

Bringing Democracy Support onto the Front-burner

The 'D' word had virtually disappeared even from the lexicon of the European Union in its dealings with the Arab world, in deference to Presidents Ben Ali and Mubarak. Now it is the demand of the peoples of almost all Arab states, including two post-revolutionary regimes in the making (Tunisia, Egypt). And elsewhere in the Arab world the leaderships are being forced to make moves in the direction of democracy. Those trying to make do with gestures rather than real reforms seem doomed to escalating conflict, if not to be overthrown in the weeks and months to come.

At any event all the Arab world from Morocco to Yemen is now living in a drastically new political context. The European Union cannot control these processes, but has every interest to try and help channel them in the direction of soundly functioning democracy.

The 'D' word has been brought back in the joint Barroso/Ashton document of 8 March proposing a new 'Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the South Mediterranean'. But that was just a first sketchy political statement. The next step must translate the initiative into operational plans. The opportunity to do this will be the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, promised for 10 May. There are several key issues that the EU has now to confront.

The first and principal question is whether democracy promotion is really to be brought onto the front-burner, after years of virtual neglect or only token attention, as regards at least the Arab world. European leaders are already answering this question with an emphatic yes. In saying this, they have to recognize the extent to which democracy promotion was diluted if not banished from the mechanisms of the neighbourhood policy, while it was deliberately excluded from the Union for the Mediterranean initiative of President Sarkozy. But the main question now is what are they going to do. Is there enough political will to give the EU's democracy support agenda a serious push, and if so where would this push lead us? At the level of the European Parliament there is manifest keenness, as evidenced by their April resolutions on neighbourhood policy, and their powers in relation to the budget are significant.

The EU's main aid programme (ENPI) has many thematic or sectoral priorities, but democracy is not one of them. The nearest apology for this is a heading called 'governance', but the actual projects under this heading

tend for example to be about 'modernisation of public administration', or 'improvements in the judiciary', all a safe distance from core issues of political system. The separate instrument dedicated to democracy and human rights according to its name (EIDHR) has the soft option of election observation (when invited) as its first speciality, and it otherwise mounts a plethora of projects relating to human rights and civil society development. Of course to mount highly political projects against the wish of an authoritarian leader is impossible, unless these are to be off-shore or covert operations. But this political vacuum in operations to date only underlines the extent of radical changes now due, if democracy is really to be placed high on the agenda.

The second question then is how to do it organizationally. A minimalist option would be to revise the priorities of the EIDHR, and make core issues of democratic political organization a major priority, making room for this together with softer options, i.e. election observation and civil society initiatives.

More fundamentally there has been a long ongoing debate over whether the EIDHR would be better transformed in whole or part into an independent foundation, drawing on the models of the German political party foundations or the US National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Something like this seems to be the idea of the Polish government in proposing a European Endowment for Democracy (EED). This proposal is under consideration by Brussels in the context of review of the neighbourhood policy. A foundation of this kind would function as an agency of the EU, with administrative autonomy. If it followed the German or NED models it would establish offices in those partner states which wanted it. One can imagine that Egypt and Tunisia might be among the first Arab countries to be interested. Such offices would be local hubs for all democracy promotion activities for which there was a demand (advice on constitutional issues, political party organisation, training programmes, etc.). They would be endowed with resources to make micro grants, or 're-grants' from block allocations from the central budget. The EED would also engage in actions in 'difficult' countries where local offices might not be welcome, for which Poland has Belarus in mind. One successful initiative in east and southeast Europe has been the creation of 15 national Schools of Political Studies, following the Moscow School. These are sponsored by the Council of Europe in partnership with the European Commission. The model could be extended to Arab countries, adapted of course to the very different context.

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A third issue would be how to take into account Islamic specificities. The US, German and British political foundations all have structured links to the main political parties of the West - right, left and centre. All these foundations in part work explicitly with recognisable 'sister parties'. But in the Arab world there are the Islamist parties with no counterpart in Europe or the US. However in Turkey the counterpart very much exists, in the AKP party. This prompts the idea of EU-Turkish cooperation, in which a Turkish counterpart might be invited to enter into a cooperation structure with the EU.

Fourth is the territorial map for a new impulse: should it be just for the South Mediterranean, or all neighbourhood partners East and South, or an extension of either of these two maps to embrace the rest of the Arab world, notably the Gulf states and Yemen, or even global. The EU's neighbourhood policy has its map, and the EU-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) cooperation is a separate affair. The case for stepping up EU-GCC cooperation certainly exists, but it would not seem advisable to merge the two regions for the purposes of EU policy, since there are too many difficult issues to sort out for the EU and Mediterranean alone, including what to do with the badly limping Union for the Mediterranean. However to make an ad hoc opening, by extending the new democracy initiative to the rest of the Arab world would make sense.

Fifth is how to make good use of the Arab diasporas in Europe. The second generation of immigrant families are now well established in mainstream educational and professional career paths. Maybe not as much as one would like, but still there are cohorts of young Euro-Maghreb professionals of the highest quality, now often with EU citizenship, who retain family connections in their countries of origin and of course Arab language competence. They amount to a valuable resource for EU programmes in the South Mediterranean, whose mobilization warrants a special effort, both for democracy actions as well as in the staffing of the EU delegations.

The notorious disunity of the EU over matters of hard security policy have once again been in evidence over Libya, with France and the UK in the front line, various other member states half-participating, and Germany disappointing all with its abstention over UNSC resolution 1973. Alongside this the case for an impressive upgrade in the EU's democracy promotion policies in its neighbourhood stands out now as a clear opportunity and necessity.

Michael Emerson
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Council of the EU on Libya

Luxembourg, 12 April 2011. [Link](#)

1. The Council welcomed the efforts undertaken by the international community to ensure implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1970 and 1973 in Libya. Recalling the need for close cooperation between all international partners, the Council welcomed the conference on Libya which was held in London on 29 March and the establishment of the Libya Contact Group. The creation of this Group, together with the further steps outlined at the Conference, provides an important platform for coordination of the international community's efforts. The Council looked forward to the first meeting of the Contact Group in Doha on 13 April. The European Union is ready to intensify its efforts, in line with UNSCR 1973, to foster a political solution in close collaboration with the UN, the League of Arab States, the African Union and other relevant partners.

2. The Council called for an immediate and genuine ceasefire. The Council repeated its call on Colonel Kadhafi to relinquish power immediately. It once more condemned the Libyan regime's refusal to respect UNSCR 1970 and 1973. It reiterated its call to the Libyan regime for a halt to the violence against citizens and for full respect for human rights. The Council also called for full compliance with international humanitarian law and in particular the protection of civilians. In this regard it noted the importance of cooperation with the International Criminal Court and welcomed the decision of the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights of 25 March.

3. Those working within the regime face a choice: to continue to associate themselves with the brutal repression of the Libyan people by Colonel Kadhafi or work to support an orderly and Libyan-led transition to democracy through a broad-based dialogue in the interests of the security and prosperity of all the Libyan people. The unity and territorial integrity of Libya should be ensured. The Council took note of the interim Transitional National Council's "Vision of a democratic Libya", which it considered as a contribution to the transition process.

4. The Council expressed its deep concern regarding the serious humanitarian situation in Libya and on its borders. It noted the risk of a further deterioration caused by displacements and migratory flows resulting from the conflict. It recalled in particular the obligation to ensure unhindered access for humanitarian aid. The Council welcomed the role of the UN Secretary General in coordinating humanitarian assistance. The EU is also determined to continue actively contributing to humanitarian activities for the Libyan people and stands ready to step up efforts in this regard, in coordination with the UN and other relevant organisations.

5. The EU has decided that it shall, if requested by UN OCHA, conduct a CSDP operation, "EUFOR Libya", to support humanitarian assistance in the region, in full respect of the principles governing humanitarian action, particularly impartiality and neutrality. To this end, the EU has appointed an Operation Commander and designated an Operational Headquarters in Rome. The Council tasked the Operation Commander to pursue urgently further planning, in close cooperation and complementarity with the UN, NATO and

others in order for the EU to be able to react quickly to developments as regards the humanitarian and security situation. As part of preparations, the EU stands ready to consider offers of contributions from third states including countries in the region, following PSC invitation.

6. Recalling the Conclusions of the European Council of 24 and 25 March and the Conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 11 and 12 April, the EU and its Member States stand ready to demonstrate their concrete solidarity to Member States most directly concerned by migratory movements and provide the necessary support as the situation evolves.

7. The Council has adopted today further restrictive measures, including in the oil and gas sector, against the regime and will take additional measures as necessary in order to prevent further funding of the regime. In this context, the Council and Member States will continue to deprive the regime completely of all funding derived from exports of oil and gas.

8. The Council underlined the readiness of the EU to support Libya in the longer term, and to play a leading role in helping stabilisation, building a democratic constitutional state, developing the rule of law and supporting civil society.

Related Documents:

- Council of the EU decides on EU military operation in support of humanitarian assistance operations in Libya. [Access here.](#)
- Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the Cairo conference on Libya. [Access here.](#)

Spokesperson of the EU HR on parity in Tunisian elections

Brussels, 14 April 2011. [Link](#)

The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy welcomes the proposal by the Council of the Tunisian High Commission for the Fulfilment of the Goals of the Revolution, Political Reform and Democratic Transition of a Law on the parliamentary elections that enshrines the principle of male-female parity for any candidates' list submitted.

It demonstrates that Tunisia intends to ensure full participation of women in political life. Women have played a key role in the revolution. Now Tunisia has the opportunity to further consolidate gender equality and end all forms of discrimination against women in law and in practice. By putting these principles at the heart of all ongoing political reforms, Tunisia can be a beacon of innovation for the region and beyond.

Statement of the HR Aston on violent repressions in Syria
Brussels, 23 April 2011.

I condemn the use of brutal force against demonstrators across Syria, which is resulting in high numbers of victims. The Syrian authorities must immediately stop their violent response and fully respect citizens' right to peaceful demonstrations. I deeply regret the death of many protesters on Friday 21 April, and offer my condolences to their families. The killings are appalling and intolerable. All those responsible for these crimes must be brought to justice and held accountable for their actions.

I noted President Assad's announcement of three decrees on Thursday 20 April, related to the lifting of the state of emergency, abolition of the Higher State Security Court and a right to peaceful protests. However, credible reform can only be measured by real improvements on the ground. I call on the Syrian government to carry out profound political reforms, starting with the respect for basic rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. It is essential that these reforms begin now and follow a concrete timetable.

I reiterate that the EU stands ready to support, once launched, a genuine reform process in Syria. That process can only be made possible by putting an immediate end to all repressive violence.

Council of the EU on Syria
Luxembourg, 12 April. [Link](#)

1. The Council is extremely concerned at the situation in Syria. It deplores the many deaths resulting from ongoing violence, strongly condemns the use of force by the security forces against peaceful demonstrators and urges the authorities to exercise restraint. The Council calls for the immediate release of those arrested in connection with the peaceful demonstrations. The Council calls on the Syrian authorities to investigate the deaths of protestors and to bring those responsible to account through a fair and transparent process.
2. The Council calls on the Syrian authorities to respond urgently to the legitimate demands of the Syrian people including through the lifting of the state of emergency. It underlines the importance of a clear and credible programme of political reform and the announced intention for political reforms must be more ambitious and backed by a concrete timetable for their implementation. It takes note of the appointment of a new Prime Minister and looks forward to the formation of a new government that should urgently launch the necessary reforms.
3. The Council notes the announced formation of a number of committees to review legislation and expects them to produce substantive proposals towards an inclusive, open and representative government. The Syrian authorities must abide by their international commitments with regards to ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms including freedom of assembly, expression and media. The Council calls

on the Syrian authorities to release without further delay all political prisoners and human rights defenders.

4. The Council will monitor events closely and stands ready to review its policies towards Syria as appropriate, including by supporting, once launched, a genuine process of reform.

EU opens up its market to Palestinian exports
Brussels, 13 April 2011. [Link](#)

High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/ Vice President of the Commission Catherine Ashton today on behalf of the European Union signed an Agreement with Prime Minister Fayyad that gives all agricultural products, processed agricultural products and fish and fishery products originating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip immediate duty free access to the EU market. The only exception from full liberalisation is the specific duty for imports of fruit and vegetables under the entry price system. This duty will remain applicable if these entry prices are not respected.

"Facilitating Palestinian trade is a crucial element of the state building process which the EU is supporting both politically and financially. This agreement is the tangible expression of our support," said Catherine Ashton on the occasion of the signing of the agreement which has the form of an Exchange of Letters.

"This agreement is good news for Palestinian farmers and the wider economy as it provides free access for their agricultural exports to tap into our market of 500 million consumers." highlighted Commissioner for Agriculture Dacian Cioloş.

"This agreement came about thanks to a genuine and collective commitment from the EU to improve its trade offer in support of the Palestinian economy. More can still be done, on a bilateral, regional and even multilateral level. I would expect to see further trade expansion firmly rooted in a conducive political environment and in visible social and economic gains for the Palestinian people" stressed Commissioner for Trade Karel De Gucht.

Background

The agreement will give immediate access and full liberalisation, for a transitional period of 10 years to the EU market, with possible further extension in time, to all agricultural products, processed agricultural products and fish and fishery products originating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A review clause is envisaged after 5 years as of entry into force. The only exception is the specific duty for imports of fruit and vegetables under the entry price system that will remain applicable if these prices are not respected. The agreement also envisages new provisions on effective administrative cooperation and assistance, in order to ensure that only Palestinian products will benefit from this specific arrangement.

Under the framework of the Barcelona Process and in accordance with the Euro-Mediterranean Roadmap for Agriculture (Rabat roadmap) adopted on 28 November 2005, the European Commission entered into negotiations with the Palestinian Authority of the West Bank and Gaza Strip

on further liberalisation of trade in agricultural products, processed agricultural products and fish and fishery products. The current Interim Association Agreement already provides for duty-free access to EU markets for Palestinian industrial goods and industrial products.

The Palestinian Authority is the smallest trading partner for the EU in the Euro-Mediterranean region and almost worldwide, with total trade amounting to Euro 56.6 million in 2009 where the vast majority of it is accounted for by EU exports (Euro 50.5 million). EU imports from the Palestinian Authority amount to just Euro 6.1 million in 2009 and consist mainly of agricultural products and processed agricultural products (approximately 70.1 % of total EU imports). Further market opening on the EU side is expected to support the development of the economy of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip through increased export performance.

Related Documents:

- Statement by HR Ashton on the violence in and out of Gaza. [Access here.](#)
- EU expresses disappointment concerning settlement expansion in East Jerusalem. [Access here.](#)

EuFoA hails new dialogue between Armenian government and opposition Brussels, 29 April 2011. [Link](#)

Following a week of unusually conciliatory statements from government and opposition representatives, European Friends of Armenia (www.EuFoA.org) hails the first steps towards a real political dialogue between the two camps. Traditionally, the political climate in Armenia has been very polarised and personalised, rather than one of dialogue and respect for different views.

"This is a totally new tone in Armenian politics, driven by the personalities involved. If the healthy variety of political blocks in Armenia aim for the best political solutions rather than for harming the opponent, they could regain voter confidence in Armenian politics at large, which today is very low. We now encourage all other opposition and government parties to support this, as the side which will look most mature and reasonable will win most in this process. Above all, Armenia will win!" commented EuFoA Secretary General Dr Michael Kambeck.

On a visit in Yerevan this morning, Stefan Füle, European Commissioner for the Neighbourhood Policy, was pleased to say that "there is a certain encouraging progress since my last visit to Armenia".

During yesterday's rally, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, leader of the Armenian National Congress (ANC), the most vocal of the three main opposition blocks, reacted positively to recent measures and statements by the Armenian President, Serzh Sargsyan.

Weeks ago, Sargsyan ordered a new investigation into the events of March 2008, a move which follows several cross-party attempts to clarify the circumstances, all of which so far failed in mutual accusations of the politicians involved. This week, the Yerevan Municipality agreed to re-allow demonstrations on Opera Square, giving priority for the democratic right of assembly over problems of traffic disruption. On Wednesday, Sargsyan publicly praised the ANC for not attempting to stir up more unrest and hinted at efforts to speed up the release of prisoners, who the opposition claims to be detained for political reasons.

These developments are entirely in line with recent calls from the EU and the Council of Europe upon the authorities and the opposition in Armenia. The picture also fundamentally contrast an opposite development in neighbouring Azerbaijan, where the authorities recently strongly tightened their already firm grip on the country's infant civil society and opposition.

Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum to Azerbaijan and Belarus Brussels, 5 April 2011. [Link](#)

Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum calls for:

- human rights, freedom of expression, and reforms towards democracy to be given top priority in EU relations with Azerbaijan and Belarus
- jailed civil society activists and political prisoners to be released immediately in both countries
- civil society representatives, especially the Civil Society Forum National Platforms, to be recognised as key partners of the EU in all Eastern Partnership countries, and establishment by the EU of a Civil Society Facility to finance the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) and support dialogue between CSOs and government in the six Eastern Partnership countries.

The work of civil society - including those formally recognised within the framework of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, established and funded by the European Commission - continues to be obstructed by government authorities in Belarus and Azerbaijan.

Democracy campaigners beaten and arrested in Baku

On 2 April 2011, peaceful protesters were beaten and arrested in Baku, the Azerbaijani capital, and others were arrested in pre-emptive police action before the 2 April public gatherings calling for democratic reforms in Azerbaijan. The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Steering Committee strongly condemns the arrest of civil society leaders, including EITI (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative) Azerbaijan Board Member İlham Hüseynli, and the head of the Association for Atlantic Cooperation Sulheddin Akbar. The arrests are clear violations of the obligations of Azerbaijan as a member of the Council of Europe and a party to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum calls upon the Azerbaijani authorities to provide

full access to the EU representation in Baku and to Azerbaijani and international human rights organisations to detainees in prison, and for the swift release of all prisoners arrested during and before the democracy rallies.

The Azerbaijani National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum has been working hard to secure the release of the detainees, and the Steering Committee regrets the failure of EU Council President Herman van Rompuy to meet with civil society leaders on his visit to Baku in January 2011, and urges European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle to meet with the National Platform of the Civil Society Forum on his forthcoming visit to Baku on 22 May 2011.

Belarus authorities obstruct meetings of civil society national platform and Eastern Partnership civil society forum steering committee

In March 2011, government authorities in Belarus prevented a Conference of the Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum taking place in Minsk by instructing the hotel approached to host the event to cancel the booking. Furthermore, the Belarusian government has obstructed the participation of a number of members of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Steering Committee from attending a Steering Committee meeting planned to take place in Minsk on 4-5 April 2011 - by failing to issue visas to four participants from EU member-states, a clear rebuke to the EU itself since the visa applications were based on invitations issued by the EU delegation in Minsk (the Steering Committee includes 10 members from the Eastern Partnership countries and seven from EU countries). As a result, a full meeting of the Steering Committee was not possible - a meeting funded by the European Commission and agreed to be held in Minsk with the personal knowledge and support of European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle.

In line with its statement of 21 December 2010, the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum reiterates its call upon the Belarusian authorities to release immediately all the democracy and human rights defenders, journalists, and opposition presidential candidates and their aides, detained in Belarus on 19 December 2010, the date of the presidential elections in Belarus.

In the joint declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership summit, signed on 7 May 2009 by the EU and six neighbouring countries, including the governments of the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Azerbaijan, the participants agreed that "the Eastern Partnership will be based on commitments to the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to market economy, sustainable development and good governance".

The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum calls upon the Azerbaijani and Belarusian authorities to immediately release all political prisoners, and to cease obstruction to the activities of civil society, including the National Platforms of the Civil Society Forum. The Steering Committee urges the European Commission,

the EU Council, and EU member-states to consult extensively with representatives of civil society, and to ensure that they meet directly with them on every official visit to Azerbaijan, Belarus, and to other Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) to hear first-hand about the observance of human rights and democratic freedoms in their respective countries.

Likewise, the Steering Committee calls upon the European Commission and EU member-states to support the full participation of civil society in the official platform meetings of the Eastern Partnership, thematic working groups, expert panels and flagship initiatives, with prior access to draft policy documents, and the establishment of a distinct Civil Society Facility under the ENPI (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument) to finance the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) and support dialogue between CSOs and government.

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Steering Committee was elected at the meeting of more than 200 representatives of civil society who met in Berlin on 18-19 December 2010. The Civil Society Forum was established by the European Commission in 2009 "to promote contacts among civil society organisations and facilitate their dialogue with public authorities".

Plans by Civil Society Forum participants for 2011-2012 include a comparative report monitoring the observation of human rights in all six Eastern Partnership countries.

EU statement on the situation of fundamental freedoms in Azerbaijan
Brussels, 7 April 2011. [Link](#)

1. Recalling its statement of 17 March on the arrests of youth activists in Baku the EU remains deeply concerned at the continued lack of respect of fundamental freedoms in Azerbaijan.
2. The EU expresses its concern about the fact that on 2 April 2011 a peaceful demonstration in Baku was systematically dispersed and that a large number of participants were arrested and immediately sentenced to administrative detention without proper legal defence. Some journalists were prevented from reporting and filming the demonstration and four journalists were temporarily arrested. In addition, opposition party members had been arrested or confined to house arrest ahead of the demonstration. Some have been charged with criminal offences in relation to the conduct of this peaceful movement. We call on the Azerbaijani authorities to immediately release all individuals concerned.
3. Furthermore, the EU calls on Azerbaijan to guarantee the right of journalists to freely exercise their profession and promote the necessary conditions to allow them to do so in safety. In this context we are concerned about the severe beating by persons unknown of the Azadliq newspaper reporters Seymur Haziyeve on 26 March and Ramin Deco on 4 April. We support the statement by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on the first case and we call upon the Azerbaijani authorities to condemn these incidents publicly, to

do their utmost in order to bring the perpetrators of violence against journalists to justice and to prevent future incidents of this kind.

4. These developments run counter to Azerbaijan's OSCE commitments in the fields of freedom of assembly, expression and freedom of the media, recently reaffirmed by all participating States at the Astana Summit. We reiterate the assertion of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office during his recent visit to Baku that freedom of assembly was essential to any democratic state. We urge Azerbaijan to go further with democratic reforms.

5. The EU stands ready to continue to support further reforms in Azerbaijan guided by the values laid down by the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the EU. Finally the EU reiterates the importance it attaches to intensified relations with Azerbaijan and invites the Azerbaijani Government to make full use of the opportunities offered by the Eastern Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Commissioner Füle expresses concerns about current developments in Azerbaijan
Brussels, 18 April 2011. [Link](#)

We are increasingly concerned about the domestic developments in the Republic of Azerbaijan regarding freedom of assembly and expression. Several new incidents of arrests by the authorities have taken place in response to peaceful demonstrations. Reportedly there have been several cases of protesters subjected to administrative detention as well as criminal cases pressed against the organisers. This happened in a context of escalating pressures on journalists, youth and political activists as well as international NGO involved in human right issues.

We encourage the Azerbaijani authorities to allow the peaceful demonstrations to take place in relevant locations and call on the country to fully respect its OSCE and Council of Europe commitments in the fields of democracy and human rights. We remain open to dialogue with all parties and willing to engage with Azerbaijani authorities to constructively support their efforts in this area.

Amnesty international concerning the crackdown on peaceful protests in Azerbaijan
Brussels, 14 April 2011. [Link](#)

The Azerbaijani authorities have initiated a new wave of arrests and criminal charges in an attempt to stifle the latest opposition rally, "Great Unity Day" planned for 17 April. On 9 April a further five opposition activists were charged with "organising mass disorder" for their participation in the violently dispersed 2 April "Day of Wrath" protest in Baku.

The new charges bring the total number of activists facing long prison terms for their involvement in the 2 April protest to 10, seven of whom Amnesty International considers to be prisoners of conscience.

The treatment of these 10 activists highlights the range of human rights abuses currently occurring in Azerbaijan. Local rights groups report that the activists have been beaten by police and remanded in custody after closed hearings on the basis of no or very little evidence, without having been granted access to a lawyer of their choice.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned by the authorities' systematic violation of individuals' rights to freedom of expression and assembly, by the reported ill-treatment of individuals by officials while in custody, and by numerous violations of individuals' right to a fair trial.

As the spring session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) draws to a close, Amnesty International calls on the Committee of Ministers and PACE to condemn the failure of Azerbaijan to uphold its commitments as a Council of Europe member state and respect the rights guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Amnesty International also calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the seven prisoners of conscience who have been imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly and to immediately drop the charges brought in absentia against France-based activist Elnur Majidli.

Amnesty International further calls on the Azerbaijani government to fully investigate and prosecute those responsible for the ill-treatment and harassment of activists participating in the 2 April rally and to respect its international obligations to guarantee the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression.

New criminal charges

Popular Front Party (PFP) members Babek Hasanov and Sahib Karimov, Musavat party members Elshan Hasanov and Ahad Mammadli, and the independent activist Ulvi Guliyev, have all been charged with organising mass disorder under Article 233 of the Criminal Code, which carries a maximum sentence of three years in prison. Ahad Mammadli has also been charged under both Article 233 and Article 315, which prohibits "violently resisting a representative of authority". Article 315 is also punishable by three years in prison. During closed hearings on 9 April, a judge at Sabail district court remanded all five in custody for two months pending their trial.

A week before the 2 April protest, organizers submitted a notification to the Baku Executive Committee, informing them of their intention to hold a peaceful demonstration of no more than 3,000 people at the public square near Narimanov cinema. The demonstration was intended to last two or three hours.

The organizers chose this location as it is inside one of the 11 zones officially designated by Baku authorities as suitable for protest.

However, Baku Executive Committee refused to allow the protest there, and asked the demonstrators to hold the protest on the premises of a driving school in Bibi Heybat, a location

on the outskirts of town and completely cut off from city life. The authorities claimed that a protest in Narimanov would disrupt the flow of traffic, although the square is able to hold 3,000 people without blocking the roads.

The organizers then attempted to hold a peaceful demonstration with 1,000 participants in Fountain Square in the centre of Baku. Fountain Square is comfortably large enough to hold over 1,000 demonstrators safely and securely if the authorities were to prepare the area beforehand.

Such a demonstration would inevitably temporarily disrupt the commercial and leisure activities that take place in Fountain Square and its surroundings. Such is the nature of demonstrations.

Amnesty International believes that the organisers of the demonstration intended to stage a peaceful protest and that the isolated incidents of vandalism that occurred are not attributable to them. Notably, no one has been detained or charged in connection with the criminal damage that resulted.

Amnesty International considers that Ulvi Guliyev, Babek Hasanov, Sahib Karimov, and Elshan Hasanov have all been detained solely for organizing an unreasonably unauthorized protest; as have Tural Abbasli, head of the Youth Organisation of the opposition Musavat Party, Arif Hajili, head of the Central Office of Musavat Party, and Mahammad Majidli, head of PFP's public relations unit, who have also been remanded in custody on charges of organising mass disorder under Article 233 of the Criminal Code following their arrests on 2 April.

Amnesty International therefore regards them as prisoners of conscience, imprisoned solely for attempting to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of association and expression.

The Azerbaijani authorities have also reportedly issued an Interpol arrest warrant for France-based activist Elnur Majidli. He told Amnesty International that he has been charged in absentia under Article 281 of the Criminal Code, which outlaws the "violent overthrow of authority, or the distribution of materials calling for such". The charge carries a maximum sentence of 12 years in prison.

Elnur Majidli has been co-organizing a series of protests in Azerbaijan via Facebook. Last week he received a telephone call from the General Prosecutor's Office warning him to cease his Facebook activities or face prosecution. He has also received several threatening phone calls from anonymous callers in Azerbaijan. Last week his father and brother were both fired from their positions in a state-owned shipping company and the Ministry of Finance respectively.

Amnesty International has reviewed Elnur Majidli's Facebook activity and considers the accusation that he has been calling for a violent overthrow of the state to be baseless. If this is the only basis to the charge against him, the organization believes he is being prosecuted simply for exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association.

Meanwhile the 17 April "Great Unity Day" Facebook page he co-founded has been deleted by Facebook after a spam attack of unknown origin.

The leaders of two major opposition parties, Musavat Party and the PFP, have pledged to continue the protest at the next rally on 17 April. They have again applied for permission to hold the protest at the square in Narimanov. "The 2 April rally only marked the beginning of a mass movement for change in Azerbaijan, we will continue the protests despite the arrest of our activists" said Isa Gambar, the head of Musavat party, addressing opposition party supporters at their headquarters on 11 April.

Amnesty International calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to allow this peaceful protest to go ahead.

Statement by the spokesperson of EU HR Ashton on the crackdown on independent media in Belarus
Brussels, 10 April 2011. [Link](#)

The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is deeply concerned by news of the detention of Mr. Andrzej Poczobut, a correspondent for the Polish newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza, during his journey to the EU Delegation to Belarus in Minsk.

This is yet another example of ongoing human rights violations conducted by the authorities in Belarus since the presidential elections on 19 December 2010. The EU strongly condemns all harassment, arrests, and intimidation of representatives of the Belarusian independent media as well as violations of the fundamental human rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the media.

The EU calls upon the Belarusian authorities to end at once the prosecution of independent journalists for slander or other politically-motivated charges. The EU also urges the Belarusian authorities to cooperate fully with the OSCE representative on Freedom of the Media.

NATO Foreign Ministers focus on broader NATO-Ukraine cooperation
Berlin, 15 April 2011. [Link](#)

In a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC), NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs welcomed today the presence of Minister Konstyantyn Gryshchenko in Berlin as a clear sign of Ukraine's policy of engagement with the Alliance.

Ministers discussed priorities for further cooperation with Ukraine and how to better advance common objectives. They agreed to continue broadening the spectrum of NATO-Ukraine cooperation to include also emerging security challenges, such as the fight against terrorism, the proliferation of mass destruction and their means of delivery, cyber defence, and energy security.

The Alliance Foreign Ministers thanked Ukraine for the contributions to NATO-led operations.

In his remarks at the beginning of the meeting, Anders Fogh Rasmussen highlighted that “five months ago, NATO adopted a new Strategic Concept. And our new strategy puts partnerships at the core of NATO’s mission and reconfirms the value of NATO’s Distinctive Partnership with Ukraine”.

“During my visit to Kyiv in February, President Yanukovich reaffirmed his personal commitment to furthering active political dialogue and practical cooperation between NATO and Ukraine. His recent approval of Ukraine’s National Annual Programme for 2011 is a tangible expression of this commitment”, the Secretary General emphasized.

At today’s meeting, the Foreign Ministers of NATO countries and Ukraine discussed a substantive agenda, which, according to Fogh Rasmussen, “reflects not only the strength and significance of the NATO-Ukraine Distinctive Partnership, but also its considerable further potential”.

President Barroso following his meeting with the President Yanukovich
Brussels, 18 April 2011. [Link](#)

I just had a constructive meeting with President Yanukovich. We naturally shared our hopes and expectations for the Chernobyl Summit. I am confident that the high-level events tomorrow will bring the desired results, notably in securing the necessary funds to complete the safety work on the Chernobyl site.

The EU is fully committed to supporting nuclear safety and especially regarding Chernobyl. Tomorrow, I will on behalf of the Commission announce an extra EU pledge of about Euro110 million. We are already contributing the lion’s share to these projects so far – roughly a quarter (Euro 470 million): for nuclear safety, but also to improve local living conditions.

At the same time, the EU has launched nuclear safety tests for plants on its territory, to ensure the highest possible safety for our citizens.

We expect our international partners to do the same. This is clearly a global issue that needs a global response. Nuclear issues do not respect borders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We also focused on the upcoming opportunities in our bilateral relationship between the EU and Ukraine, including in particular the negotiations on the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, implementation of the Visa Action Plan and the wider reform agenda. President Yanukovich recently stated that an EU integration strategy is a key element of his political approach. It is important that Ukraine continues filling this European agenda with life.

On the future EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, we both confirmed our determination to conclude negotiations in the course of this year but there is still much work to do.

But there is still much work to do. Especially the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area aspects are demanding. More specifically, it is key that the treaty contains a meaningful energy chapter and the elimination of all export duties.

This treaty, and the increased trade and modernization that it will bring, will deliver important benefits to citizens in Ukraine and the EU. This is not just another treaty, it is a transformational agenda. That’s why we should keep working on it with determination.

I also stressed the importance of political aspects of the treaty. Common values - human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law - are the fundament of our relationship. And they are critical for Ukraine’s future development, as is a cross-party consensus on the reform agenda. Once more we had an open dialogue on these issues.

I also stressed the need to make progress in improving the business and investment climate. Ukraine’s prosperity depends on being open, competitive and innovative. So moving on that front is clearly in its very own interest.

On the Visa Action Plan, President Yanukovich underlined Ukraine’s efforts. The EU will support them. We recognize the importance of this issue for Ukraine.

Finally, in the energy field we celebrated Ukraine’s accession to the Energy Community. You also just witnessed the signing of a cooperation agreement on nuclear safety worth 48 million euro. This demonstrates the commitment of the to nuclear safety, at home and beyond it’s borders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you can see, the European Union and Ukraine share a broad and ambitious agenda. We have the common will to go forward.

2011 marks the 20th anniversary of the Ukrainian declaration of independence. I also want it to be the year in which Ukraine and the EU come closer together. Because Ukraine is more than just a country located at the borders of the EU. It is a key neighbour and a close partner.

Thank you very much.

EU welcomes the dialogue between the Georgian Government and the Opposition on the Electoral Code

Tbilisi, 13 April 2011. [Link](#)

The EU welcomes the dialogue between the Georgian Government and the Opposition on the Electoral Code. The EU also welcomes the engagement of the civil society in this regard. Reforming the Electoral Code is an important step on Georgia’s path towards realising its European ambitions.

We hope that these talks will not only produce mutually acceptable results in line with OSCE and Venice Commission recommendations, but also build trust and confidence between all parties. The EU will continue to follow the talks closely and any other developments related to electoral reform.

Twelfth meeting of the Accession Conference at Ministerial level with Croatia
Brussels, 19 April 2011. [Link](#)

The twelfth meeting of the Accession Conference with Croatia at Ministerial level was held today in Brussels. Its main result was to allow EU and Croatia to provisionally close Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development ; and Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments. These two key chapters for European integration are highly significant both in terms of their policy and budgetary impact, and of their relevance for citizens. They also required a very sizeable amount of preparatory work.

The European Union delegation was headed by János Martonyi, Hungary's Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Croatian delegation was led by Gordan Jandrokovic, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration.

In light of the positions of the Parties, and of the considerable progress made with preparations in all areas under negotiation, the Conference was able to provisionally close these two chapters. Furthermore, the Conference considered proposals for transitional arrangements and derogations in Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development in areas such as direct payments, common market organisation and rural development. The Conference also considered a proposal for a derogation under Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments concerning the implementation of Article 93(1) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

The EU will, if necessary, return to these chapters at an appropriate moment. Details on the chapters provisionally closed at the Conference are provided below:

Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development
The negotiations on Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development were opened on 2 October 2009. At this meeting of the Conference the EU noted that, in order for the chapter to be provisionally closed, Croatia would have, inter alia, to present its implementation plan for the establishment of an Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS), Land Parcel identification system (LPIS), and the setting up of a Paying Agency; present an implementation plan in order to be fully prepared for the application of the single Common Market Regulation in the areas of Sugar, Fruits & Vegetables and Milk, and demonstrate sufficient progress towards the setting up of the Single Common Market Organisation.

At today's meeting, the EU commended Croatia for decisive progress allowing for the provisional closure of this chapter. The

EU also underlined that it would devote particular attention to monitoring all specific issues mentioned in its common position with a view to ensuring the further strengthening of Croatia's administrative capacity, in particular with regard to the paying agency, the Integrated Administration and Control System, the single Common Market Organisation as well as the direct support schemes. The EU also underlined the importance of a continuous and sustainable effort which has to be made in order to be fully compliant by accession. The EU will continue to monitor progress closely throughout the negotiations.

Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments

The negotiations on Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments were opened on 9 October 2009. At this meeting of the Conference the EU noted that, in order for the chapter to be provisionally closed, Croatia would have, inter alia, to prove a satisfactory functioning of the decentralized implementation system under IPA (Pre-Accession Instrument) and an adequate and mature project pipeline; submit an advanced and comprehensive draft of its National Strategic Framework (NSRF) document which would outline key priorities and expected results of Cohesion Policy assistance; and adopt an institutional set up for the implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy and individual Organizational Development Strategies.

At today's meeting, the EU noted Croatia's good preparations making possible the provisional closure of the chapter. The EU also highlighted that it would devote particular attention to monitoring all specific issues mentioned in its common position with a view to ensuring Croatia's administrative capacity for a timely and efficient programming, implementation and monitoring of Structural Funds/Cohesion Fund programmes. The EU will continue to monitor progress closely throughout the negotiations.

49th EU-Turkey Association Council
Brussels, 19 April 2011. [Link](#)

The EU-Turkey Association Council held its 49th meeting on Tuesday, 19 April 2011. The meeting was chaired by Mr Ahmet DAVUTOĞLU, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey and Head of the Turkish delegation. The Turkish delegation also included Mr Egemen BAĞIŞ, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator. Mr János MARTONYI, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary, led the European Union delegation on behalf of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Mr Štefan FÜLE, Commissioner responsible for Enlargement, represented the European Commission.

The Association Council meeting provided a timely opportunity to review EU-Turkey relations. In line with the Council conclusions of 14 December 2010, the EU noted progress made by Turkey in its preparations in the framework of the negotiating process. Overall, at this stage, out of 35 negotiating chapters, thirteen have been opened and one provisionally closed. As concerns chapters for which opening benchmarks have been set, the EU

invited Turkey to address them accordingly, and to step up its efforts in meeting established conditions.

The EU reaffirmed that the pace of negotiations depends notably on Turkey's progress in addressing opening and closing benchmarks, in meeting the requirements of the Negotiating Framework, and in respecting its contractual obligations towards the EU.

In this context, the EU welcomed the opening of one negotiating chapter in 2010. Recalling the good progress made by Turkey towards the fulfilment of the opening benchmarks in the field of Competition Policy, the EU noted that further efforts were required to meet the opening benchmarks in this chapter, and in the chapters on Public procurement, and Social policy. The EU also recalled the crucial importance of implementing the priorities enshrined in the Accession Partnership.

Commissioner Füle takes a strong stance on freedom of expression and media in the Western Balkans and Turkey

Brussels, 14 April 2011. [Link](#)

In order to promote and emphasize the crucial importance of freedom of expression and media in the Western Balkans and Turkey, the European Commission will host on 6th May "Speak Up !", a high-level international conference bringing together 400 participants who will exchange best practices and look for solutions to growing challenges regarding media freedom in the region. The Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy will be opening and closing the conference.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental pillar of good governance and accountability in democratic societies, which also requires responsibility of media professionals. The European Union expects candidate countries and potential candidates to implement such a core democratic principle and to enable a varied, pluralistic debate in the public space.

Today, three weeks ahead of the conference, the Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy met with journalists from the Western Balkans and Turkey to discuss the current situation with regard to freedom of expression and media in the region. The meeting offered journalists from countries covered by the enlargement policy an opportunity to voice their concerns and point to possible ways that their situation could be improved. Some of these journalists have been prosecuted, threatened or otherwise attacked for expressing their views.

On the occasion of the meeting, Štefan Füle said "Freedom of expression is not ensured just by adopting laws and creating institutions – it is a fundamental value, which needs to be cherished by all societies and without which no democracy can function."

Broad consensus on European perspective of Western Balkans

Brussels, 14 April 2011. [Link](#)

The Joint Parliamentary Meeting (JPM) on the Western Balkans ended today with a general agreement among participants that the EU accession prospects of the Western Balkans are the right way to ensure the necessary reforms in the countries in the region.

Reporting back from the previous day's two working groups, Doris Pack (EPP, DE) spoke of the positive effects that are expected from recent visa liberalization agreements with the Western Balkans countries. She also said that "in some sense, the root of all evil is that a functioning social order cannot be established in countries with serious economic poverty." Mihály Balla (Hungarian Parliament) emphasized that for EU integration to be successful, "the integration of citizens is just as important as the political integration of countries into the EU." "Isolated national arguments about enlargement are not helpful in this regard," he added, "we need multilateral fora such as these to achieve progress."

EU leaders underline the European perspective of the Western Balkans

In the name of the Presidency of the Council, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said the Western Balkans constitute "a sort of enclave within the territory of the European Union. We have the sense that they constitute unfinished business." He warned that "we cannot leave this glaring hole in Europe," and that "if we do not integrate this region, others will: there are plenty of potential suitors at the door." "Europe needs to be open to enlargement, and the countries of the region need to do their homework," he concluded.

European Commission President José Manuel Barroso also emphasized that "Europe sees the Western Balkans as members of the European family of nations." He also underlined the importance of debating such issues in parliamentary fora, especially one like the JPM, which brings together MEPs and national parliamentarians. "The EU is not only Brussels and Strasbourg, it's what we do in national parliaments," he said.

Background

The Joint Parliamentary Meeting brought together MEPs with Members of national parliaments to debate the European integration process of the Western Balkans. It was held over two days in the Hemicycle of the European Parliament.

Related Document:

European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Address to the 5th EU-Serbia interparliamentary meeting.

[Download here.](#)

EP: Suspend talks with Syria, reassess relations with Bahrain and Yemen
Brussels, 07 April 2011. [Link](#)

The EU must reassess its bilateral relations with Syria, Bahrain and Yemen in the light of their violent repression of demonstrators, and talks on a future Association Agreement with Syria must be suspended, say MEPs in a resolution passed on Thursday. MEPs are also concerned about the presence of international troops in Bahrain and call for an investigation into the death of 54 protestors in Yemen.

EU negotiations on the still-pending Association Agreement with Syria must be suspended until the Syrian authorities carry out “expected tangible democratic reforms”, say MEPs. The resignation of Syria’s government on 29 March “will not be enough to satisfy the growing frustrations of the people”, they add. President Bashar al-Assad must put an end to repression of political opposition and human right defenders, lift the state of emergency and undertake genuine political, economic and social reforms, says the resolution.

The use of violence by a state against its own people must always have direct consequences, stresses the resolution, drafted by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA and ECR groups and passed by a show of hands. MEPs therefore call on both the EU and national governments to revise bilateral relations with Bahrain and Yemen, and consider imposing asset freezes or travel bans. The text condemns interference by the authorities of both countries in the provision of medical treatment and denial of access to health facilities for injured protestors.

Bahrain

MEPs state their “concern at the presence of foreign troops under the Gulf Cooperation Council banner in Bahrain”. They call on this body to “to mediate in the interest of peaceful reforms” and call on all parties to engage in constructive dialogue without preconditions.

Yemen

Parliament wants independent investigations into attacks on protestors in all three countries. In the case of Yemen, the UN or the International Criminal Court should lead an enquiry into the 18 March attacks, in which 54 people were killed and more than 300 injured, it says. Parliament is deeply worried about the extent of poverty and unemployment in Yemen, and believes that the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council should grant it specific financial and technical support as soon as President Saleh is ready to make way for a democratically-established government.

21st EU - Gulf Cooperation Council and Ministerial Meeting
Joint Communiqué
Brussels, 27 September 2010. [Link](#)

1. The 21st session of the Joint Council for the European Union-Gulf Cooperation Council, was held in Abu Dhabi on 20 April 2011. The GCC delegation was led by HH Sheikh Abdallah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates. The GCC Secretariat was represented by GCC Secretary General, Dr. Abdul Latif bin Rashed Al-Zayani. The EU delegation was led by H.E. High Representative Catherine Ashton.

2. The EU and GCC Ministers reviewed the state of play of the bilateral relationship. The Ministers expressed the view that further strengthening EU-GCC relations would be an effective and valuable contribution to regional security and stability. They reaffirmed their commitment to advance political dialogue, fully respecting international law, the United Nations Charter and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. They endorsed the recommendations of the Joint Cooperation Committee, and noted with satisfaction progress on the implementation of the Joint Action Programme approved last year, and reiterated the importance to continue advancing with its implementation, with a view to promoting stronger links between their administrations, academics, scientific communities, students and people. The EU and the GCC reiterated their intention to continue their consultations with a view to conclude the Free Trade Agreement as soon as possible.

3. The Ministers discussed developments in the region, underlining its strategic importance. They condemned violence in all its forms and expressed their deep regret for the loss of life. They stressed their readiness to strengthen consultation and coordination and to mobilise appropriate support for countries across the region if and when requested. The two sides agreed that every situation was unique, but there was a common need for each country to find its own ways to enable people’s aspirations to be addressed, peacefully and constructively, in full respect of the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The two sides recalled the importance for the respect for sovereignty of the GCC Member States and recognized that the GCC is entitled to take all necessary measures to protect the citizens of the GCC Member States. The two sides urged Iran to play a constructive role in the region and to cease interfering in the internal affairs of GCC Member States and other countries in the region. The Ministers called on Iran to fulfil its obligations under international law to provide protection for diplomatic missions in Iran.

4. The EU and the GCC reaffirmed their shared position that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East is vital for international peace and security and expressed their continued support for the Arab Peace Initiative. They called for the urgent resumption of negotiations on all final status issues, with a view to arriving at a two-state solution by September 2011, as set out by the Quartet. They agreed that a further Quartet Principals’ meeting should take place

as soon as possible. The two sides reaffirmed their shared position not to recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties including with regard to Jerusalem. The EU and the GCC stressed their common position that Israeli settlements anywhere in the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace. In this regard they called on Israel to immediately end all settlement activity in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, including natural growth, and dismantle all outposts. They agreed on the need to continue to support Palestinian state-building efforts, both politically and financially.

5. The Ministers took note of the formation of the Iraqi government and stressed the importance of its completion. They also reaffirmed that national reconciliation is the key to the solution of Iraq's problems and underlined the urgency of making further progress in this regard. They condemned all acts of violence including those against ethnic and religious minorities, and underlined the importance that these acts do not deter Iraq from pursuing its ongoing political, economic and social development.

The EU and GCC underlined their full support for the central role of the UN in assisting Iraq in implementing relevant UNSC resolutions. They expressed their support for the UN efforts to finalize the issue of the maintenance of the international border posts between Iraq and Kuwait, for the return of Kuwaiti prisoners and nationals of other countries or their remains, as well as the return of Kuwaiti property including its national archive.

6. Both sides expressed their support for the continuation of efforts to engage Iran into meaningful negotiations, with the objective of reaching a peaceful, negotiated solution of the nuclear issue. They called again upon Iran to restore confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. The EU and GCC urged Iran to fully comply with the relevant resolutions adopted by UNSC and the IAEA and recalled their commitment to the full implementation of relevant UNSC resolutions. The EU and GCC underlined the importance of maintaining dialogue on this issue.

7. Ministers expressed their deep concern at the situation in Yemen. The current impasse between the various parties might decline quickly into more serious confrontation and conflict. The ministers condemned all use of violence. They reiterated their commitment to support Yemen's development as a unified, stable, democratic and prosperous state. They called on all parties in Yemen to urgently forge a meaningful, comprehensive and inclusive agreement on political transition. Dialogue is the only way to make progress on political, economic and social reforms acceptable to all Yemenis. Ministers exchanged views on current initiatives in support of Yemen's political transition. They welcomed and supported the ongoing GCC initiative and efforts to encourage concerned sides in Yemen to urgently reach a political settlement of the current impasse in Yemen.

8. The EU and the GCC underlined the importance of ensuring the unity and territorial integrity of Libya. They welcomed the efforts undertaken by the international community to

ensure the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1970 and 1973 on Libya.

They welcomed in particular the establishment of the Libya Contact Group, which provides an important platform for the efforts of the international community, the progress made at its first meeting in Doha on 13 April, and the agreement to hold the second Contact Group meeting in Italy. They underlined the need for close cooperation with the Arab League, the African Union, and the United Nations, and expressed appreciation, in this regards, for the meeting convened by the United Nations in cooperation with the Arab League in Cairo on 14 April.

Calling for an immediate and genuine ceasefire, they stressed that Colonel Qaddafi's regime has lost its legitimacy and expressed support to the Transitional National Council as a legitimate interlocutor representing the aspirations of the Libyan people. They expressed their deep concern regarding the serious humanitarian situation in Libya and on its borders. They underlined the obligation to provide unhindered access for humanitarian assistance.

9. The Joint Council reiterated its concern about the threat of piracy, which disrupts economic activity, regional and international trade and maritime safety and security. Both sides share responsibility in fighting piracy and highlighted the importance of reinforcing maritime capacities and coordination in the broader region. They welcomed international efforts, including by the EU Operation Atalanta, and the international conference on Piracy, held in the UAE on 18-19 April 2011.

10. The Joint Council underlined that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. The multilateral treaty system, in particular the NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Additional Protocol are the key instruments for its implementation. The EU and the GCC will ensure full compliance with, and national implementation of, their existing obligations under non-proliferation and disarmament treaties and agreements and work for the strengthening and universalisation of these instruments.

11. The EU and the GCC reiterated their continued commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant international instruments. They agreed to identify possible ways to forge cooperation in this area.

12. The EU and the GCC underlined the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, cooperation and respect for cultural and religious diversity, and condemned all forms of hatred and intolerance. The EU and the GCC expressed their joint commitment to the promotion and protection of the values of tolerance, moderation and coexistence and expressed their readiness to cooperate closely with existing international and regional bodies and fora, such as UNESCO, the Alliance of Civilisations and the EU-League of Arab States, in pursuance of these goals.

13. Ministers agreed to hold their next meeting in the EU in 2012.

Statement by the HR Ashton on the Political Agreement on the GCC initiative for peaceful transition in Yemen
Brussels, 27 July 2010. [Link](#)

The decision and the regulation will be published in the Official Journal on Thursday, 14 April 2011.

Related Document:
EU restrictive measures directed against certain persons and entities in view of the situation in Iran.
[Download here.](#)

I welcome the news that both the ruling party and the opposition coalition have accepted the GCC transition plan proposed on Thursday 21 April, including its provision for the rapid formation of a national unity government.

I would like to thank the GCC for its hard work towards securing political agreement for transition in Yemen. I believe that the GCC initiative represents the best chance for Yemen to address the economic, social and security challenges ahead, and to avoid escalation of violence.

I urge all parties to move quickly to finalise the agreement, and to work together for the benefit of all Yemeni people.

Conclusions of the Council of the EU concerning Bahrain
Luxembourg , 12 April 2011. [Link](#)

The Council reiterates its serious concern at the situation in Bahrain, and the lack of any tangible progress towards dialogue which should address the legitimate concerns of all Bahraini people.

The Council is equally concerned at the arrest of those who exercise their legitimate right to freedom of expression. Persons who have been detained for peacefully expressing themselves should be released immediately. The Government and security forces have a clear duty to respect fully the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons, without discrimination, as well as upholding international standards in this regard. The Council encourages the authorities to further investigate all recent events which have resulted in loss of life and injuries.

The Council calls on all parties rapidly to take concrete and meaningful steps enabling the start of a constructive dialogue that will lead to real reforms.

The Council of the EU on Iran
Luxembourg , 12 April 2011. [Link](#)

The Council followed up the political agreement reached at its March meeting by imposing autonomous EU restrictive measures (an asset freeze and a visa ban) on 32 individuals deemed responsible for serious human rights violations in Iran.

These measures form part of the EU's dual-track policy of sanctioning human rights violations and seeking engagement on human rights issues where possible.

The 2010 OSCE Kazakhstan Chairmanship: Carrot Devoured, Results Missing

Vladimir D. Shkolnikov

EUCAM Policy Brief NO 15, 15 April 2011. [Link](#)

[Abstract]

This brief looks at Kazakhstan's chairmanship through the prism of the EU's relations with Central Asian states and examines what lessons the EU can draw from the Kazakhstan chairmanship. The OSCE Chairmanship and the agreement to hold the 2010 OSCE Summit in Astana, despite it not having a Summit-like agenda were significant 'carrots' given to Kazakhstan. Did these carrots bring any results, and is there any reason to offer more such carrots to Kazakhstan or to other Central Asian states?

The author is senior fellow at the Jefferson Institute and based in Warsaw.

Kazakhstan's voting enthusiasm

Vanessa Boas

EUCAM Commentary NO 11, April 2011. [Link](#)

[Abstract]

The Kazakhstani political landscape will not be shaken by similar tremors to those that have rocked North Africa and the Middle East in recent months. President Nazarbayev who has been at the helm of Kazakhstan's political architecture since the fall of the Soviet Union is destined to stay. This is in spite of hopes that economic development coupled with the 2010 OSCE Chairmanship would spur the democratisation of the oil-rich state and lead to the rise of a natural successor for the 70 year old leader.

The author is EXACT Research Assistant at CEPS.

The EU-Central Asia Human Rights Dialogues: Making a Difference?

Vera Axyonova

EUCAM Policy Brief NO 16, 16 April 2011. [Link](#)

[Abstract]

Structured human rights dialogues are held with each of the five Central Asian republics. They are designed to discuss questions of mutual interest and enhance cooperation on human rights as well as to raise the concerns of the EU on human rights in Central Asia. In addition, the dialogues seek to involve human rights activists, NGO members, and academia representatives from both Europe and Central Asia through civil society seminars. But is this working? Is improvement in human rights noticeable in the region? This policy brief reviews and evaluates the performance of the dialogues to date, paying specific attention to the shortcomings of the existing practices, and provides recommendations for what could be improved with regard to planning and procedures.

The author is a Ph.D. Fellow at Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences.

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- EU HR Ashton on ratification by US Senate of START
- Russian PM Putin on START and missile defence

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