**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

2748th GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 15 September 2006

Council Conclusions
on the second session of the Human Rights Council

At the start of the second session of the newly established Human Rights Council (HRC), the Council adopted the following conclusions.

"1.   The EU strongly supports the mission of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The EU remains committed to work, together with others, to enable the HRC to fulfil all aspects of its mandate.

2.   The EU welcomed the establishment of the Human Rights Council last March. The EU expects the Council to become an efficient and effective body that will make a genuine contribution to the protection and promotion of human rights around the world. The EU is committed to dialogue and genuine cooperation with others in order to achieve this objective.

3.   The Council welcomes the important steps taken since the establishment of the HRC in terms of standard setting in the area of human rights, in particular the adoption - at the first HRC session - of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The EU further considers that reaching an agreement on the draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in August was a major step forward in promoting the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities. The EU hopes that these instruments will be adopted by the UN General Assembly this autumn.

P R E S S

4.   The Council expects that the HRC will cover, in accordance with its mandate, thematic issues - civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights - and country specific issues, addressing situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations and make recommendations thereon. The HRC also has an important preventive mandate, which - if used effectively- can play a crucial role in helping to avoid situations of violation. In addition the Council's regular sessions should enable it to react to situations in a timely manner.

5.   With regard to the second session, the EU underlines that this session is a key opportunity for all to set the future tone and scope of the HRC's work. The EU will therefore seek constructive cooperation with others, in order to secure a meaningful debate, and practical and effective results. During the forthcoming session, the consideration of the reports by the special procedures will be in focus. The EU will strive to achieve a genuine dialogue with the special procedures, and secure adequate operational follow-up to the recommendations made in the relevant reports, and it encourages others to do likewise. The HRC must, according to its mandate, always have an opportunity to also address urgent situations and issues, and the EU will consider appropriate ways to raise such topical issues.

6.   The EU places great importance on the system of special procedures, including thematic and country mandates. In the context of the review, the system should be further strengthened and its independence and integrity fully secured. The EU also emphasizes the duty of all Governments to cooperate with these mechanisms. The EU expects the new universal periodic review to develop into a meaningful, balanced and effective mechanism complementing other forms of activity of the HRC. The EU will continue to play an active role to this effect.

7.   The Council emphasizes the important contribution of NGOs to the HRC's work. Human rights defenders, national human rights institutions and civil society representatives play a key role in conveying the voices of those the HRC seeks to protect. It is important that their role is further strengthened over time.

8.   The Council reaffirms the firm support of the EU for the work of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs Louise Arbour, and her Office. Apart from other important functions, an active role of the High Commissioner in building an effective and operational Human Rights Council will be crucial."

————————————

P R E S S

EN