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Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 16 December 2013

President

Catherine Ashton

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and
Security Policy

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

Eastern Partnership

The Council discussed the follow-up to the Eastern Partnership summit on 28/29 November in Vilnius and the events in Ukraine. During her recent visit to Kiev, the EU High Representative condemned the use of violence against peaceful protestors and underlined the importance of a negotiated solution to the current political stalemate and the release of prisoners. She said after the Council meeting: "Ministers confirmed again today the European Union's readiness to sign the Association Agreement, with its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area part, as soon as Ukraine is ready and the relevant conditions are met."

Central African Republic

The Council expressed its extreme concern at the crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR). It welcomed the French intervention in support of the African-led international support mission to CAR (MISCA), which is intended to protect civilians and to contribute to the stabilisation of the country.

Given the dramatic humanitarian crisis, the EU and its member states have tripled their humanitarian assistance since 2012 - more than €60 million in 2013. On 8 December, the EU launched a humanitarian air bridge to ferry humanitarian goods and personnel into the country. The EU also fully supports the determined action by African partners for more stability and mobilises €50 million for MISCA through the African Peace Facility. The EU High Representative said: "Besides the urgent need to improve security, we need to support the political process to allow elections to be organized by February 2015 at the very latest."

Middle East peace process

In its conclusions, the Council expressed the EU's full support for the on-going efforts of the parties and of the US towards a just and lasting settlement for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The current talks represent a unique opportunity which must be seized for both parties to implement a two-state solution. The Council warned against actions that undermine the negotiations.

It also reiterated the EU's readiness to contribute substantially to post-conflict arrangements for ensuring the sustainability of a peace agreement. An unprecedented package of European political, economic and security support to both parties can be expected in the context of a final status agreement. Details and concrete proposals will be worked on.

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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Mr Andris PIEBALGS

Member

Ms Kristalina GEORGIEVA

Member

Mr Štefan FÜLE

Member

ITEMS DEBATED**Iran**

The High Representative briefed ministers on the round of talks she led on behalf of the international community with Iran on its nuclear programme, which took place in Geneva from 20 to 24 November. She also updated ministers on the latest expert-level talks with Iran, that took place from 9 to 13 December in Geneva.

Syria

The Council debated the latest developments in the Syrian crisis, in particular the preparations for the Geneva II peace talks on 22 January and the EU's contribution to it, progress in the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons and the humanitarian situation.

Lebanon

The Council exchanged views on the situation in Lebanon and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU reaffirms its commitment to the unity, stability, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon.
2. The EU condemns the repeated violence and security incidents, including the latest terrorist attack targeting the Iranian Embassy and the recurrent clashes in Tripoli. The EU welcomes the efforts of the Lebanese security forces, including the Lebanese Armed Forces, to protect Lebanon's borders and ensure security for all people living on Lebanese territory, with due respect for the rule of law and human rights.
3. The EU strongly calls on all parties, including Hezbollah, to act responsibly, fully abide by Lebanon's dissociation policy from the conflict in Syria and support the efforts of President Sleiman to implement the provisions of the Baabda Declaration agreed by all political forces.
4. The EU underlines the importance of continuing the national dialogue among all political forces to overcome all divisions and the current stalemate and move towards a broader agreement on the future of the country. The EU calls on all regional actors to play a constructive role in this regard.

5. The EU calls on Lebanon to urgently form a new Government capable to address the extraordinary humanitarian, economic and security challenges the country is facing. The EU looks forward to the timely holding of presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014 and encourages Lebanon to carry out necessary electoral reforms.
6. The EU commends the Lebanese authorities for their open border policy and reiterates its appreciation for the support and generosity demonstrated by the authorities and population towards all the people fleeing the conflict in Syria. The EU expresses its concern at the unprecedented effect the crisis has on the stability of Lebanon as well as on its natural and economic resources, educational systems, health care and labour markets.
7. As the largest donor of humanitarian and development assistance in Lebanon the EU will continue to contribute to meeting the growing needs of host communities and refugees. The EU underlines the importance of supporting local host communities through social and economic measures to mitigate the impact of the refugee influx from Syria. In this regard, the EU looks forward to the coming UN Regional Response Plan and will mobilise appropriate funding. The EU also reiterates its call on international partners to increase their support to Lebanon, including at the upcoming Kuwait 2 Conference.
8. The EU recalls its commitment to support Lebanon's institutions and security forces, as well as its readiness to continue this assistance and explore possibilities for increased support to the Lebanese Armed Forces.

The EU welcomes all efforts by the international community, including the International Support Group for Lebanon, to support and stabilize the country at this critical juncture. The EU stresses the importance of Lebanon's ownership to steer and keep the momentum of these international efforts.

9. The EU attaches high importance to its partnership with Lebanon under the European Neighbourhood Policy and encourages Lebanon to pursue its reform agenda. The EU looks forward to the reinforced cooperation agreed in the new EU-Lebanon ENP Action Plan.
10. The EU stresses the importance of Lebanon's continued commitment to the full implementation of its international obligations, including UNSC Resolutions 1559, 1680, 1701, 1757.

The EU reaffirms its support for the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) and calls on the Lebanese authorities to continue fulfilling their obligations regarding the STL, including the financial contribution.

The EU reiterates its support to the role of UNIFIL in supporting peace and stability in South Lebanon."

Eastern Partnership

The Council discussed the follow-up to the Eastern Partnership summit on 28/29 November in Vilnius. The summit saw a number of agreements sealed, including the initialling of the Association Agreements with the Republic of Moldova and with Georgia.

Ministers also exchanged views on recent developments in Ukraine, following the visit of the High Representative to Kiev.

Russia

In preparation for the lunch with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, the Council took stock of relations with the EU's strategic partner Russia.

Central African Republic

The Council discussed the situation in the Central African Republic and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union (EU) is extremely concerned by the crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR), which has worsened by the day with disastrous consequences for the population. Insecurity and grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are omnipresent. The humanitarian situation is alarming. The growing sectarian and ethnic dimension to the confrontations is increasingly worrying. In this context, the EU welcomes France's intervention in support of the African-led International Support Mission in the CAR (MISCA) in accordance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2127 (2013).
2. The EU again stresses that primary responsibility for protecting the population rests with the CAR transitional authorities. Every effort must be made to restore law and order and security without delay, and to protect civilian populations. The EU calls on the transitional authorities, armed groups, community leaders and the Central African people as a whole to exercise restraint and avoid entering a cycle of attacks and retaliatory violence; it also commends the moderating influence of the religious authorities.

3. The EU is particularly alarmed by the serious violations and infringements of human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as the prevailing culture of impunity in the country. It condemns all violent acts, including summary executions, arbitrary arrests and imprisonment, cases of torture, the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, sexual violence and enforced disappearances. The EU urges all armed groups to cease recruiting and using children immediately. Particular attention must be devoted to protecting, freeing and reintegrating all children involved with armed groups and forces.
4. The EU underlines that all those who violate human rights and international humanitarian law, including the leaders of the Lord's Resistance Army, will be brought to justice. It notes that the CAR has ratified the Rome Statute and that acts constituting crimes against humanity come under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. The EU is in favour of swiftly setting up the international commission of inquiry provided for in UNSC Resolution 2127 (2013), tasked with investigating violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and abuses of human rights perpetrated in the CAR by all parties since 1 January 2013.
5. The EU remains alarmed by the increasingly dramatic humanitarian crisis. The EU and its Member States have tripled their humanitarian assistance since 2012, and have already provided more than EUR 60 million so far in 2013. They will remain on high alert to respond to the emergency and help the country exit the crisis. The EU calls on all parties to ensure unfettered and safe access to humanitarian aid in full compliance with international humanitarian principles. The Council welcomes the joint initiative by the European Commission and the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator, who is responsible for humanitarian affairs, to hold a high-level meeting on 20 January 2014 to discuss the humanitarian situation in Central Africa.
6. In view of the serious nature of this crisis, the displacement of persons and the growing flow of refugees, it is essential to act to facilitate an early exit from this crisis which poses a possible risk to CAR's neighbours and to the wider region. The EU welcomes UNSC Resolutions 2121 (2013) and 2127 (2013) and the Human Rights Council Resolutions on the CAR. The restoration of security, the rule of law and democratic governance for all the inhabitants of the CAR remains the primary objective of international engagement, including by the EU.
7. As part of a comprehensive approach, the Council confirms the EU's willingness to examine the use of relevant instruments to contribute towards the efforts under way to stabilise the country, including under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), in both its military and civilian dimensions. When the security conditions are sufficiently stable, support in the field of security sector reform (SSR) will also have to be examined, to guarantee a lasting settlement of the crisis.

8. The EU offers its full support to the determined action of its African partners: the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), including through the MICOPAX, and their Member States; those African partners were among the first to understand the risks, and decided to respond to them in the interest of rapid stabilisation of the situation. The EU invites them to continue their engagement to enable MISCA to attain operational capacity rapidly. In this respect, the EU is mobilising funding of up to of EUR 50 million for MISCA through the Peace Facility for Africa. The EU supports the AU plan to organise a donor conference quickly focusing on MISCA, as provided for in UNSC 2127 (2013).
9. The EU stresses the importance of maintaining strong international mobilisation to respond to the crisis in CAR, and appreciates the continued engagement of the United Nations (UN), including on the ground via the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA). It welcomes the Bangui declaration published at the end of the third meeting of the International Contact Group on the CAR on 8 November in Bangui and invites the Group to pursue its efforts along these lines, in conjunction with the United Nations and the mediation of the ECCAS. The EU welcomes all initiatives in favour of an inter-faith dialogue and reconciliation, as well as the signing by the transitional authorities of the Republican Pact in Bangui on 7 November 2013. It calls on all actors to join a process of dialogue and national reconciliation to appease and overcome the inter-community tensions threatening the social cohesion of the country. The EU also calls on the transitional authorities to guarantee real participation by women in the transitional process, in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000).
10. The EU calls on the transitional authorities to work together, and with the political parties and civil society, in an inclusive manner and in good faith, in accordance with the Libreville Agreement of 11 January 2013, the N'Djamena Declaration of 18 April 2013, the Brazzaville Appeal of 3 May 2013, and the Bangui Declaration of 8 November 2013. It encourages them not to spare any effort in taking forward the political process in the run-up to elections and return to the constitutional order by February 2015. With that in sight, it urges the transitional authorities to set up rapidly a National Election Authority and to work towards a redeployment of the civilian administration.
11. Despite the prevailing instability over the past year, the EU remains the only major development partner to maintain its cooperation in the CAR in order to cater for the population's needs. In this context, it is mobilising EUR 23 million (from the 10th EDF) to reinforce the projects ready to restart as soon as security conditions allow, in addition to a EUR 10 million programme in support of the country's stabilisation. The Council fully endorses the European Commission's resolute action. Furthermore, the EU is preparing to assist with the process of transition with a view to restoring the democratic institutions and contributing to the provision of basic social services to the population."

Middle East peace process

The Council discussed the situation concerning the Middle East peace process and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union fully supports the efforts of the parties and of the US towards a just and lasting settlement for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The European Union particularly commends the tireless engagement by US SoS John Kerry and the leadership shown by President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu.
2. The European Union recalls previous Council conclusions which laid down its vision for a two-state solution resulting in an agreement on all final status issues, ending all claims, and fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of both parties.
3. The EU is convinced of the positive role that countries in the region can play in advancing the peace process, and remains committed to the on-going dialogue with the Arab States, including with regard to achieving peace in the Middle East. The Council reiterates the strategic importance of the Arab Peace Initiative for all parties and for the entire region.
4. Recalling its Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of June and December 2009, the European Union reiterates its readiness to contribute substantially to post-conflict arrangements for ensuring the sustainability of a peace agreement. The Council will work on concrete proposals, including by building on previous work undertaken on EU contributions to Palestinian state-building, regional issues, refugees, security and Jerusalem.
5. The EU will provide an unprecedented package of European political, economic and security support to both parties in the context of a final status agreement. In the event of a final peace agreement the European Union will offer Israel and the future state of Palestine a Special Privileged Partnership including increased access to the European markets, closer cultural and scientific links, facilitation of trade and investments as well as promotion of business to business relations. Enhanced political dialogue and security cooperation will also be offered to both states.
6. Current talks represent a unique opportunity which must be seized for both parties to implement a two-state solution. A one state reality would not be compatible with the legitimate sovereign and democratic aspirations of both parties.

7. The EU warns against actions that undermine the negotiations. In this regard, it deplores Israel's continuous expansion of settlements, which are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace. The Council also expresses its grave concern regarding incitement, incidents of violence in the occupied territory, house demolitions and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. The EU expresses its serious concern about actions that undermine the status quo of the holy sites, including in Jerusalem. The European Union will continue to closely monitor the situation and its broader implications, and act accordingly.
8. The European Union reiterates that it is in its fundamental interest to see an end to the conflict, establish lasting peace and prosperity along its southern borders and simultaneously develop its political, economic and trade relations with both parties. The European Union stands firmly behind President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu in their efforts to take bold and concrete steps towards a just and lasting solution to the conflict within the agreed timeframe.
9. The Council expressed its gratitude to the EU Special Representative, Andreas Reinicke, for his work and efforts undertaken during his time as EUSR."

Western Balkans

The Council took stock of recent developments in the region and discussed foreign policy aspects of the Commission's 2013 enlargement package regarding the Western Balkans.

Myanmar/Burma

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Myanmar/Burma:

- "1. The European Union reiterates its strong commitment and continuous support to Myanmar/Burma's democratic and economic transition and welcomes the launch of the EU-Myanmar Task Force held on 13-15 November. The European Union expresses its appreciation to the Myanmar/Burma authorities, Parliament, civil society, business, development partners and other stakeholders for the excellent cooperation extended to the organisation of the event.

2. The Council welcomes the outcome of the first meeting of the EU-Myanmar Task Force, in particular the commitment to pursue a human rights dialogue, to continue the preparatory work towards the launch of an investment agreement in 2014, as well as the agreement in principle to extend EIB lending to Myanmar/Burma from 2014. Furthermore, the Council welcomes the setting-up of the Myanmar Crisis Response Centre, the signature of an inter-parliamentary cooperation agreement, the establishment of a Business Council and the proposed creation of a European Chamber of Commerce.
3. The Council confirms its commitment to the Comprehensive Framework for the European Union's policy and support to Myanmar/Burma as outlined in Council Conclusions of 22 July 2013.
4. The European Union underlines its intention to significantly increase its development cooperation programmes with Myanmar/Burma for the period 2014-2020. It welcomes progress made on joint programming of EU and Member States' development assistance, as presented to the Government during the Task Force meeting. Furthermore, the European Union reiterates its support to on-going work to assist transition, including through support to civil society, the Myanmar Peace Centre and to the reform of the police service.
5. The Council appreciates the Government of Myanmar/Burma's close cooperation with the EU in the United Nations General Assembly on the resolution on the "Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar" and urges the Government to implement its recommendations, including the establishment of a country office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
6. The Council welcomes the formation of the Constitution Review Joint Committee and urges the Government to continue constitutional and electoral reforms. The Council encourages an inclusive review process to bring the Constitution in line with the requirements of a modern democracy and to help achieve lasting peace and national reconciliation. The Constitution should enable the conduct of credible, transparent and inclusive general and presidential elections in 2015, allowing all candidates to fairly contest the elections.
7. The European Union welcomes progress in the national reconciliation process and looks forward to the conclusion of a nationwide ceasefire agreement. The EU stands ready to support an inclusive political dialogue which should lead to a lasting peace agreement. This process should involve all stakeholders, including the participation of women.

8. The European Union welcomes the latest release of political prisoners and looks forward to the Government fulfilling its commitment to unconditionally free all remaining prisoners of conscience by the end of 2013. It emphasizes the need to put an end to all arbitrary arrests.
9. The European Union calls on the Government of Myanmar/Burma to address the underlying causes of inter-communal violence and to guarantee the respect of human rights and the rule of law. It invites the Government to pursue durable solutions, including by addressing the status and welfare needs of the Rohingya. In order to contribute to peace-building and respect between the communities, the EU strongly encourages development initiatives and the promotion of religious and ethnic tolerance. It urges all leaders to take a zero tolerance approach to violent extremism.
10. The European Union further calls on the Government of Myanmar/Burma to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations in Rakhine State and in Kachin State and to ensure unhindered access for humanitarian assistance to the internally displaced population and all those affected by conflict and violence.
11. The Council attaches great importance to the involvement of civil society in building the institutions that are necessary for a modern, inclusive democracy in Myanmar/Burma and encourages interaction between the state and civil society in this respect.
12. The Council encourages the Government of Myanmar/Burma to adhere and implement all relevant international agreements in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament."

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Relations with Morocco

The Council adopted the EU's position for the 11th Association Council's between the EU and Morocco, to be held in Brussels on 16 December 2013. It also approved the Union position within the Association Council with regard to the adoption of a recommendation on the implementation of the EU-Morocco Action Plan implementing the advanced status (2013–2017).

Support to the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty

The Council agreed on EU activities in support of the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). It allocated €5.2 million from the EU budget for projects that aim to support states to strengthen their arms transfer control systems with a view to being able to implement the ATT as well as to increase awareness and ownership of the ATT by relevant national and regional authorities and civil society stakeholders.

Agreement on the security of classified information with Australia

The Council authorised the High Representative to open negotiations in order to amend the existing agreement between Australia and the European Union on the security of classified information, in the light of a review of the Australian security classifications.

Annual report on exports of military technology

The Council took note of the 15th annual report in accordance with Council common position 2008/944/CFSP defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Great Lakes region:

- "1. Recalling its Council conclusions of 22 July 2013¹, the European Union (EU) confirms its commitment to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the DRC and the Region (PSC Framework) and to promoting stability and development in the Great Lakes Region. The EU notes a number of significant developments since July, in particular the progress achieved by the DRC in recovering full sovereignty on its territory and in restoring state authority in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the end of the M23 rebellion and the conclusion of the Kampala talks. The EU commends the Ugandan mediators for their commitment in working towards this positive outcome. The EU further expresses its appreciation for the efforts of the national authorities of the DRC, for the active involvement of regional leaders and organisations, for the work of the Group of Special Envoys for the Great Lakes², and for the crucial supporting role of the United Nations Organisation Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), including its Intervention Brigade.

2. The steps which have been taken in recent months open up a unique opportunity for the region, with the support of its international partners, to tackle the fundamental problems it faces. The EU calls on all stakeholders of the PSC Framework to implement their national, regional and international commitments and remains committed to supporting this process. The EU welcomes recent progress in operationalising those commitments and in identifying benchmarks to measure progress as a focus for the efforts of all stakeholders.

3. The EU reiterates the focus in the July Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on good neighbourliness and regional integration – this includes systematic and continuous political dialogue between all countries of the Great Lakes region to increase mutual confidence in order to address the root causes of the instability. Based on its own experience, the EU will continue to invest in regional cooperation in addition to its continued support to each country in the region, including in the areas of peace and security, environment and economic integration.

¹ Doc. 12461/13.

² Mrs. Mary Robinson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region; Mr. Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the DRC and Head of MONUSCO; Mr. Russel Feingold, United States Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of Africa and the DRC; Mr. Boubacar Diarra, African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region; Mr. Koen Vervaeke, EU Senior Coordinator for the Great Lakes Region.

4. The EU deplors the suffering engendered by the different armed groups in the eastern DRC which has resulted in a significant loss of civilian life, as well as of MONUSCO peacekeepers' lives, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians. The EU reiterates its insistence that special attention is paid to supporting the most vulnerable victims, especially child soldiers and the victims of sexual violence, and to the fight against impunity: perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity must not be allowed to avoid justice and should be held responsible for their actions.
5. In accordance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions 2076 (2012) and 2098 (2013), the EU looks forward to the swift disarmament and demobilisation of the M23 ex-combatants, with the assistance of MONUSCO, conducted in line with international human rights and humanitarian law and the Kampala talks outcome. At the same time, and as requested by the UNSCR 2098 (2013), the importance of neutralising other armed groups present in eastern DRC, including in particular the FDLR and ADF-NALU, by the FARDC supported by MONUSCO is emphasised. Furthermore, the EU urges the Government of the DRC to finalise the development of a comprehensive DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) and DDRRR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement) plan, including proper vetting procedures, and with special emphasis on children associated with armed groups. The EU welcomes the DRC's commitment to exclude perpetrators of human rights abuses from being eligible to integrate the national security forces. It underlines its readiness to take advantage of recent developments, and to build on its active support for stabilisation efforts in eastern DRC.
6. The EU welcomes the results of the recent Congolese "concertations nationales". In follow-up it encourages reconciliation and dialogue against which a comprehensive reform programme can be effectively implemented, boosting the state's authority, improving democratic and economic governance, protecting human rights and fighting against impunity.
7. The EU welcomes the priority given to Security Sector Reform (SSR) by President Kabila. It will remain actively engaged in support of SSR, with a view not least to maintaining and building on the gains of its two CSDP missions, EUPOL and EUSEC. In this regard, the EU looks forward to a sustained commitment of the Congolese authorities to implementing SSR and underlines the importance of synergies with other actors involved, in particular with MONUSCO, who has the lead in coordinating international support to the reform.
8. The EU notes that the planned electoral cycle in DRC offers an opportunity for further democratisation. It calls upon the Government of the DRC to ensure that previous recommendations, such as those formulated by the EU's own electoral observation mission, are taken into account, that set timelines are respected and that the necessary resources are allocated.

9. As discussed by EU Development Ministers on 12 December 2013, the EU will continue to pursue a comprehensive approach to its engagement with the Great Lakes Region including the use of both short term and long term instruments. It is committed to ensuring that the ongoing processes of national and regional programming of the European Development Fund, taking into account the recommendations of the European Court of Auditors, as well as the programming of assistance by EU Member States, should contribute both to the stabilisation of the Great Lakes region, and to its long term development. Programming of EU and Members States assistance, in full partnership with the countries and regional organisations concerned, will include the field of SSR. In this context, the Council encourages a further strengthening of donor coordination. Welcoming the steps taken by the DRC to fulfil the commitments taken, the EU calls for the establishment of a mutual accountability mechanism, based on the New Deal process, that ensures swift progress, and the monitoring of progress through a strengthened political dialogue.
10. Coordination, where possible, between development and humanitarian interventions will be pursued in view of reinforcing the resilience of the population in the DRC. The EU remains concerned by the overall humanitarian situation in eastern DRC. The number of conflict related internal displaced people and refugees has not reduced and the population continues to face acute humanitarian needs. Safe and unhindered access in accordance with international humanitarian principles must be enabled.
11. In addressing the root causes of conflict and looking forward to longer-term development prospects, the EU draws particular attention to the issue of natural resources, including the link between conflict minerals and armed groups, protection of the environment and the region's biodiversity, which remains a serious challenge. The EU reiterates its active support to the adoption and implementation of the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas. The EU underlines the benefits of certification mechanisms for minerals.
12. The EU underlines that stability in the region as a whole depends upon the internal stability and development of each country. Besides DRC, the EU will continue to engage with Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, and other countries of the region, in support of accountable government, an open society respectful of the fundamental rights of all people and the rule of law.
13. The EU underlines in particular the importance of an inclusive process in the run up to the 2015 elections in Burundi taking into account the fundamental elements of the Arusha peace agreement. The EU supports a continued UN role in this respect.

14. The EU recalls the wish of the United Nations Security Council for all signatories to fulfil promptly, fully and in good faith their respective commitments under the PSC Framework. The EU undertakes to continue to work closely with the United Nations and its Special Envoy, the African Union, the ICGLR, SADC and other relevant international and regional organisations and partners towards the implementation of the PSC Framework.
 15. The Council invites the High Representative/Vice President to report as early as possible on the implementation of the Council conclusions of July and December 2013."
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