Brussels, 11 November 2011

BACKGROUND

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL
- including a session on development cooperation -
Monday, 14 November 2011, in Brussels

The Council will meet from 9.30 onwards on Monday, 14 November. It will start with a debate on Afghanistan, in preparation for the international conference in Bonn on 5 December.

Ministers will then exchange views on the Southern Neighbourhood, in the light of the latest developments in the region and focussing on Libya, Syria and Tunisia. The Council will also debate the situation in the Horn of Africa and in Somalia.

During lunch, ministers will debate Common Security and Defence Policy issues, ahead of the meeting of defence ministers on 30 November. They are also expected to exchange views on Iran.

Development ministers
From 16.00, ministers in charge of development cooperation will adopt the EU position for the upcoming fourth High-Level Forum on aid effectiveness. The Council will also discuss development and humanitarian aspects of the situation in the Horn of Africa and finally debate the future direction of EU development policy and EU budget support.

On Sunday 13 November, Foreign Affairs Ministers will debate EU-Russia relations during a working dinner, starting at 19.00.

A press conference will be held after lunch (+/- 15.30).

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On the sidelines of the Council, the EU-Uzbekistan Cooperation Council will meet from 15.30 on Monday.

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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

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1 This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office
**Afghanistan**

The Council will prepare the EU position for the international conference on Afghanistan in Bonn on 5 December.

The Bonn conference will focus on three issues: the civil aspects of the transition process shifting responsibility to the Afghan government by 2014, the long-term engagement of the international community in Afghanistan after 2014 and the political process that should lead to a long-term stabilization of the country.

The Council is expected to reiterate the EU's firm commitment to remain a strong and reliable partner to Afghanistan, also after the transition has been completed. At the same time, it will reiterate that Afghanistan needs to show tangible results in the implementation of commitments in the fields of governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

The Council will also adopt a negotiation mandate for a cooperation agreement for partnership and development with Afghanistan. The agreement confirms the EU's long-term commitment to Afghanistan's development and is to reflect the principles and conditions on which the future partnership will be based. Cooperation should concern inter alia institution building, administration of public finances, respect for human rights, development, economic matters, counter-terrorism, as well as counter-narcotics.

The Council is likely to express the EU's intention to maintain its current level of development aid, both from member states and from the EU. The EU is a leading donor in Afghanistan: total EU assistance to Afghanistan from the EU and its member states amounts to around EUR 1 billion per year.

In addition, the Council is expected to prolong the EU police mission in Afghanistan in principle for three more years, until the end of 2014. The mission aims to contribute to establishing a trusted Afghani police service working within the framework of the rule of law and respecting human rights. It constitutes the EU's participation in the international efforts to support the Afghans in taking responsibility for law and order. For more information on the mission, see [fact sheet](#).

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions.

For more information on the EU engagement in Afghanistan, see [fact sheet](#).

**Southern Neighbourhood**

The Council will exchange views on the situation in the EU's Southern Neighbourhood, in the light of the latest developments in the region.

- **Libya**

The Council will discuss the situation in Libya.

The Council is expected to welcome the appointment of Abdurrahim-al Kib as new Libyan Prime Minister and to call for an inclusive transition process. It is likely to reiterate its concern about reports of human rights violations, such as revenge attacks and summary executions. The Council is expected to confirm the EU’s readiness to combine all its instruments to assist the new Libya across
a range of sectors. Finally, it will welcome the decision of the High Representative to open an EU delegation to Libya.

The Council is likely to adopt conclusions.

In response to a request from the Libyan authorities, the EU is participating in the joint needs assessment coordinated by the UN. The EU is leading the assessments concerning border management, civil society and women's rights as well as communications and media.

So as to support the recovery of the Libyan economy after the civil war, the Council has already started to lift the EU's restrictive measures: On 1 September, it announced the delisting of 28 entities subject to EU autonomous measures, including port authorities and oil companies. On 22 September, the EU implemented amendments to the UN sanctions regime to allow the release of previously frozen funds of four entities for humanitarian and civilian needs, to support renewed activity in the Libyan oil and banking sectors and to assist with building a civilian government. In addition, the asset freeze was withdrawn on three companies. The Council has also repealed EU provisions concerning the no-fly zone over Libya, implementing a decision by the UN Security Council.

- **Syria**

The Council will discuss the situation in Syria.

Both the Council and the European Council have strongly condemned the continuing brutal campaign by the Syrian regime against its own population and called for President Assad to step aside to allow a political transition that addresses the legitimate demands of the Syrian people.

On 2 November, the Syrian authorities agreed to a plan by the Arab League that provided for halting the violence, the release of prisoners, removing the military presence from cities and allowing the Arab League and media access for reporting. The EU High Representative welcomed these efforts and urged that "the commitments made by the Syrian authorities to the Arab League are followed through fully and rapidly". A related meeting of the Arab League has been convened for 12 November.

The Council is expected to suspend further disbursements of project loans to the Syrian government from the European Investment Bank as well as the bank's technical assistance contracts for sovereign projects in Syria.

The Council has gradually reinforced the EU's restrictive measures in response to the continuing human rights violations in Syria. It has not only imposed an arms embargo, but also banned the import of Syrian crude oil and new investment in and credits to the Syrian petrol sector. The delivery of Syrian-denominated banknotes from the EU to the Syrian central bank is also prohibited. In addition, it has frozen the assets of 56 individuals responsible for the violent repression against the civilian population and prohibited their entry into the EU. The funds of 19 further entities benefitting from or supporting the regime are also frozen, including the Commercial Bank of Syria.

- **Tunisia**

Ministers will discuss the situation in Tunisia.
The Council is expected to commend Tunisia for holding the first democratic elections for the constituent assembly on 23 October and welcome the positive evaluation by the European election observer mission. It will congratulate all parties that took part in the democratic process and express the EU's determination to work with the new government. The Council is set to confirm the EU's commitment to finalise negotiations for a new action plan with Tunisia.

The Council is likely to adopt conclusions.

Financial support from the EU for Tunisia has already been scaled up: For the period 2011 to 2013, the EU has committed EUR 4 billion to support the recovery of economic activity in Tunisia. A Tunisia-EU task force on 28 and 29 September announced the start of negotiations to establish a privileged partnership between the EU and Tunisia, comprising a political dimension, support to the democratisation process and progressive integration in the EU's internal market. Its conclusions are available here.

Horn of Africa and Somalia

The Council will debate the situation in the region comprising Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda.

The Council is expected to adopt a strategic framework for the Horn of Africa, which is to guide EU action for greater peace, stability, security, prosperity and accountable government in the region. The framework outlines priority areas for EU action; specific action plans and sub-strategies will be adopted as a second step.

The strategic framework sets out five EU priorities: Building robust and accountable political structures; contributing to conflict resolution and prevention; mitigating security threats emanating from the region; promoting economic growth, and supporting regional economic cooperation.

The Council could also discuss the extension of EUNAVFOR Atalanta, a mission to contribute to the prevention and repression of piracy off the Somali coast and to the protection of World Food Programme shipments of food aid to Somalia. The mandate of the mission currently runs until 31 December 2012.

Technical preparations for the appointment of an EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa have been finalised. The nomination is expected to take place at a later Council session.

On Somalia, the Council is expected to reiterate its concern and underline that the EU is actively engaged in alleviating the consequences of the worsening humanitarian situation. It will also express concern about continued attacks by Al Shabaab and call for the immediate release of kidnapped European citizens. Moreover, the Council will appeal to all signatories of the "roadmap for ending the transition" to implement the agreed tasks concerning inter alia the constitutional process, reconciliation, parliamentary reform, a national security plan and counter piracy policy. The EU will reiterate that the pace and degree of progress towards ending the political transition will determine the extent of EU support to Somali federal institutions. Finally, the Council is expected to invite the High Representative to examine how it can assure a sustained EU presence in Mogadishu that is compatible with the security situation.

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions both on the Horn of Africa and on Somalia.
The foundation of the EU's relationship with most countries in the region is the Cotonou Agreement: The 10th European Development Fund (2008 to 2013) allocates EUR 2 billion through bilateral support to states in the region as well as EUR 645 million to four regional organisations. For Somalia, the 10th EDF provides for EUR 215.8 million for 2008 to 2013. Sudan, which is not eligible for funding from the European Development Fund, receives EUR 150 million from previously unused EDF funds.

Iran

During lunch, ministers are expected to have an exchange of views following the publication of the new report by the International Atomic Energy Agency concerning Iran's nuclear programme.

The report covers developments since the last report on 2 September 2011 as well as issues of longer standing. It is thought to contain evidence of military aspects of the Iranian nuclear programme.

On 23 October, the European Council reiterated the EU's commitment to work for a diplomatic solution of the issue. It also urged Iran to enter into constructive and substantial talks with the E 3+3 so as to arrive at a comprehensive and negotiated long-term solution of the nuclear question. At the same time, it invited the Council to prepare new restrictive measures "to be decided upon and to be implemented at the appropriate moment in the case that Iran continues not to co-operate seriously nor to meet its obligations." (52/11, para 18)

SESSION ON DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Aid effectiveness

The Council will also establish the EU position for the fourth high-level forum on aid effectiveness, which will take place in Busan (Korea), from 29 November to 1 December 2011.

The objective of the high-level forum is to assess progress against previously agreed commitments and review the international aid effectiveness agenda. According to the Commission, the EU performs above average in implementing aid effectiveness commitments, such as partner country ownership, alignment with national development strategies, harmonisation, focussing resources on results as well as mutual accountability.

At the Busan conference, the EU will promote initiatives that improve transparency, increase the use of joint planning at country level, strengthen accountability and the evaluation of results and introduce a new approach to situations of conflict and fragility. The EU will also support more public-private engagement for development matters.

In addition, the Council will establish an "EU Transparency Guarantee": It will commit to publicly disclose information on aid volumes and allocation, make available indicative forward-looking information and disaggregated information on relevant aid flows. At international level, the EU will promote the strengthened capacity of the OECD on global aid statistics as well as encourage increased cooperation by international aid transparency initiatives.
Horn of Africa

Development ministers will debate development cooperation and humanitarian aid to the Horn of Africa region. In particular, they may discuss the coordination and transition between short-term humanitarian support and long-term development assistance.

According to UN office for the coordination of humanitarian affairs (OCHA), drought and famine in the Horn of Africa affect around 13 million people. Substantial improvements are not expected in the next four to six months. As of 8 November, the EU and its member states had committed EUR 682 million for food, water and sanitation in response to the drought crisis.

Future of EU development policy

The Council will discuss Commission proposals to refocus EU development aid, its so-called "agenda for change" (15560/11).

Given increasing budgetary constraints, the Commission proposed to use development aid more efficiently in support of partner countries' efforts to eradicate poverty, the primary objective of EU development policy. Therefore, the EU is to focus its offer to countries where it can have the greatest impact and concentrate on two main targets: supporting human rights, democracy and good governance, on the one hand, and inclusive and sustainable growth for development, on the other hand. It also proposed to differentiate among partner countries according to their level of development, to coordinate more among EU actors and to improve coherence across different EU policies.

The debate among ministers will feed into the preparation of Council conclusions that will fully set out the refocusing of EU development policy at a later Council meeting.

The EU and its member states are the biggest donor of official development aid globally. In 2010, they provided EUR 53.8 billion, more than half of the aid worldwide. EU funds account for around 20% of the collective EU aid.

EU budget support

The Council will consider Commission proposals for the future approach to EU budget support to third countries (15561/11).

Budget support is the channelling of development aid through the national treasury account of the partner countries, together with mutual accountability through a performance assessment. The Commission has proposed to make budget support from EU resources more efficient by strengthening contractual partnerships with those countries receiving budget support. In addition, it has proposed that member states coordinate their approaches to the budget support they grant through their own means.

The debate among ministers will feed into the preparation of Council conclusions that will establish the new approach to EU budget support.