



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 17 March 2014
7863/14
(OR. en)
PRESSE 158

**ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE COOPERATION
COUNCIL BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE
REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN**

The Cooperation Council between the European Union (EU) and the Republic of Uzbekistan held its eleventh meeting on Monday, 17 March 2014. The Cooperation Council reaffirmed the commitment of both parties to see their bilateral relations strengthened across a number of areas and took stock of the progress made since the tenth Cooperation Council between the EU and the Republic of Uzbekistan in November 2011, including with regards to the implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia.

The Cooperation Council underscored the intensification of the political dialogue between the EU and the Republic of Uzbekistan over the past years, as demonstrated by the visit of President Karimov to Brussels in January 2011 and his meeting with President Barroso, the visit of the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton as well as the opening of an EU Delegation in Tashkent.

The Cooperation Council reiterated the value of maintaining a focus on a comprehensive implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia both, on a regional and national basis, and welcomed Uzbekistan's increasing involvement in the EU regional initiatives for Central Asia. The EU expressed its expectation to see Uzbekistan actively participating in the upcoming EU - Central Asia High Level Security Dialogue.

The Cooperation Council discussed a number of issues of importance to both parties, notably political reforms, rule of law and human rights, trade and economic relations, energy cooperation, regional cooperation in Central Asia and international issues.

P R E S S

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The EU welcomed Uzbekistan's readiness to discuss about human rights with the EU in an increasingly open fashion within the Human Rights Dialogue. Both sides reviewed the situation concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms in Uzbekistan, especially in key areas of concern to the EU. The EU strongly encouraged Uzbekistan to step up its cooperation with the United Nations towards developing a National Action Plan on Human rights aimed at ensuring the implementation of the recommendations accepted by Uzbekistan under the 2013 Universal Periodic Review exercise. The EU expressed its readiness to support this cooperation exercise.

The EU welcome the renewed cooperation between Uzbekistan and the ILO, in particular on child labour, and took note of the positive findings of the ILO High Level Monitoring Mission on child labour during the cotton harvest of 2013, as reflected in the subsequent report of the ILO Committee of Experts of 2014. The EU called upon Uzbekistan to engage further with the ILO on the implementation of the ILO conventions and to address all outstanding labour issues pertaining to these conventions.

The Cooperation Council emphasised the great potential of the economic and trade component of EU-Uzbekistan relations and discussed how best to improve the business and investment climate. The EU reiterated its support for Uzbekistan's plan to accede to the WTO. The Cooperation Council expressed its support for the creation of a Joint Business and Investments Council between the EU and Uzbekistan, in order to promote EU trade and investments in Uzbekistan.

The Cooperation Council noted the converging views of the EU and Uzbekistan as regards the main priorities of the forthcoming EU development cooperation with Uzbekistan, in particular the sector of rural development.

The Cooperation Council emphasised the mutual interest for a strengthened cooperation between the EU and the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of energy and underlined the importance of effective implementation of the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on energy.

The Cooperation Council discussed regional cooperation in Central Asia and international issues, including Afghanistan. The Cooperation Council underlined the importance of regional cooperation in Central Asia as an effective means of conflict prevention and socio-economic development in the region. In this context, the Cooperation Council also underlined the importance for the Central Asian partners to seek a sustainable settlement regarding water management, security and energy issues in the region, which would take into account the interests of all countries and preserve unity in the region, in line with the guiding principles of the EU Water Diplomacy adopted in July 2013.

The Cooperation Council noted the importance of cooperation between the EU and Uzbekistan to promote regional stability and face external challenges.

The Cooperation Council was chaired by H.E. Evangelos VENIZELOS, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Greece. The delegation of Uzbekistan was led by H.E. Abdulaziz KAMILOV, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Also present were H.E. Dimitris KOUKOULAS, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Greece and Mr David O'SULLIVAN, Chief Operating Officer of the European External Action Service.
