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NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Delegations

Subject: European Parliament plenary session in Brussels on 1 February 2012:
Debate on EU foreign policy towards the BRICS and other emerging powers

The Rapporteur Mr SARYUSZ-WOLSKI (EPP, PL) explained that the aim of the report was to highlight the that BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) had started to develop a certain form of foreign policy making. He stressed that the report went beyond an individual country by country approach, and tried to identify their common points of interest. He suggested in his report that a coordination mechanism within the EEAS between various geographical desk officers responsible for particular BRICS countries should be created for them to exchange and coordinate information and positions in cases where concerted action between the BRICS could be expected, particularly given that in many cases the BRICS contested EU positions and policy in international conferences or at the UN.

HR Ashton delivered the speech set out in the Annex.

In the subsequent discussion the following issues were raised:

- speaking on behalf of the DEVE committee, Ms SCHNIEBER-JASTRAM stressed that close cooperation between the EU and the BRICKS was needed in the light of global development challenges. The EU should act quickly and be careful how it incorporated its values in cooperation so as not to alienate countries that prefer gradual convergence. She was convinced that a middle of the road approach was the best;
- speaking on behalf of the EPP group, Mr KASOULIDES stressed that global solutions are necessary today for international security, political, economic, monetary and ecological stability, as well as for access to raw materials and rare earths. He said that monetary imbalances between the East and West needed to be corrected and that China's contribution to the IMF special-purpose vehicle was a very important element of this. He therefore called for a favourable approach to China's request to upgrade its institutional role within the IMF and free market status in the WTO;
- speaking on behalf of the S&D group, Mr ZALA said that he saw the BRICS only as a grouping of similar countries and not a political entity, although they had been able to organize coordinated positions in an *ad hoc* basis in the past. He stressed that the EU should focus on each BRIC country individually in its bilateral relations as they have very different geopolitical situations;
- speaking on behalf of the ALDE group, Ms JÄÄTTEENMÄKI agreed that the BRICS were not a block but nevertheless played an important role in international relations. She said that the EU should develop strategic partnership programmes with individual BRICS in order to have stronger ties;
- speaking on behalf of the Greens/EFA, Ms KELLER said that EU should try to include BRICS in international agreements covering the principles of development, including aid effectiveness principles, as well as encourage direct South-South cooperation and the exchange of best practices. She called for the EU to support global reform of financial and economic governance institutions in order to ensure broad representation of all member countries whilst reflecting changes in their economic weight. She also urged the Commission to establish specific areas of cooperation with the BRICS countries in the field of development policy;

- speaking on behalf of the ECR, Mr TOMAŠEVSKI supported strong EU policies towards the BRICS and called for the development of individual partnerships based on common values and recognizing their economic weight;
- speaking on behalf of the EFD, Mr SALAVRAKOS said that the BRICS were a potential world power and that the EU should take this into account and develop a differentiated approach;

In their individual interventions Ms GOMES (S&D, PT) and Ms OJULAND (ALDE, ET) stressed the need for the EU to uphold the values of the rule of law, democracy and human rights in its relations with the BRICS.

At the end of the debate HR Ashton stressed that she fully agreed about the importance of developing strategic partnerships with the BRICS while recognizing that they are distinct countries with different histories and traditions.

The Rapporteur Mr SARYUSZ-WOLSKI said that his report should be seen as signal of future challenges, and warned of the risk that democracies such as Brazil and India could be seduced by non-democratic countries on human rights and democracy issues and that this was a challenge to the current system of international governance.

**Speech of High Representative Catherine Ashton
on EU foreign policy towards the BRICS and other emerging powers**

Mr President, may I first of all warmly welcome the report and thank Mr Saryusz-Wolski for the work he has done to bring this report to life, as well as all those who have commented on it, amended it or participated in the discussions about it.

It is really important because the growing role of emerging powers – and we focus in this debate on what we call the BRICS countries – is really important. When we consider the relationships that India, Brazil and South Africa have developed in their coordination through the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) and the relationships between Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa in what we now call the BRICS, it is important that we think about them in that way.

We know the economic statistics behind the phenomenal rise of the emerging powers, but for me the essence of this is about the politics. What matters is that economic clout is translated into political clout – into self-confidence and ambition for the role that can be played. We know that the five members of the BRICS are, of course, five strategic partners of the European Union, and individually they are – as Mr Saryusz-Wolski has said and the report acknowledges – very different in many ways. Each of them has a strong and deep relationship with the European Union.

It is incredibly important that we invest in our relationship with these countries and be active and creative in our engagement with them. We have a lot in common, and potentially there is a lot we can do together. This is precisely what I have been doing, what colleagues in the Commission and in the Council have been doing, and it is why – as honourable Members will remember – when I took on this role I said that I had three priorities: to get the service running; our neighbourhood, long before the events of the Arab Spring; and, thirdly, our strategic partners.

I would just mention that there are other emerging powers – countries like Mexico; countries with which we work closely, like South Korea; and of course Indonesia and others – but I want to concentrate for the purposes of this debate on the five that we call the BRICS.

With each of them, as I have said, we need to develop a strong relationship. In China I not only met with my interlocutor, State Councillor Dai Bingguo, with whom I had long debates and discussions, but I also met Defence Minister Liang to talk about how we could work together on tackling problems that we face together – on piracy, on counter-terrorism and so on. One of the advantages, if you like, of the many hats I wear in this post is that I can move between the Foreign Ministry and the Defence Ministry in many countries and can express the views of the European Union with both.

We have also been talking, of course, in India in the last two weeks: again, trying to break new ground in developing the strength of our relationship – particularly on some of the security issues that are so important and on joint work to develop the capacity to deliver on the World Food Programme, as well as tackling some of the global issues that we and they face – and recognising the significance of India in the region.

This weekend I travel to Brazil and then on to Mexico, our ambition, here again, being to strengthen the relationship we have and to talk about issues of importance between us. In Brazil I will focus in part on Iran as well as our work with Brazil on development and our work together in the UN Human Rights Council; and in Mexico, where they have played such an important role in recent days, on climate change and on some of the challenges that they face in their part of the region.

I should mention, too, South Africa. I met the South African Foreign Minister in November, again to discuss some of the issues that are extremely important – and South Africa's work with the EU in Durban on the climate change discussions has been of enormous importance.

We have just discussed our relationship with Russia. It is a very important bilateral relationship; Russia is a significant partner in foreign policy; and of course there is also our concern about the internal situation.

In each of these countries we are trying to invest in developing a strong bilateral relationship. Each of them is different; each has a different history and different relationships, traditionally, not only with the European Union, but also with the EU Member States. I agree that we need a more creative and joined-up approach as we look not only at how to deal with those bilateral relationships, but also at how to work with that group of countries in regional and global forums.

This brings me to a thread running through your report which I think is really important: namely, the extent to which they form a homogenous block or not. I know you have been very clear in the report, Mr Saryusz-Wolski, about not exaggerating what that means. As you stressed, there are major differences economically, politically and socially – and anyone looking at those countries would see how significantly different they are – but whether they manage to coordinate their position depends on where their interests coincide. There are issues on which coordination is relatively straightforward, others where it is more difficult, and many where they would perhaps want to develop that coordination further.

So my proposal is that we need to invest in these countries as strategic partners in a very strong and dynamic bilateral relationship, finding the themes and issues on which we can work closely: economically and politically, bilaterally and internationally. We need to do that because it is in our interest to do it, but I also believe it is in our interest to avoid a mindset of ‘the West versus the rest’ – something I discussed with President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton at the summit in the USA in December.

It is important that we recognise the significance of our relationships with each of these countries and find the common ground, where they should be with us and we should be with them, on many of the issues we face. It is important that we deal with them as individual, strong strategic partners, but what Mr Saryusz-Wolski has just said about coordination is completely right. I welcome the fact that the Committee on Foreign Affairs has highlighted coordination within the European External Action Service. May I instantly take up your proposal and say that I will – as a direct result of your report and your comments – make sure that we find ways to implement such coordination in the future.

That brings me to my last remark. Individual countries – yes. Individual relationships – absolutely critical. However, as these countries start to come together, it is really important to consider what it is that brings them together to form a common position, be it because we are in a different place, or because they feel they want to gather together as emerging powers, rather than – from their perspective – powers in a different part of the world. We need to find ways of creating a different dynamic and making common calls with some or all of them when that works.

Mr Saryusz-Wolski, may I again thank you for the report. As I said, you have already achieved at least one thing in creating new coordination within the EEAS.