



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on Afghanistan

*2870th EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting
Brussels, 26 and 27 May 2008*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. Looking ahead to the International Conference in Support of Afghanistan, to be held in Paris on 12 June 2008, and recalling Conclusions on Afghanistan of the European Council in December 2006 and successive GAERC Conclusions since February 2007, the Council underlines the EU's continued commitment to long-term support for the people and Government of Afghanistan. The central objective of the EU in Afghanistan is to support the Government in establishing a sustainable and functioning state providing security, respecting the rule of law and human rights, and fostering development.
2. The Council welcomes the important progress made through combined efforts by the Government and people of Afghanistan and the international community, most notably in building political institutions, health and education.
3. The Council, nevertheless, notes the remaining challenges, especially in the areas of development and governance, and the underlying factors, notably corruption and a lack of security - with narcotics being linked to both- which continue to undermine the functioning of the Government of Afghanistan. The Government and the international community need to address this through the Afghanistan Compact.
4. The Council, therefore, welcomes the opportunity to assess progress in Afghanistan at the Paris Conference and wishes to focus on the following areas.

P R E S S

5. The Council calls on the Government of Afghanistan to take greater responsibility for reconstruction and development. The Council therefore thinks that as much assistance as possible should be directed in support of the Government through multi-donor trust funds or budgetary support, with due attention to absorption capacity.
6. The Council underlines that increased ownership should be paired with accountability. Urgent progress in meeting the benchmarks of the Afghanistan Compact is needed, notably:
 - a. implementation of a strategy to tackle corruption at all levels, in recruiting competent and credible professionals to public service on the basis of merit, and establishing a more effective, accountable and transparent administration at all levels of Government; this includes ensuring proper functioning of an independent mechanism for senior appointments as agreed in the Compact;
 - b. strengthening resources and authority of sub-national government structures building upon successful national programmes and through the Independent Directorate for Local Governance;
 - c. implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy, under the leadership of the Government of Afghanistan, including implementation of an effective rural livelihoods strategy.
7. Furthermore, together with the international community the EU will provide full support to the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the implementation of priorities set out therein, in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.
8. The Council further underlines the importance of a unified approach by the international community in pursuing common goals, in full coordination with the Government of Afghanistan and with coherence between the military and civilian dimensions. In this context, the Council calls for strengthening UNAMA's capacity, including by lending support to efforts aimed at widening its presence throughout the country, notably in the South and West. The Council supports an enhanced role of the UN Secretary General Special Representative Kai Eide in coordinating efforts of the international community and stresses the synergy in objectives between UNAMA, EU and ISAF.
9. The Council recalls that promotion of respect for human rights, including freedom of the media, and gender equality is a fundamental responsibility of the Afghan Government, which should fully support the functioning of its relevant institutions and the implementation of its international obligations in the field of human rights. Full support should also be given to the abolition of the death penalty in Afghanistan. As a first step a *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty should be re-established.
10. The Council stresses the importance of the democratic process in Afghanistan, especially in light of the Presidential elections in 2009 and the parliamentary elections in 2010. The EU stands ready to support preparations for the elections. The Council also stresses the importance of well-defined, Afghan-led political outreach.
11. Security and rule of law remain key challenges to progress in Afghanistan. A lack of security in parts of the country is compounded by weak judicial and law enforcement institutions. The Council stresses the importance of the Community programmes to support Afghanistan in promoting rule of law through support to the reform of the Justice Sector. The EU underscores the need for a coherent approach to the rule of law sector, in particular the interface between Community justice reform programmes and activities in the police sector.

12. The Council reiterates its determination to contribute significantly to police reform through the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan), respecting Afghan ownership and working in close cooperation with other international actors, in particular the USA. EUPOL Afghanistan has made progress in implementing its mandate and is now deployed throughout the country; full deployment is planned for June 2008. In this context, the Council would also like to welcome the contributions of third countries to EUPOL Afghanistan.

13. Given the size of the task, the EU is committed to substantially increase its efforts through EUPOL Afghanistan, with the aim of doubling the original number of experts working in the mission. Such an increase of the mission size would provide an important additional capacity on the key police reform issues. Due to the challenging operational environment, thorough preparation, timely planning, prior full operational capability and continued contribution of high-calibre staff are essential.

14. The Council recognises the importance of the International Police Co-ordination Board's work on a unified, integrated vision of the Afghan police, which should be given the highest priority.

15. The Council considers good relations with neighbouring countries to be key to achieving stability in Afghanistan, especially given the multi-dimensional character of issues such as narcotics. The Council therefore continues to support efforts aimed at improving relations between Afghanistan and its neighbours, and at full integration of the country into regional structures. "