

Standpoint... n°266

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The following views reflect France's official positions

...Seventh Anniversary of September 11 attacks

Press briefing given by Foreign Ministry spokesperson – September 11, 2008

Today is the anniversary of the tragedy of September 11, 2001. Our thoughts go out first to the victims of this unprecedented terrorist attack, to their families and loved ones, just as they are with the victims of all acts of terrorism in the world.

France and the international community remain mobilized to continue the fight against terrorism.

As the current president of the European Union, France accords great importance to strengthening international cooperation against the terrorist threat. At the beginning of the month it took an active part at the UN in the international work to revise the global anti-terrorist strategy adopted by the UN in September 2006.

The fight against terrorism must be carried out unwaveringly in all aspects, with respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, by attacking terrorist networks, doing everything possible to prevent their actions but also acting on the causes which feed extremism and terrorism.

...France Russia / Georgia

- Daily Press briefing – Visit by Nicolas Sarkozy, president of the Republic to Moscow and Tbilisi - September 9, 2008

On 8 September, M. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the Republic, went, in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Union, to Moscow and Tbilisi, accompanied by Mr José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, Mr Javier Solana, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and M. Bernard Kouchner, French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs. President Sarkozy and his Russian counterpart approved a document reaffirming the commitment of all the parties to implement all the provisions of the Medvedev-Sarkozy six-point plan of 12 August 2008. This agreement provides for the establishment of measures on the withdrawal of the armed forces, international monitoring mechanisms and the holding of international discussions as provided for under point 6 of the plan of 12 August. The Russian forces will have to withdraw within a week from the observation posts established on the line between Poti and Senaki. International observers, including at least 200 from the EU, will have to be positioned in the areas adjacent to South Ossetia and Abkhazia by 1 October 2008. The Russian troops will therefore have to pull out of these areas within 10 days. Finally, the Georgian armed forces will have to complete their return to their normal bases by 1 October 2008.

This agreement reaffirms that observers of the United Nations Observation Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) for Abkhazia and the OSCE for South Ossetia will remain in their areas of responsibility with the same deployment blueprint as before the onset of hostilities. The European Union is the guarantor of the principle of non-use of force, provided for under point 1 of the 12 August agreement. International discussions will commence on 15 October 2008 in Geneva on the arrangements for security and stability in the region, the issue of refugees and displaced persons and any other issue by mutual agreement between the parties. In Tbilisi, the delegation led by President Sarkozy had a meeting with the Georgian President, Mr Saakashvili, and informed him of the result of the discussions held during the day in Moscow. President Sarkozy assured Georgia of the EU's support and its determination to help it get back on its feet. President Sarkozy and Mr Barroso confirmed to Mr Saakashvili the EU's desire to prepare an international conference to mobilize all the donors.

The crisis in Georgia was addressed in a joint declaration which reflects the very close alignment of views between the EU and Ukraine. President Sarkozy briefed President Yushchenko on the results of the mission he had just undertaken to Moscow and Tbilisi.

- Press briefing given by Foreign Ministry spokesperson – September 10, 2008

Q: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has ruled out EU monitors in the Georgian separatist republics, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, saying they could be deployed around these territories “not inside them.” What’s your reaction? Do you confirm that European observers will be able to monitor inside the separatist territories without the prior permission of Russian forces?

The agreement obtained by the EU in Moscow and Tbilisi on September 8, in accordance with the conclusions of the September 1 extraordinary European council and the August 12 six-point plan, permits the establishment of a civil EU observer mission in the context of the CFSP.

Its aim will be to monitor the actions of the parties and to verify compliance with the provisions of the August 12 six-point plan. The mission will be coordinated with the OSCE and UN missions.

Each of the missions, UNOMIG and OSCE, is continuing to carry out its mandate in its areas of responsibility in accordance with the deployment plan as set out August 7 and without prejudice to future adjustments.

The mandate of the EU mission is being worked out and is to be approved at the general affairs/external relations council on September 15 with a view to deployment on the ground by October 1.

Q: Russia has said that the agreements it’s just signed with South Ossetia and Abkhazia “directly mention provisions for access to its territory to deploy military installations there, including military bases obviously.” Does France see this being dangerous for the work of the monitors who are to be deployed in an around these territories?

We are sticking to the agreement on the implementation of the August 12 plan which all the parties must apply.

It provides in particular for the complete withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping forces from the areas adjacent to South Ossetia and Abkhazia to their positions prior to the outbreak of hostilities.

- Press briefing given by Foreign Ministry spokesperson – September 11, 2008

Q: Ossetian “President” Eduard Kokoity has announced that the Georgian separatist region of South Ossetia, which was recognized as independent by Russia in August, will

join the Russian Federation. What's your reaction? Can Mr. Kokoity take part in the international talks in Geneva on October 15 after making such an announcement? Do you find Mr. Kokoity's contradictory statements on Russia's annexation of South Ossetia troubling?

Mr. Kokoity completely retracted his statement, less than two hours later, saying that South Ossetia has no intention of joining the Russian Federation.

Let me recall the position of the EU and the international community which have condemned the Russian Federation's recognition of the unilateral declaration of independence by the self-proclaimed authorities of South Ossetia, and also of Abkhazia.

The EU presidency firmly recalls its commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

With regard to your second question, the international talks referred to in point 6 of the agreement of August 12, 2008 will start in Geneva on October 15 in accordance with the result of the talks on September 8. They will focus on the modalities for security and stability in the region and on the question of refugees and displaced persons. The preparatory talks on the framework, format and participation in this process have just begun.

To reply to your third question, I don't consider it necessary to comment on these contradictory statements.

Q: Russia has announced it's going to maintain about 3,800 soldiers in South Ossetia. Moscow said it will leave about 3,800 in Abkhazia. Is this a violation of the August 12 cease-fire accord and previous agreements limiting the number of soldiers that Russia can deploy in these territories?

As we emphasized yesterday, we are sticking to the September 8 agreement on the implementation of the August 12 accord.

It provides in particular for the complete withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping forces from the areas adjacent to South Ossetia and Abkhazia to their positions prior to the outbreak of hostilities.

In this perspective we are actively working on the establishment of international observer missions which will see to it that point 5 of the August 12 agreement is applied.

...European Union/Ukraine

Press briefing given by Foreign Ministry spokesperson – September 10, 2008

The September 9 European Union-Ukraine summit in Paris was attended by President Sarkozy as president of the European Council, accompanied by the minister for foreign and European affairs and the secretary of state for European affairs, the president of the European Commission accompanied by the commissioner for external relations and neighborhood policy, by the commissioner for external trade, and the high representative for the common foreign and security policy.

Ukraine was represented by President Viktor Yushchenko accompanied by Foreign Minister Volodymyr Ogrzyzko, Minister of Economy Bogdan Danylyshyn, Defense Minister Yuri Ekhanurov, Justice Minister Mykola Onishchuk and Energy Minister Yuri Prodan.

The summit resulted in significant gains for the future of relations between the EU and Ukraine. The EU and Ukraine decided to be linked from now on by an association agreement; the negotiations on this should be concluded in 2009.

The joint declaration adopted at the summit endorses the principles on which the strengthened partnership between the EU and Ukraine will be based. The future agreement will be an

association pact as Kiev wished. Ukraine is recognized for the first time as a European country which shares a history and common values with the EU countries.

With regard to the movement of people, a major issue for Ukrainian citizens, the EU said it is ready to open a dialogue soon, that is without waiting for negotiations on the agreement to conclude, so as to consider the conditions necessary for establishing a long-term arrangement for visa exemptions.

The EU and Ukraine also decided to further their cooperation in several areas of mutual interest such as energy, transportation, judicial and home affairs, the CFSP and ESDP.

...Russia/Venezuela

Press briefing given by Foreign Ministry spokesperson – September 11, 2008

Q: Two Russian strategic bombers have been in Venezuela since Wednesday for “training flights,” two days after the Russian Navy announced joint naval maneuvers in the Caribbean in November? Is France, which has a military presence in the West Indies, worried that these deployments reflect a destabilization in the region in an already very strained international context?

Venezuelan ports are visited by foreign warships making ports of call every year.

In the case of France, there are two or three ports-of-call in Venezuela a year. They're by ships stationed in French departments in America.

Similarly France and Venezuela have regular exchanges of units as part of their annual cooperation program. Venezuelan units also take part in exercises organized by France in the West Indies every year.

Any port-of-call by Russian ships to Venezuelan ports or visits by strategic bombers is a matter for that country and does not call for comment from us.

While we have no comment on bilateral cooperation between two states, we draw attention to the fact that nothing must be done that might raise concerns and tensions in the region.

...Death Penalty

Press briefing given by Foreign Ministry spokesperson – September 12, 2008

Only recently we condemned executions in Iran but we also have to express our condemnation and profound concern after the announcement by the Japanese authorities that three death-row inmates had been hanged.

The European Union is deeply disturbed at the announcement by the Japanese authorities that three inmates on death-row, Yoshiyuki Mantani, 68, Mineteru Yamamoto, 68 and Isamu Hirano, 61, had been hanged.

The accelerated pace of executions in Japan confirms a particularly disturbing trend at a time when there are over 100 inmates on death row.

The EU reaffirms its long-established opposition to the death penalty under all circumstances and is campaigning for its abolition throughout the world by trying to obtain a global moratorium on executions, the first step towards achieving this objective. The EU considers that abolition of the death penalty is essential for the protection of human dignity and the gradual development of human rights. Any judicial error in the application of the death

penalty entails the irreparable and irreversible loss of a human life. No judicial system is immune to error, and there is no irrefutable proof showing that the death penalty has any added value as a deterrent.

That is why the EU invites Japan to re-establish the moratorium on executions observed since December 25, 2006 and to consider the abolition of capital punishment.

In this regard the EU recalls that on December 17, 2007 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on a moratorium on the application of the death penalty which expressly asks all states which still practice capital punishment to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to the abolition of the death penalty.

We also have a statement to make concerning the threat of an execution in the United States.

The EU interceded today on behalf of Troy Davis, a US citizen sentenced to death in 1991 in the State of Georgia (US), whose execution date has just been set for September 23.

A letter signed by the three EU troika ambassadors to Washington, the French ambassador, the ambassador of the Czech Republic and the head of the European Commission, addressed to the president has been delivered to the pardon board of the State of Georgia which has the power to recommend commuting the sentence.

France and its EU partners reaffirm their opposition to the application of the death penalty in all places and circumstances. Abolition of the death penalty is essential for the protection of human dignity and respect for human rights. Any judicial error in the application of the death penalty is irreversible, and no judicial system is immune to error.

The EU calls on the competent authorities of the State of Georgia not to proceed with the execution of Troy Davis and to commute his sentence.

Q: Japan and the US announce executions. But there are countries like Saudi Arabia where there's an execution, if not several, every week. Why do you cite the countries that are more transparent?

I've just said that we condemn executions everywhere in the world and we're campaigning for the universal abolition of the death penalty. That applies to all countries, including those you've just mentioned. When they are announced, there's a specific case to discuss these situations, but we condemn the use of the death penalty regardless of the country practicing it.

Q: When you say you call on the authorities of this or that country to suspend executions, are there specific steps or are you content to make the appeal, which will be relayed in the press, without there being specific steps on the ground in the countries concerned?

The fact of saying it publicly is obviously a signal which, we hope, will be heard, and in a great many cases, our declarations are accompanied by specific steps.

...Bolivia

Press briefing given by Foreign Ministry spokesperson – September 12, 2008

The European Union condemns the growing number of acts of violence currently taking place in Bolivia, particularly in the provinces of Santa Cruz, Tarija, Pando and Beni. The European Union renews its appeal to all parties to take steps to rapidly establish a constructive dialogue to avoid a worsening of the situation which could lead to the loss of human life. The European Union regrets that cooperation projects and institutions sponsored by certain Member States of the Union have been the subject of threats and attacks. It recalls that those projects benefit the country's most vulnerable groups. The European Union reiterates its willingness to assist in a process of dialogue alongside all those who wish to contribute to it.

...India/Nuclear

Press briefing given by Foreign Ministry spokesperson – September 9, 2008

Q: Now that the nuclear supplier group has approved an exception to its rules to allow its members to engage in nuclear trade with India, what is the next step for French-Indian relations in this area? Should a detailed nuclear cooperation agreement be signed? If so, when? If not, is Areva free to sign contracts?

During the President's visit to India in January, the Head of State and the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Singh, expressed their support for giving a new impetus to cooperation between France and India for the development of civilian nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

In this area, France enjoys a reputation for international expertise that may be an important component in its bilateral cooperation with India.

The adoption of the exemption for India authorizes civilian nuclear trade while strictly defining it. France will thus act in compliance with its international obligations on every point.

...Middle East

Press briefing given by Foreign Ministry spokesperson – September 10, 2008

Q: What's France's reaction to the alarming news about the "catastrophic" humanitarian situation in Gaza? Is France going to take an initiative to get the civilian population out of the iron grip of Israel and Hamas on one side and the various Palestinian factions on the other?

France is paying very close attention to the development of the situation in Gaza. We've repeatedly expressed our concern about the humanitarian situation. We call for the restrictions on movement to be lifted and we condemn all forms of violence.

Let me remind you that in support of the mobilization of international donors at the Paris international donors' conference and in view of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, France is providing financial support for medical and humanitarian actions in the Gaza Strip which we told you about in detail at the briefing on July 10.

I also want to remind you that Rama Yade and Alain Joyandet are meeting today and tomorrow with UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen Abu Zayd.

In addition to its concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, France reaffirms its full support for the peace effort by President Abbas and his efforts to get inter-Palestinian dialogue re-started.

Q: Are there differences among the EU countries about humanitarian initiatives to help Gaza which explain the paralysis of France which holds the EU presidency?

There are no differences and no paralysis. The EU, which is by far the leading donor to the Palestinian Territories, provides very substantial aid to the Palestinians, especially through the commitments made at the international donors' conference in Paris on December 17, 2007, and a significant share goes to the population of Gaza.

The EU commitment is also evident in the establishment of the Pegase mechanism in 2008 in support of the three-year Palestinian reform and development plan. This new instrument broadens earlier provisions and ensures a flow of stable, predictable aid to the Palestinian Authority.

The unprecedented level and quick payment of contributions show the strength of EU mobilization to assist the population in Gaza.

...Lebanon

Press briefing given by Foreign Ministry spokesperson – September 10, 2008

Q: France is encouraging Lebanon to begin indirect talks with Israel. The Lebanese president announced yesterday that there was no point in beginning talks for reasons having to do with international decisions as Lebanon is committed to the Arab initiative. What's your reaction?

It is for the legitimate authorities in Lebanon to decide whether to hold talks or not.

France for its part is in favor of dialogue among the countries in the region and of everything that can foster stability and peace. It reiterates its commitment to stability along the blue line, respect for the cessation of hostilities and the full implementation of resolution 1701 in its entirety.

Q: What's your reaction to yesterday's announcement by the Lebanese president that national dialogue will resume on September 16?

We welcome this new phase in the implementation of the Doha Agreement and recall our full support for the Lebanese authorities and the Lebanese state's exercise of its authority throughout its territory.

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