Europe day

‘On Europe Day, the European Union takes the opportunity to remember where it came from. But above all, it can look at how far it has come,’ writes HR Catherine Ashton in an article published around the world on 9 May.

It is now four months since the launch of the European External Action Service (EEAS), which for HR Ashton embodies a united and strong continent, and is ensuring security and stability within Europe as well as throughout the world.

‘We remain the biggest donor and the largest trading power in the world, but we are doing much more’ writes HR Ashton.

‘We are fighting piracy off the coast of Somalia and helping rebuild Haiti following the devastating earthquake. We are mediating between Serbia and Kosovo for a lasting peace in the Western Balkans, and leading negotiations with Iran on their nuclear programme.’

HR Ashton also highlights the work that the EEAS is undertaking in North Africa and the Middle East: from supporting democratic reform in Egypt and Tunisia to working with the international community on the future of Libya and putting maximum pressure for change on the remaining repressive regimes.

Meeting of EU Chiefs of Defence

The Chiefs of Defence of the 27 Member States met in Brussels, on 3 May 2011, under the chairmanship of General Håkan Syrén.

In the operations session, the Chiefs of Defense were briefed by the Operation Commanders of EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina confirming the positive assessment in terms of fulfilment of the military responsibilities. They were also briefed on EUNAVFOR Atalanta which, two years after its launch, successfully performs its mission and contributes to improving maritime security off the coast of Somalia; EU Training Mission Somalia achieving excellent output standards during its second training cycle and EUFOR Libya which if requested by UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) will be conducted in order to support humanitarian assistance in the region.

The capabilities session was dedicated to key issues launched in the framework of the Member States driven Pooling and Sharing initiative.

EUPM/BIH: Seminar on fight against corruption started in Sarajevo

A two-day seminar on “Improving the fight against corruption” started on 4 May at the Police Academy in Sarajevo, as a follow up to a workshop held in November 2010. The seminar will focus on specific examples of corruption cases and presentation of case studies from the experience of the Belgian federal police.

“In the following two days, police officers of all law enforcement agencies in BiH, prosecutors and representatives of BiH Ministry of Security will discuss different ways to fight corruption and in that way enrich their knowledge and experience,” said Predrag Kurteš, Federation BiH Minister of Interior and stressed that Federation BiH Ministry of Interior and Police Administration put all its capacity into the institutional fight against corruption.

The seminar is co-organized with the EUPM.

EUMM Georgia: 12th Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism Meeting

On 5 May the 12th meeting under the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) took place in Dvani. The meeting was co-facilitated by the EUMM and the OSCE.

Participants reviewed recent incidents, including detentions on both sides. In addition, South Ossetian participants informed the meeting of measures to remove possible mines in the area around the “Sameba” Monastery. With the weather improving, access to farms and agricultural land in the areas concerned was raised. All participants recognized the importance of ensuring the security of farmers working in the area.

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Upcoming activities

16-19 May HR travels to Washington

EULEX: Medicus – Indictment Confirmed

On 4 May an Appeal Panel composed of two EULEX judges and one Kosovo judge from Pristina District Court, confirmed the indictment against five defendants in the so called “Medicus” case.

The offences were allegedly committed in 2008 at the Medicus Clinic in Pristina and involved victims from various countries.

Four defendants will face charges of trafficking in persons for the purpose of removal of organs and organised crime. Three defendants will face a charge of unlawful exercise of medical activity. Two defendants will face a charge of abuse of official position. The case will now be listed for trial at Pristina District Court.

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EULEX: Arrest in organised crime investigation into trafficking in drugs

EULEX Police have arrested one man in Pec/Peja in connection with international heroin trafficking. Searches at two different premises in Pec/Peja linked to drugs trafficking, were also carried out by EULEX Police. The operation took place in the early morning of Wednesday 4 May.

The arrested individual is accused of trafficking in drugs in and out of Kosovo to various European countries in 2008-09. His arrest is part of a wider investigation into organised crime.

The arrest and searches were duly authorized by a EULEX pre-trial judge at the District Court of Pristina. The investigation is supervised by a EULEX prosecutor from Kosovo’s Special Prosecution Office (SPRK).

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Appointment of EUSR in Kosovo

On 5 May, the Council decided to appoint Fernando Gentilini as the European Union Special Representative (EUSR) in Kosovo from 1 May 2011 to 31 July 2011.

In his position as EUSR in Kosovo, Fernando Gentilini will offer the EU’s advice and support in the political process; promote overall EU coordination in Kosovo; provide political guidance to the Head of the EULEX Kosovo mission; and contribute to the development and consolidation of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Kosovo.

HR Statement

EUNAVFOR: Italian Frigate ITS ESPERO assists MV Ital Glamour after pirate attack

On 5 May, the EUNAVFOR warship ITS ESPERO assisted the Italian Merchant Vessel ITAL GLAMOUR after it was attacked by pirates on the previous day.

The attack was carried out by four armed pirates on board a skiff and was defeated due to the first-class execution of aggressive evasive steering, conducted by the vessel’s master as suggested in the industry lead Best Management Practices (BMP3).

ITS ESPERO was patrolling the International Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) at the time of the attack, and was quickly detached to close distance with the ITAL GLAMOUR in order to render assistance.

During the attack, several Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) were fired by the pirates, one of which remained unexploded on board and had to be disposed of. During the afternoon of 5 May, the Italian warship’s Explosive Ordinary Devices (EOD) team was flown by helicopter onto the ITAL GLAMOUR and conducted a disposal of the unexploded round, as well as an inspection of the vessel. After several hours, the operation was successfully completed and the merchant vessel was able to sail again safely.

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