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**NOTE**

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from: General Secretariat of the Council  
to: Delegations

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Subject: Summary record of the meeting of the European Parliament **Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)** held in Brussels on 29-30 May 2013  
Chair: Mr Brok (EPP, DE)

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**I. Debrief on the Foreign Affairs Council of 27 May 2013 by Eamon Gilmore, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland (on behalf of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission)**

The Chair, Mr Brok (EPP, DE), opened the debate on this item with a harsh criticism of the Council's decision not to prolong the embargo on arms exports to Syria. He noted that it was a renationalisation of a community competence and wondered if this had not been indeed the ultimate objective of the UK, rather than helping the Syrian opposition. He added that the UK had managed to do it in a very clever way, openly admitting that such a decision would help protect British interests in Syria. He considered that the decision of the Council had far-

reaching consequences, not least the possibility that the arms exported to Syria could be used against the Christian minority, for example.

Mr Gilmore, speaking on behalf of the High Representative, informed the Members of the issues discussed by the Council, i.e. Syria, CSDP, Somalia and the debriefing on the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue.

A long and heated debate followed, almost exclusively devoted to the issue of the arms embargo. The overwhelming majority of Members taking the floor criticised the decision of the Council, both for what it meant in terms of procedure - and more broadly for its symbolic impact on the very existence of CSFP - and for its content. The Irish Minister and Mr Vimont, the Executive Secretary-General of the EEAS, both tried to explain the reasons behind the Council decision and to draw attention to the whole set of conclusions adopted by the Council.

In more detail, Ms Gomes (S&D, PT) said that she was appalled by the decision on the arms embargo, because it meant a renationalisation and a clear setback in arms export. For Mr Lambsdorff (ALDE, DE), Monday had been an "appalling day for CSDP", and he said that Ministers did not take the EU seriously. He accused France and the UK of having "broken ranks" and wondered if Member States were not supposed to have a common interest in Syria. He regretted that it was not the first time that the EU had been unable to act under the CFSP, Libya and Mali being two sad precedents. As a consequence, he ironically suggested either cancelling the December European Council devoted to CSDP or changing its title. Mr Danjean (EPP, FR) said he was dismayed both at the substance and at the procedural implications. In his view, it was a half-decision taken only for the sake of a clear conscience. He recalled that in Bosnia the motto had been "lift and strike", but in Syria now it was "lift without strike". He would have preferred a 10-hour debate devoted to the preparation of the EU position at the upcoming Geneva conference. Mr Panzeri (S&D, IT) went even further in denouncing the implications of the decision taken. In his view, it was an example of political hypocrisy. After the opt-outs in social policy, now it was time for opt-outs in foreign policy. As there was no guarantee on the final use of the exported arms, the criteria set out by the Council were just a way to hide the disagreement between Member States. Given Russia's reaction, the Council decision could be defined, in his view, as a "masterpiece of foreign policy" and a "wonderful peace plan" aimed at destroying the CFSP and preparing the EU's presence in Geneva.

Only two Members took a different view. For Mr Salafranca (EPP, ES), even if the Council decision was not "one of the most glorious in EU history", fingers should not be pointed at EU foreign ministers, but at Russia and China. He invited his fellow Members not to focus on competences and on positions taken by Member States, but on the loss of human lives in Syria. Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) strongly contested the views expressed by Mr Lambsdorff: unanimity in CFSP was not a "mistake" of the Lisbon Treaty and nobody had "broken ranks" because CFSP was not a unified foreign policy. The UK, as any other Member State, had the sovereign right to help the Syrian opposition, he concluded. Mr Brok wondered if France and the UK would have taken the risk of having all the sanctions lifted if their position on the arms embargo had not been accepted.

Mr Gilmore recalled that the decision on the arms embargo was accompanied by a strong set of conclusions on the humanitarian situation in Syria and on the EU's support for the Geneva II process. On the arms embargo he said that, while there was unanimity on the so-called "civil" sanctions, there was no unanimity on arms and a compromise had been found around a number of criteria and safeguards that Member States had to apply in the delivery of arms. He dismissed the argument according to which the discussion had been driven by specific national interests. Mr Vimont said he could at some extent understand the EP position, but he added that, even if this was not one of the best episodes in European history, there were a number of reasons not to dramatise excessively the conclusions to be drawn. First, this was not a renationalization of EU policy on arms exports, but a renationalisation in a single, specific case, that of Syria. Second, the 2008 code of conduct on arms exports remained valid. Third, the Council declaration set out a number of important safeguards. Fourth, no delivery of arms would take place now. Fifth, there was a review clause allowing the EU to take other decisions depending on developments. Mr Vimont said that this was a rare example of Europeans agreeing to disagree, but at the same time going ahead. In reply to Mr Brok, he said that the risk was indeed to have no more sanctions in place at all as of 1 June. Finally Mr Vimont pointed out that the whole international community, not only the EU, had hesitated about what to do about the Syrian crisis.

## **II. Exchange of views with Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia, on the state of play in EU-Serbia relations**

The Chair, Mr Brok, commended the Prime Minister for the remarkable achievement represented by the agreement with Kosovo in the framework of the dialogue with Pristina. That was even more true because of the emotional, political, historical and cultural elements that came into play in the relations between Serbia and Kosovo.

The Serbian Prime Minister, Mr Dačić, said that the dialogue had been held in good faith and had led to an historic agreement. He pointed out that it did not amount to recognising the independence of Kosovo, but Serbia was nonetheless aware of the situation on the ground. As far as the implementation of the agreement was concerned, the Prime Minister said that there was no room for doubt that it would be implemented. That, he added, should remove the last obstacle to a favourable decision towards Serbia at the June European Council. On the reform process, the Prime Minister gave Members a detailed analysis of the progress made in the reform of the judiciary, the fight against corruption and organised crime, the fight against discrimination, as well as actions taken to redress the dire economic situation in the country. The Prime Minister called on the EU not to slow down the enlargement process after Croatia's accession, but to recognise the efforts made by Serbia and the entire region.

Many Members intervening in the following debate commended the Prime Minister for his personal and political courage in the historic move towards Kosovo. They also considered that Serbia now deserved to be granted a date for the opening of accession negotiations (Mr Kacin (ALDE, SI), Mr Roucek (S&D, CZ), Ms Koppa (S&D, EL)). Ms Brantner (Greens/EFA, DE) asked what measures were being taken to have the Kosovo Serbs on board. Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) raised a similar question concerning nationalists in Serbia. Ms Lunacek (Greens/EFA, AT) regretted that some obstacles still existed on the ground, such as the alleged Serbian veto to Kosovo participation in the upcoming Ohrid summit and the non cooperative behaviour of some Serbian ambassadors towards Kosovo representatives. The Prime Minister recalled that the dialogue was neutral as far as Kosovo's status was concerned. But it was in Serbia's interest to have Kosovo Serbs taking active part in the implementation of the dialogue, so the government was investing a lot in dialogue with them. He assured MEPs that the agreement would not lead to the creation of a

"Republika Srpska" in Kosovo. As far as nationalists in Serbia were concerned, the Prime Minister considered that they were not in a position to endanger the European path of Serbia because the government had done what was good for Serbian people. Concerning the Ohrid summit and more generally Kosovo's representation in regional fora, he stressed that Serbia was not against Kosovo's participation but there was a need to find clear-cut political rules and an adequate means of representation. On Serbia's relations with neighbours, Mr Dačić said that they were a priority, notably with regard to transport links. Finally, in reply to Mr Kukan (EPP, SK), he acknowledged that Serbia had longstanding relations with Russia but pointed out that his country also had an interest in having partners in the West.

The representative of the Commission considered that Serbia was a positive example for the whole region, in particular with regard to pending bilateral issues. He hoped that Serbia could soon take the next steps in the path towards European integration.

### **III. Exchange of views with Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Jarwan, Speaker of the Arab Parliament**

Mr Al-Jarwan stressed that the EU and the Arab world shared common objectives, interests and values. He recalled the Arab States' condemnation of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, as well as their stance on the Syrian crisis. He called for interaction between civilisations and for an end to interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries.

During the debate, Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) and Ms Gomes (S&D, PT) wondered whether there was any chance for the Arab peace initiative to be reactivated. The Speaker of the Arab Parliament said that the Arab countries would like indeed to breathe new life into this plan. On the "lifting" of the EU arms embargo to Syria (Mr Tannock (ECR, UK)), he said that the Arab countries did not want to pour oil on the fire and that the continuation of violence could trigger new forms of terrorism. He considered that the solution to the Syrian crisis lay internally and third parties should play a positive role. Concerning the inclusion of Hezbollah on the EU terrorist list, he said that neither Iran, nor the EU, nor the US should interfere in the Arab world. Ms Gomes (S&D, PT) noted that many assets of former dictators in Arab spring countries were "stuck" in Gulf States and she wondered if the Arab Parliament was making any effort to ensure their recovery. Mr Al-Jarwan said that he had

received no request on this issue and that the Arab Parliament was trying to focus on issues that fostered cooperation in the Arab world and not on divisive issues. He did not answer a question on the role of the Arab Parliament in scaling down the tensions between Shiites and Sunnis (Ms Neyts (ALDE, BE) and Ms Gomes (S&D, PT)), nor on the limited freedom of the press in the Arab world (Ms Gomes (S&D, PT)).

#### **IV. Exchange of views with Martin Kobler, UN Special Representative for Iraq, on the situation in Iraq**

Mr Kobler voiced his serious concerns over the situation in Iraq, a country that was sliding back to sectarian violence and to the risk of civil war. He said that government and opposition had no culture of dialogue and the UN was trying to bring the parties together and foster dialogue on the basis of some principles: preserving the unity of the country, rejecting any form of violence or sectarianism and working on the basis of the constitution. The only encouraging sign was the improved neighbourly relations with Kuwait. Mr Kobler called for a more political role for the EU in Iraq, going beyond the partnership and cooperation agreement. On the sensitive issue of Camp Ashraf and Camp Liberty, he said that the UNHCR was doing a terrific job but unfortunately the residents were not cooperating. The UN was trying to avoid any form of violence, for example by convincing the government not to proceed with evictions from Camp Ashraf. Because of the stance taken by the Iraqi government, the only way out from Camp Liberty, where living conditions were extremely dire, was resettlement in third countries, he said. He therefore invited MEPs to put pressure on their respective governments to accept a number of residents, considered as illegal aliens by the Iraqi government.

The debate that followed was extremely heated and polarised. Those Members who defended the position of the PMOI (People's Mojahedin of Iran - the residents of the two camps) accused Mr Kobler of being too cooperative with the Iraqi government (Mr Stevenson (ECR, UK)), of being responsible for the explosion of violence at the Camps (Mr Higgins (EPP, IE)), of being too neutral while his mission should have been to improve the life of residents (Mr Kukan (EPP, SK)) and of being more part of the problem than of the solution (Mr Czarnecki (ECR, PL)). Some of them called for his resignation. Mr Brok (EPP,

DE) and Mr Lambsdorff (ALDE, DE) took a different view and supported Mr Kobler. The latter recalled that PMOI was far from democratic. Mr Brok said that rather than criticising the UN Special Representative, MEPs should exert pressure to facilitate the resettlement of the residents of the camps. Mr Kobler wholeheartedly defended himself and his actions. He recalled that he had the full confidence of the UNSG and that being criticised in Iraq was in fact a good sign of the improved freedom of expression in the country. He insisted that the transfer from camp Ashraf to Camp Liberty had not been forced but had been informally accepted by the residents themselves as a means of saving lives. He added that the UN was not taking a stance, by qualifying the residents as terrorists or otherwise: from the UN point of view, this was an humanitarian issue to be solved peacefully through resettlement. Therefore energy and money had to be invested to this aim.

On EU visibility in Iraq (Mr Lambsdorff and Ms Gomes (S&D, PT)), Mr Kobler commended the role played by the Head of the EU Delegation but he regretted that, despite her political approach, the space to act in a political way was limited. Nonetheless he insisted that it was the EU's responsibility not to let Iraq to fall apart. He wished that the EU could become more involved in projects in areas such as transitional justice or training of prison guards. Mr Kobler also stressed that the EP had a key role to play in parliament-to-parliament contacts, noting that the Iraq parliament had a lot to learn about the functioning of the democratic process. But he pointed out that Iraqi parliamentarians had refrained from cooperating with the EP because this institution was only concerned with the issue of Camp Ashraf. So Mr Kobler invited the EP to put aside its monothematic approach on Iraq.

On human rights violations, executions and violence in prisons (Ms Lochbihler (Greens/EFA, DE)), Mr Kobler dismissed allegations that he had failed to be sufficiently outspoken: he said he used to speak up on these issues even in presence of authorities but sometimes discretion was to be preferred to "ballistic declarations". He considered that de facto non-execution policy in Iraq was also the result of his action.

Mr Brok announced that the Head of the EU Delegation in Iraq had been invited to a future AFET meeting.

**V. Exchange of views with David O'Sullivan, Chief Operating Officer of the EEAS, on the state of play in EU negotiations with Switzerland**

*In camera. See separate document.*

**VI. Exchange of views with Andrew Standley, newly appointed Head of the EU Delegation to Mexico (in compliance with the Declaration on Political Accountability of the HR/VP)**

*In camera. See separate document.*

**VII. Exchange of views with Dipu Moni, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, on recent developments in Bangladesh**

Ms Moni regretted that Bangladesh attracted media attention only in the case of dramatic events. In contrast to that, she portrayed a country that had made tremendous social and economic progress since its independence. Social indicators had improved dramatically over recent decades, economic growth was around 6% and the country's preparedness for natural disasters had improved. On the recent Savar tragedy, she said that responsibility lay mainly with sub-contractors who had failed to respect standards. But since that event, the government and industry had worked together to amend labour law so as to ensure compliance with social and safety standards. On the national tribunal to judge war crimes, Ms Moni stated that it was not politically motivated, but aimed at putting an end to impunity.

During the debate that followed, many Members said that Western companies shared responsibility for the Savar tragedy because they had sought the lowest possible price for manufactured products. In reply to a question by Mr Gahler (EPP, DE), the Minister said that Bangladesh's domestic legislation already respected ILO standards, with a number of gaps that should be addressed with the amendments to be adopted soon. She added that subcontractors throughout the production chain would now have to comply with all these standards, despite the cost that this could represent. Ms De Keyser (S&D, BE) and Ms Gomes (S&D, PT) commended the country's will to put an end to impunity but could not condone the use of capital punishment. Ms Moni accepted this view but recalled that there was no global consensus on the abolition of the death penalty and in Bangladesh it was used only for hideous crimes and with a number of checks and balances in the judicial procedure. So she asked for the EU's understanding on a matter that involved deep wounds suffered by the country.

On relations with India and Pakistan (Mr Tannock (ECR, UK)), the Minister welcomed the recent moves from the new Pakistani government to promote peace in the region, saying that Bangladesh had the same objective. She considered that all the countries in the region had only one common enemy, namely poverty.

On the Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar (Mr Tannock (ECR, UK)), she said that Bangladesh could not receive any more of them because camps were already over-populated. So bilateral negotiations were ongoing with Myanmar to encourage repatriation while respecting the *non-refoulement* principle. She said that the solution of the problem was in Myanmar through the recognition of their rights as citizens.

#### **VIII. Debrief by Michael Gahler on the Election Observation Delegation to Pakistan on 7 - 14 May 2013**

The EU's chief observer, Mr Gahler (EPP, DE), said that, despite some administrative shortcomings and some violence on the elections day, the elections had gone well. The legal framework had improved since 2008 and clear democratic progress had taken place: more parties were participating and more candidates - among whom many more were women - were on the lists. Eligibility was now governed by the UN covenant on civil and political rights, which had now been ratified by Pakistan. The turnout had also increased.

Mr Howitt (S&D, UK), also a member of the delegation, said that democracy in Pakistan was still fragile, but the elections had been a step forward.

#### **IX. Debrief by Eduard Kukan on the 6th meeting of the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC) in Podgorica & Budva, Montenegro on 26 - 30 April 2013**

Mr Kukan said that the visit had taken place against the background of the opposition's boycott of the parliament following the scandal of the leaked audio-recordings on the use of public funds by the ruling party. Moreover, the opposition still refused to recognise the results of the presidential elections. Mr Kukan voiced concerns that such a situation could harm the political stability of the country. Mr Tannock (ECR, UK), standing rapporteur on Montenegro, played down the gravity of the crisis, recalling for example that the President had only limited powers in the country's political system and that Montenegro was a compact and prosperous society.

## **X. Reports**

### **a) The Annual Report from the Council to the European Parliament on the Common Foreign and Security Policy in 2012**

AFET/7/12555, 2013/2081(INI)

*Rapporteur: Elmar Brok (EPP)*

Responsible: AFET –

Opinions: BUDG – Nadezhda Neynsky (EPP)

*This item was postponed.*

### **b) Recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the EU policy towards Belarus**

AFET/7/11651, 2013/2036(INI)

*Rapporteur: Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D)*

Responsible: AFET –

- Deadline for tabling amendments (extended): 12 June 2013

Mr Paleckis (S&D, LT) presented a draft recommendation that was deeply contested in the subsequent debate. He considered that, following a slight improvement in the situation of human rights in the country, the time had come to resume dialogue with the Belarus authorities under certain conditions, including the release of political prisoners. In his view, critical engagement, as opposed to isolating Belarus, had to be preferred as a means of reaching out to the population.

All those who spoke rejected this approach on the basis that there was in fact no sign of improvement of the situation in the country. The most critical Member was Mr Saryusz-Wolski (EPP, PL), who declared that he was appalled by a draft text that departed both from the EP line and from EU policy on Belarus on the basis of false assumptions. Others (Mr Tannock (ECR, UK)) noted that both engagement and disengagement had failed with Belarus but in any case any lifting of sanctions was premature. Mr Buzek (EPP, PL) and others called for more moral support for the opposition.

The deadline for tabling amendments was extended in order to allow more work on the draft text of the recommendation. The rapporteur agreed but insisted on having the EP position adopted before the Vilnius summit.

## XI. Votes

### a) **European Parliament recommendation to the Council on the draft EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief**

AFET/7/12569, 2013/2082(INI)

*Rapporteur: Laima Liucija Andrikienė (EPP)*

The report was adopted by 32 votes in favour, 22 against and 2 abstentions.

### b) **EU's military structures: state of play and future prospects**

AFET/7/11451, 2012/2319(INI)

*Rapporteur: Marietta Giannakou (EPP)*

The report was adopted by 33 votes in favour and 11 against.

### c) **The Maritime Dimension of the Common Security and Defence Policy**

AFET/7/11450, 2012/2318(INI)

*Rapporteur: Ana Gomes (S&D)*

The report was adopted by 33 votes in favour, 11 against and one abstention.

### d) **Recommendation to the Council on the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly**

AFET/7/12095, 2013/2034(INI)

*Rapporteur: Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (ALDE)*

During the debate that preceded the vote, the rapporteur called on the Council to get together after the UNGA session to assess which EU priority had been taken into account so as to make the process more effective. The debate mainly focused on the opportunity to set up a UN Parliamentary Assembly, an idea advocated by Mr Watson (ALDE, UK), but on which the rapporteur and Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) expressed some scepticism for different reasons. The recommendation was adopted by 38 votes in favour and 6 against.

## XII. Next meeting(s)

- 6 June 2013, 9.00 – 12.30 (Brussels)