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# EU Suspends Sanctions Against Cuba, Hails Iraq Poll Success

By Roger Wilkison

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European Union foreign ministers, meeting in Brussels, have suspended diplomatic sanctions against Cuba, following the communist country's release of several political dissidents. The ministers also hailed what they called the courage and determination of Iraqis who voted in Sunday's elections.

The European Union says it is ready to give Cuba a chance to improve its human rights record and move gradually toward a more pluralistic society.

It has thus lifted measures imposed a year-and-a-half ago that virtually froze normal diplomatic relations between the communist island and the 25-nation bloc.

Those measures, imposed after Cuba cracked down on opponents of the Fidel Castro regime, included a ban on high-level contacts. The Europeans also angered the Cubans by inviting dissidents to functions at their embassies in Havana.

Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, says the bloc decided to change its policy toward Cuba after the authorities on the island released 14 of 75 dissidents, whose imprisonment sparked the E.U. sanctions.

He says he and his colleagues stress the need to support a process in Cuba that will lead to democratic pluralism and respect for human rights and basic freedoms.

But he also said that the EU will review the suspension of sanctions within the next five months, after closely monitoring the results of its new policy.

The EU also was full of praise for what its foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, called the courageous attitude of most Iraqis in defying insurgent attacks and taking part in Sunday's national elections.

Mr. Solana says Iraq's move toward democracy will result in more EU aid for the country, especially help in drafting a constitution and training the judiciary. But he underlines the need for the constitutional assembly that emerges from the vote to protect the interests of Iraq's Sunni Muslim minority, which failed to turn out in large numbers at the polls.

"The constitutional process should be done so that all sensitivities that exist in Iraq participate in the draft of the constitution," said Mr. Solana. "That would be the best guarantee that stability is achieved within the territorial integrity of the country."

Even EU countries that opposed the Iraq war, like France and Germany, declared the vote a success, but indicated there is a long way to go before Iraq can be stabilized.

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