

SUMMARY

REGIONS:

AFRICA

AMERICAS

ASIA

EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE) AND CIS

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

Paslestinia

- ▶ EU Presidency Statement on increased violence in Gaza (04/11/06)

THEMATIC :

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

EXTERNAL RELATIONS & DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ISSUES

EU/Russia

- ▶ The Finnish Minister of Justice Leena Luhtanen: Respect for human rights and an effective legal system would promote trust between the EU and Russia (30/10/06)

EU / UN REFORM

MISCELLANEOUS

Trial of Saddam Hussein

- ▶ EU Presidency statement on the verdict of Saddam Hussein (05/11/06)

IMPORTANT COMING MEETINGS

EU - THIRD COUNTRY MEETINGS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEETINGS

Committee on Development

- November, 6, 2006

Committee on Foreign Affairs

- November, 21, 2006

Subcommittee on Human Rights

- November, 21, 2006

Subcommittee on security and defence

- November, 27, 2006

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and home affairs

- November, 21, 2006

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

- November, 13, 2006

Committee on budgetary control

- November, 20, 2006

CONFERENCES / EVENTS

Subcommittee on Human Rights & Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and home affairs

Conference on serious international crimes

- November, 20, 2006

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EU/Russia

- ▶ **The Finnish Minister of Justice Leena Luhtanen: Respect for human rights and an effective legal system would promote trust between the EU and Russia** (30/10/06)

At today's meeting, the EU and Russia discussed future measures with respect to co-operation in justice affairs. The EU-Russia Permanent Partnership Council (PPC) meeting discussed the implementation of the joint road map for freedom, security and justice between the EU and Russia.

The participants of the meeting, led by the Finnish Minister of Justice Leena Luhtanen and the Finnish Minister of the Interior Kari Rajamäki, comprised Viktor Ivanov, Assistant to the President of the Russian Federation; Vladimir Ustinov, Minister of Justice; Rashid Nurgalijev, Minister of the Interior; and Jury Chaika, General Public Prosecutor, with Brigitte Zypries, Minister of Justice, and Wolfgang Schäuble, Minister of the Interior representing the next EU Presidency, Germany, accompanied by Franco Frattini, Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security.

The meeting discussed i.a. the Russian legal system and the development of the Russian judiciary.

- **Respect for human rights and the independence of the judicial system form elements which could promote mutual trust and co-operation in justice affairs between the European Union and Russia**, stressed Minister Luhtanen.

In recent years, Russia has developed its legal system vigorously. Since early 2006, Russia has trialled a legal aid system modelled on Finland, and the experiment will be continued.

- This experiment will create considerable improvements in the legal protection of an individual citizen and the fulfilment of civil rights. From the perspective of citizens' legal protection, it is highly important that people can receive free legal aid in civil matters too, continued Luhtanen. Russia has expressed its willingness to become engaged in more tangible co-operation with the EU in civil matters. Both parties emphasized the importance of the implementation of the civil law co-operation conventions.

In the EU's opinion, it is particularly important that Russia accede to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

- Through its existence alone, the Convention prevents child abduction. Shortcomings in the international legal system actually contribute to committing child abduction.

For the purpose of strengthening criminal law co-operation, intensified co-operation in particular between Eurojust and Russia would mark a major step in the development of relations and networks between the judicial authorities of the EU and Russia. Based on a decision made in Helsinki, the EU and Russia aim to agree on such co-operation as soon as possible. Eurojust is an EU body tasked with enhancing co-operation between prosecutors in EU countries and promoting the co-ordination of cross-border investigation and prosecution.

The meeting also dealt with the problem of corruption in Russia. The EU and Russia decided, for example, to hold joint training events in issues related to corruption prevention.

- Effective legislation coupled with training for staff serving in the judiciary and, on a more extensive basis, officials and law-enforcement authorities form key objectives. Information campaigns are also highly important in order to arouse general awareness, stressed Luhtanen.

During the current year, Russia has already approved both the UN Convention against Corruption and the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption by the Council of Europe. At the Helsinki meeting, the EU also encouraged Russia to approve the corresponding convention applying to civil law.

http://eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/press_releases/vko44/en_GB/172563/

MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EAST

Paslestinia

► EU Presidency Statement on increased violence in Gaza (04/11/06)

The Presidency of the European Union is profoundly concerned by increased violence in Gaza. The Presidency deplores the growing number of civilian casualties the Israeli military operation has caused. The right of all states to defend themselves does not justify disproportionate use of violence or actions which are contrary to international humanitarian law.

The Presidency calls on the Palestinian leadership to bring an end to terrorist activities, including the firing of rockets on Israeli territory.

Violence will only aggravate an already grave situation in the region where a return to the peace process is urgently needed.

http://eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/cfsp_statements/vko44/en_GB/1162658539498/

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The Presidency of the European Union notes the conclusion of the first trial before the Iraqi High Tribunal and the verdict announced today in the so-called Dujail case against Saddam Hussein and seven co-defendants.

Over the years, the European Union repeatedly condemned the systematic, widespread and extremely grave violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law committed by the regime of Saddam Hussein.

Establishing the truth and ensuring accountability for the crimes committed during the past regime will assist in furthering national reconciliation and dialogue in Iraq in the future. The nature of the crimes as well as the necessity of national reconciliation mean that all the trials have to be conducted respecting all the requirements for a fair process.

The Presidency also recalls the longstanding position of the EU against the death penalty. The EU opposes capital punishment in all cases and under all circumstances and it should not be carried out in this case either.

http://eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/cfsp_statements/vko44/en_GB/1162738862464/