

Tisková zpráva

Press Release

Communiqué de presse

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Informal General Affairs Council ended today in Prague

Today the very first of the 14 informal meetings of ministers that are planned during the Czech Presidency took place in Prague. The General Affairs Council (GAC) led by the Czech Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs, Alexandr Vondra, discussed the question of energy security in the light of the current situation, transatlantic relations and institutional issues.

The participants in the meeting were primarily the ministers for European affairs and foreign ministers of the Member States.

Concerning the energy situation the Council approved the EU declaration on the conflict between Ukraine and Russia about energy security.

1. The current situation, which arose when the supplies of gas from Russia via Ukraine were cut off, causes serious problems for many EU Member States. Since EU solidarity is of great importance, the problem involves the whole of the EU. It is inadmissible that citizens and companies in the EU should suffer due to a shortage of gas caused by a conflict over contractual obligations between Russia and Ukraine.

2. At the first signs of a reduction in the supplies of gas at the beginning of January 2009 the EU joined forces and tried to create a dialogue between Russia and Ukraine. So far the two parties have failed to show sufficient determination to solve the problem, which

damages their credibility. Nevertheless, the EU expects that the current negotiations will lead to a solution shortly. The EU urges Russia and Ukraine to fulfil their respective obligations as supplier and transit country and immediately restore the supplies to the European market.

3. The EU calls on both parties to accept independent monitoring of the actual flow of gas in the pipelines.

4. On 12 January an extraordinary meeting of the Energy Council will be held to assess the situation on the energy market, including monitoring, and to discuss which concrete measures to take.

5. The EU also insists on the necessity of creating the conditions for a long-term solution based on internationally recognised principles and that would subsequently end the regularly occurring crises in the midst of winter.

6. Safe energy supplies are a priority for the EU. It is a question of responsibility and solidarity for all Member States. Therefore, the EU will expedite work on the initiatives concerning energy security stipulated in paragraph 17 of the conclusion of the October meeting of the European Council. Particular attention will be paid to priority interlinking within the EU and with the supplier and transit countries, to increased transparency and development of crisis mechanisms for the solution of temporary shortages in supplies. Energy security will be on the agenda of the upcoming meeting of the General Affairs Council with the prospect of reaching a decision at the spring meeting of the European Council.

During the meeting, a videoconference was held involving the General Affairs Council and the representatives of the Czech Presidency in Brussels. Among the participants were the Minister of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic, Martin Říman, and the Commissioner for Energy, Andris Piebalgs.

Regarding institutional issues, an orientation discussion of the conclusions of the December meeting of the European Council took place. In close cooperation with the Irish Government, the Czech Presidency pledged to search for an adequate form of concrete expression of legal warranties for Ireland with respect to the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, so that the result is mutually acceptable for Ireland as well as the other

Member States, and so that the final proposals are ready for the European Council in June 2009. Negotiations concerning the nomination of the next Commission, which will focus on the issue of possible candidates for its President, will be initiated by the Czech Presidency immediately after the elections to the European Parliament at the beginning of June 2009.

The meeting also included a working lunch dealing with transatlantic relations, in which the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karel Schwarzenberg, took part. The participants agreed on the importance of establishing good relations between the EU and the new US administration. They identified three key areas of cooperation: economic and financial cooperation, which includes the preparations for the G20 Summit in April, the climate-energy area including the issue of energy security and preparation of the Summit in Copenhagen in December 2009 and, last but not least, the cooperation on solutions of key foreign-policy problems, particularly in the area of the Middle-East and Afghanistan and Iran.