



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



## **Council conclusions on Afghanistan**

***2932nd GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting  
Brussels, 16 March 2009***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. "The Council considers that the challenges facing Afghanistan and the broader region require a renewed international engagement. The EU will play a major role in this. It therefore reaffirms its long-term commitment to working with the people and government of Afghanistan for the stability, reconstruction and development of their country. The EU will look urgently at how to enhance and improve its engagement. The Council stresses the overriding importance of Afghan ownership and the continuing need for a comprehensive approach from the EU and its international partners, including on the inter-connected challenges of development, counter-narcotics, good governance and security. The Council recalls its conclusions of 26 May 2008 and underlines the urgency of fulfilling the commitments undertaken at the London Conference in 2006 and the Paris Conference in 2008.

# **P R E S S**

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2. The Council attaches the greatest importance to the holding of free and inclusive elections in Afghanistan. The Council welcomes the confirmation by the Independent Election Commission that Presidential and provincial elections will be held in August 2009. It is now up to the Afghan authorities, all the political parties and other stakeholders to work for transparent, fair and credible elections, in order to ensure that the next Afghan Government has legitimacy and a strong mandate. The Council confirms the EU's willingness to play a prominent role in supporting the elections throughout the country, working alongside the Afghan Government and the UN. In this regard, the EU will provide substantial financial assistance and, subject to security and other conditions being met, deploy an electoral observation mission.
3. The Council is committed to the improvement of governance and the rule of law in Afghanistan. It reiterates the EU's commitment to significantly enhance capacity building in the justice and rule of law sectors. Protection and support of human rights, the fight against corruption and impunity are central to good governance. The Council looks to the Afghan authorities to uphold the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Afghanistan and under international law. The Council underlines the importance of freedom of expression and a diverse media in Afghanistan and in this regard calls upon the Afghan government to pass the media law approved by the Lower House of Parliament.
4. The Council confirms its commitment to assist police reform in Afghanistan also through its civilian ESDP mission EUPOL. The EUPOL is an essential contribution to the establishment of a competent and legitimate Afghan national police force which is crucial for the long term stability of Afghanistan. The Council underlines that the decision to substantially increase the size of the mission is being implemented.
5. With a view to further enhancing the impact of EU policy in Afghanistan, the Council recognizes the importance of increasing the EU's coherence and visibility including by working towards a single EU representation.
6. The Council fully supports the role of UNAMA and its Head, Mr Kai Eide and stands ready to further support UNAMA in its coordinating efforts. The Council agreed long term development of Afghanistan demands not only more assistance, but also greater aid effectiveness, transparency and better coordination including more use of Afghan systems where possible.

7. The Council will address the challenges facing Afghanistan in the context of a wider regional approach. Fostering stability in Afghanistan is in the interest of all countries in the region and the international community. The Council stresses the importance of cooperation by all these countries so as to ensure sustainable development in Afghanistan and the wider region. The improvement of the bilateral relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan is essential and the Council stands ready to actively contribute to this process. In this regard it underlines the EU's intention to play a greater role in supporting Pakistan in the development of the rule of law, stability and security and looks forward to the ad hoc EU/Pakistan summit. The Council recalls the regional dimension of the mandate of the EUSR in Afghanistan, in particular as regards Pakistan. The Council looks forward to practical results from the upcoming Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) to be held in Islamabad. The Council welcomes the forthcoming international conference on Afghanistan to be held in the Hague on the 31 March.
  8. The Council welcomes the recent visit of the Vice President of the United States J. Biden to the EU. The Council looks forward to continued cooperation with the new US administration in a renewed commitment to Afghanistan and the wider region. "
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