

European Neighbourhood Watch

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Thinking ahead for Europe

East goes right, South goes left

The most striking and indeed astonishing feature of this autumn's political landscape in the European neighbourhood is the contradictory trend as between East and South. East Europe is reverting back towards authoritarianism, while the Arab world proceeds with its anti-authoritarian revolution. Neither region is homogenous, of course. But the mainstream tendencies are clear.

Vladimir Putin has decided to stand again in 2012 for President, which with two six year terms ahead in prospect could take him to 2024, in all a 24 year rule, getting comparable to the records of many of the world's notable dictatorships (23 years for Ben Ali, 30 for Mubarak, 20 for Sukarno and 30 for Suharto in Indonesia, 20 for Marcos in the Philippines, etc.). Medvedev's speeches about democracy, the rule of law and modernisation turned out to be no more than fluff, as many always argued. It is still possible that Medvedev was over the last year testing the waters with the outline of an election campaign that would have been more liberal. Maybe, but in any case it never acquired real traction, and so he gave up.

Meanwhile President Yanukovich has been steadily clamping down on effective civil liberties and democratic practice in Ukraine. But the signature event of his leadership has now become the imprisonment of Yulia Timoshenko for seven years for abuse of office despite warnings for the EU that it could put into the freezer the draft Association Agreement and the draft Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. As a result Yanukovich's scheduled visit to Brussels in mid-October, intended to firm up these agreements, was postponed until - according the diplomatic language of Van Rompuy - more propitious times.

And now Putin announces his plan for a Eurasian Union, in which he would like to include as many post-Soviet states as possible, from Belarus to Tajikistan. In Eastern Europe both Belarus and Azerbaijan are solidly authoritarian. That just leaves Moldova as passably democratic, while Georgia hardly passes. For Armenia kleptocracy is the first word that still comes to mind, although the forthcoming parliamentary elections in 2012 will see a vigorous contest.

The Arab Spring, now surely the Arab Revolution of 2011, has seen the fall of three dictators already (Ben Ali, Mubarak, Khadafi), with two more in the pipeline (Assad and Saleh). Others are pushed in a more democratic direction, making limited or at least token concessions for greater political participation as in Morocco and Jordan, and even in Saudi Arabia with women to vote in local elections.

But what of the sustainability of these new tendencies, of the reinforced authoritarianism to the East, or the new democratic liberalism to the South? The first warning is sent from East to South. It is only five years since the so-called 'colour revolutions' had their day in Ukraine and Georgia, to the point that Putin had also his moment of concern over whether this would become one of history's uncontrollable contagious revolutions (as in Europe in 1848 or 1989-91). The Orange Revolution in Ukraine and Rose Revolution in Georgia witnessed wonderfully happy scenes in the streets of Kiev and Tbilisi, with popular and peaceful regime overthrow. Roughly comparable to Tunisia so far. But the Yushchenko-Timoshenko post-revolutionary regime proved disastrously dysfunctional, while the Saakashvili regime became less and less democratic.

Tunisia is so far top of the Arab class. Egypt's revolution is being managed still by the military, and the debate there is over which of the two Turkish models may come to the fore, the military one of the second half of the 20th century, or the democratic Islamic one of the first decade of the 21st century. Yet more problematic are the cases that have fallen prey to civil wars, as in Libya now just ended, while Syria's brutal repression of over six months and the fighting in Yemen are both ongoing virtual civil wars. Unfortunately the track record of what follows civil war is ominous, sometimes leading to an outright victor who assumes authoritarian rule, sometimes to deadlock with descent into the realm of the failed state, as all too clearly seen in nearby Somalia. A further post-revolutionary syndrome is where an initial attempt at liberal democracy fails to work effectively and gives way to violent ideological radicalisation, as in Iran in 1978 and in several other famous revolutions (Robespierre's Reign of Terror, Lenin and the Bolsheviks, or Mao's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution).

The currently divergence between East and South looks like something of strategic importance for the wider European neighbourhood. Already it turns upside down the prior assumption that East Europe democratises slowly but steadily, whereas the Arab states of the South Mediterranean remain stuck with their long-term authoritarian leaderships. But maybe one should not extrapolate this too easily. Maybe Russians will come to tire of Putin well before the end of his next two six year terms, and perhaps much sooner Ukrainians will tire of Yanukovich, while the potential for counter-revolution in the Arab world should not be discounted.

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European Council Conclusions

Brussels, 23 October 2011. [Link](#)

Europe remains committed to supporting the democratic transformation of its Southern Neighbourhood through the European Neighbourhood Policy. Democratic transition and economic development in the whole region remains essential for the establishment of democracy, fully respecting the rule of law and human and civil rights. The rapid launch of concrete projects within the Union for the Mediterranean can contribute much to this process.

The death of Muammar Gaddafi marks the end of an era of despotism and repression from which the Libyan people have suffered for too long. Today Libya can turn a page in its history, pursue national reconciliation, and embrace a new democratic future.

The European Council pays tribute to the courage and determination of the people of Libya. It looks forward to the formation of an inclusive and broad-based government, to the launch of a democratic, peaceful and transparent transition that reaches out to all Libyans and to the preparation of free and fair elections in accordance with the Constitutional Declaration by the National Transitional Council. It reaffirms the commitment of the European Union to support the emergence of a democratic Libya. The European Council reiterates its support for a democratic, pluralist and stable Egypt as a key partner to the EU. The interim authorities have the crucial task of organising the first democratic and transparent elections, while ensuring law and order in a manner respectful of human rights. The European Council is concerned about the recent tragic clashes in Egypt and underlines the importance of the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief, including the protection of religious minorities as an essential component of any democratic society. The European Council welcomes the holding of the first free elections in Tunisia today. The European Union will support the new authorities in their effort in favour of democratisation and sustained economic development, including through the EU/Tunisia Task Force.

The European Council fully endorses the Council conclusions on Syria adopted on 10 October. The Syrian people must be able to define the future of their country without the fear of repression. The European Council welcomes the efforts of the political opposition to establish a united platform. The creation of the Syrian National Council is a positive step forward. It remains gravely concerned about the current situation in Syria and stresses its strong support to the Syrian people as they express their legitimate aspirations for a life in freedom and dignity. It condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing brutal repression led by the Syrian regime against its population as well as the widespread human rights violations. President Assad must step aside to allow a political transition to take place in Syria. The EU has decided to place restrictive measures aimed at those responsible for or associated with the violent repression and those who support or benefit from the regime, not at the civilian population. The EU will impose further and more comprehensive measures against the regime as long

as the repression of the civilian population continues. The European Council urges all members of the UN Security Council to assume their responsibilities in relation to the situation in Syria.

The European Council welcomes the reinforcement of EU restrictive measures against Iran due to unacceptable human rights violations and the adoption of restrictive measures against five individuals following the foiled plot to assassinate the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United States. It urges Iran to respect all obligations under international law. It expresses its continued concern over the expansion of Iran's nuclear and missile programmes, in violation of UNSC and IAEA Resolutions, as well as its lack of cooperation with the IAEA in addressing outstanding issues, including those pointing to possible military dimensions to its nuclear programme.

We urge Iran to enter into constructive and substantial talks with the E 3+3 in a way to arrive at a comprehensive, negotiated, long-term solution of the nuclear question in order to avoid possible further restrictive measures. At the same time the European Council invites the Foreign Affairs Council to prepare new restrictive measures to be decided upon and to be implemented at the appropriate moment in the case that Iran continues not to co-operate seriously nor to meet its obligations. It endorses the statement delivered by the High Representative on 21 September. It reiterates the commitment of the European Union to work for a diplomatic solution of this issue.

The Arab Spring wins Sakharov Prize 2011 27 October 2011. [Link](#)

The European Parliament Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought in 2011 goes to five representatives of the Arab people, in recognition and support of their drive for freedom and human rights. It will be presented to the winners by President Jerzy Buzek at Parliament's formal session in Strasbourg, on 14 December.

Parliament's 2011 Sakharov Prize goes to Asmaa Mahfouz (Egypt), Ahmed al-Zubair Ahmed al-Sanusi (Libya), Razan Zaitouneh (Syria), Ali Farzat (Syria) and posthumously to Mohamed Bouazizi (Tunisia). This nomination was submitted jointly by the EPP, S&D, ALDE and Green groups.

Following the decision by the Conference of Presidents (Parliament President and political group leaders) Thursday morning, President Buzek underlined "these individuals contributed to historic changes in the Arab world and this award reaffirms Parliament's solidarity and firm support for their struggle for freedom, democracy and the end of authoritarian regimes". He added, their award was "a symbol for all those working for dignity, democracy and fundamental rights in the Arab world and beyond."

Asmaa Mahfouz

Ms Mahfouz joined the Egyptian April 6th Youth Movement in 2008, helping to organise strikes for fundamental rights. Sustained harassment of journalists and activists by the Mubarak regime as well as the Tunisian example prompted Ms Mahfouz to organise her own protests. Her Youtube videos, Facebook and Twitter posts helped motivate Egyptians to demand their rights in the Tahrir Square. After being detained by the Supreme Council of Armed forces, she was released on bail due to pressure from prominent activists.

Ahmed al-Zubair Ahmed al-Sanusi

Mr Ahmed al-Sanusi, also known as the longest-serving "prisoner of conscience", spent 31 years in Libyan prisons as a result of an attempted coup against Colonel Gaddafi. A member of the National Transitional Council, he is now working to "achieve freedom and race to catch up with humanity" and establish democratic values in post-Gaddafi Libya.

Razan Zaitouneh

Ms Zaitouneh, a human rights lawyer, created the Syrian Human Rights Information Link blog (SHRIL) which reports on current atrocities in Syria. She publicly revealed murders and human rights abuses committed by the Syrian army and police. Her posts have become an important source of information for international media. She is now hiding from the authorities who accuse her of being a foreign agent and have arrested her husband and younger brother.

Ali Farzat

Mr Farzat, a political satirist, is a well-known critic of the Syrian regime and its leader President Bashar al-Assad. Mr Farzat became more straightforward in his cartoons when the March 2011 uprisings began. His caricatures ridiculing Bashar al-Assad's rule helped to inspire revolt in Syria. In August 2011, the Syrian security forces beat him badly, breaking both his hands as "a warning", and confiscated his drawings.

Mohamed Bouazizi

Mr Bouazizi, a Tunisian market trader set himself on fire in protest at incessant humiliation and badgering by the Tunisian authorities. Public sympathy and anger inspired by this gesture led to the ousting of Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Mr Bouazizi's self-immolation also sparked uprisings and vital changes in other Arab countries such as Egypt and Libya, collectively known as the "Arab Spring".

Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought

The Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought, named in honour of the Soviet physicist and political dissident Andrei Sakharov, has been awarded by the European Parliament every year since 1988 to individuals or organizations that have made an important contribution to the fight for human rights or democracy. The prize is accompanied by an award of €50,000.

This year, the other two shortlisted finalists were Belarusian civil activist and journalist Dzmitry Bandarenka and the Columbian San José de Apartadó Peace Community.

Council Conclusions on LibyaLuxembourg, 10 October 2011. [Link](#)

1. The EU welcomes recent developments in Libya and reaffirms its commitment to support the emergence of a new, stable, prosperous, sovereign and democratic Libya. The Libyan people have fought heroically for the respect of their rights and dignity. The National Transitional Council (NTC) has now established control over the vast majority of Libyan territory. The Kadhafi regime has collapsed and many of its key supporters have been arrested or have fled the country. The EU expresses full support to the Libyan authorities represented by the NTC, as the legitimate interim governing authority in Libya and the sole representative of the Libyan state and people. It looks forward to the formation of an inclusive and broad based government, to the launch of a democratic, peaceful and transparent transition that reaches out to all Libyans, including women, and to the preparation of free and fair elections in accordance with the Constitutional Declaration by the NTC.

2. The EU notes that some areas of conflict remain and pose a threat to the civilian population. It therefore welcomes the continuation of the operation to enforce UNSCR 1973 and ensure the protection of the Libyan population. It calls on Colonel Kadhafi and his immediate entourage to surrender. The EU calls on the Libyan people, including those who have previously served the regime, to unite in the spirit of reconciliation in support of the development of a new Libya. The EU recalls the duty to comply with the arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court and its expectation that all states will cooperate fully with the Court. It welcomes the NTC's call that those responsible for serious human rights violations during the conflict will swiftly face justice in accordance with due process, and its commitment to end impunity.

3. The EU welcomes the adoption of UNSCR 2009 (2011), the return of Libya as represented by the NTC to the UN, as well the Summit on Libya on 1 September in Paris and the first meeting of the High Level Meeting on 20 September in New York. The EU welcomes the establishment of a UN Support Mission to Libya (UNSMIL) and further welcomes the appointment of Ian Martin as the Special Representative of the UN SG. The EU notes the resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council and looks forward to the reintegration of Libya in it.

4. The EU stresses the need to fully respect all international obligations and the rule of law, in particular human rights and international humanitarian law. It expresses concerns about reports of serious human rights violations and welcomes the statements by NTC President Abdul Jalil concerning the need to refrain from reprisals and to protect minorities and vulnerable groups, such as the Sub-Saharan Africans, and former combatants.

5. The EU expresses particular concern at the dissemination of conventional weapons in Libya and invites competent national authorities and international organisations to continue to ensure the security of any chemical weapons stockpiles, while continuing their destruction. It calls

for concerted efforts to secure all conventional weapons and prevent trafficking of them, as well as for progress on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. Any nuclear and radiological material present in Libya should also be accounted for and properly secured.

6. The EU also underlines its commitment to cooperating with the countries of the Sahara-Sahel region in order to reduce the risk of destabilisation that may result from the situation in Libya. In this context, the EU is committed to implement its Sahel strategy in an efficient and swift manner.

7. Libya faces enormous challenges in the short and medium term. The EU has stood by the Libyan people during the conflict, including through the delivery of significant humanitarian assistance, and will continue to do so now. The EU has immediately transposed the provisions of UNSCR 2009 on the delisting of entities active in the oil and gas sector and on the release of Libyan frozen funds for the benefit of the people of Libya. In addition, it has also delisted 29 entities previously covered by its autonomous restrictive measures. It stands ready to proceed to further delistings in order to make these assets available in a transparent and responsible manner in conformity with the needs and wishes of the Libyan people and relevant UNSCRs.

8. In response to the requests from the Libyan authorities and in full respect of the principle of Libyan ownership, the EU is participating in the joint needs assessment under the overall coordination of the UN. The EU, UN and the World Bank have taken the lead for different sectoral assessments, and the EU is leading in the key fields of border management, civil society and women's rights, as well as communications and media. The EU will also participate in other sectoral assessments led by the UN and the World Bank. Without prejudice to the assessment exercise, the EU reiterates its readiness to combine its actions and instruments to provide further assistance to the new Libya across a range of sectors, including on democratisation, rule of law, institution-building, security sector reform, police training and the re-launching of the economy. To support this process, the EU has opened an EU office in Tripoli in addition to the existing EU office in Benghazi. The Council also welcomes the return of number of Member States' embassies in Tripoli.

9. In the longer-term as Libya moves from conflict towards a peaceful stabilisation, the EU is committed to deepening and strengthening its relationship with the Libyan people. As laid down in June 2011 Council Conclusions and in the Joint Communication of March and May 2011, the EU has agreed a new and more ambitious approach to its Neighbourhood Policy to provide enhanced support to those countries in the region undergoing transition. The Council also welcomes the decision of the Senior Officials of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) to invite Libya to participate in the UfM meetings, with a view to becoming a UfM member.

Joint Statement by President Herman Van Rompuy and President José Manuel Barroso on the death of Muammar Gaddafi
Brussels, 20 October 2011. [Link](#)

The reported death of Muammar Gaddafi marks the end of an era of despotism and repression from which the Libyan people have suffered for too long. Today Libya can turn a page in its history and embrace a new democratic future. We call on the National Transitional Council to pursue a broad based reconciliation process which reaches out to all Libyans and enables a democratic, peaceful and transparent transition in the country.

Council conclusions on Syria
Luxembourg, 10 October 2011. [Link](#)

1. Recalling its previous Conclusions, the EU condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing brutal repression led by the Syrian regime against its population as well as the widespread human rights violations, including killing, mass arrest and torture of civilians, peaceful protestors and their relatives, that may amount to crimes against humanity. It also condemns actions aimed at inciting interethnic and inter-confessional conflict, as well as recent targeted assassinations of renowned political figures such as Mash'al-Tammo. According to the Deputy UN High Commissioner for Human Rights more than 2,900 people, including children, have died since the beginning of the unrest. The EU deplores these deaths and expresses its condolences to the families of the victims. The EU demands that the Syrian authorities put an immediate end to the violence in order to prevent further bloodshed. Those responsible for or associated with the repression must be held to account by the international community.

2. There can be no credible political process without an end to killings and arbitrary detentions, without the release of political prisoners and the right for opposition leaders and activists to meet peacefully and organize in freedom and safety. President Assad must step aside to allow a political transition to take place in Syria.

3. The Syrian authorities must immediately alleviate the suffering of the populations living in crisis areas, including by allowing unhindered and sustained access for humanitarian agencies and workers and restoring basic services including unimpeded access to hospitals. The Syrian authorities must grant access to fact-finding missions, in particular from the independent international commission of inquiry appointed by the Human Rights Council in August, and to allow independent and international media to operate in Syria without restrictions. Syria must abide by its international commitments, in particular its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

4. The EU strongly condemns attacks on diplomatic personnel. The Syrian authorities are under an international

obligation to ensure the protection of diplomatic missions in Damascus in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

5. The EU reiterates its determination to pursue actively its current policy, including through its targeted sanctions against the Syrian regime and those supporting it, until there is an end to the unacceptable violence and decisive progress towards a genuine, peaceful and democratic transition addressing the legitimate demands of the Syrian people.

6. The EU strives to assist the Syrian people in achieving their legitimate aspirations. Sanctions are aimed at those responsible for or associated with the violent repression and those who support or benefit from the regime not at the civilian population. Those targeted by EU restrictive measures must realize the consequences of their actions and distance themselves from the regime if they want to avoid being subject to EU sanctions. In this context, the EU recalls that the list of persons and entities targeted by restrictive measures is kept under constant review and is adapted accordingly.

7. The EU salutes the unwavering courage of those in Syria who are protesting and their willingness to remain committed to non-violence. It stands with the Syrian people as they express their legitimate aspirations, and as they seek the respect of fundamental rights of individuals regardless of their religion or belief. The EU reaffirms it is for them to decide the future of their country through peaceful and democratic means. It welcomes the efforts of the political opposition to establish a united platform. It calls on the international community also to welcome these efforts. In this regard, the EU notes the creation of the Syrian National Council as a positive step forward. The EU welcomes the SNC's commitment to non violence and democratic values.

8. The EU is deeply disappointed that the UN Security Council has not yet been able to adopt a resolution on the current developments in Syria even after months of ongoing brutal abuses by President Assad and his regime. The EU will continue to press for strong UN action to increase international pressure and urges all members of the Security Council to assume their responsibilities in relation to the situation in Syria. In addition, the EU will pursue efforts with regional partners, to address the situation in Syria.

9. As soon as a genuine democratic transition begins, the EU is ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria across all areas of mutual interest, including by mobilizing assistance, and strengthening trade and economic links.

Council tightens EU sanctions on Syria
Brussels, 13 October 2011. [Link](#)

In view of the continuing repression by the Syrian regime against its population and widespread human rights violations, the Council today reinforced the EU's restrictive measures on Syria.

The Council froze the assets of one more entity that financially supports the regime. At the same time, it ensured that legitimate trade is affected as little as possible. Today's decision brings the number of Syrian entities targeted by an EU asset freeze to 19.

The legal act, together with the details about the entity, will be published in the Official Journal of the EU on 14 October.

Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, commented: "Today's decision is a direct consequence of the appalling and brutal campaign the Syrian regime is waging against its own people. Our measures are not aimed at the Syrian people, but aim to deprive the regime of financial revenues and the support base necessary to maintain the repression. The EU will consider further measures in the light of developments, to support the Syrian people as they seek to decide their country's future through peaceful and democratic means."

Related Document:

Council Regulation (EU) No 1011/2011 of 13 October 2011 amending Regulation (EU) No 442/2011 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria

[Download here.](#)

Tunisian elections met international standards and were a major step towards democracy, say EP observers

Brussels, 26 October 2011. [Link](#)

MEPs praised the successful conduct of last Sunday's elections to Tunisia's Constituent Assembly in their initial findings released on Tuesday and congratulated the people on turning out to vote in huge numbers. While noting some imperfections they declared that the elections met international standards and called on Tunisia to start building a new democratic state.

"These elections were the first step. Now it is up to you to build new democratic institutions", said Gabriele Albertini (EPP, IT), who led the 14-member delegation of MEPs that formed part of the overall EU Election Observation Mission (EOM). "The task of the Constituent Assembly that has just been elected is huge and we know how much the Tunisian people want the direction taken on 14 January to be pursued democratically, he declared.

"We were moved to see joy and hope on the faces of young people, women, old people, everyone," he continued. "We were impressed to see polling stations close early because everyone had voted! Can there be a stronger indication than that of the determination of the Tunisian people to engage in truly democratic debate and open a new chapter in their history?"

The EP Delegation worked closely with the EOM headed by Michael Gahler (EPP, DE), and fully endorsed its findings after observing polling and vote-counting in Tunis and the surrounding area, Sidi Bou Zid, Sfax and Gafsa. Though it will make some recommendations for the next elections, for example concerning voter registration and ballot papers, it found no major irregularities.

Mr Albertini called on the whole of the new political class in Tunisia to continue to work in a spirit of consensus and said the European Parliament was ready to establish ties with the newly elected members of the Constituent Assembly, provided the principles governing the EU's neighbourhood policy are met.

HRVP Ashton on the elections in Tunisia

15 September 2011. [Link](#)

Yesterday's historic elections for the Constituent Assembly mark the beginning of a new era in Tunisia.

In a climate of freedom, millions of citizens stood in line to cast their votes and decide their future in a peaceful and orderly manner.

The Tunisian revolution paved the way to the "Arab spring" nine months ago and yesterday Tunisian citizens had the opportunity, for the first time, to choose freely their democratic representatives. The EU Election Observation Mission will make its assessment soon but today I want to congratulate and pay tribute to the Tunisian people and their peaceful struggle for their rights and democratic aspirations.

HRVP Ashton on the deal between Israel and Hamas on the release of Gilad Shalit and Palestinian prisoners

Brussels, 12 October 2011. [Link](#)

I warmly welcome the news that Gilad Shalit will soon be able to return home after five years of captivity putting an end to the long ordeal that he and his family have endured. During my visits to Israel I personally shared my concerns and expressed the support of the EU and of the international community at large to Gilad's family. I pay tribute to the work of all those who have worked tirelessly to secure his release, and in particular the Egyptian and German negotiators.

Council conclusions on Middle East Peace Process

Luxembourg, 10 October 2011. [Link](#)

1. The EU reiterates its full support to the High Representative in her continuing efforts on behalf of the EU to create a

credible perspective for the re-launching of the Peace Process.

2. The EU reiterates its appeal to the parties to resume negotiations under the terms and within the timelines indicated in the Quartet Statement of 23 September 2011. The EU welcomes the positive statements of both parties in that regard. The EU underlines the Quartet's crucial role in facilitating the resumption of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians and recalls its readiness to support all efforts to bring the parties back to the negotiating table. The EU fully supports the Quartet's call on the parties to refrain from provocative actions and to respect the obligations of both parties under the roadmap.

3. The EU deplors the recent Israeli decision to advance settlement expansion in the East Jerusalem settlement of Gilo, which runs counter to the Quartet's efforts. The EU also calls upon both sides to avoid steps that run counter to the Quartet's efforts to restart negotiations.

4. The EU reaffirms its clear positions on negotiations, with regard to parameters, principles and issues, including the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council in December 2009, December 2010, May 2011 and July 2011, as well as the Statement delivered on behalf of the EU at the Security Council on 21 April 2011.

5. The EU continues to follow closely developments regarding to the Palestinian initiative at the UN.

Ashton, on the violence in Egypt Brussels, 10 October 2011. [Link](#)

I am extremely concerned by the large number of deaths and injuries among the Coptic Christian community, resulting from the violent clashes in Egypt. My thoughts are with the families of the victims, including those from the security forces.

I support the Prime Minister's call for calm and restraint. An investigation is necessary so that those responsible for the violence can be brought to justice. The authorities must protect the right to demonstrate peacefully.

Freedom of religion or belief is a universal human right, which needs to be protected everywhere and for everybody. It must be an essential part of the transition to democracy as Egypt builds a free and democratic society.

The interim authorities have the crucial task of bringing Egypt to the polls, in the first democratic and transparent elections, while ensuring law and order in a manner respectful of human rights.

The EU has supported the Egyptian people's democratic uprising from the start and offers its support and assistance to the process of democracy building.

JEDCO, European Investment Bank and Abraaj Capital Launch Jordan Growth Capital Fund

24 October 2011. [Link](#)

Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation (JEDCO), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and Abraaj Capital jointly announced today the launch of the US\$ 50 million Jordan Growth Capital Fund to provide long-term capital and institutional support to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Jordan.

The announcement was made by H.E. Eng. Yarub Qudah, Chief Executive Officer of JEDCO, Philippe de Fontaine Vive Curtaz, Vice President, EIB and Mustafa Abdel-Wadood, Chief Executive Officer, Abraaj Capital Limited, in the presence of His Majesty King Abdullah II, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, at the World Economic Forum's 'Special Meeting on Economic Growth and Job Creation in the Arab World', which is taking place at the Dead Sea from October 21-23, 2011.

JEDCO, in cooperation with the EIB, started an initiative to foster the development of the venture capital industry in Jordan by launching a tender for the establishment of two venture capital funds to be managed by fund managers in accordance with international best practices. Abraaj Capital was selected to manage the Jordan Growth Capital Fund after passing the evaluation criteria and the due diligence that was conducted based on international best practices. The Jordan Growth Capital Fund is a sector-agnostic private equity fund with a dedicated team focused on investing in high potential SMEs in Jordan. JEDCO, EIB and Abraaj Capital will serve as anchor investors in the Fund. The Fund will be managed by Riyadh Enterprise Development (RED), the US\$ 500 million SME investment platform of the Abraaj Capital group.

The Jordan Growth Capital Fund, as part of its investment mandate, will provide growth capital to high impact SMEs in Jordan. In anticipation of the launch of the Fund, RED has completed its first investment in d1g.com, one of the fastest growing Arabic social media and content sharing platforms in the Middle East and North Africa. Over the past three years, the d1g.com network has grown to 1 million subscribers and over 4.8 million unique visitors per month.

Announcing the launch of the Fund, Eng. Yarub Qudah, Chief Executive Officer, Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation stated, "The Jordan Growth Capital Fund is the first venture capital fund targeting the SMEs in the Kingdom. This initiative will play a major role in attracting international venture capital funds and foreign direct investments to invest in Jordanian SMEs. In addition, it will help in encouraging Jordanians to establish their own venture capital funds that will create a new sector specialized in fund management activities".

JEDCO was established in order to help create, develop and support world-class Jordanian enterprises, whether

in industry, agriculture or the services sector. JEDCO's ultimate goal is to prepare Jordanian companies for global competitiveness, increasing exports and export opportunities to targeted regional and international markets. In doing so, JEDCO seeks to enhance their technical, administrative and logistic capabilities.

Philippe de Fontaine Vive, Vice-President of EIB said: "I am delighted that EIB is associated with such an initiative. The fund is expected to make a key contribution to the emergence of the risk capital industry in Jordan with its talent pool and entrepreneurial energy. The successful launch of this fund is the result of over two years of close cooperation between EIB and the JEDCO and it sends a significant message to the market across the region."

Mustafa Abdel-Wadood, Chief Executive Officer, Abraaj Capital Limited, said: "Small and medium-sized enterprises are the engine of the region's future economic growth and a vital source of social and economic stability. We are very pleased to announce the launch of the Jordan Growth Capital Fund, which supports the expansion of SMEs in Jordan and accelerates their long-term growth potential."

"Addressing the region's employment challenge and fostering the growth of entrepreneurship clearly go hand in hand," he added. "It therefore makes strategic sense to announce, along with our partners EIB and JEDCO, the Fund launch during this important World Economic Forum meeting dedicated to tackling the region's twin challenges of sustaining economic growth and increasing the pace of job creation."

Abraaj Capital has a successful history of investing in Jordan, with its earlier investments including Aramex, the first PE-backed IPO in the Middle East and North Africa, and Maktoob, which was subsequently bought by Yahoo. Abraaj Capital's current investments in Jordan include the Jordan Aircraft Maintenance Company (JorAMCo).

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's article published in the newspaper Izvestia

«A new integration project for Eurasia: The future in the making»

4 October 2011. [Link](#)

A crucial integration project, the Common Economic Space of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan (CES), will kick off on January 1, 2012. This project is, without exaggeration, a historic milestone for all three countries and for the broader post-Soviet space.

The road to this milestone was difficult and often torturous. It began two decades ago when the Commonwealth of Independent States was established after the Soviet Union's collapse. To all intents and purposes, the selected model helped preserve the myriad of ties, both of civilisation and culture, which unite our peoples and also forged links in production, the economy and in other vital areas essential for our lives.

There are different views on how efficient the CIS is, and disputes over its internal problems and failed hopes have the potential to run and run. But it is difficult to argue with the fact that the commonwealth remains an irreplaceable mechanism that helps bring our positions closer together and enables us to elaborate a common view on key issues facing our region, in addition to the tangible benefits it affords its members.

Moreover, the CIS experience enabled us to launch a many-tiered, multi-speed integration process in the post-Soviet space, and to set up much needed institutions such as the Union State of Russia and Belarus, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, the Eurasian Economic Community, the Customs Union and finally the Common Economic Space.

It is worth mentioning that these integration processes received a fresh impetus during the global financial crisis, as it forced states to seek new resources for economic growth. We reached a point at which it became necessary to fundamentally modernise the principles of our partnership both within the CIS and in other regional associations. We focused above all on developing trade and production ties.

In fact, we are making integration a comprehensible, sustainable, and long-term project, attractive to both individuals and businesses, that operates independently from fluctuations in the current political environment or any other circumstances.

I would like to note that this was the initial objective when the Eurasian Economic Community was set up in 2000. In the end, it was this rationale of close, mutually beneficial cooperation, and the understanding of the commonality of our strategic national interests that led Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan to form the Customs Union.

On July 1, 2011 customs control over goods passing through the borders between our three states was lifted. This completed the establishment of a fully developed common customs area with clear prospects for implementing highly ambitious business initiatives. Now we are about to move from the Customs Union to the Common Economic Space. We are creating a huge market that will encompass over 165 million consumers, with unified legislation and the free flow of capital, services and labour force.

It is crucial that the Common Economic Space is rooted in coordinated action in key institutional areas such as: macroeconomics, ensuring competition, technical regulations, agricultural subsidies, transport, and natural monopolies tariffs. Later, this framework will also include common visa and migration policies, allowing border controls between our states to be lifted. In fact, we are adapting the experience of the Schengen Agreement that benefits Europeans as well as everyone who comes to work, study, or holiday in the EU.

I add that we will no longer have to equip the 7,000 kilometre-long Russian-Kazakh border. Moreover, new

conditions are being created that will foster trans-border cooperation.

For the general public, the lifting of migration, border and other barriers, including what are known as labour quotas, will mean that they have a free choice about where to live, study, or work. Incidentally, the Soviet Union with its system of registered domicile did not offer anything like this complete freedom.

Moreover, the list of goods for personal consumption exempted from duties will be expanded, thus saving people the humiliating inspection at customs.

Broad swathes of opportunities will also open up for businesses. I am referring here to new dynamic markets governed by unified standards and regulations for goods and services – in most cases consistent with European standards. This is important, since we are all transitioning to state-of-the-art technical regulations and coordinated policies. This will help us avoid technological gaps or trivial incompatibility of goods. Moreover, almost all companies in our countries will in fact enjoy all the advantages of a domestic producer in all three countries, including the access to government procurement and contracts.

However, to secure a foothold in an open market like this, businesses will have to improve efficiency, reduce costs and invest in modernisation. The consumer only stands to gain from this.

At the same time, we can speak of real jurisdiction competition for entrepreneurs. All Russian, Kazakh, and Belarusian entrepreneurs will be able to choose in which of the three countries to register their companies, where they want to do business and file their customs registration. This will be a serious incentive for national administrative systems to start improving their market institutions, administrative procedures and their business and investment climate. Taken as a whole, these systems will be forced to address their inadequacies and all the lacunae they have never addressed before, and advance their legislation in line with best European and global practices.

It took Europe 40 years to move from the European Coal and Steel Community to the full European Union. The establishment of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space is proceeding at a much faster pace because we could draw on the experience of the EU and other regional associations. We see their strengths and weaknesses. And this is our obvious advantage since it means we are in a position to avoid mistakes and unnecessary bureaucratic superstructures.

We are in touch with the three countries' leading business associations, we discuss controversial issues with them and take into account criticism. For example, the discussions at the Customs Union Business Forum held this July in Moscow proved highly productive.

I would like to emphasise that it is highly important for us that the general public and business communities in all three countries perceive the integration project not as some

kind of wheeze orchestrated by the top bureaucracy but as a living organism, and as a good opportunity to implement initiatives and succeed.

In order to better heed business interests, the decision was taken to start the codification of the legal framework of the Customs Union and Common Economic Space so that economic entities do not have to work their way through the thickets of endless passages, articles, and regulatory references. Instead, they will only need two documents, the Customs Code and the Codified Agreement on the Customs Union and Common Economic Space.

The EurAsEC Court will become fully operational on January 1, 2012. Both governments and economic entities will be able to apply to the court on all instances of discrimination or regarding the violation of competition and equitable business regulations.

The Customs Union and CES are special in that they have supranational structures which will also be guided by the basic requirements to minimise bureaucracy and heed people's actual interests.

We believe that the Customs Union Commission's role, which already now has significant powers, should grow further. Its jurisdiction currently includes almost 40 items and will expand to over 100, including the authority to take decisions on competition policy, technical regulations and subsidies, when the CES becomes operational. These complex issues can only be resolved by a fully developed and permanent structure – one that is streamlined, professional and efficient. This is why Russia put forward an initiative to set up a Board of the Customs Union Commission that will comprise representatives of all three states working as independent international officials.

By building the Customs Union and Common Economic Space, we are laying the foundation for a prospective Eurasian economic union. At the same time, the Customs Union and CES will expand by involving Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

We plan to go beyond that, and set ourselves an ambitious goal of reaching a higher level of integration – a Eurasian Union.

How do we understand the prospects for this project? What shape will it take?

First, none of this entails any kind of revival of the Soviet Union. It would be naïve to try to revive or emulate something that has been consigned to history. But these times call for close integration based on new values and a new political and economic foundation.

We suggest a powerful supranational association capable of becoming one of the poles in the modern world and serving as an efficient bridge between Europe and the dynamic Asia-Pacific region. This project also implies transitioning to closer coordination in economic and currency policies in the Customs Union and CES and establishing a full-fledged economic union.

Its natural resources, capital, and potent reserve of human resources will combine to put the Eurasian Union in a strong competitive position in the industry and technology race, in the struggle for investors, for the creation of new jobs and the establishment of cutting-edge facilities. Alongside other key players and regional structures, such as the European Union, the United States, China and APEC, the Eurasian Union will help ensure global sustainable development.

Second, the Eurasian Union will become a focal point for further integration processes since it will be formed by the gradual merging of existing institutions, the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space.

Third, it would be a mistake to view the Eurasian Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States as opposing forces. Each institution has its place and its role to play in the post-Soviet space. Russia, together with its partners, intends to work actively towards enhancing this commonwealth and infusing it with the topical agenda.

I'm referring to the launching of specific, comprehensible and attractive initiatives and joint programmes across the CIS, including in the energy sector, transport, high tech, and social development. There are good prospects for cooperation in science, culture, and education, as well as in managing labour markets and creating a civilised environment for labour migration. We inherited a great deal from the Soviet Union, including infrastructure, a developed system of regional production specialisation, and a common space of language, science and culture. We are all interested in harnessing this resource for development.

Moreover, I am convinced that in economic terms the commonwealth must be firmly founded in extensive trade liberalisation. Holding the CIS presidency in 2010, Russia put forward an initiative to draft a new Free Trade Area Agreement based on WTO principles that envisages the complete lifting of various barriers. We hope to see significant progress in coordinating the member states' positions on this during the next Council of CIS Heads of Government meeting slated for later this month.

Fourth, the Eurasian Union is an open project. We welcome other partners to it, particularly CIS member states. At the same time, we are not going to hurry up or nudge anyone. A state must only join on its sovereign decision based on its long-term national interests.

In this respect, I would like to touch upon an important issue. Some of our neighbours explain their lack of interest in joining forward-looking integration projects in the post-Soviet space by saying that these projects contradict their pro-European stance.

I believe that this is a false antithesis. We do not intend to cut ourselves off, nor do we plan to stand in opposition to anyone. The Eurasian Union will be based on universal integration principles as an essential part of Greater Europe united by shared values of freedom, democracy, and market laws.

Russia and the EU agreed to form a common economic space and coordinate economic regulations without the establishment of supranational structures back in 2003. In line with this idea, we proposed setting up a harmonised community of economies stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok, a free trade zone and even employing more sophisticated integration patterns. We also proposed pursuing coordinated policies in industry, technology, the energy sector, education, science, and also to eventually scrap visas. These proposals have not been left hanging in midair; our European colleagues are discussing them in detail.

Soon the Customs Union, and later the Eurasian Union, will join the dialogue with the EU. As a result, apart from bringing direct economic benefits, accession to the Eurasian Union will also help countries integrate into Europe sooner and from a stronger position.

In addition, a partnership between the Eurasian Union and EU that is economically consistent and balanced will prompt changes in the geo-political and geo-economic setup of the continent as a whole with a guaranteed global effect.

It is clear today that the 2008 global crisis was structural in nature. We still witness acute reverberations of the crisis that was rooted in accumulated global imbalances. At the same time, the elaboration of post-crisis global development models is proving to be a difficult process. For example, the Doha Round is virtually mired in stalemate, the WTO faces objective difficulties, and the principle of free trade and open markets is itself in deep crisis.

We believe that a solution might be found in devising common approaches from the bottom up, first within the existing regional institutions, such as the EU, NAFTA, APEC, ASEAN inter alia, before reaching an agreement in a dialogue between them. These are the integration bricks that can be used to build a more sustainable global economy.

For example, take the two largest associations on our continent – the European Union and the Eurasian Union currently under construction. In building cooperation on the principles of free trade rules and compatible regulation systems they are in a position to disseminate these principles, including through third parties and regional institutions, all the way from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans. They will thus create an area that will be economically harmonised, but that still will remain diverse when it comes to specific mechanisms and management solutions. At that point, it will make sense to engage in a constructive dialogue on the fundamentals of cooperation with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region, North America and other regions.

In this respect, I would like to mention that the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan has already initiated talks on establishing a free trade area with the European Free Trade Association. The agenda of the APEC forum, to be held in Vladivostok next year, will include trade liberalisation and lifting barriers that impede economic cooperation. Russia will be promoting a common agreed position of all Customs Union and CES members.

Thus, our integration project is moving to a qualitatively new level, opening up broad prospects for economic development and creating additional competitive advantages. This consolidation of efforts will help us establish ourselves within the global economy and trade system and play a real role in decision-making, setting the rules and shaping the future.

I am convinced that the establishment of the Eurasian Union and efficient integration are approaches that will enable members to take a prominent place in our complicated, 21st century world. Only by standing together will all our countries be able to take their places as leaders of global growth and drivers of progress, only together will they succeed and prosper.

EU and Russia agree terms for Moscow's eventual WTO accession

Brussels, 21 October 2011. [Link](#)

The EU's Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht today announced that the last remaining bilateral issues for the EU in Russia's accession to the World Trade Organisation have been resolved.

"We have struck a deal on the final outstanding bilateral issues, leaving the way open for Russia to join the WTO by the end of this year. This understanding will help to protect EU jobs in the car and car components' industry from moving to Russia", Commissioner De Gucht stated today. "There is now very little time left to reach a bilateral agreement between Georgia and Russia. I call on both parties to continue their efforts to find a solution in a spirit of compromise. The EU is ready to offer whatever help is necessary to resolve the issue."

As regards Russia's investment regime for car production, a balance has been found between the different concerns of European car companies that have already invested in Russia, European car and component companies that export to Russia, and Russia's desire, supported by the EU, to modernise its economy.

The result is an agreement on a compensation mechanism which will come in if exports of EU car parts to Russia fall as a result of the new investment regime. This will minimise the impact on EU jobs, particularly when it is considered against the overwhelming benefits and opportunities that Russia's WTO accession would bring EU companies in all sectors of the economy.

Good outcomes have also been achieved on the other outstanding issues: clearer rules for exporting agricultural products and foodstuffs to Russia, and a reliable quota regime for wood exports.

The EU has also secured a guarantee from Russia that an agreement to amend the system of Siberian Overflight payments, which is costly for EU airlines, will be implemented in the coming weeks.

The announcement today represents a key step in Russia's accession process. The negotiations will continue at the multilateral level in Geneva with the aim of concluding these key remaining issues very soon, which would enable Russia's accession to be agreed at the 8th WTO Ministerial Conference in December.

With respect to Georgia's outstanding request for more trade transparency, the EU has strongly supported the mediation efforts made by Switzerland over the past few months to resolve this issue and it is disappointing that the talks have so far not led to a solution. The EU supports the ongoing efforts and expresses its readiness to help provide its practical support in order to reach a solution quickly.

Background

WTO rules on investment measures

The Agreement on Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMS) is a set of WTO rules on the regulations applicable to foreign investments. It forbids policies such as local content requirements, which are designed to protect domestic industries.

The Russian decree on automobile assembly gives foreign car producers who build production plants in Russia trade preferences in terms of reduced import duties for components, in exchange for meeting local content requirements. It is therefore a direct contravention of the TRIMS Agreement. Russia had sought an exemption from TRIMS rules for this sector until 2020, which is unprecedented in WTO history.

WTO Accession process

Russia's accession process formally started 17 years ago. The EU and Russia completed their main bilateral negotiations in May 2004 but Russia's accession stalled in 2009 following the creation of the Customs Union with Kazakhstan and Belarus.

EU and Russia signed a memorandum of Understanding on the remaining issues of particular concern to the EU in December 2010. However a number of new issues of particular concern to the EU emerged later – in particular the new Russian decree on car assembly investments. On 1 October 2011 the US and Russia announced that they completed their bilateral talks. Since then, the process has focussed on the multilateral negotiations where a long list of chapters has been revised.

The benefits for the EU of having Russia in the WTO are

- It would open up opportunities in the Russian market for EU investors and exporters alike. Russia's import tariffs would come down and there would be a limit on export duty levels for a list of essential raw materials.
- WTO accession would improve the overall business and investment climate. Russia would adopt international product standards and WTO rules in a number of areas such as customs procedures, licensing and intellectual property.
- Accession and the ensuing economic reforms would help to make Russia's economy more transparent and predictable. This would create a strong incentive for

foreign companies to boost their investments in the Russian economy – in all sectors.

EU-Russia trade in facts and figures

Russia is the EU's third largest trading partner after the US and China with an 8.6% share of EU trade in 2010.

The EU is Russia's biggest trading partner with a 45.8% share of its overall trade in 2010. Total trade with Russia amounted to €244 billion in 2010, compared to €183 billion in 2009. Imports from Russia increased by 31.4% in 2010, and exports from the EU to Russia went up by 38.2%.

The EU is by far the most important investor in Russia. It is estimated that more than 75% of the investment stock comes from the EU.

European Council Conclusions

Brussels, 23 October 2011. [Link](#)

The European Council welcomes the second Eastern Partnership Summit held in Warsaw on 29-30 September and welcomes the intention of the High Representative and the European Commission to propose a roadmap that would list the objectives, instruments and actions with a view to the next Eastern Partnership Summit in the second half of 2013. The pace and depth of these countries' political association and economic integration with the EU will depend on their upholding of the democratic principles and rule of law which are the basis of the Partnership.

Algirdas Šemeta EU Commissioner for Taxation and Customs Union, Audit and Anti-Fraud in "Customs cooperation at the Eastern borders"

Brussels, 20 October 2011. [Link](#)

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen,

The Polish presidency of the EU kindly invited me to address this high-level seminar on customs cooperation in the EU Eastern neighbourhood; I found it a welcome opportunity to follow up on our common reflections at the seminar in Budapest in April. Unfortunately, at short notice, my presence is required in Brussels today to attend to pressing Commission business. I therefore sincerely regret not being able to be with you this time.

Recently released statistics clearly confirm the upward trend for trade between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries; since the year 2000, its share of the total EU trade has doubled. Although energy continues to make up a large share of EU imports, most of the trade across these borders is made up of goods transported by road and rail.

Closer customs cooperation is important for two main reasons:

Firstly, customs must make it possible for legitimate trading opportunities to continue to expand. The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement negotiations between the EU and several Eastern neighbours; Russia's expected membership of the WTO; and the Customs Union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan are all important developments; they provide an opportunity for customs in the entire region to modernise and converge, and thereby contribute to economic integration and growth.

Secondly, customs must be able to tackle critical challenges: in terms of security; product safety; and IPR infringements; on top of fighting smuggling and fiscal fraud.

The seminar in Budapest was successful in establishing an ambitious agenda for cooperation. In Cracow, you have an opportunity to take the Budapest agenda one step forward: by focusing on implementation.

You will all recall the three strategic priorities agreed in Budapest:

- Firstly, developing safe and fluid trade lanes; on the basis of operator reliability and compliance; faster procedures; supported by appropriate IT
- Secondly, promoting risk management systems to detect and contain illicit trade and to strengthen the fight against fraud; and
- Thirdly, investing in customs modernisation through convergence of legislation and procedures and the provision of appropriate infrastructure and equipment.

These priorities fully reflect those of the Strategic Frameworks for Customs Cooperation agreed between the EU and Russia at the end of last year. Similarly, a Strategic Framework along the same lines was at the top of the agenda when I visited Moldova last week. These Strategic Frameworks – and others to come – establish clear objectives for the coming years that we are committed to implement.

Currently, the Strategic Frameworks are being elaborated with countries directly neighbouring the EU. Meanwhile, I welcome the Polish initiative to invite all other Eastern Partners to identify cooperation priorities. In this way, and in line with the Budapest agenda, you may, at the seminar, consider extending the approach beyond the direct EU borders.

At this stage, allow me a few remarks on each of the three specific themes that you will be discussing in Cracow:

First, on exchanges of information:

Enhancing exchanges of information is indispensable if we want to strengthen risk management and fight smuggling and fraud more effectively. In June this year, the European Commission presented a specific Action Plan for the fight of smuggling of in particular cigarettes at the EU Eastern Border. Exchanges of information with neighbouring countries are an important component of the Action Plan. I believe that the main task for the Cracow seminar is to determine how to organise exchanges of information in practice; how to take account of specific priorities such as

cigarette smuggling and valuation fraud; and how to ensure an adequate legal basis.

Second, the extension of the Common Transit to the entire region is a very ambitious objective, which the EU is determined to pursue. Success will depend on sustaining the overall reliability and trustworthiness of the system in the longer term. This requires concentrated efforts and commitment, nationally and internationally. There are great potential benefits in terms of smooth trade and customs efficiency; by far worth the effort.

Finally, concerning customs modernisation strategies, I recognise that much depends on the national reform agenda, for which each country is responsible. But we can learn from one another, about what works and what doesn't; and there are possibilities for financial and technical support in developing and implementing focused strategies. I would urge you to discuss the practical ways and means, such as partnerships and twinings, to advance on this front.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Throughout the Eastern neighbourhood of the EU, there are important transformations affecting customs authorities. I hope that the Cracow seminar will bring clarity and focus to the ongoing process of deepening customs cooperation in line with the conclusions we reached in Budapest. The European Commission, DG TAXUD and OLAF, is fully committed to this effort. I am also convinced that EU Member States will actively engage in helping to implement our agreed priorities and make them a success.

Through better cooperation we can significantly improve our chances to respond effectively to challenges as they evolve. Let me therefore conclude by thanking Polish customs and the city of Cracow for their dedication in organising this seminar. I wish you a fruitful seminar and look forward to hearing about its outcome.

Eastern Partnership Culture Congress took place in Lublin

21-23 October 2011 . [Link](#)

Eastern Partnership Culture Congress was held on 21-23 October 2011 in Lublin, Poland. Eastern Partnership Culture Congress is a long-term undertaking, where in order to establish Eastern Partnership as a cultural project, you need a new platform for idea exchange, for designing new tools supporting cooperation and establishing a common representative group at European level.

The Congress is a part of a wider project entitled "Eastern partnership as a cultural project", which is run by Lublin City Office in cooperation with The Centre for Culture in Lublin and Foundation Trans Culture.

Congress objectives:

to establish a platform "cultures for changes" based on: congresses held every two years, think-tank and work group activity;

to issue publications, to organize summer schools and other partnership events, to establish Eastern Partnership as a cultural project,

to develop a long-term cooperation with Eastern Partnership neighbouring countries: European Union, Russia, Turkey and many others,

to engage culture in social change, to elaborate organization and financial tools for common ideas and arrangements.

EaP CSF Working group 4 "Contacts between people" address to the congress delegates letter with recommendations:

Among others the following recommendations will be addressed to EU:

- To invite EU Delegations in the EaP countries and relevant European Commission DGs to provide advise to EaP governments on congruency of national cultural policy reforms with relevant EU policies.

- To secure a regular exchange of reform experiences and updates on recent progress made to establish a periodically convening EaP Cultural Policy Reform Forum and involve civil society led initiatives, government representatives dealing with cultural policy reforms, representatives of all relevant inter-governmental institutions in the field (European Commission, EU Delegations, Council of Europe, UNESCO, etc.)

- To encourage the Regional Monitoring and Capacity Building Unit of the Eastern Partnership Culture Program in Kyiv to closely coordinate its efforts and work plans with civil society based initiatives in the field of culture in order to avoid duplication, repetition or pillarisation of efforts serving common development/reform goals.

- To encourage RMCB Unit in Kyiv to monitor reform progress in the EaP countries.

Recommendations to EaP governments:

- To ratify and completely implement all relevant international conventions in the field of cultural heritage.

- To implement fully the UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions (2005).

- To elaborate publicly roadmaps for cultural policy reforms to indicate tangible goals and milestones to be achieved within a reasonable timeframe. Close collaboration with local and international stakeholders should be secured.

Energy Community – Five years of regional cooperationBrussels, 21 October 2011. [Link](#)

The Energy Community will celebrate its fifth anniversary on Monday 24 October. Established to increase socio-economic stability and security of supply, the Energy Community has set a good example of regional cooperation in which the EU and the South-Eastern European countries can diversify their energy sources. It has created a functioning institutional framework and more legal certainty for investors. Next steps are to enhance market reforms and to boost investments in the energy sector. The final objective is that the regional market should be fully integrated in the European's internal energy market.

EU Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger said: "The Energy Community has proved to be an appropriate framework to boost business and favour sustainable growth. Now comes the time for the full implementation of the regulatory and legal framework set by the Community. When fully implemented it will ensure that citizens and companies benefit from fair competition on energy markets and are protected against unexpected power cuts."

Achievements

Contracting Parties have been successful in creating a stable regulatory framework and aligning their rules to the European Union standards. The Energy Community Contracting Parties have adopted key EU legislation for the opening of their electricity and gas markets to competition, based on the Second Energy Package and including common rules on access to the market, on operation of the systems, on third party access to energy infrastructure and on consumer protection e.g.; they have also adopted EU rules on energy efficiency, renewables, energy performance of buildings and labelling of household appliances. The Energy Community has also recently adopted rules on electricity and gas markets of the Third Energy Package. The Contracting Parties have committed themselves to put it in place by 2015.

Way forward

In the coming years the Energy Community will mainly tackle investment challenges it faces. A number of existing power plants require replacement or rehabilitation, electricity networks and gas interconnectors need modernisation. Strong energy regulatory authorities are needed, with enough powers, resources and independence to ensure non-discrimination, effective competition and efficient operation of the energy market. This will create a market environment that will help attract necessary investments.

In its role as a coordinator of Energy Community activities the Commission will promote investments in the region and will offer specific advice on structural reform. The Contracting Parties will create a regional strategy which will examine the needs and potential of the region and will include an investments' plan.

Background

The Energy Community Treaty was signed between the European Union and the following nine Contracting Parties: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro Serbia, Ukraine and Kosovo under UNSCR 1244. To date, Armenia, Georgia, Norway and Turkey have the status of observers. It entered into force in 2006.

The Energy Community was created for a period of 10 years, expiring in 2016 and it can be extended by a unanimous decision of its Ministerial Council. Its secretariat is in Vienna. It gives administrative support, provides legal and technical assistance to the parties. The budget of the Energy Community for 2011 is over €3 million and it is financed to a 98% by the EU.

The Energy Community has a regional market of 73 million citizens.

In the medium term, the Energy Community aims at creating an integrated energy market across the region which allows for cross-border trade, guarantees energy supply and takes into consideration climate and social aspects.

EU and Eastern Partnership region move forward with transport cooperationBrussels, 25 October 2011. [Link](#)

Following adoption of the Commission's communication on renewed approach to transport cooperation (see IP/11/844), Vice-President Siim Kallas met transport ministers of the EU Member States and of the six Eastern Partnership countries on 24 and 25 October 2011 in Krakow, to move forward with transport cooperation between the EU and those partner countries.

Vice-President Siim Kallas said: "We have today agreed with the Eastern Partnership countries to work together to make travel easier for people and ensure that goods can be transported efficiently. To follow up this work, we launched the Eastern Partnership Transport Panel. Discussions at this first ministerial conference proved that the EU and Eastern Partnership countries see a mutual benefit in working together towards closer transport cooperation."

Transport ministers summarised key challenges and opportunities for closer transport cooperation in a Joint Declaration. As a concrete initiative, they launched the Eastern Partnership Transport Panel as a framework for transport cooperation between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries.

As next steps, ministers have agreed to:

- follow up actions set out in the Commission communication for closer transport market integration and improved infrastructure connections;
- plan a regional transport network for the Eastern Partnership region that connects with the Trans-European

Transport Network (TEN-T) and between the countries themselves;

- take into account the transport infrastructure projects of mutual interest;
- cooperate with international financial institutions that can contribute to improved transport connections through financing.

The EU and partner countries plan to review progress at a next Eastern Partnership ministerial transport meeting that will be organised on the basis of proposal by the Commission and the Presidency of the Council, and in cooperation with the partner countries.

In summer 2011, the European Commission put forward actions to improve transport connections with the EU's neighbouring countries (1). To bring transport cooperation with the neighbours to the East to the same level as with other neighbouring regions, specific focus is given to the Eastern Partnership countries. Countries covered by the Eastern Partnership are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Several steps have already been taken to strengthen transport links with this region. The Eastern Partnership Transport Panel met for the first time in Brussels on 14 October to discuss issues concerning transport cooperation, including progress made in negotiations on a comprehensive aviation agreement with Moldova and a mandate from the Council to negotiate a comprehensive aviation agreement with Azerbaijan.

Tymoshenko trial could jeopardise EU-Ukraine association agreement, say MEPs
27 October 2011. [Link](#)

Parliament deplores the conviction of Ukrainian former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko as a violation of human rights and an abuse of the judiciary designed to silence Ukraine's leading opposition politician, in a resolution passed on Thursday.

A failure to review former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko's conviction will jeopardise the prospects of concluding and ratifying an EU-Ukraine association agreement, MEPs say in a resolution passed by a show of hands.

The resolution urges the Ukrainian authorities to ensure that legal proceedings in any appeal against Ms Tymoshenko's conviction or in trials of other members of the former government are fair, transparent and impartial. MEPs insist that Ms Tymoshenko should be allowed to participate fully in the political process both now and in the forthcoming elections in Ukraine.

MEPs fear that the Tymoshenko trial is at odds with Ukraine's proclaimed commitment to democracy and European values, and voice concern at signs of decline in democratic freedoms, and the possible use of state

institutions for partisan purposes and political revenge. MEPs are also alarmed by reports about the deterioration of media freedom and pluralism in Ukraine.

Parliament welcomes the preliminary agreement to conclude a deep and comprehensive EU-Ukraine free trade agreement, which, it says, could be a basis for finalising talks on an association agreement.

MEPs believe that Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's recently-postponed visit to Brussels could have helped to achieve the progress needed to remove technical and political obstacles to initialising an association agreement. Parliament therefore urges the Council and Commission to reschedule the meeting so that it takes place before the planned EU-Ukraine Summit in December 2011.

Related Documents:

HRVP's speech on the situation in Ukraine European Parliament, Brussels, 12 October 2011.
[Download here.](#)

EU-Ukraine trade negotiations: a pathway to prosperity, Brussels, 20 October 2011
[Download here.](#)

Statement by the spokesperson of HRVP Ashton on further convictions of peaceful demonstrators in Azerbaijan
Brussels, 8 October 2011. [Link](#)

Recalling EU statements earlier this year which expressed concerns about freedom of assembly in Azerbaijan and the EU statement of 26 August regretting the convictions of six participants in the peaceful demonstration of 2 April 2011, High Representative Catherine Ashton is very concerned about the sentencing of 4 more participants in these events.

The High Representative considers that these convictions are not consistent with Azerbaijan's efforts to progress toward a pluralistic democracy and are a discouraging signal.

The High Representative calls on the judiciary in Azerbaijan to ensure a fair, transparent and evidence-based appeal process. In this context, she also expresses concerns about the increasingly challenging working environment for independent lawyers.

The EU Delegation has been instructed to closely monitor further developments on this issue and remain engaged in assisting Azerbaijan in fulfilling its commitments with regard to democracy and the rule of law.

Better mobility between the EU and Armenia

Brussels, 27 October 2011. [Link](#)

Today Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Home Affairs, Jerzy Miller, Poland's Minister of the Interior and Administration, and Edward Nalbandian, Armenia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, officially launched a new Mobility Partnership. Together with ten Member States (Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Sweden) they signed a Joint Declaration on carrying out a series of initiatives in the field of migration. These will strengthen relations between Armenia and the EU by promoting mobility and cooperation on migration issues.

"The launch of this Partnership with Armenia is a very important step towards bringing European and Armenian citizens closer. The Mobility Partnership, together with other instruments such as future Visa Facilitation and Readmission agreements, will be key in increasing the mobility of European and Armenian citizens in a well-managed and secure environment", said Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström.

"This Mobility Partnership is a clear sign of the readiness of the European Union and the countries of the Eastern Partnership to move towards a closer integration. Fostering mobility and people-to-people contacts is fundamental for the promotion of social and economic development and mutual understanding between the people in Armenia and in the EU", stated Stefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy.

With this Mobility Partnership, the EU and Armenia will step up their dialogue and cooperation in key areas. Practical initiatives will be launched to enhance Armenia's ability to manage migration and inform, integrate and protect migrants and returnees.

The partnership will also support Armenia's efforts to improve the way it deals with issues relating to asylum and the protection of refugees, and to the prevention and reduction of irregular migration and human trafficking. Ten EU Member States as well as the European Training Foundation (ETF) are involved in this partnership, which remains open to other Member States wishing to take part.

The Republic of Moldova Joins EU Research Programme

Brussels, 11 October 2011. [Link](#)

The European Union and Moldova have today forged closer ties on research and innovation. Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science and Gheorghe Duca, President of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Moldova, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the association of Moldova to the EU's Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7). This will allow Moldovan scientists, research institutes, universities and companies to collaborate with their counterparts across

Europe in key research areas, while strengthening their own research expertise and capacity. In practice they will compete for research funding on an equal footing with counterparts in EU Member States. In return Moldova will make a contribution to the overall FP7 budget, calculated on the basis of its GDP. The Republic of Moldova will be the 14th country associated to FP7.

Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn welcomed the signature of the MoU, stating "The agreement today is only the beginning of a long-term partnership that will benefit Moldova and the rest of the European scientific community. Together we can tackle the big challenges that face our societies like better healthcare, greener transport, and energy security."

Increased sectoral cooperation with Moldova and the other countries of the Eastern Partnership and the broader European Neighbourhood Policy region, through the facilitation of their participation in EU programmes, is a key aspect of the recent communication 'A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood' issued jointly by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission. FP7 will be the first EU programme in which the Republic of Moldova will participate fully. The Republic of Moldova will also be the first Eastern Partnership country and the second European Neighbourhood Policy country to be associated with FP7. Association is the strongest form of international cooperation in research and innovation between non-EU countries and the EU. The Republic of Moldova will become formally associated to FP7 from the 1 January 2012. In practical terms Moldovan researchers will be associated for all of the FP7 calls which are currently open, as these draw on the budget for the 2012 financial year. The other countries associated to FP7 are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Faroe Islands, FYROM, Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein,

Related Document:

EU and Moldova endorse customs cooperation
[Download here.](#)

European Commission recommends moving onto next stages towards EU entry

Brussels, 12 October 2011. [Link](#)

Today the European Commission recommends the opening of accession negotiations with Montenegro, and granting EU candidate status to Serbia. In a set of annual reports, the Commission reports on the progress towards EU accession made by the Western Balkans, Turkey, and Iceland over the past year.

Presenting the annual Enlargement Package, Commissioner Stefan Füle said: "Today's recommendations for Montenegro and Serbia show that the enlargement process is stimulating reforms on the ground and helping to create a more stable

and prosperous Europe. The transformational power of the enlargement process sends a powerful message of hope at this challenging time, both for European Union Member States and for the enlargement countries.”

In a year that has seen the closure of accession negotiations with Croatia, there has been further progress elsewhere in the Western Balkans. The arrest of the two remaining ICTY indictees removed a major stumbling block from Serbia's European path and marked an important step towards reconciliation in the region. A dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina was established and has yielded initial results. This needs to be pursued constructively. Montenegro has strengthened its reform efforts based on the priorities set out by the European Union. The European Commission also confirmed its earlier recommendation to open accession negotiations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Visa-free travel to the Schengen area was granted to the citizens of two more Western Balkan countries in December 2010, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Nevertheless, good governance, the rule of law, administrative capacity, unemployment and economic reform remain major challenges in the region. There are still problems concerning regional cooperation. In a number of countries, important reforms were delayed, often as a result of internal political developments and conflicts. There have been a number of worrying developments in freedom of expression in the media. Differences over status of Kosovo continue to have a negative effect on both Kosovo and the wider Western Balkans region.

Iceland's accession process has made headway over the past year, with negotiations ongoing. The Commission expects that the accession negotiations will continue to progress well and is confident that core issues such as fisheries and environmental protection can be addressed constructively. The accession negotiations with Turkey have regrettably not moved into any new areas for over a year. Turkey's EU-accession process remains the most effective framework for promoting reforms, developing dialogue on foreign and security policy issues and strengthening economic competitiveness. At the same time, the Commission is concerned about the recent tensions in relations between Turkey and Cyprus. A new positive agenda in EU-Turkey relations needs to be developed, to enable a more constructive relationship based on concrete steps in areas of common interest.

Background

CROATIA: candidate - applied in 2003. Accession negotiations were completed in June 2011. In line with Article 49 TEU, the Commission today presents its favourable Opinion on Croatia's readiness accession to the European Union. Following the completion of the ratification process, Croatia should become a member state on 1 July 2013.

TURKEY: candidate - applied in 1987. Accession negotiations were opened in October 2005. 13 chapters are opened and 1 provisionally closed. Full implementation of the obligations under the Customs Union and progress towards normalisation of relations with Cyprus are needed before

the country can advance more vigorously in its accession negotiations.

ICELAND: candidate - applied for membership in 2009 and opened accession negotiations in June 2010, with 4 chapters opened of which 2 have been provisionally closed. As Iceland is already a member of the EEA and the Schengen area, a large part of its legislation is already aligned with that of the EU.

THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA: candidate - applied in 2004. The country continues to sufficiently fulfil the political criteria and the Commission renewed its 2009 recommendation for opening accession negotiations. As a unanimous decision of Member States is required for the negotiations to start, a solution to the name issue is essential.

MONTENEGRO: candidate - applied in 2008. In 2010, the EU awarded candidate status and set out seven key priorities which the country needs to fulfil in order to achieve the opening of accession negotiations. Today the Commission recommended opening of accession negotiations.

ALBANIA: potential candidate - applied in 2009. In 2010 the EU set out twelve key priorities which the country needs to fulfil to achieve the opening of accession negotiations. Although progress was made in some of these areas the Commission was not in a position to recommend further steps for Albania this year.

Building on recent positive signals, the Commission encourages the political forces in Albania to re-establish and sustain a level of political dialogue allowing the functioning of key democratic institutions and the implementation of essential reforms.

SERBIA: potential candidate - applied in 2009. The Commission today presented its opinion on Serbia's membership application. Based on its findings, it recommends that the Council grants Candidate Status for Serbia. Condition also set one key priority which the country needs to fulfil in order to achieve the opening of accession negotiations.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: potential candidate - has not applied for EU membership; following the 2010 parliamentary elections, the country has not yet formed a state-level government and the lack of a shared vision by political leaders on the direction of the country continued to block key EU-related reforms.

KOSOVO: potential candidate - Differences over the status of Kosovo remain an obstacle to the development of contractual relations between the EU and Kosovo. The EU supports Kosovo's efforts to fulfil its European perspective.

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