BACKGROUND¹
FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL
Monday, 13 December 2010, Brussels

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet at 14.00 on Monday, 13 December.

The main items on the agenda will be the Western Balkans, Sudan, the Middle East Peace Process and Gaza, Somalia/Horn of Africa, the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, Afghanistan, strategic partners, priorities for 2011 and Iran.

During the plenary session, the Council will discuss the political aspects of the EU's relations with the Western Balkans ahead of the adoption of the enlargement package by the General Affairs Council on Tuesday. It will continue the discussion on Sudan begun at the November Council and consider the options for providing support in the run-up to the referendum on 9 January 2011 and afterwards. The Council will discuss the Middle East Peace Process and will focus in particular on Gaza and a possible EU package of actions to facilitate the flow of goods through the border crossing points. It will also exchange views on Somalia and the Horn of Africa. It will hold an exchange of views on the elections and the reconciliation process in Afghanistan, following the development ministers' discussion on Afghanistan on 9 December.

During the working dinner, the High Representative will brief ministers on the talks with the Iranian nuclear negotiator in Geneva on 6 and 7 December. Over dinner, the High Representative and ministers will also discuss relations with the EU’s strategic partners, ahead of the General Affairs Council discussion, on Tuesday, 14 December, in preparation for the European Council on 16 December. They will also exchange views on priorities for 2011.

Other items will include the situation in the Republic of Moldova after the elections and the OSCE summit in Astana at the beginning of December.

The Council is also expected to adopt conclusions on the Democratic Republic of Congo and on Ivory Coast.

The Council meeting will be followed by a press conference.

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

Monday, 13 December 2010

EU-Tajikistan Cooperation Council
EU-Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting
EU-Morocco Association Council

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
Western Balkans

The Council's discussion on the Western Balkans will focus on Kosovo following the recent elections and on Serbia. The Council will touch briefly on Bosnia and Herzegovina pending a more detailed discussion at the January Council.

Sudan

Rosalind Marsden, EU Special Representative and chair of the Task Force on Sudan, will brief the Council on the options for contingency planning for Sudan in the run-up to the referendum on self-determination for Southern Sudan on 9 January and in the period following it. The focus will be on short-term contingencies in the humanitarian and security field. The Council is expected to adopt conclusions emphasising the EU's conflict-prevention approach, reiterating its commitment to assisting Sudan for the rest of the interim period and beyond in order to promote lasting peace, stability and prosperity for all Sudanese people, regardless of the outcome of the referendum. It is also expected to call for a solution on Abyei and efforts to find a political solution in Darfur to continue.

Côte d'Ivoire

The Council is expected to discuss the situation in Côte d'Ivoire following the presidential election. The EU, through HR Ashton, called all parties to the electoral process to respect the will of the people and accept the results of the electoral process as certified by the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Middle East Peace Process and Gaza

The Council will discuss the Middle East Peace Process and recent developments in the region. The High Representative will present the options for a package of EU actions designed to help develop the economy of Gaza with infrastructure, equipment and training measures designed to support the Gaza crossing points, with a role for the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy Operations in the Palestinian Territories. The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process.

Somalia / Horn of Africa

The Council will discuss Somalia and the Horn of Africa. It will look in particular at the political situation in Somalia and take stock of progress with the different aspects of the EU’s engagement and its support for the Transitional Federal Government.
Afghanistan

The Council will exchange views on the elections in Afghanistan and the reconciliation process, following the development ministers’ discussion on Afghanistan on 9 December.

Iran

The High Representative will brief ministers on the talks that she conducted on behalf of the E3 +3 countries (France, Germany, UK, China, Russia and the US) and Iran in Geneva on 6 and 7 December.

Strategic partners and priorities for 2011

Over dinner, the High Representative and ministers will continue their discussion from the previous Council on the EU’s relations with its strategic partners, ahead of the High Representative's presentation at the European Council on 16 December and on the basis of discussion papers on China, Russia and the US. They will also discuss foreign policy priorities and goals for 2011 over dinner.

Other items

Other items include the situation in the Republic of Moldova following the elections and an assessment of the outcome of the OSCE summit in Astana on 1 and 2 December, together with a briefing from the incoming Lithuanian OSCE Chair on its plans for the coming year.