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NOTE

from : Presidency
to : COREPER

Subject : Stocktaking Report on the implementation of measures to increase the efficiency, coherence and visibility of EU external policies and future work

As requested by the European Council at its meeting in June 2006, the Presidency has taken work forward in improving the efficiency, coherence and visibility of the Union's external policies. In that respect the Presidency submits to delegations a stocktaking report on progress made and recommendations on future work.

This report has been drawn up together with the Secretary-General/High Representative and the Commission.

Stocktaking Report on the implementation of measures to increase the efficiency, coherence and visibility of EU external policies and future work

Introduction

As the discussion regarding the future of the Constitutional Treaty continues, the Union must demonstrate its ability to move forward in the framework of the existing treaties. The June 2006 European Council concluded that "best use should be made of the possibilities offered by the existing treaties in order to deliver concrete results that citizens expect". The EU's external action is an area which can be further strengthened on the basis of the existing treaties.

The June 2006 European Council Conclusions also invited the Presidency, the Council, the Secretary-General/High Representative and the Commission to take work forward in improving the efficiency, coherence and visibility of the Union's external policies. It was agreed that a first stocktaking in relation to the implementation of these measures would be made at the end of the Finnish Presidency.

The approach of the Presidency has been to develop and implement practical measures that can be realised in the framework of the existing Treaties taking into account the Commission Communication "Europe in the World". A check-list of such measures was distributed at the beginning of July.

Enhancing EU external action will require the commitment from the successive Presidencies, the Member States, the Commission and the Council Secretariat in order to ensure the continuity of the process. The aim of the stocktaking report is to assess what has been achieved so far and to set targets for future work.

Enhancing the EU's strategic planning in external relations and improving working methods

A first high-level external relations meeting was organised on 9 September in Helsinki between the Presidents of the European Council and Commission, the President of the Council and the Commissioner for External Relations (the High Representative for CFSP was prevented from attending due to the negotiations regarding Iran). The meeting discussed preparations for forthcoming third country summits, the state of play and future work on measures to increase the coherence of the EU's external policy and the lessons learned from EU action in the crisis in the Middle East in August.

Regular pre-GAERC briefing meetings between the Presidency, the High Representative and the Commission have been used to prepare meetings with third countries as well as discuss other current issues in order to strengthen planning and coordination in external relations.

Steps have also been taken to engage Coreper at the initial stages of third-country summit preparations. The discussions have been based on a note from the Presidency with a draft annotated agenda, including a description of the objectives of the summit as well as any possible difficulties. The aim of this approach is to encourage a more strategic approach resulting in more focused agendas. In addition, EU Heads of Mission in the countries concerned have prepared evaluation reports both before and after the Summits.

Coreper has also discussed steps to improve the working methods of the Council and the European Council. The need to address an increasing number of multi-sectoral policy issues as well as to ensure a more coherent use of all the EU's existing internal and external policy instruments has underlined the importance of ensuring that the Council and European Council continue to function more effectively.

At the October GAERC, the Council adopted conclusions on the integration of development concerns in Council decision-making. These conclusions commit the Council in particular to ensuring that sufficient information on the impact of policy decisions on developing countries is available to all Council formations and that documents for Coreper fully reflect the various sectoral and horizontal considerations.

The conclusions relating to the external aspects of the EU's competitiveness ("Global Europe") adopted at the November GAERC underline that an effective policy to foster competitiveness must cover both internal and external measures, and emphasise the need to improve coherence between the two policy fields.

Particular emphasis has been placed on ensuring coherence between the different Council formations and the handling of the external dimension of internal policies. For example, as energy became a highly topical issue for the EU early this year it has figured prominently on the agenda of the relevant working groups (energy and regional working groups). A work plan covering all aspects of the external dimension of energy was discussed at Coreper. The implementation of the external dimension of JHA has required close cooperation of JHA working groups and regional working groups.

The frequency of Africa working group meetings was increased by establishing a Brussels-based chair in order to facilitate the work of PSC and allow it to focus on strategic work.

The principle of joint written contributions (prepared by the Commission and the Secretary-General/High Representative) for the Council and its preparatory bodies has been continued and enhanced. Recent examples include papers on Kosovo, the reinforcement of EU-Engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU concept for strengthening African capabilities for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. In addition, numerous papers have been prepared at working level. Internal guidelines are being developed to accelerate and simplify the endorsement of policy initiatives taken by the Commission in the context of joint papers.

The practice of coordinated and joint press statements by the Presidency, the Commission and High Representative/Secretariat General has been introduced. Joint statements were issued on the crisis in Lebanon as well as on the EU-US negotiations on Passenger Name Records, and procedures have been set up in order to facilitate the production of joint statements in the event of a crisis.

Follow-up:

The experience of holding a High-level external relations planning meeting has been beneficial and should continue in the future as an important element in identifying forthcoming key issues at the beginning of each Presidency.

The practice of using pre-GAERC briefing meetings to run through forthcoming third country meetings and other issues of importance should be continued.

Discussions in Coreper on the preparation of third-country summits should be further developed and begun at an earlier stage.

The development of working methods within the Council should be used to enhance the coherence of the EU's external action. This includes the need to ensure coherence between different formations of the Council and its preparatory bodies, in particular in the areas of Environment, Justice and Home Affairs and Economic and Financial affairs.

A Policy Coherence for Development Report to review progress is to be prepared for the Council in 2007. It will provide an opportunity to consider further steps to improve planning and working methods.

Active follow-up of the Council conclusions on the external aspects of the EU's competitiveness ("Global Europe") will provide an opportunity to consider ways to factor in global competitiveness challenges in the EU's policy-making processes.

Continue the positive experience in respect of joint papers and joint press statements.

Coherence and visibility in the use of the different external relations policy instruments in third country relations

The EU and Member States have a wide range of external relations instruments at their disposal, which can be deployed coherently when the political will exists as was demonstrated in the EU's response to the Lebanon crisis as well as in handling the post-conflict situation. The Presidency, the High Representative and members of the European Commission maintained permanent contacts with the parties to the conflict and were key in the diplomatic efforts of the international community to bring the conflict to an end. The evacuation of EU citizens and others from Lebanon worked well. Member States' troops formed the backbone of the expanded UNFIL. Substantial financial support was provided by Member States and the Commission for the humanitarian and environmental crisis and the structures of the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy were fully utilised.

A discussion was initiated on the different roles and mandates of the various mechanisms, bodies and actors in humanitarian crisis in third countries. [Planned for December 13]

Enhancing the visibility of the EU, the Secretary-General/High Representative, acting on behalf of the Union, represented the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany in the negotiations with Iran on the Iranian nuclear program.

In the Middle East Peace Process, the EU continued to play an important role in the Quartet and the Presidency and the Secretary-General/High Representative (following his mandate from the European Council on this subject) and the Commission have been directly involved in different initiatives and negotiations. The EU established two security missions in the Occupied Territories: one supporting Palestinian police reform; the other supporting the control of the Rafah border crossing. The "Temporary International Mechanism" developed by the Commission greatly helped to alleviate the situation of the Palestinian population.

The further EU involvement in crisis management in Africa served to improve coordination between the Presidency, the Council Secretariat and the Commission. The Secretary-General/High Representative and the Commission hold regular meetings to pave the way for various concerted answers to the challenges ahead.

The EU developed its second autonomous military operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). EU Member States' military personnel acting under the flag of the Union have been instrumental in ensuring essential security conditions for the final stage of the democratic transition in the DRC. EUFOR DRC, set up at the United Nations' request to support public order during the electoral period has ended successfully. During the same period, the Council has extended the EUPOL and EUSEC missions alongside major programmes financed by the Commission (totalling over EUR 160 million), all of which have provided essential support to civil institutions, professional police forces and armed forces in DRC.

The EU's involvement in Aceh, through the ESDP mission and community measures including support to the negotiation and implementation of the peace agreement, post-tsunami assistance and an EU Election Observation Mission have successfully contributed to restoring peace and stability in Aceh, as is confirmed by the local elections to be held on 11 December 2006. This involvement has enhanced the visibility of the EU in the region, strengthened the political dimension of EU's relationship with Indonesia and ASEAN, and the perception of the EU as an important, impartial partner in crisis management.

With a view of facilitating a more comprehensive and integrated EU contribution in Afghanistan, an inventory of different EU activities, including development and security, has been requested from the Commission and the Council Secretariat.

In the field of the CFSP/ESDP, the PSC has worked for greater coherence between the different actors and actions. As a part of the work to promote Civil-Military Co-ordination in the field of crisis management, the Presidency has focused on improved information sharing between EU actors.

A common policy framework on Security Sector Reform (SSR) has been agreed, and an EU concept for support to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) has from the outset been prepared as a joint initiative, based on draft by the Council Secretariat and the Commission. A more coherent approach to the use of the various external policy instruments in the area of ESDP operations has been encouraged through e.g. joint assessments and planning.

In line with the 2003 EU Strategy against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction adopted and the European Security Strategy, the Council [in December] endorsed the concept paper concerning the WMD Monitoring Centre which aims at enhancing effectiveness, consistency and synergy within EU's action against the proliferation of WMD. It establishes a cooperative working method for the Centre, without changing institutional settings and prerogatives, among Council Secretariat/HR, the Commission services and Member States.

The importance of ensuring adequate CFSP funding in order to meet the existing needs and respect political commitments has been underlined in the budget process. Changes in the Financial Regulation and the simplified structure of the new external assistance instruments should help to improve the effectiveness of EU external action overall.

Efforts to continue the simplification of ESDP procedures were undertaken, including on the use of framework contracts to procure essential equipment for ESDP operations. The EU Exercise Study 2006 (EST 06) specifically focused on improving rapid response capabilities for ESDP operations.

The work to improve the coherence and consistency of the EU's human rights policy in its internal as well as in external policies has continued. In this context, the EU Strategy on mainstreaming human rights across the CFSP, including ESDP and other EU Policies has been implemented and human rights aspects have increasingly been considered in relevant decision-making of the EU. A number of concrete steps have been initiated to ensure mainstreaming of human rights into ESDP, including developing a standard field manual and training guidelines on human rights for ESDP missions, and in all political dialogues with third countries including under Association and Cooperation agreements and under the ENP.

With the aim of increasing coherence, a joint meeting of trade and development ministers was organised. Development-related aspects of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) and the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) were discussed. It endorsed Conclusions on Aid for Trade (AFT), which set the framework for future EU AFT policies.

The joint paper from the Commission and the High Representative of June 2006 on the external aspects of energy policy proposed the establishment of a Network of Energy Security correspondents to collect and process important market, regulatory and geopolitical information. The network should also contribute towards better integration of the Union's internal and external policies and to the development of increased cooperation between the Member States and the EU institutions.

Follow-up:

The discussion already initiated to ensure better coordination between the different actors and mechanisms in order to maximize the response to emergency and crisis situations should continue.

The work on the improvement of civil-military co-ordination in the planning and conduct of EU crisis management operations as well as in the development of capabilities needs to be taken forward. Here, the lessons learned from ESDP missions are essential.

Necessary effort should be made to secure adequate CFSP funding given existing political commitments.

The EC Regulation on the Instrument for Stability will enter into force on 1.1.2007 and replace notably the EC Rapid Reaction Mechanism. In accordance with the Joint Council and Commission statement to the minutes of the Council when it adopted the Stability Instrument¹, "The Council and the Commission recognize that an effective and coherent EU response to political crisis, violent conflict or disasters in third countries requires a high degree of political coordination combined with operational flexibility and speed of decision making. Both institutions underline their political determination to closely cooperate in that regard."

¹ Doc. 14010/06 ADD 1

Consideration should be given to making greater use of QMV in CFSP.

Mainstreaming human rights in CFSP and ESDP should be continued.

An EU Aid for Trade Strategy is to be prepared for the Council in 2007.

The development of the Network on Energy Security Correspondents should be continued.

Developing the effectiveness of EU's internal coordination and coherence of EU-positions in international organisations

The issue of how to improve EU coordination and the coherence of EU positions in international organisations was raised. It was agreed that enhancing EU coordination is important in order to defend the EU's interests effectively and to strengthen its visibility in the UN system. Issues raised have included the development of EU-coordination in the UN system (e.g. Security Council and the Specialised Agencies), enhancing the mechanism for the exchange of views (UN Funds and Programmes), broadening the outreach activities and the visibility of the EU in the UN system, and improving coordination between CONUN and other working groups.

Steps have also been taken to promote the enhancement of the flow of information between the Presidency, the Commission and the Council Secretariat in the UN capitals (e.g. contact lists, distribution of reports). Preliminary discussions on possibilities to increase the support of the Council Secretariat and the Commission to the Presidency in UN Capitals without the presence of the Council Secretariat took place.

In addition, the ongoing discussions on improving information sharing at the International Financial Institutions (including possible EU coordination) has been promoted. The Presidency has delivered several joint statements on behalf of the European and other like-minded countries.

The EU acted through a joint position at the UN High Level dialogue on Migration and Development and contributed strongly to the adoption of a coherent and comprehensive view on international migration issues.

Efforts have been made to deepen relations between the EU and the OSCE through the preparation of a joint declaration and an active coordination of EU statements.

The observer status of the Community in International Maritime Organisation (IMO) was discussed on [December 8.]

The Community formed its position also as regards the Energy Community Treaty in its first Ministerial meeting in Skopje 17 November.

The Presidency has called for a more active role of the Commission in the Arctic Council, most recently at the Arctic Council's ministerial meeting in Salekhard in October.

Follow-up:

Future Presidencies should continue to raise the issues regarding the development of EU's internal coordination and coherence of EU-positions in international organisations next year.

CONUN will continue, for its part, deliberations how to further enhance EU coordination within the UN system.

The possibilities of increasing support of the Council Secretariat to the Presidency in specific international organisations i.a. Vienna should be discussed.

The visibility of the Commission in regional organisations should be developed.

Developing practical cooperation between the Member States embassies, the Commission delegations and the Council Secretariat as well as enhancing personnel exchange between the national diplomatic services and the Commission and the Council Secretariat

The October GAERC welcomed the joint Solana-Rehn report on the reinforced presence in Bosnia Herzegovina and mandated the Council to work in this regard. In further discussions, the double-hatting of the EUSR/Head of Delegation was raised.

An update of the existing arrangements on the diplomatic representation of the Presidency in third countries (dating from 1977) is under discussion in the RELEX Counsellors' working group. Non-binding guidelines for the diplomatic representation of the Presidency by another Member State in third countries in the field of CFSP are due to be concluded by the end of the year.

Experiences were gathered from the Presidency's embassies in third countries on how practical cooperation could be further developed between the Member States/Presidency and the Commission delegations. Measures such as better availability of Commission documents and analysis as well as better planning and coordination of activities and meetings were raised.

In addition, Member State and Commission delegations' cooperation, division of labour and complementarity in Development Cooperation was taken forward with an agreed roadmap for future work at country-level. For example, issues such as ownership of the partner countries, in- and cross-country complementarity and cross-sector complementarity were included.

Work on the arrangements facilitating wider exchange of reporting between the Commission and the Council Secretariat has been continued. The SITCEN has confirmed that it will continue to share with the Commission all assessments and other material shared with Member States.

As a part of the aim of increasing cooperation in third countries between the Commission and the Member States, the practice of inviting a Commission representative to participate in an observer capacity in the discussion in the weekly EU Presidency-US conference calls in Washington was instituted.

A pilot phase of the Diplomatic Exchange and Secondment Programme (DESP) was launched in July 2006. For 2007, 25 exchanges of officials are planned. An interinstitutional agreement is being prepared to enable officials of the General Secretariat of the Council to participate in the DESP. The General Secretariat and the Commission regularly second officials to Member States preparing and exercising the Presidency.

In addition, the reciprocal opening up of the Commission and Member States' diplomatic training schemes, including to officials from the Council Secretariat, should continue.

The use of the expertise of the Heads of Delegations in the work of the Council preparatory bodies was promoted. The importance of close cooperation between the Commission delegations, the High Representative and the EUSRs is recognised.

Closer consular cooperation has been promoted in line with the June 2006 Conclusions. To increase the effectiveness and coherence of consular crisis mechanisms in third countries the SG/HR and the Commission are submitting a joint report in this regard.

Discussions have been held on the idea of a "framework" or "lead nation" concept in consular crises in the third countries and the scope for improving the exchange of information during consular crises, the possibility of reinforcing the Presidency mission in such countries and Consular Rapid Deployment Teams.

The updated Guidelines on consular protection of EU citizens, as well as a text on consular best practices, have been circulated to the missions of Member States in third countries.

The draft regulation amending the Common Consular Instructions on visas for diplomatic and consular posts in relation to the introduction of biometrics has been discussed in the Council working group on visas. Preparation for pilot projects is under way. Discussions on a Common Application Centre for visa applicants are ongoing between the Schengen missions present in Beijing.

Follow-up:

Further discussion on the possibility of double-hatting of the EUSR/Heads of Delegation should continue. Work on how to improve cooperation between Commission Delegations, the High Representative and the EUSRs will be taken forward.

Implementation and further discussion on the ways to improve coordination, complementarity and division of labour between the Commission and the Member States in the field of Development Cooperation.

The programme on personnel exchange should be developed further.

Arrangements for facilitating the exchange of reporting should be worked on including the possibilities of the Presidency/Member States to be included in the exchange at a later stage.

Continue work in the advances in cooperation regarding visa application centres.

The reinforcement of consular cooperation continues by taking practical steps to improve information exchange, EU consular visibility, local coordination and cooperation in third countries between Member States, the Secretariat and the Commission.
