A big step forward in the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS)

At its meeting in Luxembourg, the Council reached a political agreement on the text of the decision establishing the European External Action Service (EEAS). This is an important step since it allows High Representative Ashton to go on working on the establishment of the EEAS and in particular to begin negotiations with the European Parliament (EP). “In the last month, the work in the Council on my original proposal went well and I am extremely grateful to the efforts of the Spanish Presidency. The political agreement of today allows us to kick-start negotiations with the EP for the rapid establishment of the Service” Catherine Ashton said.

The creation of the EEAS is one of the main changes introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, aimed at achieving greater coherence and efficiency in the EU’s external action and increasing its political and economic influence in the world. The EEAS will assist the High Representative in fulfilling her mandate. It will work in cooperation with the diplomatic services of the member states and comprise officials from relevant departments of the General Secretariat of the Council and of the Commission, as well as staff seconded from national diplomatic services of the member states.

The Treaty provides that the EEAS shall be established by a decision of the Council acting on a proposal from the HR after consulting the European Parliament and after obtaining the consent of the Commission.

Substantial Security and Defence component at Foreign Affairs Council

The Foreign Affairs Council that took place in Luxembourg on 26 April included a substantial security and defence component with the participation of defence ministers. The Council adopted conclusions on the Common Security and Defence Policy, covering current CSDP issues and developments, and conclusions on maritime security.

Ministers exchanged views on the state of play and the way ahead for CSDP operations, notably EUPFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EU NAVFOR and the EU Training Mission for Somalia. They also discussed the way forward on the implementation of the EU Action Plan for Enhanced Engagement in Afghanistan and Pakistan and took note of the first six-monthly implementation report.

On the eve of the Council, HR Ashton chaired a working dinner for defence ministers. She updated them on the preparations for setting up the External Action Service. It was also an opportunity to continue the discussions initiated at the informal defence ministers meeting in Palma de Mallorca on the organisation of their work within the Foreign Affairs Council.

Council conclusions on maritime security strategy

Council conclusions on CSDP
EDA’s Steering Board meets in Luxembourg

In the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council held in Luxembourg, Catherine Ashton chaired the European Defence Agency’s steering board in her capacity of head of the EDA. This steering board is composed of the defence ministers of the 26 participating member states (all EU member states but Denmark).

At this meeting, EU defence ministers decided to cooperate on a deployable field laboratory for forensic research of road-side bomb explosions. The capability will be operational by mid-2011. France will act as the lead nation. Road-side bombs and other improvised explosive devices (IED) are killer number one to deployed forces in crisis management operations.

Defence Ministers also launched a R&T programme on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) protection. This programme is EDA’s first contribution to the European Framework Cooperation initiative for systematically ensuring civil-military synergies in research, conducted by the EDA, the European Commission and the European Space Agency. “CBRN protection is a logical first choice for coordinated civil-military research, as both civilians and military are equally exposed to the terrible effects of chemical, biological and other threats”, EDA’s Chief Executive, Alexander Weis, said.

Furthermore, the Ministerial Steering Board received the report of the “Wise Pen Team” of five retired admirals on maritime surveillance in support of CSDP. The central message of the report is the need for linking national and international military and civilian assets in order to create a federated maritime surveillance network. The report contains concrete recommendations and will provide an important contribution to the activities on the integration of maritime surveillance led by the European Commission.

Read the Report by the Head of the EDA to the Council

EULEX Kosovo helping to solve the issue of missing persons

On the Day of Missing Persons in Kosovo, Yves de Kermabon, Head of EULEX, expressed the mission’s commitment to help solve the issue of the missing: “Dealing with the legacy of past human rights violations is one of the many challenges facing Kosovo today. Initiatives undertaken to confront impunity and to promote the rule of law by investigating past abuses are important factors towards forging a justice system that advances international human rights standards, restores public confidence, fights impunity and strengthens the fabric of civil society.”

Steady progress has been achieved since December 2008 when the EULEX mission was launched in Kosovo. EULEX forensic experts and the Office of the Missing Persons and Forensics (OMPF), through their joint efforts, have conducted 185 field operations where 79 missing persons have been located and identified. 135 remains of the missing plus other victims of the conflict and its aftermath have been forensically examined, identified and returned to families. An exhaustive examination of unidentified remains was begun and is continuing. Additionally, over 130 coordination meetings have been held with family associations, following which a significant number of important leads have been obtained.

The War Crimes Investigations Unit (WCIU) within EULEX is investigating the fate of missing persons and the circumstances of their disappearances. The unit also locates grave sites, collects evidence of crimes related to disappearances, and works on identifying perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

Read full article

The EUMM Bus is touring Georgia

In the lead up to EU Day, to be celebrated on 9 May 2010, the “EUMM Bus” will be travelling across Georgia from Tbilisi to Mtskheta, Gori and Zugdidi. From 26 April to 1 May, along the itinerary of the EUMM Bus, a number of public awareness activities will be organized to enhance the knowledge of the local population about the role and activities of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia.

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ESDP Newsletter - ESDP@10
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