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At its meeting on 15 June 2012, the Council approved the Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia set out in the Annex to this note.

**GUIDELINES ON THE EU'S FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY
IN EAST ASIA**

I. Introduction

1. East Asia is a region of especially dynamic change in which the EU and its Member States have substantial interests. This paper briefly reviews and updates the analysis presented in the 2007 East Asia Guidelines¹ regarding the opportunities and risks for EU interests in relation to East Asia. Proceeding from this analysis, building also upon the EU's Security Strategy of 2003 and the relevant Council Conclusions, and taking account of the new institutional framework put in place by the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the paper recommends an updated set of guidelines for the EU's foreign and security policy in East Asia.² The present guidelines are thus designed to provide a broad and up-to-date orientation for the EU's approach to East Asia, across the full range of its activities and, as such, are a contribution to the framework of the CFSP and CSDP in the region.

II. EU Interests in East Asia: Key Challenges and Opportunities

2. In East Asia as in the wider world, the EU has a broad approach to security:
 - the preservation of peace and strengthening of international security, in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter;
 - the promotion of a rule-based international system;
 - the development and consolidation of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
 - the promotion of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction;
 - the promotion of regional integration;
 - the promotion of cooperative and sustainable policies to meet global challenges such as climate change, energy security, environmental protection, poverty, economic imbalances, and health issues;

¹ Council Guidelines adopted on 20 December 2007.

² The present paper addresses the region of East Asia as a whole, including both North-East Asia and ASEAN.

- the strengthening of bilateral trade and investment flows, supported by improved market access and investment conditions.

Progress in these areas will contribute greatly to stability and prosperity both at home and in the region.

3. The EU has major direct economic interests at stake in East Asia

East Asia is the home of some of the world's largest and fastest growing economies. Taken together, Mainland China, the Chinese Special Administrative Regions (Hong Kong and Macao), Taiwan, Japan, Korea and ASEAN now account for around 21% of global GDP, and for some 28% of the EU's global trade in goods and services (in 2010) and these proportions continue to rise. The EU's trade with East Asia (27.9% of our total trade) is now significantly greater than our trans-Atlantic trade (22.7%), while China is the EU's second largest trading partner (accounting for 13.9% of our total trade, just a fraction behind the United States³) and represents the EU's largest bilateral trade deficit. ASEAN represents 5.2% of our total trade, and Japan 3.8%.

EU direct investment in the region is key to both sides' global competitiveness, and East Asian investment into the EU, notably by Japan and Singapore, is already significant. On average 2006-09, EU investment flows to East Asia accounted for 7.7% of total EU outward investment, while investment from East Asia in the EU represented 6.9% of total inward investment in the EU⁴.

³ In 2010, EU bilateral trade with China stood at €395.1 bn, or 13.9% of total EU trade, compared to that with the US at €411.6 bn (14.4% of total EU trade). All statistics quoted here are from Eurostat.

⁴ On average 2006-09, EU outward investment to ASEAN amounted to €5.7 bn, compared to €6.2 bn to China and €2.7 bn to Japan. Inward investment to the EU included €9.0 bn from Japan, €5.6 bn from ASEAN, and €0.7 bn from China.

The continuing increase in our economic interconnectedness reflects the fact that growth in Asia has continued to surpass expectations, even in times of global recession⁵. Indeed East Asia as a whole has in recent years taken on an increasingly important role in driving global growth. The region thus offers substantial and rapidly expanding market opportunities for EU firms, including SMEs, notwithstanding levels of protection which remain relatively high.

Intra-regional financial ties are intensifying, bearing in mind the Chiang Mai initiative and the increasing role of the renminbi in trade across the region, and the rapid development of financial centres in the region. As holder of the largest proportion of the world's foreign currency reserves, China together with other East Asian economies have a significant role to play in world-wide financial stability.

Regional economic cooperation initiatives such as free trade agreements (FTAs) concluded among East Asian countries could also significantly impact on EU interests, and Japan, China and ASEAN have intensified their network of free-trade agreements in recent years, while the US has joined the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) aimed at negotiating an FTA among a number of Asia-Pacific countries. To ensure a level playing field, the EU should further expand its network of bilateral FTAs with individual South-East Asian countries (negotiations with Singapore and Malaysia are already underway), bearing in mind the goal of a bi-regional EU-ASEAN FTA. The EU has also recently decided to explore actively with Japan the possibility of launching FTA negotiations, while an FTA with Korea has now entered provisionally into force. The EU should also continue to support relevant regional economic integration initiatives such as the ASEAN Economic Community, and reinforce its regional cooperation activities.

⁵ The EU's latest Economic Forecast (spring 2011) foresaw GDP growth in 2011 of 9.3% in China, 6.1% in Indonesia, and 4.4% in Korea, as compared to 1.8% for the EU (and 0.5% for earthquake-affected Japan).

Issues related to market access and the enforcement of intellectual property rights persist in many countries of the region. While European consumers benefit from imported Chinese goods, it is clear that the current trade imbalance between China and the EU is not sustainable in the longer term.

In all, the level of economic interdependence between the EU and East Asia has reached very significant proportions and is critical for the future growth prospects of both sides.

4. East Asian security and stability is a precondition for the region's continued economic success. There are a number of threats to regional security which have a direct bearing on the interests of the EU:
 - the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and the attendant risks of proliferation: This is a major threat facing the region. Inter-Korean dialogue, resumption of and progress in multilateral negotiations, denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, are central to regional security;
 - the tensions across the Taiwan Strait: although a considerable improvement of relations between Taiwan and mainland China has been achieved, underlying tensions exist, and miscalculation on either side of the strait could destabilise the situation. The EU supports all measures to deepen economic and people-to-people contacts between Taiwan and the mainland;
 - the recent increase in tensions in the South China Sea, with conflicting claims involving several countries in the region, could if unchecked have implications for navigation and commerce across the broader region, including for EU trade and investment interests.

The South China Sea issues give one example of the potential for competitive nationalism in the region: with China's economic development, more active diplomacy, and increasing (and untransparent) defence expenditure, the strategic balance in the region is shifting. Despite growing regional economic interdependence, the uncertainties generated by such geopolitical changes, combined with unresolved historical and territorial disputes, have the potential to create significant tensions. Rising energy demand and the desire for energy security, and competition for resources more broadly, can compound these tensions.

In addition, there are a number of more localised conflicts which have troubled the region over the years, and in several cases the EU has been able to contribute to relevant confidence-building, conflict-resolution and post-conflict reconstruction activities, drawing on our ability to bring together our political, development and humanitarian instruments. For example, our contribution to the peace process in Aceh, to post-conflict development in Timor Leste, or more recently our support for the peace process in Mindanao, have allowed the EU to demonstrate its support for peace and security in the region.

5. The policies and actions of the major East Asian players are also increasingly important to the EU's wider global agenda. The EU needs, and seeks to promote, multilateral solutions to global challenges. The EU is promoting an open and fair trading system and further liberalisation under the WTO and in its bilateral and regional agreements, including those currently being negotiated with Malaysia and Singapore and the one applied with the Republic of Korea. The EU works worldwide to
- promote human rights and good governance;
 - prevent the proliferation of WMD;
 - engage in the global fight against terrorism;
 - counter radicalisation and extremism;
 - seek international cooperation on migration;
 - promote socially and environmentally sustainable development, and action on climate change, in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

The demand for energy arising from East Asia's emerging economies is increasing at a steady pace and raises new concerns on the world's energy security. This shared challenge requires collective response. The EU seeks stable, transparent markets in energy and resources. It is working to enhance our cooperation in these areas in our bilateral contractual relations, e.g. Partnership and Cooperation Agreements and Framework Agreements.

6. The countries of East Asia, as their international economic and political weight increases internationally, are increasingly influential in the effort to achieve these vital global objectives. It is important therefore to utilise fully our cooperation with East Asian countries in global fora such as the United Nations, the WTO, or the G20 (where four East Asian countries participate), or in regional and inter-regional fora such as ASEAN, ARF and ASEM. Strategic partnerships with certain of these countries (currently with Japan, China and the Republic of Korea in this region) can help to promote our mutual interests in the broader global fora.

7. As the longest established free market democracy in the region, Japan is already an important partner in this respect, sharing many EU values. It is a strategic partner for the EU since 2003. At the 20th EU - Japan Summit in May 2011 both sides agreed to enhance all aspects of their relationship in a comprehensive and balanced way by starting a process for parallel negotiations for an ambitious Free Trade Agreement, and a Framework Agreement covering political, global and sectoral aspects. A complementary FTA and Framework Agreement and a strategic partnership are already in place with the Republic of Korea, a like-minded partner, keen to enhance its cooperation with the EU across a broad front. The policy choices of China, which is now a global player, are of strategic importance to the EU, which is implementing a strategic partnership with that country. Bearing in mind its internal challenges, China has a strong interest in peaceful economic development. The achievement of this goal would make a major contribution to global stability. The EU has a major interest in encouraging China to take a broader view of its global interests and responsibilities, notably in the political, economic, commercial and monetary fields, as well as to play a constructive role appropriate to that of a global power in the promotion of effective multilateralism and the resolution of international and regional issues. ASEAN as a regional grouping (and Indonesia as a G20 member) also has the potential to play an increasingly important role on the international stage, which given strong leadership will continue to evolve in the years ahead.

8. The EU has a more general stake in good co-operative relations between the region's major players, notably as regards relations between China and the US and China and Japan. In the longer term, the EU has a strong interest in deeper regional integration – in particular in continuing to support the development of ASEAN integration. ASEAN, as a regional organisation at the centre of several regional cooperation initiatives in East Asia is indeed the natural counterpart for the EU. More generally, the embedding of political and security cooperation among the region's major players will be of great benefit for the region as a whole, and is something which the EU must continue to support actively.
9. The US's security commitments to Japan, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan as well as certain ASEAN countries, and the associated presence of US forces in the region, give the US a distinct perspective on the region's security challenges, and makes the US an important contributor to regional stability. It is important that the EU remains sensitive to this. Given the great importance of transatlantic relations, the EU has a strong interest in partnership and cooperation with the US on foreign and security policy challenges related to East Asia.
10. Other extra-regional partners with an important interest in East Asia of course include countries such as India, Russia, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. All of these are ASEAN dialogue partners (together with the EU), as well as being important partners of the EU in their own right. All take part in the ARF, and all (except Canada) also take part in the ASEM process. It will be important for the EU to pursue our political dialogue with these extra-regional partners in relation to East Asian matters.

III. The EU response

11. The EU's essential interests are thus closely tied up with the security of East Asia, and with the foreign and security policies of the region's main players. The EU's economic presence in the region, and its unique experience of post-war reconciliation and political and economic integration, position it well to play an important role in helping to bolster regional security. A number of the EU's regional partners have signalled that they would welcome enhanced EU engagement in this respect.

12. The EU therefore needs a more developed, coherent and focussed common foreign and security policy in East Asia, the purpose of which is to secure and advance the EU interests set out in section II. In order to intensify the EU's exchanges with the region's key players, and building on steps already taken, the EU should :
- make full use of its strategic partnerships in the region, including :
 - bringing to bear the potential of the High-Level Strategic Dialogue and High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue with China;
 - deepening its strategic dialogue on East Asia with Japan;
 - developing its political dialogue on regional issues (in particular DPRK issues) with the Republic of Korea;
 - deepen its engagement with ASEAN, including through the ARF and through accession to the TAC, as well as through strengthened policy dialogue with ASEAN and its member-countries and peer support for ASEAN institutions (where requested), building further on the 2007 Nuremberg Declaration and Plan of Action;
 - develop its strategic dialogue on East Asia with the US;
 - develop its exchanges on regional issues with other important players including: Russia, India, Australia, New Zealand and Canada;
 - use to the full the opportunities offered by the ASEM process;
 - conclude the ongoing FTA negotiations with Singapore and Malaysia and extend its network of FTAs to other South-East Asian countries, and strengthen region-to-region trade dialogue through the implementation of the recent EU-ASEAN Trade and Investment Work Programme;
 - consider parallel FTA and Framework Agreement negotiations with Japan (if the scoping exercise is successful in defining a high level of ambition), and fully implement the EU-Korea FTA and new Framework Agreement;
 - expand further the network of Partnership and Cooperation Agreements already in place with countries across the region, including efforts towards the conclusion of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with China;
 - create a positive environment for EU participation in the East Asia Summit, expressing its strong interest in East Asia through an appropriate level and frequency of political contacts with regional partners and representation in multilateral events;

- deepen its cooperation with the countries of the region in global fora such as the UN and the WTO, and enhance our work in the countries of the region to promote compliance with WTO obligations, in particular regarding non-tariff barriers.
13. Enhanced dialogue with East Asia and other relevant partners will serve the EU's purposes in several ways – directly promoting our interests in the region, establishing better channels through which the EU can deliver messages when it feels its regional and global interests are at stake, and enhancing the scope for promoting our mutual interests in global fora.
14. In this context, the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, with in particular the establishment of the European External Action Service and the strengthening of coordination among EU Delegations and Member-State embassies in the field, offers the ideal opportunity to build further on our dialogue and cooperation with the countries of East Asia, to develop and implement common analyses, approaches, and political engagement strategies, to allow the EU to deploy its weight more effectively in our relations with East Asia.

IV : Key issues, aims and principles

15. As the EU works to further enhance its relations with East Asia, and to strengthen its voice on common foreign and security policy issues relevant to the region, the following issues, aims and principles will be of particular importance in guiding its approach :

IV.a) The Changing Balance in the Region and the Risk of Competitive Nationalism

16. The EU should use its influence to promote good co-operative relations among the key players in East Asia and invite all sides to refrain from actions that could be misperceived by others in the region. The EU should :
- promote confidence-building measures and encourage peaceful and cooperative solutions to disputes over territory and resources;
 - encourage China to be more transparent about its defence expenditure, doctrine and institutions;

- encourage more military-to-military exchanges among the regional players and with EU Member States to increase transparency and reduce the risk of misperception;
- be willing, if requested, to share lessons drawn from its own experience in post-war reconciliation, and in confidence-building, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution;
- more generally, encourage political leaders on all sides to build on their excellent economic relations to establish better political relations and to lead their respective public opinions away from competitive nationalism and towards relations defined in terms of shared interests;
- promote effective multilateralism (including through EU-ASEAN, ARF, East Asia Summit, and ASEM) and regional integration.

IV.b) East Asia and the EU's Global Agenda

17. In line with its now global interests, China is becoming more active around the world. Japan and Korea are also becoming more active internationally. ASEAN has also strengthened its own capabilities for regional integration through the adoption of the ASEAN Charter in 2008, and foresees itself playing an increasing role in the global community in the years ahead.
18. In this context, the EU should :
- develop its cooperation with all regional partners on a broad range of global issues, expanding dialogue and cooperation in areas such as development assistance and the fight against poverty, climate change and environmental sustainability, the fight against terrorism, piracy, drugs, illegal migration and human trafficking, non-proliferation of WMD, confidence-building, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution;
 - continue its engagement for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in East Asia, in order to narrow existing gaps in values which can hamper efforts to find common ground on some policy issues. This would include encouraging Asian partners to adhere to UN human rights instruments and comply with their mechanisms, and supporting a sharing of experience among human rights bodies across the region and in Europe;

- promote the development and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, especially in countries with a serious lack of progress in this respect;
- continue to promote cultural and civil society exchanges as a cornerstone of mutual understanding;
- encourage and support the integration of countries in the region into existing multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament instruments and assist them in the full implementation of these instruments as well as in the establishment of effective export controls;
- step up its work in particular with China, stressing the need for progress towards rule of law, personal freedoms, and democracy;
- at the same time the EU should deepen its engagement in the many sectoral areas that concern economic and social reform, including for example cooperation in the fields of education, culture, youth, innovation, research, environment and energy, entrepreneurship and tourism, and building enhanced people-to-people dialogue and contacts;
- and, more generally, encourage and support regional integration as an essential means for promoting prosperity, stability and security.

19. Because of its sheer size, how China develops and how well integrated it is in the region and in multilateral structures will have an impact both regionally and globally. The EU should work actively to foster China's emergence as a successful and fully engaged member of the international community. In keeping with our strategic partnership, the EU's approach should be one of frankness and more transparency, reciprocity, mutual support and enhanced bilateral ties. In addition to continuing to be guided by relevant Conclusions of the European Council on China, the EU should :

- encourage and step up cooperation with China on non-proliferation, counter-terrorism, counter-piracy, illegal migration, serious crime, conflict prevention and peacekeeping, encouraging China's involvement in international arms control and non-proliferation mechanisms;

- expect China to adhere fully to its WTO commitments;
- continue to seek to increase China's commitment to effective multilateralism, including the advancement of the multilateral trading agenda within the WTO framework and the involvement of China in global governance systems;
- continue to monitor internal developments in China closely, and remain aware of the substantial internal challenges associated with China's fast economic growth;
- continue to pay close attention to the application of the established “one country, two systems” principle with respect to the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macao, and to further enhance its cooperation and dialogue with the two SARs through the Structural Dialogue and the Joint Committee with Hong Kong and Macao respectively;
- more generally, consistently promote transparent and rules-based international approaches that contribute to building China's confidence in, and engagement with, the international system;
- engage with China systematically on its growing activities in the developing world, setting out clearly where the EU has difficulties or commonalities with China's approach, identifying possibilities for common development actions, especially in Africa, and urging China to apply policies which fully support the UN Millennium Development Goals and the principles of ownership, alignment and harmonisation as outlined in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of March 2005;
- develop its dialogue with China on energy and environment issues, encouraging China to have more confidence in international markets, and inviting it to engage in cooperative efforts to address the threat of climate change and the challenges of sustainable energy consumption and production.

20. Japan and the Republic of Korea are natural political partners in Asia. Europe, Japan and the Republic of Korea have a close similarity in overall views and are ‘like-minded’ in many ways. Japan and the Republic of Korea are keen to extend and deepen cooperation. Furthermore, Japan plays an essential role in multilateral organisations and a key role in Asia. It is a major provider of development assistance, and has engaged in many peace-building activities in the same regional theatres as the EU. The Republic of Korea is rapidly expanding its international profile (eg host of G20 and Nuclear Security Summit), commensurate with its economic power. The EU should therefore intensify its dialogue and cooperation with Japan and the Republic of Korea in order to enhance the new strategic partnerships, and bring forwards its goals in peace, stability and development, the promotion of human rights, the promotion of nuclear safety and security, and the promotion of sustainable policies to meet the challenges of climate change and energy security.
- 20.bis Mongolia is situated at a strategic crossroads between China and Russia. Building on the PCA now negotiated, the EU should extend and deepen its cooperation with Mongolia – particularly with a view to assisting its economic transition process, supporting sustainable development, and promoting an inclusive growth process.
21. ASEAN and the EU have long been important partners, and indeed the EU became one of ASEAN’s very first “Dialogue Partners” in 1977. The adoption of the ASEAN Charter in 2008, together with the planned achievement of the three ASEAN Communities (economic, political and security, and cultural) by 2015, as well as the announced intention to have a single ASEAN voice on the global stage by 2022, have set the stage for a considerable intensification of this long-standing partnership. ASEAN, at the core of key regional initiatives such as the ARF, ADMM + and the East Asia Summit (where the recent adhesion of Russia and the US is likely to increase the importance of that forum in the field of security), merits particular attention from the EU in the years ahead.

IV.c) Regional Security Architecture

22. The EU's long-term aim should be to support the development of increasing regional integration and the emergence of strong regional institutions based on clear recognition of shared interests. These should embody closer cooperation on foreign and security policy objectives across East Asia in line with international norms.
23. The EU recognises that for the time being, the region needs to develop a system to address shared (regional) security concerns and that for the foreseeable future an essential element in the security architecture of the region is provided by the US's network of bilateral alliances and its associated military presence.
24. In this context, it will be important for the EU to strengthen its participation in the major regional fora – through its dialogue and cooperation with ASEAN, its participation in the regular EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meetings and in the ARF and its accession to the TAC, as well as through a pro-active participation in the ASEM process⁶. This will also permit the EU to pursue its interest in deepening its involvement in the evolving regional architecture in East Asia.
25. The EU should :
 - enhance, through its strategic dialogues with key partners, its contribution to the existing security framework in the region, and its ability to engage with these key actors to help ensure that their policies do not undermine stability;
 - recognise that the credibility of US defence guarantees in the region is essential at present for the region's stability;

⁶ The next EU-ASEAN Ministerial will be held in Brunei in April of 2012, while the next ASEM summit will be held in Vientiane in November of 2012.

- seek to develop the authority and effectiveness of the regional organisations and fora so that over time they can make a more effective contribution to regional security, promoting outward-looking models which recognise EU interests and equities in the region, and supporting the emergence of an effective, rules-based multilateral security architecture;
- in particular, further deepen its relationship with ASEAN including through accession to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and through an active participation in the ARF and in ARF activities (including “track 2” activities); encourage the development of the East Asia Summit in an open and inclusive way, with the EU involved as closely as possible; work to build up the activities of ASEM, through the active participation of the EU and its Member States; seek further contacts with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation;
- share our own experience of regional peace and security mechanisms (including for example the OSCE), and be willing to cooperate in the context of broader East Asia peace and security mechanisms as they evolve;
- look for opportunities to add value to regional organisations through direct involvement in the region with specific initiatives;
- encourage greater involvement of regional players in multilateral peacekeeping operations, and consider stepping up its own participation in regional “soft security” initiatives.

IV.d) Cross-Strait Relations

26. The EU has its One China Policy and supports the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue. It has a significant stake in the maintenance of cross-strait peace and stability. It fully understands the sensitivity of this issue on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, and for China's relations with the US and Japan.

27. In due regard to its One China Policy, the EU should be ready to :
- encourage initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue, practical cooperation and confidence building;
 - welcome positive developments;
 - work for an inclusive process of dialogue that involves all concerned parties;
 - encourage both sides to pursue pragmatic solutions to questions regarding the position of Taiwan with regard to specialised multilateral fora, especially where Taiwan's practical participation is important to EU and global interests;
 - continue technical cooperation with Taiwan in the economic and cultural field.
28. When circumstances dictate, the EU should also be ready to :
- underline to Beijing and Taipei that when stability and peaceful dialogue are threatened, the EU also sees a threat to its own interests;
 - express its concern, privately or in public, when it sees a risk of destabilising unilateral action aimed at changing the status quo in the region, or provocative behaviour, or recourse to coercion.
29. The EU should also, in consultation with all partners, deepen its understanding of the military balance affecting the cross-strait situation, of the technologies and capabilities which, if transferred to the region, could disturb that balance, and of the related risks to stability including the risk of miscalculation. Member States will be able to take account of that assessment as they apply the Code of Conduct in relation to their exports to the region of strategic and military items.

IV.e) The Korean Peninsula

30. A number of North Korea's policies – such as those towards inter-Korean relations, non-proliferation and human rights pose serious concerns and are detrimental to regional and global stability. The EU should :

- maintain its support for peace and stability on a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, and to that end maintain its insistence on the complete, verifiable and irreversible abandonment of the DPRK's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes, and encourage the resumption of IAEA inspections;
- continue to call on DPRK to fulfil its international obligations, in particular by coming into compliance with UNSCRs 1718 and 1874. Continue to call on DPRK to return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC);
- stress its continuing support for meaningful renewal of a multilateral negotiating mechanism such as the Six-Party Talks (6PT), encouraging dialogue between the concerned parties (with the proviso that it is for the parties concerned to determine when the conditions are in place for a fruitful resumption), and maintaining close cooperation with the key players in the 6PT;
- express its support to the inter-Korean dialogue as a way to enhance trust-building and create better conditions for the renewal of multilateral negotiations and as the framework to promote economic and social interaction and cooperation on the Peninsula;
- continue to press for improvements in human rights in North Korea, bearing in mind that the situation in North Korea is one of the worst in the world. Encourage North Korea to cooperate fully with UN human rights mechanisms, and to re-engage in meaningful bilateral dialogue with the EU and Member States on human rights;

- be ready, as in the past, to provide assistance in response to humanitarian emergencies, on the basis of independently assessed and verified needs and subject to adequate monitoring arrangements;
- encourage the North Korean authorities to open to the outside world, including by embarking on economic reform, which would over time offer the best perspective for a sustainable improvement in the livelihood of the population;
- build up dialogue with the concerned parties on the issue of the broader stability of the Korean Peninsula, and continue to provide support for its democratic partners in the face of provocations from North Korea;
- continue to express its willingness to gradually deepen and widen relations with North Korea as progress is made on EU matters of concern referred to above. EU Member-State Embassies in Pyongyang are a key part of this engagement.

IV.f) The South China Sea

31. The recent escalation of tensions in the South China Sea, arising from conflicting claims among a number of littoral countries, including China, could have important implications for security and stability in the region, including more broadly for the freedom of navigation and commerce.
32. The EU and its Member States, while not in any sense taking position on these various claims, should nevertheless :
 - recall the great importance of the South China Sea for the EU (inter alia in the perspective of promoting the rules-based international system, the principle of freedom of navigation, the risk of tensions impacting on the consistent increase in trade and investment, with negative consequences for all, energy security);
 - continue to encourage the parties concerned to resolve disputes through peaceful and cooperative solutions and in accordance with international law (in particular UNCLOS), while encouraging all parties to clarify the basis for their claims;

- recall previous work to build a collaborative diplomatic process on these issues at the regional level, and encourage ASEAN and China to build on this foundation and agree on a Code of Conduct;
 - and, if welcomed by the relevant parties, offer to share the experience of the EU and its Member States in relation to the consensual, international-law-based settlement of maritime border issues, and to the sustainable management of resources and maritime security cooperation in sea areas with shared sovereignty or disputed claims.
-