



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 18 July 2016
(OR. en)

11246/16

COASI 159
ASIE 62
CFSP/PESC 622
CSDP/PSDC 450
POLGEN 89
RELEX 638
DEVGEN 168
COHOM 101
JAI 678
MIGR 139

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 18 July 2016
To: Delegations

No. prev. doc.: 10998/16

Subject: Pakistan
- Council conclusions (18 July 2016)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on Pakistan, as adopted by the Council at its 3482nd meeting held on 18 July 2016.

Council conclusions on Pakistan

1. The Council endorses the 2016 implementation report on the EU-Pakistan 5-year Engagement Plan and welcomes the fact that relations with Pakistan have expanded in scope and intensity during the implementation thereof.
2. Migration is a key priority for the EU in its relations with Pakistan and the EU will remain closely engaged with the country and expects the full implementation of the EU-Pakistan Readmission Agreement. Effective implementation of the Agreement is critical for the continued development of EU-Pakistan relations. The EU stands ready to support Pakistan in managing migration, including on prevention of migrant smuggling and the reintegration of returnees. In addition, through its development cooperation, it continues to address root causes of irregular migration.
3. The EU recalls its concerns with regard to the situation of human rights in Pakistan, especially the freedom of religion or belief, the rights of persons belonging to minorities, the rights of women, and the rights of children. The EU welcomes Pakistan's adoption of a Human Rights Action Plan and its decision to strengthen its Human Rights Institutions. The Council calls for these to be translated into tangible progress in terms of respecting, protecting and promoting all human rights, as well as through strengthening the rule of law. The Council recalls that effective implementation of international conventions is an essential requirement under the GSP+ scheme, while the EU stands ready to support Pakistan in its implementation of international obligations, including those related to genuine elections.

4. The EU welcomes the Government's condemnation of violence against women, including "honour" related violence, and supports further efforts to ensure equal rights and opportunities for men and women. The empowerment of women and girls, including the end of child marriages, constitutes an integral part of inclusive development. Furthermore, the EU encourages Pakistan to develop and adopt a National Action Plan on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.
5. The EU remains committed to supporting Pakistan in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals through its development programmes. In this framework, the EU calls on Pakistan to facilitate the registration and visa for its development/implementing partners, in particular for International Non Governmental Organisations.
6. The EU supports the role of democratic institutions and of civil society. The EU encourages Pakistan to follow up on the recommendations by several EU Election Observation Missions to further improve the electoral process, well in time before the next elections planned for 2018.
7. The EU is strongly opposed to capital punishment in all cases and has consistently called for its universal abolition. In light of this, it remains deeply concerned by Pakistan's decision to lift the moratorium on executions and the fact that executions continue at an alarming pace, as well as the reported shortcomings in the judicial proceedings. The EU strongly urges Pakistan to re-instate the moratorium as a first step towards the abolition of the death penalty. The Council calls on Pakistan to comply in full with its international obligations as stated in Human Rights Treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention against Torture.

8. The EU acknowledges the significant efforts by the Government of Pakistan and the sacrifices made in the fight against terrorism. The EU reiterates its commitment to cooperate on a comprehensive approach to terrorism in compliance with human rights and to prevent and counter violent extremism, which remains a global challenge. To this end, the EU is committed to expanding and making more operational its Counter Terrorism cooperation with Pakistan. In this vein, the Council looks forward to holding a new edition of the EU-Pakistan staff talks to exchange on crisis management and defence cooperation.
9. The Council recalls the collective commitment to support peace, stability, and development in Afghanistan and recognises the important role Pakistan can play in advancing political, security, economic and trade relations, which can contribute to peace, stability and growth in the region. The EU encourages Pakistan to continue and intensify its cooperation with the Afghan Government, including in facilitating an Afghan-led and owned peace process. The EU calls on Pakistan to strengthen cooperation with Afghanistan to combat terrorism and disrupt terrorist infrastructure.
10. The EU commends Pakistan for hosting an estimated three million Afghan refugees and encourages Pakistan to continue providing protection, including proof of registration cards. The EU also recognises the pressing need to help Pakistan care for these refugees and when appropriate to assist their voluntary return and provide support to host communities.
11. The Council also encourages comprehensive dialogue between Pakistan and India and supports further development of regional trade links, which would strongly benefit the whole region.
12. The EU remains committed to its dialogue with Pakistan and to making it more strategic through the follow-up of the Engagement Plan. Depending on the progress achieved, not least in the areas of human rights, migration including readmission, this may lead to a third EU-Pakistan Summit in 2017.

13. The Council invites the High Representative and the European Commission to initiate consultations with Pakistan on a framework for engagement beyond the EU-Pakistan 5-year Engagement Plan, with particular priority given to human rights, the strengthening of democracy, rule of law and governance, as well as migration including readmission.
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