Brussels, 11 June 2010

BACKGROUND¹

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL
Monday, 14 June in Luxembourg

Foreign ministers will meet at 11.00 on Monday morning to discuss external relations issues, focusing in particular on Gaza, Iran and the Western Balkans. They will be joined over lunch (starting at 13.30) by Serge Brammertz, ICTY Chief Prosecutor. They will also discuss piracy off the coasts of Somalia in the presence of Rear-Admiral Peter Hudson, the outgoing commander of operation EU NAVFOR Atalanta. The Council is also expected to discuss or adopt conclusions on other issues including Cuba, Georgia, Sudan as well as child labour.

The Foreign Affairs ministers’ meeting will be preceded by a meeting of development ministers, beginning at 8.30 on Monday morning, to discuss the Millennium Development Goals as well as gender equality and development.

A press conference by HR Ashton will be held after the working lunch. Commissioner Piebalgs is expected to brief the press on development issues at +/-11.00.

Meetings on the sidelines of the Council

Monday, 14 June 2010

– EU-Gulf Cooperation Council meeting

– EU-Montenegro Association Council meeting

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office
**Tuesday, 15 June 2010**

– EU-ECOWAS ministerial meeting

– EU-Algeria Cooperation Council meeting

– EU-Lebanon Association Council meeting

– EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council meeting

– EU- Republic of Moldova Cooperation Council meeting.

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*Video coverage of the event will be available for preview and download in broadcast quality (MPEG4) on*  
http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu
SESSION ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Gaza
The Council will discuss the situation in Gaza following the recent incident involving the flotilla attempting to reach Gaza.

In her reaction on 31 May on behalf of the EU, HR Ashton noted that the humanitarian situation in Gaza remained a source of grave concern and that the EU did not accept the continued policy of closure. The EU underlined the need to urgently achieve a durable solution to the situation in Gaza and called for an immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza.

In this spirit, and in the light of input from the HR and member states and of contacts with partners in the region and in the Quartet, the Council is expected to examine ways for the EU to contribute to improved access.

The Council is also likely to stress the importance that the proximity talks continue, and is expected to adopt conclusions:

Iran
The Council will hold a discussion on the Iranian nuclear programme following the adoption by the UN Security Council of a resolution imposing a fourth round of sanctions in view of Iranian government's failure to meet its international obligations under UN Security Council and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resolutions.

In a statement immediately after adoption of UNSCR 1929 on 9 June, the E3+3 ministers with the support of HR Ashton reaffirmed their determination and commitment to seek an early negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. They also reaffirmed their June 2008 proposals, which remain valid, and expressed their readiness to continue dialogue with Iran. They asked HR Ashton to pursue this with Dr. Saeed Jalili, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, at the earliest opportunity.

Western Balkans
The Council is expected to discuss - and welcome - the outcome of the high level meeting on the Western Balkans held in Sarajevo on 2 June under the chairmanship of Minister Moratinos. It will also recall the EU’s unequivocal commitment to the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries in line with the Thessaloniki Agenda.

On Albania, the Council will discuss the political situation, against the background of efforts facilitation efforts initiative by MEPs Daul and Schulz, which was supported by the High Representative and by Commissioner Füle.

The Council is also expected to have an exchange of views with the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Serge Brammertz, following his series of visits to the region in preparation for his biannual report to the UN Security Council, which is due to be presented on 18 June. The Council is due in particular to return to the issue of the ratification of the Stabilisation and Association with Serbia,, following its decision in December last year to start implementing the interim agreement.

The Council will adopt conclusions on these issues.
**Somalia and piracy**

Over lunch, the Council will discuss the situation in Somalia and the issue of piracy, including the prosecution of suspected pirates, and will hear a briefing from the outgoing Commander of the EU naval operation EU NAVFOR ATALANTA, Rear-Admiral Peter Hudson. HR Ashton is expected to report on her trip to Kenya, Tanzania and the Seychelles in May, during which she discussed with partners in the region the development of regional cooperation to fight piracy.

The Council is also expected to prolong the mandate of operation EUNAVFOR Atalanta for another two years until December 2012. It should also agree in principle to extend the Area of Operations further to its East and South in order to respond to the increased range of pirates’ attacks. The Council is expected to adopt conclusions.

The EU favours a comprehensive approach to the area, linking security with development, the rule of law and respect for human rights, gender related aspects and international humanitarian law. The EU's naval operation EU NAVFOR Somalia - Operation ATALANTA was launched in December 2008 to tackle piracy off the Somali coast. The EU also launched a military mission (EUTM) to contribute to the training of Somali security forces in April 2010.

The EU has committed EUR 215.4 million for development aid to Somalia through the European development fund for the period 2008 to 2013. The current European Commission development aid programme to Somalia (including all regions of South-Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland) amounts to almost EUR 180 million and 87 projects.

The main areas of development cooperation are governance, security and support to civil society (29 projects ongoing amounting EUR 57.65 million), education (15 projects ongoing amounting to EUR 45.7 million), the productive sectors and rural development (19 projects ongoing amounting to EUR 41.5 million). Humanitarian aid from the EU amounted to EUR 45.8 million in 2008.

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**Other items on the agenda**

The Council is also expected to discuss - ad/or adopt conclusions on - a number of other issues, including Haiti and disaster response, on the basis of input from Commissioner Georgieva; Cuba in the context of the annual evaluation of the EU's common position; EU efforts on the issue of child labour, in the context of the international day against child labour (12 June).
In the separate session devoted to development cooperation, the Council will adopt the EU position for the UN high level meeting on the millennium development goals (MDGs) in New York in September.

In addition, the Council will adopt conclusions on tax and development - cooperating with developing countries in promoting good governance in tax matters (10349/10) and on cross-country division of labour in development aid (10348/10).

**Millennium development goals, including MDG initiative**
The Council will adopt the EU position for the UN summit to review the MDGs to be held from 20 to 22 September in New York. An EU action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment in development is attached to the Council conclusions.

The MDGs constitute the first ever set of shared development goals at international level. World leaders agreed in 2000 to take decisive action to combat world poverty in its different dimensions by 2015. With only five years until the deadline, their aim at the New York meeting will be to ensure a comprehensive review of successes and gaps, and agree on concrete action to speed up progress.

The EU has doubled its official development assistance since 2000 in order to promote the achievements of the MDGs. In 2009 it provided EUR 49 billion, more than half the level of global development aid.

**Gender equality and development**
The Council will discuss gender equality and development, a fundamental value and principle for the EU.

Equality between women and men and the promotion of women's rights are not just part of the MDGs, but also a fundamental value and principle for the EU. Despite substantial progress over the past few decades, women and girls still constitute the large majority of the world's poorest. Women are under-represented in governments and decision-making bodies, have fewer opportunities within the labour and financial markets and are paid significantly less than their male counterparts. The current financial and economic crisis risks to undo some of the progress achieved in recent years.