Brussels, 22 October 2010

BACKGROUND¹

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL
Monday, 25 October 2010, in Luxembourg

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet in Luxembourg in the afternoon of Monday, 25 October, after the General Affairs Council in the morning. Ministers will start at 13.00 with a working lunch, followed immediately by the formal Council meeting, with a press conference at the end of proceedings.

The main items on the agenda will be the Sahel, the Middle East, Cuba, the EU's forthcoming summits with the US and Ukraine and the Union for the Mediterranean Summit, Georgia, and the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Over lunch, ministers will look at the recent developments in Cuba and begin work on the options concerning the EU common position. They will also have a short exchange on the preparations for the forthcoming EU-US Summit, EU-Ukraine Summit and Union for the Mediterranean Summit. The High Representative will brief ministers over lunch on her recent visit to Georgia.

The formal Foreign Affairs Council meeting after lunch will discuss the situation in the Sahel and the possible role the EU could play to help stabilize the region. The High Representative will brief the Council, during a restricted session, on her recent trip to the Middle East and the efforts to encourage Israel and the Palestinians to continue with direct negotiations. The Council will also hold an initial stocktaking of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The Council is expected to adopt, without discussion, the legal acts needed to implement the EU's restrictive measures on Iran agreed in July and to renew, without discussion, restrictive measures on Belarus and the Republic of Guinea.

It is also expected to adopt, without discussion, conclusions on subjects including Belarus, Uzbekistan, the Republic of Moldova, the Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

High Representative Catherine Ashton will hold a press conference after the plenary session of the Council (at approximately 17.15).

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office
Meetings on the sidelines of the Council - in Brussels

Tuesday, 26 October 2010

EU–Ukraine Ministerial Political Dialogue meeting, in Brussels, at 11.00
EU–Jordan Association Council meeting, in Brussels, at 14.30
Press conference at 15.15.

Press conferences and public events can be followed by video streaming:
http://video.consilium.europa.eu/

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

Ministers will exchange views over lunch on the recent political and economic developments in Cuba and the various options for the EU’s approach towards Cuba in the future. Their goal will be to identify the most effective way to continue promoting the EU’s values and interests in Cuba.

Ministers are expected to welcome the on-going release of political prisoners and express their hope that all the remaining political prisoners will be released. They are also expected to welcome the economic reforms announced in Cuba.

Options for the EU's future engagement with Cuba include exploring the possibility of a simplified bilateral framework for EU-Cuba relations.

Preparations for EU-US summit, EU-Ukraine summit and Union for the Mediterranean summit

Ministers will have a brief discussion over lunch on the preparations for the forthcoming EU summit with the US (on 20 November in Lisbon) and with Ukraine (on 22 November in Brussels.)

In connection with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Summit (scheduled for 20 November in Barcelona) Catherine Ashton will ask ministers to approve her proposal of continuing for a one-year transition period the current arrangement whereby the Council designates a Member State as Co-President of the UfM for the EU side, on a proposal from the HR.

Georgia

High Representative Catherine Ashton will lead a discussion on Georgia over lunch. She will report on her recent visit to Georgia during which she launched the negotiations on an EU-Georgia Association Agreement. Ministers will look at the situation in Georgia and its relations with its neighbours as well as with the EU.

Sahel

At the formal Council session, there will be a discussion on the situation in the Sahel region, which is posing an increasing security threat both within the region and to Europe. The situation is complex, and the Council will look at various options for a possible EU role in helping to stabilize the region. This role could combine the EU’s foreign policy, security and development instruments in a comprehensive approach made possible by the Lisbon Treaty.
Middle East

The Council will hold an exchange of views, in restricted session, on the Middle East. The High Representative will report on her recent contacts in connection with the international community's efforts to encourage Israel and the Palestinians to continue their direct negotiations and keep the peace process on track. The discussion might also cover the wider region, including Lebanon.

European Neighbourhood Policy

The Council will have a brief discussion to take stock of the European Neighbourhood Policy, as a follow-up to the joint letter by the High Representative and Commissioner Füle.

Any other business

Under any other business, the High Representative is expected to give the Council a short report on her visit to the UN General Assembly and the progress on the issue of the EU’s status in the UNGA.

Iran sanctions

The Council is expected to adopt, without discussion, the legal acts implementing a fourth round of restrictive measures against Iran targeting the development of sensitive technologies in support of Iran's nuclear and missile programmes.

This package of measures was agreed in principle by the Council in July this year. They are being implemented in order to comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1929 (2010) and in response to the European Council Declaration of June 2010 calling for accompanying measures by the EU, which are in addition to and go further than the UN measures.

The package of restrictive measures covers the areas of trade, financial services, energy and transport and extends the list of entities and individuals subject to a freeze of assets and economic resources.

In particular, the package includes restrictions on trade in dual-use goods and technology, as well as equipment which might be used for internal repression, restrictions on trade in key equipment and technology for, and restrictions on, investment in the Iranian oil and gas industry, restrictions on Iranian investment in the uranium-mining and nuclear industry, restrictions on transfers of funds to and from Iran, restrictions concerning the Iranian banking sector, restrictions on Iran's access to the insurance and bonds markets of the Union and restrictions on providing certain services to Iranian ships and cargo aircraft.
Other items to be adopted without discussion

The Council is expected to adopt, without discussion, conclusions or decisions on a number of subjects, including the following:

**Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina)**
The Council is expected to adopt, without discussion, conclusions on the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina) following the general election in October.

**Belarus**
The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Belarus and to renew its restrictive measures against certain Belarus officials and at the same time suspend their application for another year, while keeping the situation under review.

**Republic of Guinea**
The Council is expected to roll over for another year the restrictive measures on the Republic of Guinea adopted last October following the violent crackdown by security forces on political demonstrators on 28 September 2009 and the subsequent human rights violations. The measures comprise an arms embargo and a visa ban. They will be kept under constant review.

**Uzbekistan**
The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Uzbekistan.

**Republic of Moldova**
The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the Republic of Moldova.

**Eastern Partnership**
The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the Eastern Partnership.