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Delegations will find attached the declassified version of the above document.

The text of this document is identical to the previous version.

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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

To : Delegations

From : General Secretariat of the Council

Subject : Report of the Asia–Oceania Working Group of 2 December 2004

Please find in annex the report of the Asia–Oceania Working Group of 2 December 2004.

I. OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS

Afghanistan

1. The Group agreed that a revised version should be prepared of the draft Council conclusions in HAG/1657/04. (Text has since circulated as HAG/1718/04).
2. Policy Unit undertook to produce a revised version of its recommendations paper (SEC/2471/04 COR 1). (Text has since circulated as SEC/2531/04).

India

3. The Group agreed to the Commission's suggestion that work to develop the EU-India Strategic Partnership should follow procedures already established in the case of EU-China Strategic Partnership. The Group therefore endorsed the idea of holding expert meetings in Brussels and New Delhi to prepare a joint EU-India Action Plan.

Pakistan

4. The Group agreed that the EU should maintain its line of issuing no public comment upon the issue of the uniform of President Musharraf.

Burma/Myanmar

5. The EU will continue to urge Asian countries, especially China, India and the members of ASEAN, to use their influence to promote change in Burma/Myanmar.
6. The Presidency will circulate by Coreu a draft statement of the Presidency on behalf of the EU expressing concern at the extension of the house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Philippines

7. The Commission will circulate by Coreu, by 6 December, an opinion of its Legal Service explaining that the border management project for the Philippines proposed by the Commission can legally be funded under the 1992 ALA regulation.

North Korea

8. After an in-depth exchange of views on the outcome of the Regional Directors troika visit to the DPRK (13-16 November 2004), the Group supported the Presidency proposal to continue discussing the situation in the Korean Peninsula in the coming months on the basis of a reflection paper. The Presidency asked the Council Secretariat (including the Policy Unit) and the Commission services to draft this reflection paper. The paper should focus on the issues highlighted during the discussion (see below, under "Other Points") and should address the Korean Peninsula in its entirety.

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II. OTHER POINTS

Afghanistan

9. The Group had an exchange of views on priorities for EU policy and action on the basis of the Policy Unit paper SEC/2741/04 COR 1. (A final text, taking account of additional comments from PSC has since circulated as SEC/2545/04).
10. The Group took note of the final report from the EU Democracy and Election Support Mission (COASI Meeting document 154/04 of 29 November 2004).
11. The Group had an exchange of information on EU participation at the ceremony for investiture of President Karzai in Kabul on 7 December 2004.

Pakistan

12. The Group had a brief exchange of views on the current situation in Pakistan, and took note of the Key Objectives Paper prepared by EU HoMs (HAG/1451/04). The Group agreed to have a fuller discussion at its meeting in January 2005.

Burma/Myanmar

13. The Group expressed concern and pessimism about the current political situation in Burma/Myanmar. Some Member States felt that the EU might wish to review the image of the current EU sanctions and counterbalance it by supporting the people of the country through means provided for in the Common Position.
14. The Group also exchanged views on the degree of influence of certain Asian partners - especially China, India and the members of ASEAN - in Burma/Myanmar, and discussed ways whereby the EU could invite these partners to promote change in the country. The opinion that China was the most influential partner was widely shared.
15. While the paragraph on Burma/Myanmar in the chair statement of the ASEM Summit last October was welcomed as a step in the right direction, the Group expressed disappointment at the lack of language on Burma/Myanmar at the ASEAN Summit on 28-29 November in Vientiane.

North Korea

16. The Group had an in-depth exchange of view on the situation in the Korean Peninsula, following the regional Directors troika visit on 13-16 December. The Group gave a positive assessment of the visit, despite the fact that concrete results had been somewhat disappointing. The main issues addressed during the discussion were: the EU support for the Six-party talks process, the nature and extent of the EU engagement in the process hopefully leading to the de-nuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, the level of humanitarian assistance and co-operation with the DPRK, support for economic reform, inter-Korean relations as well as the opportunities and modalities of a human rights dialogue with the DPRK in the current situation.

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17. The Presidency concluded that pending the resumption of the Six-party talks there was no reason for the EU to revise its current approach. However, it was desirable to follow event closely, continue dialogue and enhance the level of engagement with the DPRK. This would have the advantage of exposing a greater number of middle-ranking officials from the DPRK to contacts with the outside world. Member States should improve their exchange of information on bilateral activities with the DPRK. EU HoMs resident in Pyongyang could increase their reporting about developments in the country. The idea was put forward that, in order to improve co-ordination, Member States HoMs accredited to the DPRK should all be based in Seoul.

China

18. The group had a general debate on EU-China partnership, including the question of the arms embargo.
19. The Group also exchanged views on Taiwan. A number of Member States expressed their support to a continuation of the status quo, combined with a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue.

ASEF

20. Delegations had an exchange of views on the role of ASEF and its current financial situation. During the discussion the following points were made: even though no one wanted to rediscuss the present system of financing of ASEF based on voluntary contributions, questions were raised about the sustainability of this system in light of its current tasks and the present level of expenses. The Commission, as one of the main contributors to the ASEF budget, raised the problem of medium/long term financing of ASEF, if the institution were to meet its engagements. There should be a more equitable sharing of the burden but also greater clarity on ASEF actual tasks. Some delegations advocated a closer relationship between the ASEM SOMs and ASEF Board of Governors as well as the setting up of a financial controller.
21. Moreover, there was a need to reflect on the role of ASEF in the framework of the current debate on the creation of an ASEM Secretariat. ASEF could be the kernel of such Secretariat. ASEF could also have a role in the preparation for the Kyoto FMM in May 2005, which should address the future of ASEM. Ideas on how to involve ASEF in this process could be circulated by Coreu.

ASEM

22. The Presidency announced that a meeting of ASEM co-ordinators would take place in Bali on 22 December 2004, at the margins of the preparatory meeting for the ASEM inter-faith dialogue. Besides the ASEM co-ordinators (Presidency, Commission, Indonesia and Korea), Luxembourg (as incoming Presidency) as well as Japan (as the organiser of the next FMM) would also attend.
23. The Commission announced that China had agreed to organise the next Finance Ministers Meeting. It was also willing to host a SOMTI. A Commission note on new ASEM activities would be circulated to delegations for comments (Doc. 158/04). An Economic Ministers meeting should in principle also be held in 2005 at a European venue to be decided.
24. A list of ASEM SOMs and ASEM contact points was circulated in the room.

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AOB

25. The Commission distributed the annotated agenda for the EC-ASEAN Joint Co-operation Committee meeting, 14 December, Jakarta (meeting doc. 156/04) and the draft agenda and programme for the 9th Thailand-EC senior Officials' Meeting, 16-17 December, Bangkok (meeting doc.157/04).
26. Luxembourg distributed its draft "Asia" agenda of activities to take place under Luxembourg Presidency in the first semester of 2005.

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