High-level political dialogue between the Council of Europe and the European Union

The EU and the Council of Europe met today in Strasbourg, in the framework of the political dialogue meetings held regularly at high level to exchange views on important issues for both organisations.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, representing the EU on behalf of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Andorra, Gilbert Saboya, as Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, held discussions on cooperation between the two organisations in the South Mediterranean, and on the issue of education for human rights and democracy.

They reiterated their strong political support for democratic reforms in the region, in the interest of both the South Mediterranean and Europe, and their willingness to continue jointly to provide assistance to this end, in particular regarding constitutional reform, the holding of free and fair elections, the protection and promotion of human rights, as well as the reform of the judiciary.

Minister Marcoullis, Minister Saboya and Secretary General Jagland stressed that cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe is strong at all levels, including on recent developments taking place in neighbouring countries of the South Mediterranean.

The participants also underlined the importance of the contribution of human rights education to the development of democracy and social cohesion and, in this context, welcomed the initiatives planned over the next six months in this area by the Andorran Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, in particular awareness raising and training activities for young people.
The EU and the Council of Europe expressed their intentions to further step up the mutual support in areas of common interest and concern, continuing to build upon the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding, their framework for cooperation and political dialogue.

Participants also reiterated the importance they continue to attach to the ongoing process of EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights and their commitment to maintaining sustained efforts with a view to a rapid and successful conclusion of those negotiations.