Council conclusions on Pakistan

FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Luxembourg, 24 June 2013

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. "The European Union welcomes the historic May 2013 elections in Pakistan which marked a strengthening of democracy in Pakistan as a result of the first handover in the country’s history from one civilian government to another after completing a full term. The EU notes that these elections were also the first to be held since Pakistan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 2010. The voter turnout was the highest since the 1973 elections, in spite of attempts by extremists who are opposed to democratic governance, to intimidate candidates and the electorate.

2. The EU applauds the strong commitment of the Pakistani people to democracy, and notes with satisfaction the increase in the number of women registered as voters, and female candidates, by comparison with 2008. The EU hopes that women’s participation in political life in the country will continue to strengthen.

3. The Chief Observer of the EU’s Election Observation Mission to Pakistan is expected to issue his final report and recommendations shortly. The EU hopes that these will serve as a contribution towards further improvements in the democratic process.

4. The EU welcomes the commitment of the new government to tackle economic, fiscal and energy reform, essential for creating growth and jobs and reducing poverty. Strengthening governance in these and other areas will be a major challenge for Pakistan. The EU supports the new government in urgently addressing these challenges, including by offering technical assistance should Pakistan request this, in line with commitments under the EU-Pakistan 5-Year Engagement Plan. The EU encourages Pakistan to address concerns regarding the respect for and promotion of human rights, including those of minorities, and freedom of religion and speech, and prioritise these issues.
5. The EU notes with concern the continuing terrorist attacks in Pakistan, which have claimed countless innocent lives, and reiterates its unequivocal commitment to working collaboratively with Pakistan in order to address the shared threat from terrorism both inside and outside its borders, including bringing perpetrators to justice. The EU affirms the need to enhance efforts on countering violent extremism and strengthen the rule of law. It notes with approval the upcoming Political Dialogue on counter-terrorism, and looks forward to swift progress in delivering on these areas.

6. Recalling its conclusions of March 2013, the EU looks forward to more intense work with the new government on the 5-Year Engagement Plan. Continued cooperation on trade should be part of this. The EU also looks forward to cooperation with the new government on migration issues including the full implementation of the readmission agreement.

7. The EU welcomes the signals sent by the new government of Pakistan to prioritize improving relations with India, building on recent progress in trade and visa facilitation. The EU also welcomes and encourages Pakistan's constructive role in promoting a secure Afghanistan and supporting an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. Pakistan's contribution to enhanced regional political and economic relations, and the stability and growth that this could bring, is essential.

8. Humanitarian challenges from natural and man-made crises continue to regularly confront Pakistan. The EU encourages Pakistan to take measures to provide access for humanitarian assistance to affected people, and to foster a climate of respect for humanitarian principles, in particular, by facilitating the work of humanitarian actors. The EU remains committed to working with Pakistan on measures to improve resilience and disaster risk reduction.

9. The Council agrees that it is important that close and continuing contacts with the new government in Pakistan should be pursued as soon as possible, including the resumption of the EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue which was initiated last year, and in the light of progress achieved, a third ad hoc Summit."