



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**EU-GEORGIA COOPERATION COUNCIL
NINTH MEETING
BRUSSELS, 9 DECEMBER 2008**

Press Release

The Cooperation Council between the European Union (EU) and Georgia held its ninth meeting on Tuesday 9 December 2008. The meeting was chaired by Mr Jean-Pierre Jouyet, Secretary of State for European Affairs of France. The EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Ambassador Peter Semneby also took part in the meeting. Mr Hugues Mingarelli, Deputy Director-General of the External Relations Directorate-General, represented the Commission and Mr Tomas Pojar, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, represented the incoming Czech Presidency. The Georgian delegation was led by Giorgi Baramidze, State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Issues and Vice Prime Minister of Georgia.

P R E S S

The Cooperation Council discussed the repercussions of the recent conflict in Georgia and the increased EU role in the conflict settlement, in particular through the dispatching of an EU civilian observation mission under the European Defence and Security Policy, the participation of the EU in the Geneva discussions and the provision of increased EU financial assistance for alleviating the humanitarian situation and sustaining Georgia's economic recovery. The EU side reiterated its support to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia.

The Cooperation Council welcomed the intensification of bilateral EU relations with Georgia, and in particular looked forward to the launching of negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreement between the EU and Georgia.

During the meeting, the parties discussed a wide range of issues. One of the main topics was the European Neighbourhood Policy, particularly the implementation of the ENP Action Plan. The parties stated that the signing of the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan with all three Southern Caucasus countries in November 2006 opened a new era in the EU relations with the region, offering Georgia a deeper political relationship and broader economic integration. The Cooperation Council noted Georgia's strong commitment to the implementation of the ENP Action Plan, welcomed the good progress made in some areas and agreed on the need to focus the efforts on further implementation.

The EU side seized the opportunity to present the main lines of the Communication on the Eastern Partnership, adopted by the European Commission on 3 December, which proposes the creation of a stronger policy framework for EU's future relations with Eastern partners at both the bilateral and multilateral level.

The Cooperation Council also provided a timely opportunity to take stock of political developments in Georgia, as well as the advancement of political and economic reforms.

The EU highlighted the importance of the respect of the rule of law, democratic and pluralistic principles, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as freedom of expression and freedom of the media, as essential elements in the bilateral dialogue. It reaffirmed its willingness to continue its support for the further development of democratic institutions in Georgia, including in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The EU side welcomed the recent commitments of the President Saakashvili for strengthening democratic institutions in Georgia, and expected concrete steps in this sense. The Cooperation Council agreed that consolidation of democracy was the key to ensuring Georgia's long term stability and its successful transformation into a prosperous, harmonious and united society.

The Cooperation Council also discussed the broad framework for the implementation of the EUR 500 million EU financial assistance package for 2008-2010, which will start to be delivered by the end of 2008.

The recent crisis in Georgia confirmed that the EU plays a constructive role in the region and is stepping up its cooperation with the Southern Caucasus. Alongside deepening bilateral relations, the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative, and the Black Sea Synergy, will further strengthen relations with Southern Caucasus countries.

The plenary meeting of the Cooperation Council was followed by a joint ministerial working lunch between the EU and Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to discuss matters of regional interest, as well as conflicts in the Southern Caucasus. Mr Jean-Pierre Jouyet, Secretary of State for European Affairs of France represented the EU Presidency. He was accompanied by Mr Javier Solana, High Representative for CFSP, and by Ms Benita Ferrero-Waldner Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, as well as Mr Tomas Pojar, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, representing the incoming Czech Presidency.