

European Neighbourhood Watch

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Thinking ahead for Europe

The Arab Spring – Is it a Revolution?

In June we did a first stocktaking, and promised to continue a monitoring of the Arab Revolution at six-monthly intervals.

The score so far is three outright regime changes (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya), with two more in the pipeline still: Yemen experiencing a slow regime change of uncertain destination, and with Syria into its eighth month of bloody repression. Note that all of these have been republics, whereas the monarchies of the region (Morocco, Jordan and the six Gulf states) have been spared so far, all making concessions to head off uprisings, either monetary manna in the case of the petro-monarchies, or some tentative political concessions in the non-petro-monarchies. Qualitatively the general observation is that the street has lost its fear, while by the same token the authoritarian leaderships themselves became fearful for their future, if not for their lives.

Is it warranted to call this a Revolution? Scholars of revolutions differentiate between 'great revolutions' on the one hand, and lesser events such as the coup d'état, seizure of power after popular uprisings, civil war and diverse rebellions. All these events have been catalogued, and apparently total 690 greater and lesser revolutions in world history (Wikipedia, 'list of revolutions'). The great revolutions are those that transform economic and social structures as well as political institutions. The lesser ones just see an uprising that overthrows the leadership. The Arab Spring beginning in 2011 easily passes as a set of lesser revolutions, but now the interesting question is whether it becomes a great revolution.

The Arab Revolution of 2011 surely takes its place in the quite small number of revolutionary episodes in the world history that have had major regional or continental dimensions, and involved revolution by contagion between a number of states sharing some historical-cultural-geographic identity: 1789, 1848, 1917, 1989 of course, and the great decolonisation revolutions, first in Latin America between 1811 and 1821, and then in Africa and Asia after World War II. Already on these grounds the Arab Revolution has some claims to 'greatness', since the revolutionary fervour swept through all the seventeen states from Morocco to Yemen, and very few of the 690 catalogued revolutions did this much.

Scholars of the world's 'great' revolutions, and of the political dynamics that follow in their wake, have sobering messages. The seminal work of Crane Brinton, in 'The Anatomy of Revolution' (published in 1938), identified one recurrent model or syndrome with a sequence of stages, in which a popular uprising leads to violent confrontation and overthrow of the incumbent regime. Moderate

democratically oriented factions take over initially but fail to control the political dynamics that have been released. The revolution is taken over by radical forces, which establish control with brutal repression of dissidents and this leads into a new dictatorship that can last for a long time. Brinton worked out this model sequence after comparative review of several 'great revolutions', with the French and Russian revolutions most plausibly fitting into this mould. One could add the Chinese revolution, starting in 1911 but maturing only after an interval of war into the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of the 1966 to 1976. Most recently and close to the Arab world, the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1978 also broadly fits the model. World history offers however a plethora of models, of which this is only one, although the track record of the 'great revolutionary model' is undeniably impressive with the French, Russian, Chinese and Iranian revolutions.

In the Arab Revolution the three clear-cut regime changes – Tunisia, Egypt, Libya - are half way into their revolutions. Will they mature into viable democracy, or just dysfunctional democracy, or will they radicalise along the dramatic course of the Brinton model, or relapse into the miserable condition of the failed state?

Tunisia seems so far to be the best candidate for an emerging democratic solution.

However in the Egyptian case there is now a four way struggle for power between moderate Muslim Brotherhood islamists, radical Salafist islamists, the army, and secular liberal factions. The confrontations now become ominous, notwithstanding the impressively conducted elections in recent weeks. The army, once the hero of the revolution, has become its enemy. The secular liberals are politically weak. The Salafists have jumped up from the sidelines into a major force.

Where there has been terrible civil war, as in Libya, one has to fear very difficult outcomes. NATO and the West have invested hugely in a democratic outcome, but Iraq is a relevant reference with ongoing violent conflict in a formally democratic setting. For Syria and Yemen the references may also be Iraq, or worse, the failed state of Somalia.

The six petro-monarchies of the Gulf have all avoided regime overthrow, although in Bahrain it became a prospect. All however have for now bought off revolution with monetary manna showered onto the people in great quantities. Yet this stores up trouble for later, creating ultimately unsustainable economies, and when the time comes for detox it will be very painful. Maybe

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they can avoid this for another decade or so. Most of these states make at least slight gestures in the direction of constitutionalisation of the monarchies. Revolution is postponed. More serious steps in the direction of evolutionary constitutionalisation may be under way in Morocco and Jordan, where there is no manna to distribute.

Election results in the last months have shown a clean sweep of successes for Islamist parties, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and for like-minded parties in Tunisia and Morocco, with similar sympathies evident also in Jordan and Kuwait. These parties are often referring to the Turkish AK model of moderate and democratic political Islam, and not radical Islam. If this is sustained and deepened as the leading political norm across the Arab world, replacing decades of repressive authoritarianism, it would qualify as a great, democratic revolution. But not so fast. In the central case of Egypt confrontation with the army and the spectacular rise of the Salafists signal that all options are open. Don’t forget the Brinton model.

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The Multiannual Financial Framework: The Proposals on External Action Instruments
Brussels, 7 December 2011. [Link](#)

1. What is the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)? What are the proposals for the external instruments?

The MFF translates the Union's political priorities for seven years into financial terms¹. It sets annual maximum amounts (ceilings) for EU expenditure as a whole and for the main categories of expenditure (headings).

On 29 June 2011, the European Commission presented its proposals for the MFF 2014-2020. Compared to the Member States, the European Union has a small budget, but with a big impact for Europeans and citizens of third countries. The Commission's proposal for a multi-annual budget for 2014-2020 responds to today's concerns and tomorrow's needs. It represents a budget for investment and growth to ease the pressure on Member States' finances, focussing on Europe 2020 priorities, impacts and results. The proposal focuses further on priority funding at the EU level that provides true added value. The overall amount proposed for the next seven years in 2011 prices is €1,025 billion in commitments (1.05% of the EU GNI) and €972.2 billion (1% of EU GNI) in payments.

- Global Europe: External financing instruments

The legislative package presented today is part of the proposals of the next MFF. It consists of a main Communication entitled 'Global Europe' and legislative proposals for nine geographic and thematic instruments. At a time when the world order is changing rapidly and emerging economies like China, India and Brazil are asserting their influence, Europe must stand together and be an active partner in shaping global change. These budgetary proposals will also enable the EU to further reinforce its role on the global stage and promote its interests and values.

An increased external relations budget will help make Europe count in a world of shifting alliances and emerging new powers. The overall objective for external action will be to ensure that the EU is also able to live up to its ambitions in promoting democracy, peace, solidarity, stability and poverty reduction and to help safeguard global public goods.

The EU will focus its work with its external partners on four policy priorities: enlargement, neighbourhood, cooperation with strategic partners and development cooperation.

The total amount proposed for this external relations package is €96,249.4 million (current prices) over the period 2014-2020.

Pre-accession instrument (IPA): €14,110 million

European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI): €18,182 million

Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI): €23,295 million

Partnership Instrument (PI): €1,131 million

Instrument for Stability (IfS): €2,829 million

European Instrument for Democracy

& Human Rights (EIDHR): €1,578 million

Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation: €631 million

Instrument for Greenland: €219 million

European Development Fund (EDF, outside EU Budget): €34,276 million

The package will be transmitted to the European Parliament and the Council and is expected to be adopted in 2012.

2. What is new about the proposals, what changes?

The main differences of the proposal lie in the principles underpinning the new set of instruments rather than in a revised structure.

- A differentiated approach with different forms of cooperation

The EU will seek to target its resources where they are needed most and where they could make the most difference. A more differentiated approach to partnerships and aid allocation driven by the country context is a core principle of this proposal.

Assistance will be allocated on the basis of country needs, capacities, commitments, performance and potential EU impact. Differentiation will allow for different forms of cooperation such as blending grants and loans from international financial institutions, including the European Investment Bank.

- Concentration of spending

The EU will also ensure concentration of external spending to avoid the inefficiencies resulting from sectoral dispersion and aid fragmentation.

- More flexibility

In a fast-changing world, EU financial instruments have historically been hampered by a lack of flexibility. In order to further increase the EU's capacity to respond to unforeseen events, new mechanisms have been introduced for revision of the instruments to increase flexibility.

- Simplification of rules

Simplified rules and procedures for programming and delivering EU assistance are proposed for all external instruments to ensure more effective delivery of EU assistance.

- Greater focus on human rights, democracy and good governance

The EU will aim for mutual accountability in allocating and disbursing funds. Overall, EU external instruments will take greater account of human rights, democracy and good governance when it comes to allocating external assistance to partner countries.

In line with the Lisbon Treaty provisions, the new instruments will implement new mechanisms to ensure more democratic debate on EU external assistance through a stronger involvement of the European Parliament.

Improved coordination between the EU and Member States to maximise our impact and visibility will also be a key feature of this new set of instruments, notably through joint programming of aid.

3. What are the EU financing instruments?

The proposed package includes nine financial instruments and one horizontal regulation concerning implementation modalities. One instrument has been newly created – the Partnership Instrument – replacing the Industrial Cooperation Instrument (ICI). The existing financing instruments remain valid and have been revised to adjust to the new realities, be more strategic and easy to use.

- THE INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA)

The EU provides financial support to the enlargement countries in their preparations for EU accession. Since 2007, this is done through a single financial instrument: the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).

Continued EU support will be provided after 2014 to the countries in the enlargement process, to help them meet the necessary requirements to join the EU. This support will be delivered through the renewed Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA).

Any European country that respects EU values may apply to join the EU. At the moment, there are five candidate countries: Croatia (whose Accession Treaty is to be signed on 9 Dec 2011, Croatia is expected to become a Member State on 1 July 2013), Iceland, Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Kosovo² also share the European perspective. They are known as potential candidates.

Main elements of the new IPA

On the delivery side, while ensuring continuity and seamless transition from the current IPA, the new instrument will operate under simplified rules so as to facilitate access to the funding for beneficiaries. For better effectiveness and efficiency, the assistance will be made more result-oriented, flexible and tailored to specific needs:

- to focus assistance on a limited number of policy areas that will notably help beneficiary countries strengthen

their democratic functioning, enhance their economic and social development and align progressively with the Copenhagen criteria. Moreover, the coherence between the financial assistance and the overall progress made in the implementation of the pre-accession strategy will be strengthened.

- to better translate political priorities into key actions which can receive IPA funding, a Common Strategic Framework for the instrument will be introduced. The IPA Common Strategic Framework will include criteria for the allocation of funds to beneficiary countries and to multi-country and territorial cooperation actions.

- to address more closely the needs of the beneficiaries and taking better into account their technical and administrative capacities, access to assistance will be granted under the same terms to all enlargement countries, without distinction based on the status of the country (i.e. whether candidate or potential candidate).

- to reduce the administrative burden, assistance programmes will become multi-annual, reviewed once at mid-term (compared to the current system of annual revisions and programming). This will allow us to focus more on the objectives themselves, rather than the mechanics of preparing individual projects.

- to make the overall IPA assistance more coherent, the current system of five separate components will be reviewed. All countries will be able to work on all policy areas at a much earlier stage.

- to improve the effectiveness of the assistance, there will be more flexibility to allocate funds to more result-oriented actions, to cater for emerging needs and to give incentives to improve performance.

- to leverage more funds and exploit synergies to enable necessary investments to be made, the new instrument will provide for increased cooperation with international financial institutions and other donors, and for the use of innovative financial instruments.

Budget

The proposed budget for the new IPA is €14.110 billion in current prices for the period 2014-2020. This represents a stable budget at the same level of the current IPA in 2013.

Background

The conditions for countries joining the EU are: i) stable institutions that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; ii) a functioning market economy, as well as the ability to cope with the pressure of competition and the market forces inside the Union; iii) the ability to assume the obligations of membership, in particular those related to the objectives of political, economic and monetary union.

Countries also need to be able to put EU rules and procedures into effect, and implement and enforce EU-

compliant legislation effectively through the appropriate administrative and judicial structures.

To support them in this process the EU provides funding via the IPA. The total pre-accession funding for the period 2007-2013 is € 11.5 billion.

- EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD INSTRUMENT (ENI)

In the context of the renewed approach to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) outlined in the Joint Communication of 25 May 2011, the new ENI Instrument will provide increased support to 16 partner countries to the East and South of the EU's borders. Building on the achievements of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), the new ENI will contribute to strengthening bilateral relations with partner countries and bring tangible benefits to both the EU and its partners in areas such as democracy and human rights, the rule of law, good governance and sustainable development. It will continue to provide the bulk of funding to the European Neighbourhood countries, essentially through bilateral, regional and cross border co-operation programmes.

Main elements of the new ENI

Application of differentiation and the “more for more” principle: This principle is the key aspect of the renewed Neighbourhood policy, and will allow the EU to increase its support significantly for those partners that are genuinely implementing a broad and comprehensive democratisation process. It provides for a much higher level of differentiation in the cooperation with partner countries, reflecting their commitment to universal values, progress in deep democratisation and jointly agreed objectives. It will allow the EU to better adjust its assistance to the partner countries' needs and progress.

Reducing the complexity and length of the programming process. This will be done in order to streamline, shorten and better focus the programming so support can be delivered faster to our ENP partner countries

Streamlining the scope of the Instrument through focussing our cooperation on the key policy objectives set out in particular in the ENP action plans agreed with the partners. This will make EU support more relevant and more efficient. Objectives will include in particular promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, stronger and more inclusive growth, and support to in the progressive economic integration into the EU internal market. Other key areas include promoting confidence building and other measures that contribute to security and the prevention and settlement of conflicts. Support for increased people to people contacts, sectoral cooperation (e.g. energy and climate change) and civil society organisations will also figure prominently.

Amending the provisions on the Cross-Border Cooperation programme. Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) programmes aim at reinforcing cooperation between Member States and partner countries along the external border of the European Union. The programmes promote economic and social development in border areas, address common challenges,

ensure efficient and secure borders and promote people-to-people cooperation. The new provisions will facilitate effective and fast implementation of the programmes, which will benefit participating EU Member States and partner countries and their citizens.

Promoting closer links with EU internal instruments and policies. This will be done notably by promoting mechanisms for the pooling of funds from internal and external instruments of the EU budget. The aim is to enable partner countries and their citizens to participate in successful EU internal programmes in areas such as student mobility, youth programmes or support to Civil Society, while improving the efficiency and simplification of the implementation of assistance.

Responding to the evolving relationship with Russia by amending provisions on Russia's eligibility for ENI funding to reflect the specific status of Russia as an EU neighbour and strategic partner. Russia's eligibility for regional and Cross-Border Cooperation programmes is retained in the new ENI, but bilateral cooperation will be addressed in the future under the new Partnership Instrument.

Simplifying and mainstreaming the implementation provisions within a new Implementing Regulation common to all EU external assistance instruments.

Budget and next steps

The proposed budget for the new ENI is €18.2 billion for the period 2014 - 2020. This represents a significant increase compared to the budget of the previous ENPI instrument. This significant increase reflects the increased priority of the ENP in the overall foreign policy of the EU.

The MFF regulations package will now be transmitted to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (EU Member States) for further discussion and adoption. The new MFF budget and the new regulations will enter into force on 01 January 2014.

EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle on the budget proposals for EU external instruments from 2014-2020

Brussels, 7 December 2011. [Link](#)

This is an important week for enlargement. In two days time, Member States will sign the Accession Treaty with Croatia, paving the way to become a new member state soon.

But today, we are already adopting proposals that demonstrate our continued commitment to all the other enlargement countries. We also demonstrate our continued commitment to the 16 countries in our neighbourhood.

By doing so, we continue our support for the democratisation process, support for economic and social development in our immediate neighbourhood, as well as support for the reform process in those countries preparing for EU membership.

Today's proposals will allow us to respond better to our partner's needs and ambitions. Through the new European Neighbourhood Instrument and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, support to our neighbours will become faster and more flexible; allowing for increased differentiation and incentives for best performers.

The renewed instrument for pre-accession (IPA) has been a very successful instrument to promote important reforms in the enlargement countries. It has greatly enhanced the transformative power of our enlargement policy. Its success is important for both the enlargement countries and the EU.

We will continue to support the reform process and propose to maintain a substantial and stable level of funding (€ 14,1 billion for 2014-2020: the same level of funding as for 2013). A credible enlargement policy needs a credible level of financial assistance, and this is what we are proposing today.

Despite its success, improvements can be made to the current pre-accession instrument.

The improvements we propose are:

- A more coherent reflection of political priorities into a multi-annual strategy, targeting key sectors for reform
- a more tailored approach reflecting the needs of the countries,
- increased flexibility and simplification for faster and easier access to funding,
- more focus on results: a system of performance incentives will help to allocate funds more easily to the best performing countries and sectors.

These innovations to IPA will require stronger political commitment. But they will also provide for improved predictability for beneficiary countries, so that they can devote more resources on actual implementation.

On European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), we are today proposing a substantial increase in the resources allocated to our bilateral relations with the 16 countries covered by the neighbourhood policy. This is because peace, prosperity and sustainable democratisation in our neighbours are increasingly important for the security of the EU and its citizens.

The new European Neighbourhood Instrument is the complement of our more ambitious approach towards our neighbours that we outlined in the Joint Communication on the ENP released last May. It is part of the overall response to the evolution of our relationships with our neighbours and also a direct answer to the revolutionary movements to the south of the EU.

This is why we have decided to align deeds with words and are proposing a substantial increase (by 40%) in the budget allocated to the neighbourhood - to ensure the success of the democratisation process and to improve economic and social development.

Indeed, the ENI plays an important role in assisting the transformation process in the Southern Mediterranean and for our Eastern Partners.

The ENI will be based on the new principles of the ENP, in particular 'More for More' and increased differentiation.

A major effort has been made to simplify the implementation of the cross borders activities under the ENP, which remains a key feature of the instrument. Russia will remain eligible to cross border cooperation under the ENI.

Implementing the new European Neighbourhood Policy through the new ENI needs to be done together with the citizens and governments in our partner countries. In line with the new approach to the ENP, I intend to make sure that the voice of Civil Society will be heard and that their opinions and suggestions are taken into account when preparing and delivering our assistance.

Human Rights resolutions: Azerbaijan, women in Afghanistan and Pakistan
Tunisia, 15 December 2011 . [Link](#)

Parliament strongly condemns the murder of Rafiq Tagi in Azerbaijan and expresses its concern over the safety of Samir Sadagatoglu, in a resolution adopted on Thursday. In two further resolutions, MEPs express their deep concern about the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and urge the Tunisian authorities to guarantee Zacharia Bouguira the right to a judicial process conducted in accordance with international standards.

Azerbaijan

MEPs strongly condemn the murder of Rafiq Tagi, a prominent Azerbaijani writer and journalist, and express their concern over the safety of Samir Sadagatoglu, the editor of the Sanat newspaper. They welcome the move by the Azerbaijani Government to set up a special working group to investigate the murder of Rafiq Tagi and call on the Azerbaijan authorities to ensure that the investigation is thorough and effective, and that perpetrators are prosecuted and brought to justice in a trial which meets international fair trial standards. At the same time, Azerbaijani authorities must to do their utmost to protect the life and safety of Samir Sadagatoglu.

MEPs finally insist that threats and incitement to violence against individuals expressing views deemed 'offensive' by some adherents of religions and beliefs systems are "totally unacceptable", that those responsible for such threats and incitement must be prosecuted, and that the freedom of expression and safety of the threatened individuals must be fully guaranteed.

Situation of women in Afghanistan and Pakistan

Parliament is deeply concerned about the situation of women and girls and the repeated reports of brutal violations of women's rights in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It stresses that closer international attention must be paid as a matter of urgency to the situation of women and girls in those countries. Women's rights must be explicitly addressed in all human rights dialogues, and in particular the issue of

combating and eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including all forms of harmful traditional or customary practices, early or forced marriage, domestic violence and femicide. Parliament insists that the invocation of any custom, tradition or religious consideration of any kind in order to evade the duty to eliminate such brutality be rejected.

MEPs pay tribute to the Afghan women who are playing a crucial role in the development and growth of the nation. The advances made in recent years in the area of equality between men and women are essential to building the future of the country. They also welcome positive developments in the form of appointments of women to high-ranking political and administrative positions in Afghanistan. However, Parliament is deeply concerned that, despite all the progress made, Afghan women and girls continue to be victims of domestic violence, trafficking, forced marriages, including child marriages, and being traded in settlement of disputes.

With regard to the situation in Pakistan, MEPs express their deep concern about the handling of the court cases against Asia Bibi, Mukhtar Mai and Uzma Ayub, which could further erode faith in Pakistan's justice system and embolden those who seek to violate the rights of women and other at-risk groups. They call on the Pakistani Government to re-establish the fundamental rights enshrined in the 1973 Constitution, including the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex.

Tunisia: the case of Zacharia Bouguira

Parliament welcomes the international commitments made by Tunisia since the end of the Ben Ali regime, particularly as regards cooperation with United Nations special procedures and mechanisms in the fight against torture, inhuman and degrading treatment. It urges the Tunisian authorities therefore to guarantee Zacharia Bouguira the right to a judicial process conducted in accordance with international standards, in order to shed light on the serious human rights violations of which he was the victim and to prosecute the perpetrators of those acts. Parliament calls also for the violation of the rights of the 13 Moroccan citizens to be investigated.

MEPs are aware of the challenges facing Tunisia during its democratic transition process and call on the Tunisian Government and the Constituent Assembly, as well as on the relevant trade unions, to engage without delay in an irreversible reform process focusing in particular on the security sector, with specific reference to the police and judicial systems. Also, the independence of the judiciary and the freedom and independence of the press and the media must be guaranteed, with a view to establishing a robust and sustainable democracy.

Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean on "The EU response to the developments in the Southern Neighborhood"
Brussels, 1 December 2011. [Link](#)

I welcome the conclusions of the European Council of yesterday, which reaffirms the strategic importance of the EU neighborhood, and reiterates its commitment towards a new partnership with the EU's Southern neighbors.

The last two meetings of the European council (11 March and 20 June), as well as the two Communications of European commission (18 March and 25 May) are important steps towards a new and revised contract between the EU and its neighbors.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize that this new relation is also based on more support to partners ("More for More") who make greater commitments, and greater progress towards democratic reform: closer political association, assistance to economic and social reforms, progressive economic integration with the EU internal market, improved mobility of people, and financial support.

In this concern, I welcome the promotion of EU SPRING package of €350 million which has been adopted in September 2011, which provides; additional funding for Southern neighbors to strengthen democratic institutions, to promote deep and sustainable democracy, and to improve inclusive growth and job creation.

As a regional institution, the UfM stresses on the importance of building a new relation between the EU and its neighbors, based on fundamental principles of joint ownership and mutual accountability.

As underlined by the European council, it is important to continue to support the operational activity of the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean, particularly by looking for effective ways, and instruments to provide a greater regional cooperation, implementing concrete regional projects in order to meet the needs of the citizens of the region.

I believe that this exceptional time needs exceptional response. With the commitment of all the institutions and the members of the Union of the Mediterranean, we will be able to achieve the objective of the Euro- Mediterranean partnership, in terms of peace, stability and shared prosperity.

EU agrees to start trade negotiations with Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia
Brussels, 14 December 2011. [Link](#)

The European Commission welcomes today's decision of the EU Foreign Affairs Council to authorise the opening of trade negotiations with Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia as soon as the necessary preparatory process is completed. This decision provides the European Commission with a mandate to start negotiations to establish deep and comprehensive free trade areas (DCFTAs). Compared to the current trade relationship between the EU and these countries, the DCFTAs will go beyond removing only tariffs to cover all regulatory issues relevant to trade, such as investment protection and public procurement.

"We are offering Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia progressive economic integration into the EU single market and want to improve the conditions for market access to the EU for these four WTO members as they engage in a process of democratic and economic reform," said EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht. "Our door is open for other Southern Mediterranean partners once the same conditions are met."

The future deep and comprehensive free trade areas will be part of the existing Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements, and will cover a full range of regulatory areas of mutual interest, such as trade facilitation, technical barriers to trade, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, investment protection, public procurement and competition policy. The different economic development and regulatory priorities of our Southern Mediterranean partners will be taken into account during the negotiations.

The opening of trade negotiations aims at improving market access opportunities and the investment climate in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. They also support economic reforms undertaken in these four countries.

In the context of these negotiations, the EU will also pay particular attention to measures which can enhance regional economic integration, and in particular the process launched among these four Southern Mediterranean partners in the framework of the Agadir Agreement, a free trade agreement between Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia.

The EBRD starts donor-funded activities in southern and eastern Mediterranean
13 December 2011. [Link](#)

Donors to the EBRD have started to make significant contributions that will allow the Bank to begin its activities in the southern and eastern Mediterranean (SEMED) region. The first donor-funded project is under way in Egypt.

So far over €59 million in donor funds has been made available as part of the first phase of the EBRD's economic response to the important political developments in North Africa and the Middle East. The use of donor funds for technical cooperation will lay the groundwork for forthcoming investments, once shareholders ratify amendments to EBRD statutes to allow the Bank to invest in SEMED. The EBRD will join forces with other institutions already active in the region to maximise the impact of its operations.

The European Union (EU) has signed agreements with the Bank to provide €20 million for technical cooperation activities in the Bank's prospective new countries of operations. This contribution was approved under the EU Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF) and comprises €15 million for a project preparation framework and €5 million for the EBRD TurnAround Management and Business Advisory Services (TAM/BAS).

"The launch of the EBRD's operations in the southern and eastern Mediterranean will bring much-needed private sector development expertise to this region. This is why the EU provided €20 million in cooperation funds to support the start up of operations through the Neighbourhood Investment Facility," said Stefan Fule, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy.

Nine other donors have pledged funds for the Bank's activities in the SEMED region. Australia and Italy pledged €0.5 million each, Finland €3.5 million, France €3 million, Germany €1 million, the Netherlands and Norway €2 million each, Sweden €1 million and the UK £5 million (€5.8 million) and the EBRD itself has contributed a further €20 million from its net income allocation to a fast start of activities in the SEMED region.

"The EBRD is ready to assist in the changes occurring across Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, putting to work its 20 years of experience in transition," said EBRD President Thomas Mirow.

The first donor-funded project that has been agreed will help Fast Transport Group, an Egyptian-owned small business that provides private transportation services in Alexandria, to expand services to Cairo and to improve its business model and management. Delivered by the Bank's TAM Programme, this is the first in a strong pipeline of projects to come in the months ahead.

The EBRD's TAM/BAS Programme provides business advice and consultancy services to small and medium-sized businesses – which are the main drivers of economic growth and job creation in the southern and eastern Mediterranean region.

The EBRD has the capacity to invest, eventually, as much as €2.5 billion a year across the southern and eastern Mediterranean region. For the Bank to begin investing, countries in the SEMED region will need to demonstrate their commitment to and application of principles of

multiparty democracy, pluralism and market economics, in accordance with the Bank's statutes.

Erasmus Mundus: funding boost for Arab Spring countries

Brussels, 16 December 2011. [Link](#)

The European Commission has more than doubled the number of education and teaching grants available for young people and university staff from countries involved in the 'Arab Spring' uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East. Funding for a further 559 scholarships, on top of the 525 that were already planned for 2011-2012, are being allocated to Southern Mediterranean countries through 'Erasmus Mundus', the international version of the European Commission's Erasmus student and staff exchange scheme. The recipients will be able to spend part of their studies, research or a teaching period in the European Union. The Commission is increasing its grant funding to encourage learning and training opportunities for individuals who are viewed as key to strengthening democracy in the region. The move is part of the EU's strategic response to the Arab Spring.

"I am very pleased that the Commission is increasing funding for young people and teachers who have been at the forefront of the democratisation process in the Southern Mediterranean. This sends a clear signal of our commitment to their cause," said Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth.

Erasmus Mundus is open to applicants from all over the world, including the European Union. Since the launch of the scheme in 2004, more than 12 000 students, 300 doctoral candidates and 2 000 professors have received scholarships for joint Master's degree courses or doctorate programmes. In the 2011-2012 academic year, around 6 000 students and researchers from 150 countries have already received scholarships worth a total of €210 million. The Commission has provided an additional €10 million to fund the extra 559 scholarships for countries in the Southern Mediterranean. These countries are expected to benefit from further increases in funding for Erasmus Mundus scholarships and grants in 2012-13.

Over three-quarters of the grants offered through Erasmus Mundus since 2004 have been awarded to people in non-EU countries, including more than 3 000 from North Africa and the Middle East. The size of the scholarship depends on the length of study or training period, the educational level of the candidate and the country of origin. Non-Europeans studying in the European Union receive at least €1000 per month towards their living costs while European students studying outside Europe receive at least €500 per month.

Council conclusions on Syria

Brussels, 1 December 2011. [Link](#)

1. The European Union strongly supports the efforts of the League of Arab States (LAS) to bring about an end to the repression in Syria and provide protection to the civilians by deploying an observer mission on the ground. The EU welcomes the significant decision of the Arab League to impose sanctions against the Syrian regime due to its repeated failure to deliver on its promises and to its refusal to implement the Arab Plan of Action. The EU will continue to support the Arab League's efforts to restore peace and welcomes the commitment by the Arab League to engage with the UNSG to solve this crisis which represents a threat to regional stability.

2. The EU reiterates its condemnation in the strongest terms of the brutal crackdown by the Syrian government which risks taking Syria down a very dangerous path of violence, sectarian clashes and militarization. The EU salutes once more the unwavering courage of those in Syria who are protesting and their willingness to remain committed to non-violence. The EU reaffirms its support for the Syrian people, in their quest for dignity and freedom, to decide the future of their country through peaceful, democratic as well as non sectarian means. President Assad must step aside immediately to allow for a peaceful and democratic transition.

3. The EU is extremely worried about the deteriorating living conditions of the Syrian people in certain localities affected by the unrest, especially in the region of Homs. The Syrian authorities must immediately alleviate the suffering of the population living in these areas and must allow unhindered and sustained access to humanitarian agencies and workers and ensure the functioning of basic and health services.

4. The EU welcomes the resolution on human rights in Syria approved on 22 November in the UN General Assembly's Third Committee and welcomes in particular the Arab support for its adoption. The resolution sends a strong signal of wide and united condemnation of the Syrian regime's systematic abuses and underlines international support for the Arab League. The EU welcomes the publication of the report of the independent international commission of enquiry on the violations of international human rights law in Syria since March 2011. The upcoming Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council on Syria, for which the EU has called, could also contribute to the international efforts to push the Syrian government to end the appalling violence against its population. The EU will continue to press for strong UN action to increase international pressure and urges all members of the UN Security Council to uphold their responsibilities to end the violence in Syria and support the Syrian people in their desire for greater freedoms and political rights.

5. The EU reiterates its strong support to the Syrian people and encourages the Syrian opposition to establish a united platform and to continue to engage with the Arab League towards a successful transition. The EU will continue

to actively engage with representative members of the Syrian opposition which adhere to non violence, inclusiveness and democratic values. It welcomes the Syrian National Council's commitments in this regard.

6. In light of the continued repression in Syria, the EU has decided today to place further restrictive measures targeting the regime's ability to conduct its brutal repression. These new measures are related to the energy, financial, banking and trade sectors and include the listing of additional individuals and entities that are involved in the violence or directly supporting the regime. In line with the European Council Conclusions of 23 October, the EU will continue to impose additional and more comprehensive measures against the regime, not the civilian population, as long as the repression continues. The EU will continue to consult closely with the Arab League on this matter and calls on the international community to join its efforts and those of the Arab League to target those responsible for or associated with the violent repression and those who support or benefit from the regime.

7. As soon as President Assad steps aside and a genuine democratic transition begins, the EU is ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria across all areas of mutual interest, including by mobilizing assistance, and strengthening trade and economic links.

HRVP's speech on Syria in the European Parliament
Strasbourg, 13 December 2011. [Link](#)

Since we discussed the situation in Syria last October the brutal repression has continued. The situation is dramatic and particularly worrying in Homs. The UN reports the number of victims has reached 5,000 people – and this may be a conservative estimate.

The situation is totally unacceptable. The brutal repression of civilians must stop. Assad must listen to his people, to his neighbours, to the Arab partners, to Europe, to the world. We all have the same message: he should stop the violence against his own people and let the transition begin.

Thousands remain in detention. The recent report of the UN International Commission of Inquiry indicates that crimes against humanity were committed by the security forces. Some people in Syria are taking up arms to defend themselves and the risk of widespread armed confrontation is increasing.

Against this difficult and complex backdrop, the EU has ratcheted up its sanctions and has done everything possible to build a growing international consensus to isolate the regime.

I have been in regular contact with the Arab League Secretary General Al Araby and hosted him at the last Foreign Affairs

Council. The Arab League has our full support in their demands to the Syrian regime (including the immediate cessation of violence, withdrawal of the military from cities, and the granting of humanitarian and media access).

We have also backed their plan to dispatch an observer mission to protect civilians, offering our assistance and have welcomed their decision to impose sanctions. Regional leadership is key and should continue. The role of Turkey – with whom I have been in regular contact - and its decision to impose sanctions is also crucial to weaken the regime. We have worked hard on the international scene, stepping up contacts with key international partners to isolate further the regime and its supporters. I have discussed this with Secretary Clinton in Washington, Foreign Minister Lavrov in Russia, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and with Foreign Minister Davutoglu in Bonn.

In the UN, successful efforts by the EU and Member States led to a resolution in the 3rd Committee of the General Assembly. A Special Session of the Geneva Human Rights Council was called at my initiative and a new resolution was adopted with unprecedented support in early December, establishing a Special Rapporteur for human rights in Syria.

Now all members of the UN Security Council must assume their responsibilities in relation to the situation in Syria. The EU and its Member States will continue to lead the efforts for a strong and united message.

The Syrian opposition has grown more active and is better organized over the last months. I have met this morning with a Syrian Human Rights activist and I know the role that this parliament has played in engaging with those activists and encouraging them in their work. I have also met other leaders of the Syrian National Council and welcomed the ongoing efforts by the Syrian opposition to establish a united platform and to work for a shared vision for the future of Syria and the transition to a democratic system.

We all agree on the importance of a strong and inclusive opposition political platform taking in all religious and ethnic communities. It is essential that the Syrian opposition maintains and develops its clear commitment to a peaceful and non sectarian approach.

The coordination with opposition on the ground to set out plans for the transition is of the utmost importance.

On the sanctions track our strong response to the Syrian regime's policy of repression has been further reinforced. Further individuals and entities linked to the regime have been added to the assets freeze and travel ban: 86 individuals and 30 entities are now on the list. At the beginning of this month, new measures were adopted to strengthen and complement the existing sanctions. In the oil sector, we have added a ban on the export of key technologies and equipment. In the financial sector, we have expanded the prohibitions on contacts with Syrian banks and we have also established a ban on export of monitoring software and equipment in the telecommunications sector.

Despite the efforts of everyone, the Syrian regime has remained defiant. None of the opportunities offered by the Arab League have yet been accepted. We think they need to comply fully with the Arab Plan of Action. They want to find excuses and dilute the effectiveness of an observer mission but the Arab League remains strong in their position.

Let me conclude with a word on the humanitarian situation. I believe it is increasingly worrying. Conditions are worsening in the places most badly hit by the violent repression and armed confrontations. These include cuts of electricity and water supplies, shortage of basic commodities (fuel, medication) in the areas most affected such as Baba Amr quarter in Homs.

Most recently, systematic denial of access has made it impossible to independently assess the situation. We are particularly concerned about the consistent reports of abuse related to the harassment of medical personnel and difficulties for wounded victims to safely access emergency health care. We have to assume that the information provided is correct, in the absence of free and unimpeded access for aid agencies to independently assess and respond to the most urgent needs.

DG ECHO is closely monitoring the situation from Damascus and was able to carry out a field mission in October. The ICRC continues to negotiate access to detainees.

We have made it clear that we are ready to provide emergency assistance should humanitarian needs be confirmed.

We are also recognizing the vulnerability of the Syrian refugees hosted by neighbouring countries, notably Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon and we are ready to support these refugees if the host countries request our help and we have made that knowledge available to them

I call on the Syrian authorities to allow humanitarian access without restrictions and across the country, so that Syrians in need can receive immediate assistance.

And I hope we'll see action in the Security Council: that all members will take their responsibilities, and respond to this and respond to what the UN Commissioner for Human Rights has said, with a great sense of urgency.

President Assad of Syria must step down immediately, says Parliament

15 December 2011. [Link](#)

Parliament again calls on President Bashar al-Assad and his regime to step down immediately, in a resolution adopted on Thursday. It condemns the regime's brutal repression of its people, demanding an end to the violent crackdown, calls for an investigation into possible crimes against humanity, and backs the EU's tough sanctions combined with its readiness to develop a new partnership with Syria as soon as Assad goes and a democratic transition starts.

Parliament wants all those responsible for crimes against humanity to be "held to account by the international community". It calls again on the UN Security Council "and on Russia and China in particular" to ensure that international human rights standards are respected in Syria. It also "encourages the UN Security Council to refer the crimes committed by the Syrian regime against its people to the International Criminal Court"

MEPs welcome the new restrictive measures imposed by the EU on the Syrian regime on 14 November and 1 December, and want further sanctions "which target the Syrian regime but minimise the negative impacts on the population". They note that the EU has banned exports of information and communication technologies (ICTs) which can be used to violate citizens' human rights in Syria but that details of this ban have not been published while reports have indicated that EU-based companies have equipped the Syrian Government with technologies to intercept and monitor internet traffic and mobile communications in Syria.

The House points to UN Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay's warning on 2 December of the danger of civil war and supports the Arab League's efforts to end the violence, welcoming its proposal to send an observer mission. It asks Member States to consider expelling EU-based Syrian diplomats involved in intimidation of exiled opposition activists. It calls for greater cooperation with Turkey regarding the situation in Syria and it urges High Representative Catherine Ashton to start discussions with Turkey, the Arab League and the Syrian opposition on arrangements for setting up humanitarian corridors at the Syrian-Turkish border.

MEPs encourage the efforts of the Syrian opposition to establish a united platform to continue to engage with the international community and they continue to support the Syrian National Council.

HRVP on the situation in Egypt

Brussels, 18 December 2011. [Link](#)

I am extremely concerned at the violent clashes witnessed in Cairo, notably in Tahrir Square, over the past day. I deplore the loss of life and large number of injuries. I send my condolences to the families of the victims.

I urge all parties to exercise calm and restraint and strongly condemn the use of violence against peaceful demonstrators. Law and order must be ensured in a manner respectful of human rights. Security forces must protect the right of all citizens to peaceful demonstration, and to the freedom of assembly and expression.

The governing authorities should take immediate action to stop the clashes. I urge them to swiftly launch an independent investigation and to bring those responsible for violence to justice.

Egypt is in the middle of a crucial and difficult transformation process. The democratic electoral process should continue in a safe and transparent environment.

Council conclusions on Yemen

Brussels, 1 December 2011. [Link](#)

The European Union welcomes the signature on 23 November of the agreement for political transition in Yemen and its implementation mechanism. The EU commends the Gulf Cooperation Council for its initiative and its sustained efforts to broker this settlement, in close and constructive cooperation with international partners.

The EU calls now on all parties to deliver in good faith on their commitments to a peaceful and orderly transition, which remains essential for an inclusive, Yemeni-led process of democratic renewal. The challenges facing Yemen are immense. The new transitional government of national unity will need to act as a matter of urgency to tackle the humanitarian, economic and security crises which now confront Yemen.

The EU deeply deplores ongoing violence since the signature on 23 November and reiterates its call upon all actors to immediately stop all violence and provocations and commit constructively to the transition.

The signature of the agreement is a critical first step towards the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2014, unanimously adopted on 21 October 2011. The Resolution sets out the serious concerns of the international community about the situation in Yemen and calls for a peaceful transfer of power. The subsequent reports of the Secretary General, starting with that issued on 28 November, provide an important means for the international community to continue following actively and closely the evolution of the situation.

The EU strongly hopes that the transition process which has just begun will become a solid platform for national reconciliation in Yemen. It should meet the legitimate demands and aspirations of all Yemenis from throughout the country and all parts of Yemeni society, including civic organisations, women and young people.

The EU will do all it can to assist the Yemeni people, notably through urgently needed humanitarian and development assistance. The EU will continue to monitor the situation.

The European Commission renews its assistance for the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Brussels, 19 December 2011. [Link](#)

Today, the European Commission has adopted a new assistance package for the Occupied Palestinian Territory for 2012, which amounts to €160.4 million.

Two thirds of this will go to the Palestinian Authority to help it cover wages and pensions for essential civilian workers (particularly medical and teaching staff) and social allowances for vulnerable Palestinian families. The funding will also cover arrears of bills by the Palestinian Authority to the private sector for medical supplies. The remaining amount of €55.4 million will be allocated to the core budget/general fund of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). UNRWA provides basic health, education and social services for a Palestinian refugee population of five million people both in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in neighbouring states. The EU and its EU Member States are the biggest donors to UNRWA.

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission, said: "This decision highlights our commitment to the Palestinian people. It consolidates our support to the Palestinian Authority's institution-building programme and contributes to the ability of the PA to provide essential public services. Today's decision also underlines our support to Palestine refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency."

EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle, announcing the adoption of the package said: "This is a sign of our strong political and financial commitment to build a democratic and viable Palestinian state, as well as to contributing to the well-being of the Palestinian refugee community. We have made a special effort both to mobilise extra funds from this year's budget and to front-load those from next year to respond to the difficult financial situation both the Palestinian Authority and UNRWA face in providing vital services to the Palestinian people. Indeed, I trust that other donors will also share the burden of this support".

Related Documents:

President Herman Van Rompuy following his meeting with President of the Palestinian Authority.

[Download here.](#)

HRVP following her meeting with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas

[Download here.](#)

MEPs reject extension of the EU-Morocco fisheries agreement and call for a better deal

14 December 2011. [Link](#)

Parliament voted on Wednesday to reject a proposed extension of the controversial EU-Morocco fisheries agreement. It called on the Commission to negotiate a new, more environmentally and economically beneficial deal, which should take account of the interests of the Sahrawi population. The current protocol, which has applied provisionally since 28 February 2011, will cease to apply immediately.

MEPs voted in favour of a report drafted by Carl Haglund (ALDE, FI) which called on Parliament not to extend the current arrangements, mainly for economic, ecological and legal reasons. In so doing, they rejected a Fisheries Committee proposal to extend the contested protocol, by 296 votes to 326, with 58 abstentions.

“This should not be seen as a hostile move towards our partners; it should rather be seen as us taking ourselves seriously on a very important issue,” said Mr Haglund in the debate before the vote. Mr Haglund stressed that he is in favour of a future agreement with Morocco, but it must be a better one. “There is no doubt that we all want a good agreement”, he added.

Mr Haglund argued that the one-year extension of the current protocol was unacceptable under the terms proposed by the European Commission because of its low cost-benefit ratio for the EU, the excessive exploitation of demersal stocks, the very limited contribution of EU funds to the development of local fisheries policy and the lack of proof that EU money benefits the local population of Western Sahara.

New protocol to be more sustainable

In a separate resolution, MEPs stressed that a new protocol must be economically, ecologically and socially sustainable and mutually beneficial.

In the future, the allocation of fishing opportunities should be based on scientific advice and EU vessels should be allowed to fish only surplus stocks. Financial support for the development of local fisheries must be used properly and more efficiently while monitoring of where the money goes must be improved.

MEPs also called on the Commission to ensure that a new protocol fully respects international law and benefits all affected local populations, including the Sahrawi people.

The resolution was approved with 544 votes in favour, 123 against and 33 abstentions.

What's next?

The rejected protocol, which has applied provisionally since 28 February 2011, will cease to apply immediately. Parliament expects the Commission to advance negotiations

on a new protocol so as to avoid any provisional application in the future.

EU helps to further stabilise Libya through support for education, administration and civil society

Brussels, 15 December 2011. [Link](#)

The European Commission has today adopted an assistance package for Libya to support the stabilisation and transition process of the country. The programme will strengthen civil society and public administration by providing training for experts and expertise through twinning with EU and Arab partners. It will also improve education in the country by supporting teacher training and reviewing the way that textbooks deal with issues of gender or minority discrimination, for example.

Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, said: “When I visited Tripoli in November, the Libyan authorities and the civil society representatives I have met all expressed their gratitude to the EU for our support during the crisis. We are now here to help the new Libya develop its institutions and the civil society which will build a deep democracy respectful of the rights of everyone. Public administration, education, and resources for the civil society – in particular youth and women – will be crucial factors in defining the way ahead.”

EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, commented: “From the start of the Libyan crisis, the EU has stood by the people of Libya in their quest for freedom. Today’s decision helps pave the way towards a more open and inclusive society for Libyans, with a public administration that responds to their needs. We are initiating a stronger partnership, both with civil society and with the new authorities, in sectors which are crucial for democratic transition.”

The programme, which amounts to a total of €10 million, responds to a request by the Libyan authorities and comprises three areas of intervention:

The EU will fund a public administration capacity building facility which will help to modernise, stabilise and improve public administration in Libya. The activities will include tailor-made training courses, providing high level expertise on legal, administrative and financial matters, institutional assessments and studies, as well as setting up exchange and twinning with counterparts from EU and/or Arab countries;

An education programme will help to ensure that all children receive quality pre-school and basic education in a child-friendly environment, with a focus on the most vulnerable children. The activities will include, teacher training and the development of teaching material on child/human rights, assessment and review of textbooks regarding gender/minorities discrimination. The programme will also strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Education

in policy formulation; for example, by supporting training, mentoring and study visits of ministry staff.

The civil society programme will support the emergence of an inclusive and sustainable civil society and local governance which will help to act as a catalyst for stabilisation and transition reform in Libya. The activities will include the establishment of civil society resource centres, capacity building for civil society organisations (for example, through training in advocacy and fundraising), support to local authorities and civil society on joint local development plans and the establishment of exchanges between Libyan and European/regional civil society organisations.

The path toward regionalization is the core issue of the visit of CoR president Bresso in Tunis

December 2011. [Link](#)

The emerging role of regional and local authorities in the Arab spring transition is the main topic of the institutional visit on the 1st and 2nd December in Tunis of Mercedes Bresso, president of Committee of the Regions of the European Union.

The recent publication of the Tunisian Government White Book on regional development is paving the way to a process of decentralisation/ regionalisation opening new perspectives of social and economic growth in the Country as well as new opportunities of cooperation with the European partners. To develop a common understanding of these challenges with the key players in the regionalisation process, CoR President meets bilaterally with the Tunisian Interior Minister, Mr. Habib Essid, with the Regional Development Minister, Abderrazak Zouari, and with the Secretary of State for European Affairs, Radhouane Nouicer. The institutional visit includes also the participation on Thursday to a conference on decentralisation and regional development promoted by the Tunisian Interior Ministry, ARLEM (the Mediterranean Assembly of Local and Regional Authorities) and the Tunisian Municipalities Association. "The challenge of decentralisation and regionalisation is a key factor in North Africa political uprising - said CoR president Mercedes Bresso in front of a 150 Tunisian mayors audience - and the Union for the Mediterranean, the ARLEM and the EU are called to support and contribute to this process, avoiding any imposition of specific institutional assets, in the full respect of the peculiarities of each Country". According to Bresso "the moment has come, instead, to boost territorial cooperation and to sustain these developments leveraging the experience done in the field of regional policies within the EU".

On Friday president Bresso also attends a session of the Mediterranean Assembly of Citizens focused on the role of the civil society in the current crisis and changes of Mediterranean Countries, and a meeting of ARLEM bureau, together with CoR first Vice-President Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso and CIVEX President Luc Van den Brande.

On the agenda the preparation of the third plenary session in Bari (Italy) on 29/30 January 2012 and of the 2012 work programme, with an exchange of views on the draft annual report on the state of the territorial dimension of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), and on the progress of the ARLEM reports on desertification and climate change, renewable energies, small and medium enterprises and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Concerning the development of partnerships between local and regional authorities from the Southern Mediterranean and the EU, an overview of the decentralised cooperation "bourse" exchange tool set up by the Committee of the Regions and the European Commission will be provided. Saïfallah Lasram, president of the Special Delegation of the city of Tunis, Bruno Fulda, director of cabinet of the Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, and Mr Mokhtar Hammami, director general at the Tunisian Centre for Training and Support for Decentralisation, take part to the debate, which will be concluded by Mercedes Bresso and Mohamed Boudra, ARLEM co-presidents.

Council conclusions on the customs cooperation with eastern neighbouring countries

Brussels, 5 and 6 December 2011. [Link](#)

The European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership and the EU-Russia Partnership for Modernisation are priorities of the European Union aimed at establishing an institutional framework for a closer political and economic cooperation between the EU and its Eastern Neighbour countries;

HAVING REGARD TO:

- * the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements concluded between the EU and its Member States and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova, Russia and Ukraine;
- * the Council conclusions on the European Neighbourhood Policy adopted by the Council on 20 June 2011;
- * the strong commitment of the EU and its Eastern European Partners to further enhance the political association and economic integration which is confirmed by the Eastern Partnership and the negotiations of association and Deep And Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA);
- * the Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Warsaw, 29-30 September 2011 concerning in particular the agreement to further enhance the cooperation in the areas of integrated border management, fight against drugs, organised crime and corruption;
- * Strategic frameworks for customs cooperation with Russia and, when endorsed, with Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine;
- * the conclusions of the meetings on Customs Cooperation at the Eastern Border of the EU, in

particular the High Level Seminar held in Budapest on 14-15 April 2011 and the High Level

Seminar “Towards better cooperation” held in Cracow on 19-21 October 2011;

* the Commission Action Plan to fight against smuggling of cigarettes and alcohol along the EU Eastern border;

* the Council conclusions on a strategy to prepare certain neighbouring countries for accession

to the 1987 EC-EFTA Conventions on a common transit procedure and the simplification of formalities in trade in goods;

* the ongoing European Union efforts to combat the smuggling of highly taxed goods, in

particular the large scale investigations coordinated by the European Anti-Fraud Office

(OLAF), the Agreements concluded by the EU and Member States with tobacco

manufacturers, the regional and cross-border measures under the Eastern Partnership,

the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument as well as the role played by the EU

Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM);

WITH A VIEW TO FOCUSING ON THE FOLLOWING PRIORITY AREAS OF COOPERATION AS AGREED IN BUDAPEST AND IN CRACOW:

* developing safe and fluid trade lanes;

* promoting risk management and the fight against fraud;

* investing in customs modernisation in the region;

INVITES THE COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES TO COOPERATE WITH THE EASTERN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES WITH A VIEW TO:

1. Develop safe and fluid trade lanes, in particular by:

* giving support to the countries in the region in their preparations for the extension of the Common Transit Convention and the Convention on the simplification of formalities in trade in goods which are powerful instruments for trade facilitation, for increasing the harmonisation of procedures and to convey economic integration;

* considering assistance in the development of reliable and compatible authorized economic operators systems in the Eastern neighbouring countries and later on the mutual recognition thereof;

* enhancing coordination at the border including the creation of fast lanes and the development of infrastructure where applicable;

* supporting initiatives of Member States that facilitate speedy transportation of goods through the EU Eastern border.

2. Promote risk management and the fight against fraud, in particular by:

* cooperating in developing and improving risk management systems and methods of risk analysis, including in order to increase the performance in the application of security and safety measures and to prevent smuggling of highly taxed goods and valuation fraud;

* developing exchanges of information on a sound legal basis to facilitate trade and strengthen risk management,

beginning by studying needs, building on the experience of past and current schemes of information exchange such as pilot projects;

* organising joint actions targeting risk areas and/or identified illicit trade routes in the region;

* stepping up actions to fight against smuggling of cigarettes and alcohol along the EU Eastern border;

* launching a study to identify the information useful to exchange and the ways of transmission, to strengthen risk management and improve customs controls with the view of establishing safe and fluid trade lines as well as fighting fraud.

3. Foster customs modernisation, in particular by:

* assisting the countries in the region in capacity building, including development and implementation of customs modernisation strategies;

* cooperating to facilitate convergence of customs legislation and procedures in line with the objectives of free trade area agreements currently negotiated or foreseen.

4. Explore the possible use of available assistance mechanisms for these purposes, such as:

* Customs 2013 and its successor programme;

* Hercule II and its successor programme;

* Twinning and other assistance projects;

* Programmes for regional and trans-border cooperation;

* EU Border Assistance Mission.

5. Seek to prepare and adopt the Strategic Frameworks as instruments to strengthen the customs cooperation with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

6. Continue the dialogue between the EU and Eastern neighbouring countries by setting up regular dedicated customs fora.

INVITES THE COMMISSION TO:

* evaluate the progress achieved in the agreed priority areas;

* report to the Council on the progress in order for the Council to propose a follow up to the above actions by the end of 2013.

EU launches trade negotiations with Georgia and Moldova

Brussels, 5 December 2011. [Link](#)

The EU decided to launch negotiations on a deep and comprehensive free trade area with Georgia and Moldova in order to boost economic growth and investment with the Eastern European partners. The negotiations will tackle a broad range of trade and economic issues so as to achieve a closer economic integration with the EU.

“We want to establish a stable and solid framework for closer economic ties with Georgia and Moldova” said EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht. “A deep and comprehensive

free trade area will help Georgia and Moldova to become more competitive and enjoy the benefits of the EU Single Market.”

“This kind of economic integration is one of the cornerstones of our relations with countries of Eastern Partnership,” Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle said. “Moldova and Georgia have achieved sufficient progress with the necessary reforms and have fulfilled a set of conditions to be able to proceed further in the gradual economic integration with the EU internal market.”

These free trade areas will be part of the Association Agreement, under negotiation with Georgia and Moldova since July 2010 and January 2010, respectively, in the framework of the Eastern Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The EU aims to enhance political stability and security in these two countries by means of closer economic integration with the EU. The free trade areas are expected to diversify and strengthen Georgia and Moldova’s export capacity and effectively open the EU market of 500 million consumers.

Both countries need to continue their work toward stability, transparency and predictability of the legislative regimes. These are essential to improve foreign direct investment inflows, bring jobs and long-term growth. Projected gains for Georgia and Moldova lie therefore behind the border and as such will impact their long-term development perspective. At the end of this process the two countries could see their GDPs significantly enhanced.

Both countries currently enjoy preferential access to the EU market through autonomous lower import duties through the Generalised System of Preferences with further incentives for good governance (“GSP+”) (Georgia) and Autonomous Trade Preferences (Moldova).

Background

In the framework of the Eastern Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU has been negotiating Association Agreements with Georgia and Moldova since 2010. The future Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas will be part of these Agreements, which aim to closely associate both countries to the EU both in economic and political terms, in line with the Eastern Partnership objectives. The future trade relations will therefore expand significantly beyond the scope of current cooperation, set out in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, in force since July 1998 (Moldova) and July 1999 (Georgia).

Although the Council authorised the Commission to start the Association Agreement negotiations in 2010 with both countries, the launch of the trade negotiations was conditioned upon Georgia and Moldova fulfilling a set of “key recommendations”. These were issued in March 2009 and December 2010, respectively, and covered necessary reforms in key regulatory areas related to trade and investment, in order to prepare Georgia and Moldova for further negotiations.

Substantial reforms were required notably in the fields of technical regulations, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, intellectual property rights protection and competition rules.

The EU assisted both countries in this process, including by means of technical assistance in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument and the Comprehensive Institution Building programme, since 2009, as well as with the EU Member States’ support.

The Commission has now assessed that sufficient progress has been achieved in these preparations and reported to the Council’s Trade Policy Committee, recommending the launch of negotiations. The Committee gave the Commission the green light in this regard on 2 December.

The parties will now engage in preparations for the first negotiating round to take place in early 2012.

Current trade relations

The EU is Georgia’s and Moldova’s first trading partner. Bilateral trade in goods amounted to €1.7 billion with Georgia and €2.1 billion with Moldova in 2010.

The fact that both countries already benefit from preferential access to the EU market (Georgia through the Generalized System of Preferences Plus and Moldova through the Autonomous Trade Preference (ATP) mechanism) means that existing import duties are already very low, so the benefits of the future deep and comprehensive free trade area lie predominantly behind the border, in the regulatory area.

Ukraine-EU Summit Joint Declaration

25 November 2011, Brussels. [Link](#)

1. The 15th Ukraine-EU Summit took place in Kyiv on 19 December, 2011. Ukraine was represented by President Viktor Yanukovich. The European Union (EU) was represented by Mr Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council and Mr José Manuel Durão Barroso, President of the European Commission.

2. The leaders noted with satisfaction that chief negotiators had reached a common understanding on the full text of the Association Agreement which will establish the future contractual basis of EU-Ukraine relations. The way is now open for technical completion of the final consolidated version of the Agreement, including its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, with a view to its initialling as soon as possible.

3. The leaders recognised the critical importance of the Association Agreement which would constitute a new stage in the development of Ukraine-EU contractual relations aiming at political association and economic integration. This would include a comprehensive process of convergence and approximation of Ukraine to European Union values, standards and norms in all areas of cooperation. To this end, the leaders underlined the importance of stepping up efforts in the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda.

4. The leaders exchanged views on the future of Ukraine-EU relations based on the objectives and the principles of the Association Agreement. This Association Agreement

leaves open the way for further progressive developments in EU-Ukraine relations. The leaders recognised that Ukraine as a European country with European identity shares a common history and common values with the countries of the European Union and acknowledged that gradual convergence of Ukraine with the EU in political, economic and legal areas would contribute to further progress in EU-Ukraine relations. The EU acknowledged the European aspirations of Ukraine and welcomed its European choice.

5. The leaders recalled that the Association Agreement provides for a shared commitment to a close and lasting relationship that is based on common values, in particular full respect for democratic principles, rule of law, good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, non-discrimination of persons belonging to minorities and respect for diversity and human dignity.

6. The leaders reconfirmed the commitment to the rule of law with an independent judiciary, recognizing this as a critical element underpinning the Association Agreement: at the same time they noted the specific challenges in this area which require urgent attention, notably through judicial reform. They also stressed the importance of a free media and of freedom of assembly, and agreed on the need further to improve the existing legislation in Ukraine in these areas in order to bring it in line with the international standards. They reached a common understanding that Ukraine's performance, notably in relation to respect for common values and the rule of law, will be of crucial importance for the speed of its political association and economic integration with the EU, including in the context of conclusion of the Association Agreement and its subsequent implementation.

7. The leaders discussed developments related to constitutional, electoral and judicial reforms in Ukraine and recognized the advantages of pursuing these reforms further in a transparent and inclusive manner, with the involvement of the opposition and significant participation of civil society representatives.

8. The leaders reconfirmed their commitment to create the institutional, regulatory and technical conditions for the implementation of the Association Agreement and the establishment of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. They recognised that such a deep and comprehensive free trade area, linked to the broader process of legislative approximation, has the potential to contribute to further economic integration with the European Union Internal Market as envisaged in the Association Agreement. They also agreed on critical importance of further efforts to improve the business climate in Ukraine.

9. The leaders took positive note of the progress made in the implementation of the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation and reconfirmed their shared commitment to move towards visa-free travel regime in due course, provided that conditions for well managed and secure mobility set out in the Action Plan are in place. As an intermediate step towards a visa-free travel regime, they welcomed the conclusion of the negotiations on amending the Visa Facilitation Agreement in

view of further facilitating the issuance of visas to Ukrainian citizens.

10. The leaders had an exchange on international and regional issues of common interest, in particular relations with Belarus and Russia. As regards the Republic of Moldova, they leaders noted their convergence of views on the Transnistria settlement process, in the light of the recent resumption of official negotiations in the "5+2" format.

Related Documents:

José Manuel Durão Barroso President of the European Commission Statement by President Barroso following the EU-Ukraine Summit Press conference Kiev

[Download here.](#)

Remarks of President Herman Van Rompuy, following the 15th EU-Ukraine Summit, Kyiv

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Parliament wants EU-Ukraine association agreement to go ahead

1 December 2011. [Link](#)

The EU-Ukraine association agreement should be initialled without delay, and preferably before the end of this year, said Parliament in a resolution voted on Thursday. EU governments should therefore give the agreement their green light at the summit of 8-9 December, it adds. While urging Ukraine to review the conviction of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, MEPs argue that the agreement could serve as a lever to bring about the changes needed in the country.

Parliament's recommendation, drafted by Ryszard Antoni Legutko (ECR, PL), stresses that the deepening of relations between the EU and Ukraine is in the interests of both parties but warns against the selective use of justice and urges Ukraine to respect human rights and the rule of law. Ms Tymoshenko and other opposition leaders should be allowed to participate fully in politics, it says.

MEPs also say it should be possible to suspend the agreement temporarily should basic fundamental principles be breached. They also call on Ukraine to make the former communist secret service archives public. The House wants the recently-postponed meeting with President Yanukovich to go ahead.

Related Documents:

Statement by Commissioner Štefan Füle on his visit to Ukraine

[Download here.](#)

EU support for public administration, regional development and energy efficiency in Ukraine

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EU HRVP and US Secretary of State on concerns about human rights in Belarus
Brussels, 18 December 2011. [Link](#)

Today we remember the one year anniversary of the start of the brutal crackdown by the Belarus Government on civil society, political opposition and independent media.

Over the past 12 months, the Belarusian authorities have imprisoned peaceful demonstrators, suppressed non-violent protests, and worked to silence independent voices. There have also been credible reports of degrading and inhumane treatment of political prisoners. A number of them have been set free, but we reiterate our call for all political prisoners to be immediately released and rehabilitated, including presidential candidates Andrei Sannikau and Mikalai Statkevich, and human rights defender Ales Byalyatski.

We also express grave concern over new laws that will further restrict citizens' fundamental freedoms of assembly, association and expression and that target support to civil society.

We reiterate that the improvement of bilateral relations with the United States and the European Union is conditional on progress by the Government of Belarus towards the fulfillment of its OSCE commitments and the respect for fundamental human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles.

The United States and the European Union remain willing to assist Belarus as it works to meet these obligations.

Related Documents:

Council strengthens restrictive measures on Belarus
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Belarus: Š.Füle with the opposition on European future
[Download here.](#)

Commissioner Füle following his meeting with Mr Tigran Sargsyan, Prime Minister of Armenia
Brussels, 5 December 2011. [Link](#)

I had a fruitful and open discussion with Mr Tigran Sargsyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. Shortly after the visit of High Representative Ashton in Yerevan and the Cooperation Council meeting of 25 November, this meeting confirms the mutual commitment to reinforce links between the EU and Armenia.

Regarding EU-Armenian relations, I expressed the view that the EU is very pleased to see new and ambitious reform efforts from Armenia, bringing together important priorities of EU-Armenia relations, including preparations for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. In this context we also discussed setting up the EU-Armenia Partnership for Reforms, which is being developed in line with the Joint Declaration we had signed with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Edward Nalbandian, during my visit to Armenia last April.

Today, I reiterated our commitment to support Armenia in advancing its ambitious reform strategy. I encouraged Armenia to remain committed to political reforms, particularly with regard to forthcoming elections.

I assured the Prime Minister that the EU is ready to organise an international event to mobilise international support for a sustained reform effort after Armenian Parliamentary elections in May 2012. In this context, I stressed the importance of ensuring that these elections will be conducted in line with international standards.

We also had a discussion on the Eastern Partnership agenda for 2012 and the road map, which is now being prepared to guide and monitor the implementation of the Eastern Partnership. In this context, I commended Armenia's commitment to the Eastern Partnership and its active involvement in Eastern Partnership initiatives.

We welcomed the recent signature of a Mobility Partnership with Armenia as an important step towards bringing European and Armenian citizens closer together. We also welcomed the recently adopted EU assistance for governance and the public sector in Armenia. We are also looking forward to start negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements early in 2012.

We also mentioned the visit of the President of the Republic of Armenia, Mr Serzh Sargsyan, in Brussels early next year that should further build on the good momentum in our mutual relationship.

EU-Armenia Human Rights Dialogue
6 December 2011, Yerevan. [Link](#)

On 6 December 2011, the European Union and Armenia held the third round of human rights dialogue in Yerevan. As of today, the European Union is engaged in dedicated human rights discussions with close to 40 countries around the world. Armenia welcomes and attaches importance to this format of dialogue with the EU.

The dialogue, which also involved an expert level, was held in a friendly, open and constructive atmosphere, with an exchange on a wide range of issues of mutual interest and concern, as well as discussions on possibilities for concrete cooperation in the field of human rights. The Armenian delegation was headed by Mr. Zohrab Mnatsakanian,

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. The EU Delegation was headed by Dr. Riina Kionka, Head of the Human Rights Policy Guidelines Division at the European External Action Service.

The dialogue allowed for an exchange of views on the human rights situation both in Armenia and in the EU. In particular, the talks focused on: the national framework for the protection of human rights; the reform of the judiciary; elections and electoral framework, freedom of expression and information, freedom of assembly and association, including the functioning of civil society; rights of vulnerable groups. The EU and Armenia also discussed human rights cooperation within international organisations, in particular at the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The EU and Armenia agreed to hold a EU-Armenia civil society seminar before the next round of the human rights dialogue.

In keeping with the EU's practice of incorporating the voice of society into its meetings on human rights with third countries, the EU met with representatives of Armenian NGOs and international NGOs prior to the human rights dialogue.

HRVP on the Duma elections in the Russian Federation

Brussels, 6 December 2011. [Link](#)

I take note of the outcome of the Duma elections in the Russian Federation and the fact that the elections, as noted by the international observers from OSCE/ODIHR in their preliminary conclusions, were technically well prepared and administered.

Reports of procedural violations, such as lack of media impartiality, lack of separation between party and state, and the harassments of independent monitoring attempts, are however of serious concern.

The OSCE/ODIHR as well as observers representing the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe will present their respective reports in the coming months. In the meantime, I expect that the issues raised in the preliminary findings as well as by local observers will be addressed by Russian authorities to allow for smooth and fair Presidential elections in the Spring.

Related Documents:

Remarks of Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, following the 28th EU-Russia Summit [Download here](#).

Statement by President Barroso at the press conference following the EU-Russia Summit Press conference [Download here](#).

EU welcomes 3 new members to the World Trade Organisation

Brussels, 15 December 2011. [Link](#)

The EU welcomes the accession of Montenegro, Russia and Samoa to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) this week, bringing the total number of Members to 157. The EU is also expected to formally conclude its bilateral negotiations with the Lao People's Democratic Republic on its accession to the WTO on 16 December.

"The EU has strongly supported the accession of these countries to the WTO" said EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht. "Their WTO membership improves the conditions for doing business with these countries and strengthens the multilateral trading system as a whole."

The 8th WTO Ministerial Conference, taking place from 14-17 December 2011 in Geneva, will endorse the accession of Russia on 16 December and of Montenegro and Samoa on 17 December. On 16 December, the EU will sign bilateral deals with Russia and with Lao People's Democratic Republic, whose accession to the WTO may become a reality in 2012. The accession of Russia to the WTO is significant from both a multilateral and bilateral perspective. Russia is the biggest economy still outside the WTO, therefore both Russia and its trading partners will benefit from its integration into the global, rules-based system of trade relations. Russia's accession to the WTO is especially important for the EU, Russia's biggest trading partner. This step will give a major boost to further development of our economic relationship. Russia's membership in the WTO will also prove an important stepping stone for deepening the bilateral economic integration, including through the conclusion of the ongoing negotiation on the New Agreement.

The EU also welcomes the accession of Montenegro to the WTO. Since it is a candidate country for EU membership, Montenegro's WTO membership is an important milestone in the integration process with the EU.

Samoa is the second least-developed country whose accession is approved this year, following Vanuatu in October. The EU has supported Samoa along its accession path, accompanying the country in its internal reform process and taking a flexible approach in accordance with the specific principles agreed in the WTO as regards the accession of least-developed countries.

The signature of the bilateral Protocol between the EU and Lao People's Democratic Republic on 16 December will represent a significant step closer to the accession of Laos to the WTO. The EU welcomes Laos' reforms and progress throughout its accession process; they will build the long-term economic conditions for economic growth.

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CEPS Neighbourhood Watch Editorial address

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