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- December, 18, 19, 2007

### **CONFERENCES / EVENTS**

**REGIONS:**

**AFRICA**

**Somalia**

► **Council Conclusions on Somalia, 2839th GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting (10/12/2007)**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The Council expressed its concern that the situation in Somalia currently poses a significant threat to peace and security in the Horn of Africa and beyond. It also causes immense suffering to the people of Somalia. The Council called for urgent efforts by all parties towards an inclusive political process. It stated its commitment to a comprehensive approach to the Somali crisis, covering the political, security and humanitarian facets.

2. The Council welcomed the appointment of a new Prime Minister, Mr Nur Hassan Hussein. His appointment opens a window of opportunity to make progress on the transition. The Council encouraged the new Prime Minister to invite all political forces, inside and outside Somalia, that renounce violence and accept the Transitional Federal Charter as the framework for restoring peace and stability to Somalia, to an inclusive political process. The Transitional Federal Institutions (TFI) have the prime responsibility to implement the outcome of the National Reconciliation Congress, as endorsed by the Transitional Federal Parliament, and to establish a Road Map for actions until the end of the transitional period. This includes the preparation for a constitutional referendum and elections by 2009 as set out in the Transitional Federal Charter. The EU is willing to consider a significant contribution for the transitional period, on the basis of a mutual understanding between the EU and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) on progress to be made in the political process.

3. The Council condemned all acts of violence and called on all parties to cease hostilities and engage in ceasefire, confidence building and security arrangements in the search for sustainable peace.

4. The Council urged the TFI, Ethiopia and all other actors in Somalia to ensure humanitarian access, respect human rights and international humanitarian law, to protect the civilian population and to facilitate secure and early return of displaced persons to Mogadishu and other areas of origin.

5. The Council called on the Prime Minister to affirm the commitment of the TFG to respect and ensure respect of international humanitarian law and to the protection of civilian population at risk. Peace cannot be built on impunity. The Council therefore called on the TFG to investigate all human rights abuses committed in Somalia and bring those responsible to justice. The Council encouraged the UN to use all available instruments to improve monitoring of the human rights situation in Somalia. The EU remains committed to enhance humanitarian assistance, provided there is unimpeded humanitarian access and respect of the integrity of humanitarian assistance.

6. The Council invited EU Member States with a large Somali diaspora to engage with it and encourage it to work in support of EU and international efforts to bring peace to Somalia.

7. The African Union Mission in Somalia, AMISOM, is at present the only available option to facilitate the withdrawal of foreign and regional forces from Somalia. The Council expressed its support for AMISOM, particularly recognizing the contribution that Uganda has made. It reiterated the need to strengthen AMISOM, including through identifying substantial new financial support. The EU is committed to make further contributions to the AU, on the basis of a comprehensive political and needs assessment, as well as to provide bilateral contributions to AU Member States deploying to AMISOM. The Council called on other donors to contribute as well. The Council encouraged the UN to provide more support to AMISOM in

accordance with resolution 1772 of the UN Security Council and to move forward with contingency planning for a possible peacekeeping operation in Somalia.

8. The Council expressed its full support to the Special Representative for Somalia of the UN Secretary General, Mr Ould Abdallah and to his leadership role in coordinating efforts of the international community. It welcomed his readiness to draw up an International Action Plan and in particular to frame international support to the transitional process (constitution, census, multiparty system, elections) and establish a strategic framework for security sector support to Somalia. The Council expressed its readiness to support the elaboration and implementation of the International Action Plan.

9. The EU recognized the increasing danger posed by acts of piracy off the Somali coast and will study possible ways to respond to the problem, together with the Somali authorities and the international community. The Council welcomed the French initiative to provide military accompaniment to vessels chartered by the World Food Programme (WFP) delivering aid to Somalia. It stressed the need for international support to this initiative in order to continue to provide protection to the WFP beyond January 2008.

10. Successful EU delivery and responsiveness in the Somali peace process remains essential to support a comprehensive political solution which would bring long term stability to Somalia. The EU remains ready to make full use of all existing instruments to attain this objective."

### **EU-Africa Summit**

#### ► **«Lisbon Declaration» of the EU-Africa (09/12/2007)**

The Lisbon Summit, bringing together the European Union and Africa, has offered us a unique opportunity jointly to address the common contemporary challenges for our continents, in the year that we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the European integration and the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the independence of Africa.

We have come together in awareness of the lessons and experiences of the past, but also in the certainty that our common future requires an audacious approach, one that allows us to face with confidence the demands of our globalizing world.

Since our first gathering in 2000 in Cairo, much has changed. In Africa we have witnessed the creation of the African Union, which offers a new continental framework for addressing African issues and has become a recognised voice for the continent, and of its economic instrument, NEPAD. In Europe, the EU has grown in membership and scope, deepening its process of integration and acquiring new responsibilities in the world. On a global scale, we have today an increased understanding of our vital interdependence and are determined to work together in the global arena on the key political challenges of our time, such as energy and climate change, migration or gender issues.

In recognition of our ambitions, and of all that we share today and have shared in the past, we are resolved to build a new strategic political partnership for the future, overcoming the traditional donor-recipient relationship and building on common values and goals in our pursuit of peace and stability, democracy and rule of law, progress and development.

We will develop this partnership of equals, based on the effective engagement of our societies, in order to achieve significant results in our fundamental commitments, namely: the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals; the establishment of a robust peace and security architecture in Africa; the strengthening of investment, growth and prosperity through regional integration and closer economic ties; **the promotion of good governance and human rights**; and the creation of opportunities for shaping global governance in an open and multilateral framework.

We are determined to give this new strategic partnership the necessary means and instruments that will enable it to fulfil the Joint Strategy and the Action Plan that we have adopted today, and to do so we have created a comprehensive and effective follow-up mechanism that can deliver on these goals and show us the results on the occasion of the Third Summit that shall be held in 2010.

We believe that this Summit will be remembered as a moment of recognition of maturity and transformation in our continent to continent dialogue, opening new paths and opportunities for collective action for our common future.

[http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias\\_Documentos/20071209declaracaolisboa.htm](http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/20071209declaracaolisboa.htm)

## **EU-Africa Summit**

### ► **José Sócrates: 'This EU-Africa Summit will go down history'** (09/12/2007)

«This EU-Africa Summit will go down history because it approved a strategy and a plan of action between the two continents, but also because it created a new spirit of cooperation, loyalty and equality among States», declared José Sócrates, Portuguese prime minister and current president of the European Union, during the press conference that closed the work sessions of the II EU-Africa Summit.

For José Sócrates, who was accompanied by John Kufuor, president of the African Union, José Manuel Durão Barroso, president of the European Commission and by Alpha Omar Konaré, president of the African Commission, «this Summit will also go down History because it gave voice to everyone: to human rights, to immigrants, to refugees, to development needs and common concerns with the environment».

The president of the EU also stressed the fact that the Summit created, among participating States, «a new project, a new spirit where cooperation, mutual help, loyalty and friendship are all present», stating that this is the «spirit of Lisbon».

**José Sócrates also declared that the II EU-Africa Summit placed the human rights issue at the centre of the agenda, due to the common wish of European and African leaders. «Discussing human rights was not a European imposition on Africa. It was the result of a common will between the two parties».**

The current president of the African Union, John Kufuor, also stated that the II EU-Africa meeting changed relations between the two continents. «The success of this summit reflects the interest and willingness of these States and creates great expectations on Africa and Europe».

For the current AU president, the summit that ended today in Lisbon is «a success» and it will have «a tremendous impact in the new era of globalisation».

This is a shared position by the president of the European Commission, José Manuel Durão Barroso, who stated that cooperation between the European Union and the African Union now goes largely beyond «a relation among politicians and diplomats. It also highlights the human link between the two sides of the Mediterranean».

According to José Manuel Durão Barroso «it would be difficult to find a better bridge between the two continents than Lisbon». He added that he felt very honoured, as president of the European Commission, to have participated in the effort to improved relations between the European and the African countries.

«We are living a very important moment», said Durão Barroso. «From this summit comes out a plan of action for the next three years that deals with migrations, energy, human rights, climate change and scientific research».

For Alpha Omar Konaré, president of the African Commission, the EU-Africa Summit was a «franc debate among the States of these two continents». According to Konaré, «Africa is not poor; it only needs good governance so that the riches of this continent can benefit all the population».

Konaré also said that he is very happy with the fact that there are «many voices» of civil representation - entrepreneurs, the youth and various associations - that are involved in the partnership between the two continents and ready to collaborate so that this cooperation between Europe and Africa can develop in a positive way for all parties.

[http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias\\_Documentos/20071209UEAfricahistoria.htm](http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/20071209UEAfricahistoria.htm)

## AMERICAS

## ASIA

## EUROPE (OUTSIDE OF UE ) AND CIS

### Afghanistan

- ▶ Council Conclusions on Afghanistan, 2839th GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting (10/12/2007)

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. Following the Conclusions of the European Council in December 2006 and of the GAERC of February 2007, the Council reaffirms the EU's commitment to long-term support for the people and government of Afghanistan. The core principles of EU engagement remain unchanged: promoting Afghan leadership, responsibility and ownership, and fostering the development of a democratic, secure and sustainable Afghan State.

(...)

**6. The EU's cross-cutting priority remains the promotion of human rights, paying special attention to women's and children's rights. Execution of death penalties, the conditions for imprisoned children and women and alleged use of torture are recent examples of concern. The Council would like to make an urgent appeal to halt any possible further executions and to reconsider the ending of the de facto moratorium on the execution of death penalty.**

(...)

9. Progress on the rule of law is essential to the security and long term stability of Afghanistan, and the Council reiterates the importance of greater EU engagement in that sector. The Rome International Conference on Justice and Rule of Law in Afghanistan was a success, and the post-Rome justice process is on track. The Council reaffirms its support for the Government of Afghanistan's efforts to promote and extend the rule of law through development of the police, courts, prisons and the wider justice system to the regional and provincial level.

10. Strengthening the security sector, including the police, and promoting Afghan ownership in this regard are key for sustainable security in Afghanistan. The Council is determined to contribute significantly to police reform through the EU police mission. EUPOL is now deploying across the country and should reach full complement of 195 by Spring 2008. The Council welcomes all contributions to EUPOL Afghanistan made by third countries. The Council recognises the considerable challenges involved in ensuring that EUPOL reaches its full potential, and will give the mission all necessary backing to overcome them. The mission has been working with partners to improve coordination on police reform amongst the international community, and enhance Afghan ownership of those reforms. As a result the International Police Coordination Board (IPCB) is now meeting again and its Secretariat up and running. EUPOL efforts complement other efforts in these fields, notably within CSTC-A and ISAF."

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/newsWord/en/gena/97500.doc>

**Iran**

► **EU Presidency Statement on the execution of Makwan Mouloudzadeh (05/12/2007)**

The EU Presidency strongly deplores the execution of Makwan Mouloudzadeh, who was sentenced to death by a judge of Kermanshah Court for a crime allegedly committed when he was only 13 years old. The EU Presidency recalls the Islamic Republic of Iran's international commitments, specifically the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both clearly prohibiting the execution of minors or people who have been convicted of crimes committed while they were minors.

The EU Presidency reiterates its longstanding position against the death penalty in all circumstances and wishes to recall that any miscarriage or failure of justice in the application of capital punishment represents the irreparable and irreversible loss of human life.

The EU Presidency urges the Islamic Republic of Iran to carry out an investigation in order to verify whether the trial of Makwan Mouloudzadeh followed all legal procedures and if he was granted all the rights provided for by the penal procedural code, and to ensure that all appropriate measures are taken in this regard.

The EU Presidency also appeals to the Islamic Republic of Iran to ensure that the new law under consideration is approved by the Majlis and the Judiciary and that it should clearly exclude the application of death penalty sentences to minors or juvenile offenders.

[http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias\\_Documentos/Declaracoes\\_PESC/20071205Irao.htm](http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/Declaracoes_PESC/20071205Irao.htm)



**THEMATIC :**

**FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES**

**JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS**

**EXTERNAL RELATIONS & DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ISSUES**

**EU / UN REFORM**

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Statement EU Annual NGO Forum on Human Rights**

- ▶ **EU Annual NGO Forum on Human Rights: Statement delivered by the Portuguese Secretary of State for European Affairs (06/12/2007)**

«Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests,

It is a real pleasure for me to welcome you to Lisbon for this 9th EU NGO Forum on Human Rights. This forum is a unique opportunity for civil society, the EU institutions and governments to exchange views on the EU's human rights policy, and we are pleased to have you all here to contribute to what I am sure will be a very positive outcome.

Your presence here in Lisbon shows your commitment to the cause of human rights. Let me stress that I firmly believe that although promoting and protecting human rights is an unending task for Governments, tackling human rights issues should not be the exclusive prerogative of the State. Civil Society and NGOs have a decisive role to play. This is a lesson we know well, from the times when the Portuguese diplomacy was fighting for the self-determination of East Timor. I am therefore sure that you will provide valuable input to the debates.

This brings us back to the NGO Forum. This Forum is organised by the Portuguese EU Presidency in cooperation with the European Commission, and I would like to thank all for their valuable contributions. The first of these Forums was held nine years ago and its objective remains unchanged: it is a platform for discussing EU human rights policies. Within the EU, we consider that Human Rights policies and priorities are set in order to be known by and shared with civil society in a spirit of openness and frankness. We are also eager to receive feed-back on how EU objectives have in fact been realised on the ground and are perceived by other stakeholders.

(...)

[http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias\\_Documentos/20071206seaaeforum.htm](http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/20071206seaaeforum.htm)

## **European Day against the Death Penalty approved**

- ▶ **EU presidency: justice ministers approve by unanimity European Day against the Death Penalty (07/12/2007)**

**The justice ministers from the European Union approved today, by unanimity, during a Council meeting held in Brussels, the establishment of the European Day against the Death Penalty.**

Justice Minister Alberto Costa, as representative of the current presidency, consulted with his Polish counterpart during the last few days and the European Union arrived at a consensus on the establishment of this special day. Thus, today there was a joint celebration of the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council.

From 2008, October 10 will be remembered all over Europe as a day that symbolises the defence of human rights and the need for a more humane justice.

The establishment of this day by the European Union had not been possible in September since Poland refused to be associated with it, having thus been approved in the ambit of the Council of Europe.

Meanwhile it was possible to arrive at a consensus with the new Polish minister for justice, concerning a unanimous stand of the European Union to unequivocally condemn the death penalty.

[http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias\\_Documentos/20071207JAIPenadeMorte.htm](http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/20071207JAIPenadeMorte.htm)

## **Presidency Statement on celebration Human Rights Day**

- ▶ **EU Presidency Statement on the celebration of Human Rights Day (10/12/2007)**

As we celebrate today Human Rights day, the EU Presidency would like to take this opportunity to recall that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. Human Rights are the principles that make us humans and are applicable worldwide. The struggle for the realization of human rights is a struggle for each and everyone as it is fundamental to ensure the equal enjoyment of human rights by all. The values of universality of all Human Rights, the ideals of justice and human dignity enshrined in the Universal Declaration and reaffirmed in the Vienna World Conference of 1993 constitute essential objectives of the European Union and serve as a fundamental basis for our action.

Today, we also begin the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We have come a long way since the Declaration was adopted in 1948 and have faced serious challenges, but the EU is confident that the simple and basic idea of human rights for all will continue to have a dramatic and positive impact in history.

The EU is firmly committed to continue to develop a deeply rooted culture of human rights worldwide, with education playing a crucial role to this end. The EU stresses once again the necessity to ensure that civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights are treated equally without any discrimination in their applicability.

The EU Presidency would also like to recall, on Human Rights day, that we are celebrating this year the 18th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has almost universal ratification, representing a landmark achievement in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The EU Presidency acknowledges that the protection and promotion of human rights, for which governments have responsibility, cannot be realised without the help and the work of human rights organs and of international organisations and, in this regard, the EU pays tribute to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to her Office. The EU also praises the courageous work of Human Rights Defenders and of civil society, which have vital role in the worldwide promotion of these rights and deserve our unfailing support.

The EU Presidency reiterates that human rights are the foundation of our coexistence and that we must keep united to achieve our common goal of bringing effectiveness, within each country, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the major Human Rights instruments.

[http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias\\_Documentos/Declaracoes\\_PESC/20071210HUMAN.htm](http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/Declaracoes_PESC/20071210HUMAN.htm)

### **Council Conclusions on EU Guidelines on Children rights**

- ▶ **Council Conclusions on EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child 2839<sup>th</sup> General Affairs Council meeting (10/12/2007)**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. "The Council welcomes and adopts the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child (including the implementation strategy). **The Guidelines will be an integral part of the process of further strengthening the European Union's human rights policy in external relations.** The Council notes that, together with the 2003 Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict which will continue to guide EU actions in that specific area, the new set of Guidelines will enhance the European Union's activities in the promotion and protection of the Rights of the Child by promoting a comprehensive and strategic approach.

2. By adopting these "EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child", the EU commits itself unreservedly to promoting and protecting all rights of the child as contained in key international and European legal human rights instruments, norms and standards as well as political commitments relevant to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Convention on the rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Statute of the International Criminal Court as well as the Millennium Development Declaration and Millennium Development Goals, the Declaration and Plan of Action "A World fit for Children" of UNGASS 2002, among others. To allow for focused action, the EU has chosen "All Forms of Violence Against Children" as its first Priority Area and has adopted, together with the Guidelines, an Implementation Strategy for specific measures to be taken in that area.

3. The Council reaffirms EU's determination to observe as a matter of priority in its external human rights policy the promotion and protection of all rights of the child, i.e. persons below the age of 18 years, taking into account the best interests of the child and its right to protection from discrimination and participation in decision-making processes, founded on the principles of democracy, equality, non-discrimination, peace and social justice and the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights."

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/97511.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/97511.pdf)

### **Implementation EU policy on human rights**

- ▶ **Council Conclusions on the implementation of the EU policy on human rights and democratisation in third countries, 2839<sup>th</sup> GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting (10/12/2007)**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The Council reaffirms the importance of the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world as a cornerstone of the EU's external action. The EU has increasingly mainstreamed the human rights dimension into its general foreign policy instruments. At the same time it has further

developed its actions specifically aimed at the promotion and protection of human rights in third countries, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora, with a particular emphasis on the UN.

2. The Council recalls that the 10th of December marks the start of a year long celebration to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The Council reiterates its profound commitment to the universal principles contained in the Declaration.
3. The EU reiterates its commitment to universal, interdependent and indivisible human rights. The EU remains fully committed to playing an active role in the Human Rights Council (HRC), and to ensuring that the HRC lives up to the expectations the international community has placed in it. The EU calls upon all countries to cooperate in the spirit of UNGA resolution 60/251. The EU reiterates its full support to the Special Procedures of the HRC and urges all States, in particular members of the HRC, to fully cooperate with them. The Council stresses that the objective of the review process of the Special Procedures, as decided by the General Assembly, is to improve the independent and expertise-driven special procedures system, not to weaken it.
4. The European Union assesses that the institutional building package, despite the fact that not all of the EU's objectives could be achieved, should enable the Human Rights Council to address serious human rights violations in a timely manner whenever and wherever they occur. It should also enable the HRC to fulfil its responsibility to, inter alia, serve as a forum for dialogue on thematic issues on all human rights and to promote advisory services, technical assistance and capacity building on all human rights as foreseen in UN General Assembly resolution 60/251.
5. The EU welcomes in particular the creation of the new system of the Universal Periodic Review. This is an important innovation for the Human Rights Council. The foundation agreed in June 2007 offers the potential for a system that will ensure regular examination of the human rights record of each UN member state and its observance, protection and promotion of the principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependency of human rights on the basis of the same criteria. The Council calls on the membership of the HRC to respect the spirit of the June agreement, to ensure that UPR develops into a meaningful process.
6. While remaining deeply concerned about the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the EU feels that this issue should not be the only geographic situation to be explicitly singled out in the agenda.
7. The Council welcomes the holding of the Special Session on Burma/Myanmar in October 2007, and the adoption, by consensus, of a Resolution strongly deploring the violent repression of peaceful demonstrations and continued arrests, urging the government to ensure full respect of human rights and to cooperate fully with humanitarian agencies.
8. The Council also welcomes the Human Rights Council capacity to ensure the follow up of special sessions. The EU attaches the highest priority to the fact that serious human rights situations like the one in Sudan/Darfur continue to be addressed effectively in conformity with the HRC's mandate. The EU welcomes the fact that the Government of Sudan is cooperating with the Group of Experts established by the HRC. However, the EU expects concrete improvements on the human rights situation on the ground and looks forward to the report of the Group of Experts at the HRC's resumed December session.
9. The Council also welcomes the capacity of the HRC to address human rights situations through other instruments than special sessions and resolutions, such as panel debates and round tables or side events. It underlines the key role of the Special Procedures in this respect. The country visits by

Special Rapporteurs, as well as the interactive dialogues held with the mandate holders, contributed to raising the awareness of the international community of troubling human rights violations. The Council further recalls and welcomes that, during lively debates, particularly alarming human rights situations as in Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka have been addressed by many delegations and by NGOs.

10. The Council stresses the major role played by the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly in the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide in complement to the Human Rights Council. The EU will continue to make full use of this important body, namely by contributing to the fulfilment of its mandate to examine thematic and geographic issues related to human rights.
11. The Council expresses its satisfaction with the adoption by the UNGA Third Committee of a resolution calling for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, tabled by a cross-regional group including - besides the EU - Albania, Angola, Brazil, Croatia, Gabon, Mexico, New Zealand, the Philippines and Timor Leste. This was the first time a resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty was adopted by the General Assembly. This cross-regional initiative has started a process of dialogue and engagement at the level of the General Assembly on an issue of fundamental importance for the enhancement and progressive development of human rights. The adoption of this resolution is a clear recognition of the growing international trend towards abolition and represents an important step towards the eradication of this practice.
12. The Council further welcomes the adoption of resolutions on other thematic issues of particular relevance, such as rights of the child, religious intolerance, torture, eliminating rape, human rights and counter-terrorism. The Council also welcomes the adoption of resolutions on the human rights situation in Myanmar, DPRK, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Belarus. The adoption of these resolutions is visible proof of the international community's continuing concern for the lack of improvement of the human rights situation in these countries. The Council attaches particular attention to the situation in countries neighbouring the EU. In this respect, the Council regrets the decrease of country special procedures, which runs contrary to what should be the Human Rights Council practice.
13. The Council welcomes the progress made in mainstreaming human rights into all EU policies and underlines the need to further strengthen these efforts. The Council underlines the importance of taking human rights aspects into consideration in all relevant geographical and thematic policies of the EU and stresses the continuing character of this work. The Council commends in this regard the work done by the Personal Representative of the SG/HR for Human Rights. The Council also welcomes the strengthening and consolidation of the Human Rights Team in the Council Secretariat.
14. The Council emphasizes the need to further strengthen the human rights perspective in the ESDP and welcomes efforts made in this direction, such as the inclusion of human rights and gender expertise both in the planning and in the implementation of all ESDP operations, the compilation of relevant documents on mainstreaming and the development of a generic pocket card for ESDP personnel. The Council underlines the need to continue the active implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security and 1612 on Children and Armed Conflict, and stresses the importance of human rights training for ESDP staff particularly with a view to achieving more concrete progress in this field on the ground.
15. The Council reaffirms its commitment to improving the coherence and consistency of the EU's human rights policy in its internal matters as well as in external affairs. The EU's Fundamental Rights Charter as well as the establishment of a Fundamental Rights Agency are to be seen as important steps in this context. On the external side, cooperation with regional and international organisations, such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the United Nations are important. In this context, the Council

stresses the importance of effective implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the EU signed in May 2007.

16. The EU human rights guidelines are an essential tool for sustained and systematic action in priority areas. The Council welcomes measures taken in the course of 2007 to further strengthen the implementation of the Guidelines, namely the adoption of a new set of Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child together with an implementation strategy for specific measures to be taken in that area. The EU has chosen “All Forms of Violence Against Children” as its first priority area. In this regard the Council also welcomes the creation of the mandate for a Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations on Violence Against Children.
17. The EU reiterates its firm opposition to the death penalty in all cases. The adoption of the resolution on the moratorium on the use of the death penalty paves the way for the EU to step up its efforts to encourage retentionist countries to institute a moratorium as a first step on the way towards its abolition. Demarches were carried out by the EU in a significant number of countries in accordance with the minimum standards defined by international law and the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty, including cases of minors, stoning sentences and the most serious crimes principle. The Council will continue to take action on individual cases of concern.
18. **The EU reaffirms its commitment to the prevention and eradication of all forms of torture and ill-treatment within the EU and world-wide. The EU continued its global campaign to support relevant UN instruments, in particular the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, and encourages its partners to fully cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteur on torture. The Council notes the assessment of the implementation of the Guidelines against Torture. The EU will continue to address both specific cases and more structural aspects with a view to preventing and eradicating torture.**
19. The Council remains deeply committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of children affected by armed conflict and welcomes the Machel Study 10 years review and additional steps taken regarding the diffusion of the Paris Principles and the endorsement of the Paris Commitments. In this regard, the Council welcomes the initiatives undertaken to promote and strengthen these principles in priority countries through specific implementation strategies, which will continue to be implemented.
20. The Council commends and will continue to support the important work of Human Rights Defenders worldwide. The continued persecution and harassment of Human Rights Defenders in many countries requires concrete EU action to ensure their safety and protection. In that respect the Council welcomes the elaboration of local implementation strategies to support the work of Human Rights Defenders by EU missions in third countries and looks forward to these strategies increasingly being put into practice. Individual cases will continue to be raised with the governments concerned.
21. Human rights dialogues are a vital instrument of the EU external human rights policy. They take place in various formats ranging from structured human rights dialogues to consultations with like-minded countries. The Council recalls that in addition to specific human rights dialogues, the issue of human rights will continue to be raised during political dialogues with third countries at all levels. The Council reiterates the importance of the regular consultations with like-minded countries in order to further strengthen cooperation in the promotion and protection of Human Rights throughout the world.

The Council notes that the various agreement-based, ad hoc and local human rights dialogues with third countries are an important channel to promote human rights, rule of law and democracy and to

express concerns. The Council welcomes efforts aimed at including all relevant human rights issues on the agendas of the Article 8 dialogue meetings.

22. In this context the Council welcomes the first round of human rights expert talks with the African Union, which should pave the way for a regular human rights dialogue, to discuss issues of common concern, including positions in multilateral fora and facilitate the implementation of human rights and democracy-building commitments.
23. The Council reaffirms the importance it attaches to the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue as a key instrument to build a mature relationship with China in this field. The two dialogue rounds that took place in May and October of this year were held in a positive atmosphere and provided a platform for a substantive and frank exchange of views between China and the EU on a wide range of human rights issues including cases of individual concern.

The Council acknowledges the progress made by China in the field of economic, social and cultural rights, notably the recent adoption of the labour contract law. This needs to be matched by progress on civil and political rights and the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights remains a key EU demand in this regard. The Council remains seriously concerned about continued restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of religion, minority rights, re-education through labour system, torture and the extensive use of the death penalty.

The EU will continue to closely monitor the human rights situation in China and to work for positive change through continued and improved dialogue and cooperation, involving also civil society.

24. The EU remains deeply concerned with the continuing deterioration of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Iran. During the past year the EU has on several occasions expressed its concerns over the extended use of capital punishment, including the death sentences for juvenile offenders, and the use of cruel and inhumane punishment such as stoning. The Council is also seriously concerned by the escalation of restrictions to the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of the media, the harassment and persecution of Human Rights Defenders and restrictions on freedom of religion and belief, including those placed on the Bahá'í. The Council has repeatedly called on Iran to ensure implementation of its human rights obligations through statements and demarches. The EU regrets that Iran has suspended the EU-Iran Human Rights Dialogue and reiterates its willingness to resume the dialogue with Iran. The Council welcomes the successful adoption of the Canadian-led resolution on the situation of human rights in Iran in the UNGA Third Committee. The adoption of this resolution demonstrates the firm stance of the international community against the systematic violation of human rights in Iran.
25. The Council welcomes the continuation of the human rights consultations with the Russian Federation. The EU, however, remains concerned about certain developments in Russia over the past year regarding freedom of expression, assembly and freedom of the press, especially in the context of parliamentary and presidential elections. The EU regrets that the electoral campaign for the Duma did not always meet international standards and commitments voluntarily assumed by Russia.  
Other issues of concern are minorities, women's rights (including trafficking), torture and maltreatment, including abuse of psychiatric detention, the respect for the rule of law, the effects of the law on NGO activities and of the counter-extremist law on civil society, instances of racism and xenophobia, and the situation in northern Caucasus. The Council will continue to follow these issues with concern.
26. The Council welcomes the first round of the human rights dialogue with Uzbekistan in 2007, and the ongoing discussion on the realisation of a civil society seminar. It remains, however, concerned

about the human rights situation and calls on Uzbekistan to make further progress on human rights. As regards Turkmenistan, the Council confirms its objective of bringing into line the Ad-hoc Human Rights Dialogue with Turkmenistan with the structure of other official Human Rights Dialogues, especially in the light of the Strategy for a new Partnership with Central Asia which foresees the establishment of a “regular, result-oriented Human Rights Dialogue with each of the Central Asian states”. The Council remains concerned by the situation of human rights in Central Asia and remains committed to working for a concrete improvement in the human rights situation in the five Central Asian Republics, which all have, to varying degrees, serious problems upholding fundamental rights and freedoms.

27. The Council underlines the importance of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the need for the EU’s continuous support for the promotion of human rights and democracy worldwide. The Council reiterates the need to continue to enhance the effectiveness and consistency of EIDHR and all the financial instruments relevant to the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy. To this end the Council encourages the Commission to further strengthen the coordination of existing mechanisms within the EU and with other players and donors, making use of their specific inputs and experiences. The Council further stresses the importance of concrete situations in the country concerned and the need to build on its domestic human rights and democracy movement which should serve as the basis for EU action.

The Council further welcomes the continuation during the past year of its ongoing close cooperation with the European Parliament. At the same time the Council acknowledges the important role of civil society in promoting and protecting human rights, and will continue to work closely with the representatives of civil society in achieving our goals in the fields of human rights. The Council takes note of the recommendations of the Annual EU Human Rights Forum, held in Lisbon 7-8 December 2007, and underlines the need to continue the existing active cooperation among the European human rights community."