the rights of economic operators.

The Council also urges the Afghan Government to act on the IMF's recommendations following the collapse of the Kabul Bank, and to take steps to improve its public financial management, including establishing a transparent system of flows of public finances from donors to central government and from central government to provinces, and advancing public administration reform. In this context, it is essential that Afghanistan uses international support effectively to achieve fiscal sustainability. Undertaking the necessary steps to facilitate adequate private sector development to sustain the economic income of Afghanistan is an important prerequisite for long term engagement of the international donor community. Without adequate economic development shared by the population, all other progress in the country may be hampered.

4. The NATO Summit and other international meetings in Chicago on 20 and 21 May will notably focus on long-term support to Afghanistan's army and police. Capable, sustainable and affordable Afghan National Security Forces will be key to increasing security in Afghanistan reinforcing the confidence of the Afghan people, the international community and external investors in Afghanistan's institutions of state. An adequate level of security, including for our personnel, will also remain

vital for the EU and other donors to be able to deliver assistance effectively throughout the country.

5. Planning for the security sector must ensure that the size, structure and missions of the Afghan National Police allow for a refocus on civilian policing and rule of law capabilities. The Council recalls that assuring the professionalism and quality of the Afghan police is a higher priority than funding sufficient numbers alone. Fair and impartial policing is essential if human rights, especially those of women and children, are to be promoted. The Council invites the Afghan Government to endorse a professionalisation plan, specifying the measures and resources for its implementation.

6. Civilian policing will remain the key focus of EU assistance in the security sector. The Council reiterates the importance of continued cooperation and coordination between EUPOL, NATO and Member States' training missions throughout Afghanistan. The Council recalls its previous agreement to an extension in principle of the mandate of EUPOL AFGHANISTAN until the end of 2014. The Council reiterates the EU's commitment to support Afghanistan's efforts in strengthening policing and the rule of law beyond 2014 and intends to address this matter at an early date.

7. The Council restates its support for the 'Heart of Asia' process initiated at the Istanbul conference in November 2011 and welcomes progress by countries in the region in defining confidence building measures to be agreed at the 14 June Kabul Ministerial Conference. The Council reiterates that the initiative must be owned by the countries of the region. Continued and enhanced regional cooperation will be an important element in increasing stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and the surrounding region. It notes the conclusions of the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) Ministerial meeting in Dushanbe on 26-27 March. Greater stability will support the continued voluntary return and sustainable reintegration of the Afghan refugee population as part of a comprehensive regional approach.

8. As agreed in November 2011, the EU will engage actively with partners to support strengthened regional political and economic cooperation. The Council reiterates its readiness to support confidence-building measures where there is both political and financial buy-in from the countries of the region, in particular in areas where the EU has proven competence, such as strengthening capacities in border management, counter-narcotics and supporting collaborative efforts to promote trade,

economic cooperation and development. Taking into account the results of the Kabul Conference, the EU will further consider, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, the possible development of ways to deepen its regional engagement in the framework of a comprehensive approach.

9. The EU welcomes the Declaration of the 3rd Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact Initiative in Vienna on 16 February, and emphasises the importance of continued and enhanced efforts at national, regional and global level to combat the production and trafficking of illicit drugs.

10. The Tokyo Conference should focus on advancing existing mutual commitments by the international community and the Afghan Government to ensure the viability of the Afghan state up to transition and throughout the Decade of Transformation. For their part, the Afghan Government must make progress against IMF benchmarks and other vital governance reforms. The EU will advocate a progressive approach in the form of a roadmap, matching donors' alignment with the Afghan Government's national priority programmes with progress on issues such as governance and human rights. Progress should be regularly evaluated and reviewed.

11. At Tokyo, it will be important to consider future modalities for donor funding as the tasks of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the Transition Support Teams are progressively reduced. The EU and its Member States will strive to coordinate more efficiently their assistance to Afghanistan. The EU will also actively promote better use of international mechanisms, including the International Contact Group the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) and the International Police Coordination Board (IPCB), in coordination with UNAMA. The EU and its Member States will seek to establish common positions for these meetings. The EU will review its action in Afghanistan following the Tokyo conference. The EU will promote synergies among Member States in order to enhance its impact in Afghanistan.

12. The EU intends to reallocate an increased share of its bilateral support for governance in Afghanistan for 2012-2013 for the Afghan National Police through the Law and Order Trust Fund (LOTFA). It is essential to ensure that LOTFA is efficiently, transparently and accountably managed.

13. In line with the EU and its Member States' long term commitment, the EU will continue to prioritise Afghanistan, making an enhanced contribution to support for the country, in the context of fulfilment by the Afghan authorities of their re-

form obligations agreed at the Kabul and Bonn Conferences. The EU will maintain a balance between support to governance, including significant support to an effective Afghan civilian police force and the rule of law, and also to the social and productive sectors, with a continued emphasis on capacity building. The Council expects this to be accompanied by increased support from other donors.’

Burma/Myanmar

PRESS RELEASE, 3142nd Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 23 January 2012, 5592/12

The Council debated the EU response to the reforms undertaken in Burma/Myanmar.

It adopted the following conclusions:

1. ‘The Council welcomes the remarkable programme of political reform undertaken by the Government and Parliament in Burma/Myanmar, together with its commitment to economic and social development. These changes are opening up important new prospects for developing the relationship between the European Union and Burma/Myanmar. The EU stands ready to respond accordingly.
2. The EU considers that the recent release of a substantial number of political prisoners marks a crucial step forward and clearly shows the determination of the Government to continue on the path of reform.

The Council also welcomes the Government’s efforts to seek peace with ethnic groups; the legislation permitting trade union activity, establishing freedom of assembly and loosening censorship of the media; as well as the creation of a Human Rights Commission. These elements are essential steps towards establishing a democratic state under the rule of law.

3. The Council welcomes the dialogue between President U Thein Sein and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the changes to the Electoral Law adopted by the Parliament. The Council is pleased by the NLD’s decision to register as a political party and, together with other parties, contest the by-elections on 1 April. The EU attaches particular importance to the free and fair conduct of these elections.

4. The EU welcomes the resolve by the Government to engage with ethnic groups through an inclusive political process, thus bringing to an end the armed conflicts in the country, including the recently concluded cease-fire with the Karen National Union. The Council underlines the need for all actors concerned to establish a credible and sustained process for handling the difficult issues involved in securing

long-term peace and national reconciliation. It stresses the importance of improved humanitarian access, especially to areas affected by ethnic conflicts.

5. The Council notes the commitment by the Government to continue and complete these reforms, notably by the unconditional release of the remaining political prisoners within the next few months and by the free and fair conduct of the by-elections. The Council also welcomes the Government's continued commitment to credibly addressing the ethnic conflicts through an inclusive political process. The Council confirms that the ongoing reform process has already led to improved relations between the EU and Burma/Myanmar and that this, together with meeting the above mentioned expectations, would lead to the further easing or lifting of the restrictive measures, in the Council's Decision by the end of April. The Council decides, as a first step, that restrictive measures (visa ban) concerning the President, the vice-Presidents, cabinet members and the Speakers of the two Houses of Parliament should be suspended and mandates relevant working groups to implement it, and to consider further steps. A further review of the Council's Decision imposing restrictive measures is ongoing.

6. The European Union wishes to assist Burma/Myanmar in advancing reforms. It will promote economic development through increases in assistance to reduce poverty and build capacity, and through strengthened sectoral dialogue with the Government. The EU invites progressive engagement by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to support Burma/Myanmar in developing its strategy. The EU stands ready to back the peace processes with the ethnic groups, for example through financial assistance for the process of the reintegration of returnees. The Council looks forward to a visit by the High Representative to the country. It also reaffirms its full support for her decision to open an EU Office in Yangon and looks forward to its early opening.'

PRESS RELEASE, 3159th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg, 23 April 2012, 8772/12

The Council held an in-depth discussion of the situation in Burma/Myanmar. It adopted the following conclusions:

1. 'The European Union has followed with respect and appreciation the historic changes in Myanmar/Burma over the past year and encourages the wide-ranging reforms to continue under President U Thein Sein, the Government and the Par-

liament, in a developing partnership with political and civil society actors, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. These reforms will need time to implement and to bear fruit. The foundation for development is legitimate government, the rule of law and national reconciliation. The EU praises the peaceful nature of the process and the readiness of the parties to work towards the same goals, with a shared vision for political, social and economic reforms.

2. It also welcomes the concrete steps taken towards these ends:

- the overall transparent and credible conduct of the by-elections on 1 April, resulting in the election of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and members of the National League for Democracy party, which will support steps towards national reconciliation;
- the progress on changes in law and practice to enable freedom of assembly and of association and to eliminate the use of forced labour;
- the release of a substantial number of political prisoners and the Government's willingness to work on open cases;
- the Government's efforts to conclude cease-fire arrangements with armed groups in the ethnic regions, in particular with Karen National Union, and its readiness to look towards wider and more durable political settlements.

3. These and other unprecedented developments allow the EU to open a new chapter in its relations with Myanmar/Burma. The Council therefore welcomes the upcoming official visit of the High Representative to the country, marking a new beginning in bilateral relations, as highlighted by the opening of an EU Office in Yangon.

As a means to welcome and encourage the reform process, the Council will suspend restrictive measures imposed on the Government, with the exception of the arms embargo, which it will retain. The Council will monitor closely the situation on the ground, keep its measures under constant review and respond positively to progress on ongoing reforms.

4. In this regard, the EU still expects the unconditional release of remaining political prisoners and the removal of all restrictions placed on those already released. It looks forward to the end of conflict and to substantially improved access for humanitarian assistance, in particular for those affected by conflict in Kachin State and along the Eastern border, as well as to addressing the status and improving the welfare of the Rohingyas.

5. The EU wants now to enter into an active collaboration with Myanmar/Burma as a whole, with a view to assisting the reform process and contributing to economic, political and social development.

6. On the basis of the discussion the EU Development Ministers will have in May, the EU will continue to engage in a dialogue and cooperation with the authorities and other stakeholders, including in the following areas:

- the EU looks forward to collaborating with the central and local authorities and others concerned to support the process of bringing peace and stability to ethnic regions and to open a long-term perspective for their development, as part of national reconciliation;
- the EU and its Member States have announced significant new funding for economic and social development, democratic transformation and the strengthening of civil society and the public administration's capacity at central and regional level, in order to help improve governance and to establish an effective administration in a democratic and inclusive state;
- the EU stands ready to assist all actors in their endeavour to strengthen the rule of law and the respect for human rights. In this regard, the EU looks forward to working with the legislature and the national Human Rights Commission. The EU will also work with the authorities, including the Election Commission, in reviewing the electoral system with a view to the general elections in 2015.

In all these areas, donor coordination will be important and the EU looks to the Myanmar/Burma authorities to show leadership in this, fostering a wide-ranging consultation with all stakeholders, including political parties, regional authorities and civil society, applying principles such as participation, inclusion, transparency and accountability. This will be discussed at the next Foreign Affairs Council/Development.

7. The EU recognises the vital contribution the private sector has to make to the development of Myanmar/Burma and would welcome European companies exploring trade and investment opportunities. This should be done by promoting the practice of the highest standards of integrity and corporate social responsibility. These are laid out in the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, UN guiding principles on business and human rights and the EU's own CSR strategy 2011-2014. The EU will work with the authorities, the private sector and the people of Myanmar/Burma to create the best possible regulatory environment.

8. The Council supports reinstating the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) for Myanmar/Burma as soon as possible once the required conditions are fulfilled, following the assessment of the International Labour Organisation.

9. The EU also welcomes the willingness of the Government to address environmental risks, in particular those related to deforestation and the loss of biodiversity. It therefore encourages the Government to begin a dialogue with the EU on ways to ensure the sustainable management of Myanmar/Burma's forests and harvesting of timber in compliance with national legislation, consistent with fighting poverty and securing livelihoods. It will work with the authorities to promote transparency and accountability in extractive industries as well as in environmental protection, in particular through Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT).

10. The EU now looks forward to a future in which it will be able to collaborate constructively with the Government and the people of Myanmar/Burma to foster unity and build prosperity.'

North Korea

Statement by EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton, concerning the DPRK’s “satellite” launch

Brussels, 13 April 2012, A 168/12

I am deeply concerned about the dangerous and destabilising actions undertaken by the DPRK today. Regardless of its stated purpose, today’s attempted launch is a clear violation of the DPRK’s international obligations as set out in particular under UN Security Council Resolution 1874.

I call upon the DPRK to abide by its obligations under relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, its IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement under the NPT, and its commitments towards denuclearisation under the 2005 Joint Statement of the Six Party Talks. I also urge DPRK to refrain from any action that could further increase regional tensions.

The EU is ready to continue working with its international partners, with a view to contributing to the pursuit of lasting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

Statement by EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton, concerning the DPRK’s “satellite” launch

Brussels, 12 December 2012, A 571/12

The launch from DPRK earlier today is another step in a long-running attempt by the DPRK to acquire ballistic missile technology and is thus a clear violation of the DPRK’s international obligations, in particular under UN Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874.

I urge the DPRK to comply, without delay, fully and unconditionally with its obligations under relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, its IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement under the NPT, and its commitments towards denuclearisation under the 2005 Joint Statement of the Six Party Talks.

The EU will consider an appropriate response, in close consultation with key partners, and in line with UNSC deliberations, including possible additional restrictive measures.

Sudan & South Sudan

PRESS RELEASE, 3159th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg, 23 April 2012, 8772/12

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. 'The EU is deeply concerned about the escalating conflict between Sudan and South Sudan.
2. The EU calls on the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to stop immediately attacks on each other's territory, whether directly or through proxies, cease hostilities, withdraw all security personnel from Abyei and avoid further provocative actions, including inflammatory rhetoric. It urges both sides to establish the joint border verification and monitoring mechanism without further delay.
3. In this context and following international condemnation of the seizure and occupation of Heglig by the South Sudanese armed forces, the EU welcomes the recent statement by the Government of South Sudan that it is withdrawing its forces from Heglig. It calls on South Sudan not to mount any further such attacks and urges the Government of Sudan not to attack SPLA forces as they withdraw.
4. The EU condemns continued aerial bombardments and reported ground incursions into South Sudan by the Sudan Armed Forces.
5. The use of force will not resolve any of the outstanding issues between the two countries. The EU urges both to return to the existing negotiating process under the auspices of the AU High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) and renew their efforts in good faith to reach agreement through peaceful dialogue.
6. The Government of Sudan and the SPLM North must engage in an inclusive political process to resolve the conflict in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile.
7. The EU calls on the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan, as an immediate first step, to honour their Memorandum of Understanding on Non-Aggression and Cooperation signed in Addis Ababa on 10 February 2012. This is essential to allow the peaceful resolution of all outstanding issues.

8. The EU strongly supports efforts by the African Union and the AUHIP, in cooperation with the United Nations and other international partners, to ensure that both Governments urgently take the steps outlined above.’

EUAVSEC South Sudan to strengthen aviation security in South Sudan

Luxembourg, 18 June 2012, 11610/12

The Council today gave the green light for a new Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mission to strengthen the aviation security at Juba international airport: EUAVSEC South Sudan. This civilian mission responds to an invitation by South Sudan and is part of the EU’s comprehensive approach, a strategy to assist South Sudan in becoming a viable, stable and prosperous state.

EU High Representative Catherine Ashton said: *‘The EU is committed to supporting peace, security and development in South Sudan. EUAVSEC South Sudan will work to raise the security at Juba airport to internationally accepted standards. This is important for the economic development of South Sudan and for the efforts to prevent the airport from becoming a target for terrorism.’*

South Sudan is landlocked and heavily dependent on air traffic. Improving airport security will enable the increased flow of people and goods, as well as boost trade. In particular, EUAVSEC South Sudan will train and mentor security services, provide advice and assistance on aviation security, as well as support the coordination of security activities. The mission will not have any executive tasks.

EUAVSEC will last for 19 months and its headquarters will be in Juba, South Sudan. Up to 64 personnel will be deployed, with activities starting in September 2012. A budget of EUR 12.5 million has been allocated.

Guinea-Bissau

PRESS RELEASE, 3159th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg, 23 April 2012, 8772/12

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. ‘The European Union strongly condemns the coup d’état in Guinea-Bissau. It demands the immediate reestablishment of the legitimate government, the completion of the interrupted democratic electoral process and the immediate restoration of constitutional order.
2. Self-appointed transitional institutions will not be recognised, nor any kind of arrangement which would allow the armed forces to continue to threaten or control the civilian powers. The EU rejects the establishment of a so-called “Transitional National Council”.
3. The freedom and security of all citizens must be ensured and perpetrators of human rights violations be held accountable. The EU calls for the immediate and unconditional release of those held in illegal detention and an end to violence and intimidation against political leaders and civil society representatives.
4. The EU acknowledges the decision of the African Union to suspend Guinea-Bissau, and firmly supports the efforts of the UN, ECOWAS and CPLP to restore stability, democracy and respect for human rights there.
5. The EU is ready to impose restrictive measures against individuals who continue to engage in or provide support for acts that threaten the peace, security and stability of Guinea-Bissau.’

The EU Neighbourhood

PRESS RELEASE, 3157th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 22 and 23 March 2012, 7849/12

Belarus

The Council debated the situation in Belarus and adopted the following conclusions:

‘1. Recalling the Council conclusions on 31 January 2011 and 20 June 2011, the Council reiterates its grave concern about the continued lack of respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law in Belarus, and regrets that further repressive measures have taken place.

2. As the political prisoners have not been released and rehabilitated, and against the background of the further deterioration of the situation, the Council decided to designate additional persons responsible for serious violations of human rights or the repression of civil society and democratic opposition, to the list of those subject to travel restrictions and assets freezes. The Council also decided to designate further businessmen and companies benefitting from or supporting the regime and will agree further such designations at upcoming Council meetings if all Belarusian political prisoners are not released. The EU’s restrictive measures remain open and under constant review.

3. The EU calls for the immediate release and rehabilitation of all remaining political prisoners. It condemns the rejection of the appeal of human rights defender and political prisoner Ales Byalyatski as well as the sentencing to two years in prison of Syarhei Kavalenka. The EU is deeply concerned about reports of torture and inhumane prison conditions of political prisoners, such as of former presidential candidates Andrei Sannikaw and Mikalay Statkevich and activists Dzmitry Bandarenka, Dzmitry Dashkevich and Mikalay Awtukhovich. The Council reminds the Belarusian authorities of their obligation under international law to ensure the respect of the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and of their responsibility to investigate reports thereof.

4. Recalling the statement of HR Ashton of 17 March 2012, the EU strongly condemns the execution of Uladzislaw Kavalyow and Dzmitry Kanavalaw. The EU reiterates its call on the authorities of Belarus to join a global moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its universal abolition. The EU opposes capital punishment under all circumstances.

5. The EU reiterates its call on the Belarusian authorities to stop all harassment of members of the opposition, human rights defenders, journalists and civil society, and not to hinder their freedom of movement. The EU also condemns the suppression of non-violent protests and the systematic use of the judicial system as a means of repression, including against peaceful protesters. It is furthermore strongly concerned about the introduction of new legislation that will further restrict the Belarusian citizens' freedoms of assembly, association and the free flow of information on the internet, as well as the provision of support to civil society.

6. The Council again urges Belarus to respect internationally recognised diplomatic immunities and privileges of EU diplomatic representations and their personnel in Minsk and to stop the ongoing harassment and intimidation.

7. In the context of the upcoming 2014 World Ice Hockey Championship, the EU will keep International and National Ice Hockey Federations informed about its deep concerns as regards the lack of respect by Belarus for human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles.

8. The EU reiterates its firm commitment to strengthening its engagement with the Belarusian people and civil society and to supporting the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people. The Council welcomes that the EU is now launching a "European dialogue on modernisation" with the Belarusian society on necessary reforms for the modernisation of Belarus and on the related potential development of relations with the EU, as well as possible EU support in this regard.

9. The EU calls on the Belarusian authorities to follow up on their previously announced intention to initiate a national dialogue with civil society and the opposition to pave the way for the holding of parliamentary elections in 2012 in line with international norms and standards. The EU calls on the Belarusian authorities to cooperate within the OSCE in view of a re-opening of the OSCE field presence in Belarus, and to adhere to and implement OSCE commitments across all three dimensions, in particular in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

10. The EU reiterates its readiness to launch negotiations for visa facilitation and readmission agreements which would enhance people-to-people contacts to the benefit of the Belarusian population at large, and strongly regrets the unconstructive position of the Belarusian authorities in not responding so far to the letter sent in June 2011 inviting them to start negotiations. In order to facilitate the issuing of visas to the Belarusian public, the Council welcomes that the EU Member States will strive to make optimal use of the existing flexibilities offered by the Visa Code, in particular the possibilities to waive and reduce visa fees for certain categories of Belarusian citizens or in individual cases. The Council recalls the possibilities of facilitating movement of persons living in border areas, and calls on the authorities of Belarus to take the necessary steps for the entry into force of all local border traffic agreements with its neighbouring EU member states in accordance with the EU acquis on local border traffic.

11. The Council will continue to follow closely the situation in Belarus. The Council reiterates its commitment to the policy of critical engagement, including through dialogue and the Eastern Partnership, and recalls that the development of bilateral relations is conditional on progress towards respect by Belarus for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The EU remains willing to assist Belarus to meet its obligations in this regard.’

Against the background of the further deterioration of the situation in Belarus, the Council strengthened EU sanctions against the Belarusian regime.

Joint statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Štefan Füle on the parliamentary elections in Ukraine

Brussels, 29 October 2012, A 480/12

We followed closely the pre-electoral period and Sunday’s voting process in Ukraine. The turnout shows Ukrainian citizens’ attachment to a democratic and pluralistic society. Vote counting is not yet fully completed.

We take full note of the International Observation Mission’s preliminary findings on the conduct of the elections - which present a mixed picture with several shortcomings - and of the difficulties faced by the local electoral observers. The final assessment will also depend on post-electoral developments, which we will watch

closely. It is therefore particularly important that the Ukrainian authorities ensure proper conduct in the coming stages of the electoral process, notably as regards the remaining vote count, tabulation of results and following up on possible electoral complaints.

We expect that the future Verkhovna Rada will fully reflect the will of the Ukrainian voters, as expressed during Sunday's elections.

We reiterate our regret that the consequences of trials that did not respect international standards have prevented opposition representatives from standing in the parliamentary elections, and call on the authorities to address this matter and take further steps to reform the judiciary to avoid their recurrence.

Our engagement with Ukraine towards political association and economic integration remains based on its respect for our common values. We are committed to continue to work towards using the full potential of our relations for the benefit of the citizens of Ukraine and the EU.

Common Security and Defence Policy

PRESS RELEASE, 3157th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 22 and 23 March 2012, 7849/12

Military Capabilities

The European Defence Agency (EDA) Steering Board met in the margins of the Council.

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the pooling and sharing of military capabilities:

‘1. The Council emphasizes the urgent political necessity to retain and develop the military capabilities for sustaining and enhancing CSDP. European cooperation on pooling and sharing of military capabilities represents a common response to European capability shortfalls, aiming at enhancing operational effectiveness in a context of financial austerity and a changing strategic environment. Military capabilities and the political will to generate forces underpin the EU’s ability to contribute to security and stability through operational engagement.

2. In this context the Council welcomes the significant progress on concrete cooperative initiatives facilitated by the European Defence Agency (EDA) such as on Air-to-Air Refuelling, Medical Support, Training (Counter-IED, Helicopter Training Programme, Air Transport Crew, Fast Jet and Naval) and Maritime Surveillance. The EDA Steering Board on 22 March 2012 endorsed a Political Declaration on Air-to-Air Refuelling and welcomed a Declaration of Intent for the establishment of Multinational Modular Medical Units. These projects, as well as other collaborative projects established by Member States within bilateral or regional frameworks, constitute a package of concrete initiatives developed so far as part of the Ghent process for strengthening defence cooperation. They underline the strong commitment of Member States to strengthen European military capabilities and demonstrate the added value of European actions and efforts in that regard and the longterm

potential of pooling and sharing, bearing in mind the upcoming NATO Chicago Summit.

3. The Council also calls for further efforts in Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance, Future Military Commercial Satellites (SATCOM), Smart Munitions, and Naval Logistics and encourages continuous work on Training and Education facilitated by the EUMS.

4. The Council welcomes the cooperation between the EU and NATO on military capability development for crisis management, in particular the Pooling and Sharing and Smart Defence initiatives. It notes with satisfaction the productive contacts between the staffs of the two organisations, and strongly encourages these contacts to continue in a transparent manner in order to avoid duplication, ensure coherence and mutually reinforcing capability development.

5. While significant progress has been made, the Council reiterates the need for a more sustainable and structured policy on Pooling and Sharing in the longer term. Systematic cooperation will require a change of mindset and continuous political momentum and commitment. The Council encourages Member States, in the very early stages of their national processes, to systematically explore the possibility for Pooling and Sharing solutions.

6. In the context of further developing the systematic approach to Pooling and Sharing, the Council welcomes the work conducted in the framework of the EDA on enablers for multinational cooperation. Pooling demand, harmonising procedures for qualification/ certification, and sharing surplus equipment, will support capability improvements and reduce through-life costs. Noting the potential of “Save and Reinvest”, the Council invites EDA to explore this further.

7. Acknowledging the wider implications of defence for technology, innovation and growth, the Council notes with concern the overall reduction of defence Research and Technology investment and its implications on Europe’s ability to develop future defence capabilities. The Council reiterates its commitment to cooperation in Research and Technology. It encourages the EDA and the Commission to pursue synergies with European policies and in particular in the field of Research and Technology, including regarding the new European Framework Programme for Research and Technology (Horizon 2020). This will contribute to strengthening the European Defence Industrial and Technological Base.’



European Union

State of the Union 2012 Address

Strasbourg, 12 September 2012

Mr President,

Honourable Members,

I. Analysis of the situation

It is an honour to stand before you today to deliver this third State of the Union address. At a time when the European Union continues to be in crisis.

A financial and economic crisis. A social crisis. But also a political crisis, a crisis of confidence.

At its root, the crisis results from:

- Irresponsible practices in the financial sector;
- Unsustainable public debt, and also;
- A lack of competitiveness in some Member States.

On top of that, the Euro faces structural problems of its own. Its architecture has not been up to the job. Imbalances have built up.

This is now being corrected. But it is a painful, difficult, effort. Citizens are frustrated. They are anxious. They feel their way of life is at risk.

The sense of fairness and equity between Member States is being eroded. And without equity between Member States, how can there be equity between European citizens?

Over the last four years, we have made many bold decisions to tackle this systemic crisis. But despite all these efforts, our responses have not yet convinced citizens, markets or our international partners.

Why? Because time and again, we have allowed doubts to spread. Doubts over whether some countries are really ready to reform and regain competitiveness. Doubts over whether other countries are really willing to stand by each other so that the Euro and the European project are irreversible.

On too many occasions, we have seen a vicious spiral. First, very important decisions for our future are taken at European summits. But then, the next day, we see some of those very same people who took those decisions undermining them. Saying that either they go too far, or that they don't go far enough. And then we get a problem of credibility. A problem of confidence.

It is not acceptable to present these European meetings as if they were boxing events, claiming a knockout victory over a rival. We cannot belong to the same Union and behave as if we don't. We cannot put at risk nine good decisions with one action or statement that raises doubts about all we have achieved.

This, Honourable Members, reveals the essence of Europe's political crisis of confidence. If Europe's political actors do not abide by the rules and the decisions they have set themselves, how can they possibly convince others that they are determined to solve this crisis together?

II. The challenge – a new thinking for Europe

A crisis of confidence is a political crisis. And, the good thing is that, in a democracy, there is no political problem for which we cannot find a political solution.

That is why, here today, I want to debate with you the fundamental political questions - where we are now and how we must move forward. I want to focus on the political direction and the vision that shall inspire our policy decisions.

I will of course not list all these individual decisions. You are receiving the letter I addressed to the President of the European Parliament, and that sets out the Commission's immediate priorities. We will discuss them with you before adopting the Commission Work Programme later in the autumn.

My message to you today is this: Europe needs a new direction. And, that direction cannot be based on old ideas. Europe needs a new thinking.

When we speak about the crisis, and we all speak about the crisis, have we really drawn all the consequences for our action? When we speak about globalisation, and we all speak a lot about globalisation, have we really considered its impact on the role of each of our Member States?

The starting point for a new thinking for Europe is to really draw all the consequences of the challenges that we are facing and that are fundamentally changing our world.

The starting point is to stop trying to answer the questions of the future with the tools of the past.

Since the start of the crisis, we have seen time and again that interconnected global markets are quicker and therefore more powerful than fragmented national political systems. This undermines the trust of citizens in political decision making. And it is fuelling populism and extremism in Europe and elsewhere.

The reality is that in an interconnected world, Europe's Member States on their own are no longer able to effectively steer the course of events. But at the same time, they have not yet equipped their Union - our Union - with the instruments needed to cope with this new reality. We are now in a transition, in a defining moment. This moment requires decisions and leadership.

Yes, globalisation demands more European unity.

More unity demands more integration.

More integration demands more democracy, European democracy.

In Europe, this means first and foremost accepting that we are all in the same boat.

It means recognising the commonality of our European interests.

It means embracing the interdependence of our destinies.

And it means demanding a true sense of common responsibility and solidarity.

Because when you are on a boat in the middle of the storm, absolute loyalty is the minimum you demand from your fellow crew members.

This is the only way we will keep up with the pace of change. It is the only way we will get the scale and efficiency we need to be a global player. It is the only way to safeguard our values, because it is also a matter of values, in a changing world.

In the 20th century, a country of just 10 or 15 million people could be a global power. In the 21st century, even the biggest European countries run the risk of irrelevance in between the global giants like the US or China.

History is accelerating. It took 155 years for Britain to double its GDP per capita, 50 years for the US, and just 15 years for China. But if you look at some of our new Member States, the economic transformation going on is no less impressive.

Europe has all the assets it takes. In fact much more so than previous generations faced with similar or even greater challenges.

But we need to act accordingly and mobilize all these resources together.

It is time to match ambitions, decisions, and actions.

It is time to put a stop to piecemeal responses and muddling through.

It is time to learn the lessons from history and write a better future for our Europe.

III. Response to the situation – the ‘decisive deal for Europe’

What I demand and what I present to you today is a Decisive Deal for Europe. A decisive deal to project our values, our freedom and our prosperity into the future of a globalized world. A deal that combines the need to keep our social market economies on one hand and the need to reform them on the other. A deal that will stabilise the EMU, boost sustainable growth, and restore competitiveness. A deal that will establish a contract of confidence between our countries, between Member States and the European institutions, between social partners, and between the citizens and the European Union.

The Decisive Deal for Europe means that we must leave no doubt about the integrity of the Union or the irreversibility of the Euro.

The more vulnerable countries must leave no doubts about their willingness to reform. About their sense of responsibility. But the stronger countries must leave no doubts about their willingness to stick together. About their sense of solidarity.

We must all leave no doubts that we are determined to reform. To reform together.

The idea that we can grow without reform, or that we can prosper alone is simply false. We must recognise that we are in this together and must resolve it together.

This decisive deal requires the completion of a deep and genuine economic union, based on a political union.

Economic union

Let me start with Europe's economy.

Firstly, we need growth. Sustainable growth.

Growth is the lifeblood of our European social market model: it creates jobs and supports our standard of living. But we can only maintain growth if we are more competitive.

At the national level it means undertaking structural reforms that have been postponed for decades. Modernising public administration. Reducing wasteful expenditure. Tackling vested interests and privileges. Reforming the labour market to balance security with flexibility. And ensuring the sustainability of social systems.

At the European level, we need to be more decisive about breaking down barriers, whether physical, economic or digital. We need to complete the single market.

We need to reduce our energy dependence and tap the renewable energy potential.

Promoting competitiveness in sectors such as energy, transport or telecoms could open up fresh competition, promote innovation and drive down prices for consumers and businesses.

The Commission will shortly present a Single Market Act II. To enable the single market to prosper, the Commission will continue to be firm and intransigent in the defence of its competition and trade rules. Let me tell you frankly: if it was left to the Member States, they will not resist pressure from big corporations or large external powers.

We need to create a European labour market, and make it as easy for people to work in another country as it is at home.

We need to explore green growth and be much more efficient in our use of resources.

We have to be much more ambitious about education, research, innovation and science.

Europe is a world leader in key sectors such as aeronautics, automotives, pharmaceuticals and engineering, with global market shares above a third. Industrial productivity increased by 35% over the last decade despite the economic slowdown. And today, some 74 million jobs depend on manufacturing. Every year start-up firms in the EU create over 4 million jobs. We need to build on this by investing in our new industrial policy and creating a business environment that encourages entrepreneurship and supports small businesses.

This means making the taxation environment simpler for businesses and more attractive for investors. Better tax coordination would benefit all Member States.

We also need a pro-active trade policy by opening up new markets.

This is the potential of Europe's economy. This is the goldmine that is yet to be fully explored. Fully implementing the Growth Compact agreed at the June European Council can take us a long way.

And we could go further, with a realistic but yet ambitious European Union budget dedicated to investment, growth and reform. Let's be clear. The European budget is the instrument for investment in Europe and growth in Europe.

The Commission and this Parliament, indeed all pro-European forces, because most member States support our proposal, must now stand together in support of the right multi-annual financial framework that will take us to 2020. It will place little burden on Member States, especially with our proposed new own resources system. But it would give a great boost to their economies, their regions, their researchers, their students, their young people who seek employment, or their SMEs.

It is a budget for growth, for economic, social and territorial cohesion between Member States and within Member States.

It is a budget that will help complete the single market by bridging gaps in our energy, transport and telecoms infrastructure through the Connecting Europe Facility.

It is a budget for a modern, growth-oriented agriculture capable of combining food security with sustainable rural development.

It is a budget that will promote a research intensive and innovative Europe through Horizon 2020. Because we need this European scale for research.

This will be a real test of credibility for many of our some Member States. I want to see if the same Member States who are all the time talking about investment and growth will now support a budget for growth at the European level.

The budget is also the tool to support investment in our growth agenda, Europe 2020, which we need now more than ever before. Europe 2020 is the way to modernise and preserve the European social market economy.

Our agenda of structural reform requires a major adjustment effort. It will only work if it is fair and equitable. Because inequality is not sustainable.

In some parts of Europe we are seeing a real social emergency.

Rising poverty and massive levels of unemployment, especially among our young people.

That is why we must strengthen social cohesion. It is a feature that distinguishes European society from alternative models.

Some say that, because of the crisis, the European social model is dead. I do not agree.

Yes, we need to reform our economies and modernise our social protection systems. But an effective social protection system that helps those in need is not an obstacle to prosperity. It is indeed an indispensable element of it. Indeed, it is precisely those European countries with the most effective social protection systems and with the most developed social partnerships, that are among the most successful and competitive economies in the world.

Fairness and equity means giving a chance to our young people. We are already doing a lot. And before the end of the year, the Commission will launch a Youth Pack-

age that will establish a youth guarantee scheme and equality framework to facilitate vocational training.

Fairness and equity also means creating better and fairer taxation systems.

Stopping tax fraud and tax evasion could put extra billions into the public purse across Europe.

This is why the Commission will fight for an agreement on the revised savings tax directive, and on mandates to negotiate stronger savings tax agreements with third countries. Their completion would be a major source of legitimate tax revenues.

And the Commission will continue to fight for a fair and ambitious Financial Transactions Tax that would ensure that taxpayers benefit from the financial sector, not just that the financial sector benefits from taxpayers. Now that it is clear that agreement on this can only happen through enhanced cooperation, the Commission will do all it can to move this forward rapidly and effectively with those Member States that are willing. Because this is about fairness. And fairness is an essential condition to make the necessary economic reforms socially and politically acceptable. And above all fairness is a question of justice, social justice.

In the face of the crisis, important decisions have been taken. Across the European Union, reform and consolidation measures are being implemented. Joint financial backstops are being put in place, and the European institutions have consistently shown that they stand by the Euro.

The Commission is very aware that in the Member States implementing the most intense reforms, there is hardship and there are – sometimes very painful – difficult adjustments. But it is only through these reforms that we can come to a better future. They were long overdue. Going back to the status quo ante is simply impossible.

The Commission will continue to do all it can to support these Member States and to help them boost growth and employment, for instance through the re-programming of structural funds.

Allow me to say a word on Greece. I truly believe that we have a chance this autumn to come to the turning point. If Greece banishes all doubts about its commitment to reform. But also if all other countries banish all doubts about their determination to keep Greece in the Euro area, we can do it.

I believe that if Greece stands by its commitments it should stay in the Euro area, as a member of the European family.

Securing the stability of the Euro area is our most urgent challenge. This is the joint responsibility of the Member States and the Community Institutions. The ECB cannot and will not finance governments. But when monetary policy channels are not working properly, the Commission believes that it is within the mandate of the ECB to take the necessary actions, for instance in the secondary markets of sovereign debt. Indeed, the ECB has not only the right but also the duty to restore the integrity of monetary policy. It is of course for the ECB, as an independent institution, to determine what actions to carry out and under what conditions. But all actors, and I really mean all actors, should respect the ECB's independence.

I have spoken about the economic measures that we must implement as a matter of urgency. This is indispensable. But it is not sufficient. We must go further.

We must complete the economic and monetary union. We must create a banking union and a fiscal union and the corresponding institutional and political mechanisms.

Today, the Commission is presenting legislative proposals for a single European supervisory mechanism. This is the stepping stone to a banking union.

The crisis has shown that while banks became transnational, rules and oversight remained national. And when things went wrong, it was the taxpayers who had to pick up the bill.

Over the past four years the EU has overhauled the rulebook for banks, leading the world in implementing the G20 commitments. But mere coordination is no longer adequate – we need to move to common supervisory decisions, namely within the Euro area.

The single supervisory mechanism proposed today will create a reinforced architecture, with a core role for the European Central Bank, and appropriate articulation with the European Banking Authority, which will restore confidence in the supervision of the banks in the Euro area.

It will be a supervision for all Euro area banks. Supervision must be able to look everywhere because systemic risks can be anywhere, not just in so-called systemically

relevant banks. Of course, this in a system that fully engages the national supervisors.

The package comprises two legal texts, one on the ECB and the other on the EBA, which go together. It is clear that this parliament will have a crucial role to play in the adoption of the new mechanism, and after that in its democratic oversight.

This is a crucial first step towards the banking union I proposed before this House in June. Getting the European supervisor in place is the top priority for now, because it is the precondition for the better management of banking crises, from banking resolution to deposit insurance.

In parallel the Commission will continue to work on the reform of the banking sector, to make sure it plays its role in the responsible financing of the real economy. That means improving long term financing for SMEs and other companies. It means rules on reference indices, so we do not again see the manipulation of bank interest rates affecting companies and mortgage holders alike. It means legislation to ensure that banks give a fair deal to consumers and another look at the structure of banking activities to eliminate inherent risks.

In all of this, the role of this Parliament is essential. The Commission endeavours to work in close partnership with you.

But there is a second element of a deeper economic union: it is the move towards a fiscal union.

The case for it is clear: the economic decisions of one Member State impact the others. So we need stronger economic policy co-ordination. We need a stronger and more binding framework for the national decision making for key economic policies, as the only way to prevent imbalances. While much has been done here, for instance through the six-pack and the Country-Specific Recommendations, further steps are crucial to combine specific conditions with specific incentives and to really make the economic and monetary union sustainable.

To deliver lasting results, we need to develop a fully equipped Community economic governance together with a genuine, credible Community fiscal capacity.

We do not need to separate institutions or to create new institutions for that. Quite the contrary: for this to be effective and quick, the best way is to work with and through the existing institutions: The European Commission as the independent

European authority, and overseen by the European Parliament as the parliamentary representation at the European level.

And it is in such a framework that over time, steps for genuine mutualisation of debt redemption and debt issuance can take their place.

So economic reform coupled with a genuine economic and monetary union: these are the engines to get our boat moving forward.

The Commission will publish a blueprint for deepening the economic and monetary union still this autumn.

This blueprint will be presented to this House. Because these questions must be discussed with and by the representatives of the people.

At the same time, it will inform the debate at the December European Council that will be prepared by the report that the President of the European Council, myself and the Presidents of the European Central Bank and the Eurogroup have been asked to present.

Our blueprint will identify the tools and instruments, and present options for legal drafting that would give effect to them, from policy coordination to fiscal capacity to debt redemption. And, where necessary – as in the case of jointly and severally guaranteed public debt – it would identify the treaty changes necessary, because some of these changes require modifications to the Treaty. It will present a blueprint for what we need to accomplish not only in the next few weeks and months, but in the next years.

Political union

Ultimately, the credibility and sustainability of the Economic and Monetary Union depends on the institutions and the political construct behind it.

This is why the Economic and Monetary Union raises the question of a political union and the European democracy that must underpin it.

If we want economic and monetary union to succeed, we need to combine ambition and proper sequencing. We need to take concrete steps now, with a political union as a horizon.

I would like to see the development of a European public space, where European issues are discussed and debated from a European standpoint. We cannot continue trying to solve European problems just with national solutions.

This debate has to take place in our societies and among our citizens. But, today, I would like to make an appeal also to European thinkers. To men and women of culture, to join this debate on the future of Europe. And I make this appeal to you. This is the house of European democracy. We must strengthen the role of the European Parliament at the European level.

And we need to promote a genuine complementarity and cooperation between the European and national parliaments.

This also cannot be done without strengthening European political parties. Indeed, we have very often a real disconnect between political parties in the capitals and the European political parties here in Strasbourg. This is why we have to recognise the political debate is cast all too often as if it were just between national parties. Even in the European elections we do not see the name of the European political parties on the ballot box, we see a national debate between national political parties. This is why we need a reinforced statute for European political parties. I am proud to announce that the Commission has adopted a proposal for this today.

An important means to deepen the pan-European political debate would be the presentation by European political parties of their candidate for the post of Commission President at the European Parliament elections already in 2014. This can be done without Treaty change. This would be a decisive step to make the possibility of a European choice offered by these elections even clearer. I call on the political parties to commit to this step and thus to further Europeanise these European elections.

A true political European Union means we must concentrate European action on the real issues that matter and must be dealt with at the European level. Let's be frank about this not everything can be at the same time a priority. Here, some self-criticism can probably be applied.

Proper integration is about taking a fresh look at where is the most appropriate level of action. Subsidiarity is an essential democratic concept and should be practiced.

A political union also means that we must strengthen the foundations on which our Union is built: the respect for our fundamental values, for the rule of law and democracy.

In recent months we have seen threats to the legal and democratic fabric in some of our European states. The European Parliament and the Commission were the first to raise the alarm and played the decisive role in seeing these worrying developments brought into check.

But these situations also revealed limits of our institutional arrangements. We need a better developed set of instruments – not just the alternative between the «soft power» of political persuasion and the «nuclear option» of article 7 of the Treaty.

Our commitment to upholding the rule of law is also behind our intention to establish a European Public Prosecutor's Office, as foreseen by the Treaties. We will come with a proposal soon.

A political union also means doing more to fulfil our global role. Sharing sovereignty in Europe means being more sovereign in a global world.

In today's world, size matters.

And values make the difference.

That is why Europe's message must be one of freedom, democracy, of rule of law and of solidarity. In short, our values: European values.

More than ever our citizens and the new world order need an active and influential Europe. This is not just for us, for the rest of the world it is important that we succeed. A Europe that stands by its values. And a Europe that stands up for its belief that human rights are not a luxury for the developed world, they should be seen as universal values.

The appalling situation in Syria reminds us that we cannot afford to be by-standers. A new and democratic Syria must emerge. We have a joint responsibility to make this happen. And to work with those in the global order who need to give also their co-operation to this goal.

The world needs an EU that keeps its leadership at the forefront of development and humanitarian assistance. That stands by open economies and fights protectionism. That leads the fight against climate change.

The world needs a Europe that is capable of deploying military missions to help stabilize the situation in crisis areas. We need to launch a comprehensive review of European capabilities and begin truly collective defence planning. Yes, we need to reinforce our Common Foreign and Security Policy and a common approach to defence matters because together we have the power, and the scale to shape the world into a fairer, rules based and human rights' abiding place.

IV. Treaty change, 17/27 dimension and expanding public debate

Federation of nation states - Treaty change

A deep and genuine economic and monetary union, a political union, with a coherent foreign and defence policy, means ultimately that the present European Union must evolve.

Let's not be afraid of the words: we will need to move towards a federation of nation states. This is what we need. This is our political horizon.

This is what must guide our work in the years to come.

Today, I call for a federation of nation states. Not a superstate. A democratic federation of nation states that can tackle our common problems, through the sharing of sovereignty in a way that each country and each citizen are better equipped to control their own destiny. This is about the Union with the Member States, not against the Member States. In the age of globalisation pooled sovereignty means more power, not less.

And, I said it on purpose a federation of nation states because in these turbulent times these times of anxiety, we should not leave the defence of the nation just to the nationalists and populists. I believe in a Europe where people are proud of their nations but also proud to be European and proud of our European values.

Creating this federation of nation states will ultimately require a new Treaty. I do not say this lightly. We are all aware how difficult treaty change has become. It has to be well prepared.

Discussions on treaty change must not distract or delay us from doing what can and must be done already today.

A deep and genuine economic and monetary union can be started under the current Treaties, but can only be completed with changes in the treaties. So let's start it now but let's have the horizon for the future present in our decisions of today.

We must not begin with treaty change. We must identify the policies we need and the instruments to implement them. Only then can we decide on the tools that we lack and the ways to remedy this.

And then there must be a broad debate all over Europe. A debate that must take place before a convention and an IGC is called. A debate of a truly European dimension.

The times of European integration by implicit consent of citizens are over. Europe cannot be technocratic, bureaucratic or even diplomatic. Europe has to be ever more democratic. The role of the European Parliament is essential. This is why the European elections of 2014 can be so decisive.

Before the next European Parliament elections in 2014, the Commission will present its outline for the shape of the future European Union. And we will put forward explicit ideas for Treaty change in time for a debate.

We will set out the objectives to be pursued, the way the institutions that can make the European Union more open and democratic, the powers and instruments to make it more effective, and the model to make it a union for the peoples of Europe. I believe we need a real debate and in a democracy the best way to debate is precisely in elections at the European level on our future and our goals.

17/27 dimension

This is not just a debate for the Euro area in its present membership. While deeper integration is indispensable for the Euro area and its members, this project should remain open to all Member States.

Let me be very clear: in Europe, we need no more walls dividing us! Because the European Union is stronger as a whole in keeping the integrity of its single market, its membership and in its institutions.

No one will be forced to come along. And no one will be forced to stay out. The speed will not be dictated by the slowest or the most reluctant. This is why our proposals will be based on the existing Union and its institutions, on the Community method. Let's be clear – there is only one European Union. One Commission. One European Parliament. More democracy, more transparency, more accountability, is not created by a proliferation of institutions that would render the EU more complicated, more difficult to read, less coherent and less capable to act.

Expanding public debate

This is, Honourable Members, the magnitude of the decisions that we will need to make over time.

That's why I believe we need a serious discussion between the citizens of Europe about the way forward.

About the possible consequences of fragmentation. Because what can happen sometimes is to have, through unintended consequences, to have fragmentation when we do not want it.

About what we could achieve if leaders avoid national provincialism what we can achieve together.

We must use the 2014 election to mobilise all pro-European forces. We must not allow the populists and the nationalists to set a negative agenda. I expect all those who call themselves Europeans to stand up and to take the initiative in the debate. Because even more dangerous than the scepticism of the anti-Europeans, is the indifference or the pessimism of the pro-Europeans.

V. Conclusion: is this realistic?

To sum up, what we need is a decisive deal to complete the EMU, based on a political commitment to a stronger European Union.

The sequence I put before you today is clear.

We should start by doing all we can to stabilise the euro area and accelerate growth in the EU as a whole. The Commission will present all the necessary proposals and we have started today with the single supervisor to create a banking union, in line with the current Treaty provisions.

Secondly, we will present our blueprint on a deep and genuine economic and monetary union, including the political instruments, and this will be done still this autumn.

We will present here again all proposals in line with the current Treaty provisions.

And thirdly, where we cannot move forward under the existing treaties, we will present explicit proposals for the necessary Treaty changes ahead of the next European Parliamentary election in 2014, including elements for reinforced democracy and accountability.

This is our project. A project which is step by step but with a big ambition for the future with a Federation as our horizon for Europe.

Many will say that this is too ambitious, that it is not realistic.

But let me ask you - is it realistic to go on like we have been doing? Is it realistic to see what we are seeing today in many European countries? Is it realistic to see taxpayers paying banks and afterwards being forced to give banks back the houses they have paid for because they cannot pay their mortgages? Is it realistic to see more than 50% of our young people without jobs in some of our Member States? Is it realistic to go on trying to muddle through and just to accumulate mistakes with unconvincing responses? Is it realistic to think that we can win the confidence of the markets when we show so little confidence in each other?

To me, it is this reality that is not realistic. This reality cannot go on.

The realistic way forward is the way that makes us stronger and more united. Realism is to put our ambition at the level of our challenges. We can do it! Let's send our young people a message of hope. If there is a bias, let it be a bias for hope. We should be proud to be Europeans. Proud of our rich and diverse culture. In spite of our current problems, our societies are among the most human and free in the world.

We do not have to apologise for our democracy, our social market economy and for our values. With high levels of social cohesion. Respect for human rights and hu-

man dignity. Equality between men and women and respect for our environment. These European societies, with all its problems, are among the most decent societies in human history and I think we should be proud of that. In our countries two or three girls do not go to prison because they sing and criticise the ruler of their country. In our countries people are free and are proud of that freedom and people understand what it means to have that freedom. In many of our countries, namely the most recent Member States, there is a recent memory of what was dictatorship and totalitarianism.

So previous generations have overcome bigger challenges. Now it is for this generation to show they are up to the task.

Now is the moment for all pro-Europeans to leave business as usual behind and to embrace the business of the future. The European Union was built to guarantee peace. Today, this means making our Union fit to meet the challenges of globalization.

That is why we need a new thinking for Europe, a decisive deal for Europe. That is why we need to guide ourselves by the values that are at the heart of the European Union. Europe I believe has a soul. This soul can give us the strength and the determination to do what we must do.

You can count on the European Commission. I count on you, the European Parliament. Together, as Community institutions, we will build a better, stronger and a more united Europe, a citizens' Union for the future of Europe but also the future of the world.

Thank you for your attention.

Joint statement by Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, on the award of the 2012 Nobel Peace prize to the European Union

Brussels, 12 October 2012, EUCO 186/12

It is a tremendous honour for the European Union to be awarded the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize. This Prize is the strongest possible recognition of the deep political motives behind our Union: the unique effort by ever more European states to overcome war and divisions and to jointly shape a continent of peace and prosperity. It is a Prize not just for the project and the institutions embodying a common interest, but for the 500 million citizens living in our Union.

At its origins the European Union brought together nations emerging from the ruins of devastating World Wars – which originated on this continent – and united them in a project for peace. Over the last sixty years, the European Union has reunified a continent split by the Cold War around values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

These are also the values that the European Union promotes in order to make the world a better place for all. The European Union will continue to promote peace and security in the countries close to us and in the world at large. We are proud that the European Union is the world's largest provider of development assistance and humanitarian aid and is at the forefront of global efforts to fight climate change and promote global public goods.

This Nobel Peace Prize shows that in these difficult times the European Union remains an inspiration for leaders and citizens all over the world.