



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESS RELEASE

3218th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 31 January 2013

President

Catherine Ashton

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

*The Council reiterated the EU's strong and continued commitment to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of **Mali**. It welcomed the progress of the Mali armed forces, supported by France and states of the region, in the North of Mali against the terrorist groups. It stressed the importance of continuing international commitment in support of Mali, in particular the efforts deployed by the African states. It also welcomed the adoption of a roadmap, a vital step towards fully re-establishing constitutional order.*

*The Council also welcomed the end of the transition in **Somalia** as a historic opportunity to leave behind two decades of conflict and undertook to sustain the EU's collective efforts to support Somalia's transformation. The Council had an exchange of views with the President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.*

*The Council took stock of the situation in **Syria and Egypt** as well as of the EU response to the **Arab Spring**, with a view to a debate at the European Council of 7 and 8 February.*

*The Council approved the crisis management concept for a possible civilian Common Security and Defence Policy mission to support border management in **Libya**.*

CONTENTS¹

PARTICIPANTS.....	4
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ITEMS DEBATED

Southern neighbourhood	6
Mali	6
Somalia/Horn of Africa.....	8
The Arctic	11
United States of America	11

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

– Iraq – restrictive measures.....	13
– Temporary reception of certain Palestinians	13
– Afghanistan – restrictive measures.....	13
– EU action against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.....	14
– Tunisia – restrictive measures	14

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

– EU support for sustainable change in transition societies	14
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COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

– EU exercise programme 2013-2015	14
– Support for border management in Libya.....	14

¹ • Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
 • Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
 • Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

PARTICIPANTS

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Czech Republic:

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Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

Estonia:

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United Kingdom:

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First Secretary of State, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Commission:

Ms Maria DAMANAKI

Member

Ms Kristalina GEORGIEVA

Member

Mr Štefan FÜLE

Member

The government of the acceding state was represented as follows:

Croatia:

Ms Vesna PUSIĆ

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED

Southern neighbourhood

With a view to a debate at the European Council on 7/8 February, the Council examined the state of play on the Arab Spring and took stock of the EU's response.

The Council also discussed recent events in Egypt and the latest developments in Syria.

Mali

The Council debated the situation in Mali and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Recalling its conclusions of 17 January 2013, the European Union reiterates its strong and continued commitment to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Mali. In this context, and in line with the relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions (in particular, Resolutions 2071 and 2085), the EU supports the efforts being made by the region and by the international community. It welcomes the advance of the Malian armed forces, supported by France and the region, against the terrorist groups in the north of Mali, and reiterates its full support for this action. The EU also welcomes the Malian National Assembly's adoption of a roadmap for transition.
2. The EU stresses the importance of continuing international commitment in support of Mali, in particular the efforts deployed by African states. In this context, it welcomes the outcome of the donors' conference organised by the African Union (AU) on 29 January 2013 and encourages the swift implementation of its conclusions. The EU urges the AU and ECOWAS to speed up deployment of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), which it is ready to provide with financial and logistical support. Given that support for AFISMA is one of the EU's priorities in Africa, the Council reiterates its readiness to contribute significant assistance to AFISMA through the African Peace Facility. In this regard, it asks the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to implement, without delay and on the basis of a request, the commitments made by the EU at the international donors' conference in Addis Ababa, in particular the announcement of an EUR 50 million contribution by the Commission. The EU calls on other donors to participate in the sustainable and predictable funding of the operation.

3. The adoption of the roadmap is a vital step towards fully re-establishing constitutional order, including civil control over the armed forces, and the authority of the state throughout Mali, and the EU calls for its urgent implementation. This step allows the gradual resumption of European development aid in order to respond swiftly to Mali's priority needs. The Council also invites the High Representative and the Commission to propose specific measures to support the implementation of the roadmap, including support for the electoral process. The EU emphasises the importance of re-establishing an inclusive national dialogue open to the populations of the north and to all groups rejecting terrorism and recognising Mali's integrity. Swift restoration of state authority, the rule of law and public services in the liberated areas in the centre and north of Mali is also crucial. To that end, in line with the European overall approach, the Council welcomes the joint efforts of the EEAS and the Commission to prepare concrete forms of assistance, using all the available instruments.
4. The Council welcomes the speeding up of preparations for the EUTM Mali mission to provide training and advice for the Malian armed forces, which will help contribute to strengthening civilian authority and respect for human rights. It recalls the objective agreed by the Council on 17 January 2013 to adopt the decision to launch this mission by mid-February at the latest in order to initiate the first advisory activities.
5. The EU is alarmed by allegations of human rights violations and calls on the Malian authorities to make immediate investigations into the matter. The EU stands ready to provide appropriate support to combat such abuse. It stresses the importance of complying with international law and in particular reminds the Malian authorities of their primary responsibility to protect civilian populations. All perpetrators of human rights violations must be held responsible for their actions. The EU welcomes the decision by the International Criminal Court to open an inquiry into violations and encourages the Malian authorities to cooperate. It also calls for the swift deployment of observers and the strengthening of cooperation by international organisations to ensure in particular that human rights are respected throughout Mali.
6. The EU welcomes the High Representative's intention to host the next meeting, on 5 February 2013 in Brussels, of the Support and Follow-Up Group on the situation in Mali, co-chaired by the AU, ECOWAS and the United Nations. That meeting will provide a suitable opportunity to strengthen the coordination of international commitment to Mali, support for implementation of the roadmap, and the follow-up to the AU's donors' conference."

Somalia/Horn of Africa

The Council discussed the situation in Somalia and the Horn of Africa. It held an exchange of views during a working lunch with the President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU welcomes the end of the transition in Somalia as a historic opportunity to leave behind two decades of conflict. The adoption of a provisional Constitution, the selection of a Federal Parliament and the election of a new President bring new prospects for lasting peace and prosperity to Somalia.
2. The visit of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to the EU is a sign of its recognition of the new political setting in Somalia and of a strengthened partnership between the EU and Somalia. The EU stresses the importance of Somali ownership and underlines the primary responsibility of the Somali authorities to re-build a country free from the threat of violence and organised crime, economically viable, engaged with its neighbours and the international community. Reflecting a shift of paradigm in EU-Somalia relations and consistent with its comprehensive approach, the EU is committed to supporting the new Government's vision and priorities. It undertakes to sustain its collective efforts to support Somalia's transformation and to engage more directly with the Somali people and institutions. In this context, the EU encourages the accession of Somalia to the Cotonou Agreement.
3. The Council welcomes the announcement by the High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP) and the Somali President that Somalia and the EU will host a Conference in Brussels that will focus on medium- and long-term priorities and on the needs of Somalia and its people. The aim of the Conference will be to endorse a compact between Somalia and the international community that will guide the reconstruction of Somalia, based on the Busan New Deal Principles for Fragile States. The Conference will focus on building a new political order in Somalia, promoting its socio-economic development and establishing the rule of law and security. The EU also welcomes the UK initiative to host a conference that will focus on the immediate priorities of strengthening security, justice, public financial management and supporting the political progress of Somalia. The EU welcomes the engagement of the Somali Federal Government in co-hosting the two conferences.

4. The EU supports the Somali President's immediate priority of extending security in the country. On the basis of a revised National Stabilisation and Security Plan (NSSP) and related security-sector reform strategies, the EU will continue to help develop Somali security capacity accountable to political authority as well as rule of law capacity across the country, providing protection for the population and respecting human rights. The EU highlights the importance of international coordination and complementarity in support of Somalia's security sector development.

Since 2010, the EU Training Mission (EUTM) Somalia has successfully trained nearly 3,000 Somali soldiers, which now constitute the core of the Somali National Armed Forces. Building on its success and responding to the evolving needs of the Somali authorities, the Council decided on 22 January 2013 to extend the mandate of the EUTM Somalia until 31 March 2015 and to appoint Brigadier General Aherne as the Mission Commander. The mission will provide training as well as advice to help building effective, well-integrated, self-sustainable and accountable Somali National Armed Forces in continued close cooperation with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Uganda and the US and other partners. As the security situation allows, EUTM will gradually transfer its activities from Uganda to Somalia.

The EU has also supported the rule of law sector. It has supported judicial capacities and the training and payment of stipends of Somali Police Forces, in close cooperation with the UN. In addition, its EUCAP NESTOR mission will assist Somalia and states in the region to develop self-sustainable capacities to enhance maritime security and governance, including judicial capacities.

5. The EU commends the efforts of the AMISOM and welcomes the completion of the AU strategic review. AMISOM can be expected to continue to play a vital role in bringing security to Somalia while the capacity of Somali security forces develops. Considering that support to AMISOM remains one of the EU's priorities in Africa, the EU reiterates its readiness to continue to provide significant support to AMISOM through the African Peace Facility. It also calls upon other donors to ensure predictable and sustainable funding for AMISOM.
6. The EU welcomes the completion of the United Nations (UN) strategic review of its presence in Somalia, and looks forward to an enhanced UN role in Somalia, including in relation to the effective coordination of international engagement, in support of peace- and state-building.

7. The EU underlines the importance of reconciling the nation and of building accountable and transparent institutions at local, regional and national levels, through an approach inclusive of all clans and social groups. The EU will support the Government's efforts to promote democracy, the rule of law and strengthen the respect of human rights. The EU stresses the importance of adopting a final Constitution by referendum, reflecting the will of all Somalis, of encouraging dialogue and peaceful interactions between the centre and the regions, and of preparing for elections. It will also support inclusive local development and reconciliation efforts. The EU underlines the critical role of civil society and the media in the process of transformation.
8. The EU also undertakes to support the socio-economic recovery that is needed to improve the welfare and livelihoods of Somalis. It will support basic service provision, strengthen public finance management and support the country's re-engagement with the international financial institutions. The EU will help to build resilience, including through linking relief, rehabilitation and development in delivering EU assistance to Somalia.
9. The EU will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to meet the most urgent needs of the people of Somalia, in full respect of the humanitarian principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence. It calls on all parties in Somalia to ensure safe and unhindered access to humanitarian aid and to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.
10. The EU notes that improved conditions on land will also contribute to tackling the root causes of piracy off the coast of Somalia. It commends the success of the EU's naval operation EUNAVFOR ATALANTA in the fight against piracy. The EU aims to consolidate the containment of piracy in the Western Indian Ocean through ATALANTA, while limiting the ability of piracy groups to operate from land by building Somali law enforcement capacity, including through EUCAP NESTOR, and disrupting the piracy networks including its financiers and logistics. It will do so together with the Somali authorities, taking in to account their evolving needs as well as the political and security situation on the ground, and using its Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations and other EU instruments in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way.

11. The EU remains concerned about the continuous threat which terrorism poses to Somalia itself, the wider region and at a global level. The EU has committed itself to helping build regional capacities to tackle the threat of terrorism, supporting regional law enforcement cooperation and countering violent extremism, including through the work of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, working with regional bodies, national governments in the Horn and in Yemen, and with key partners such as the UN and the AU. The Council therefore notes that Member States have today endorsed an EU Counter-Terrorism Action Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen within their sphere of competence.

12. The EU recognises that a precondition for peace, security and prosperity in Somalia is stability in its wider neighbourhood. It emphasises the need for the countries of the region to step up efforts to build good neighbourly relations, develop regional capacities and forge regional cooperation and integration, in particular in the economic field, and to lay the foundation for a regional political, economic and security framework. As a first step, the EU urges Somalia and its neighbours to reach a good neighbourliness agreement under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and with the support of its partners. It further encourages Somalia's active engagement in IGAD and urges all countries of the region to demonstrate their willingness to settle bilateral disputes in its framework. As set out in the EU Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa, the EU stands ready to facilitate and to work closely with the AU and with IGAD and its member states to achieve these objectives, including through the efforts of the EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa.

The EU emphasises the importance of peaceful and credible elections in Kenya in March 2013 for the country's security and prosperity and that of the wider region."

The Arctic

The Council exchanged views on proposed steps towards an EU policy on the Arctic, as outlined in the related joint communication of the Commission and the High Representative.

United States of America

The Council held an exchange on the foreign policy priorities likely to feature on the agenda of President Obama's second administration.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**FOREIGN AFFAIRS****Closer cooperation and regional integration in the Maghreb**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Reaffirming the strategic importance of the European Neighbourhood and recalling the Council Conclusions of 20 June 2011 on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Council welcomes the Joint Communication entitled "Supporting closer cooperation and regional integration in the Maghreb: Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia" and congratulates the High Representative and the Commission on the broad range of proposals set out in the communication.
2. The Council appreciates the fact that the communication was drawn up in a spirit of solidarity and partnership at a time when the Maghreb region, which remains a key priority for the EU, is experiencing profound and historic changes.
3. The Council welcomes the principle underlying the communication, which is that the impetus for change and the decisions as to how integration might best be achieved lie solely with the countries of the Maghreb themselves.
4. The proposals in the communication set out an agenda for EU support to the five countries of the Maghreb in their efforts to achieve closer cooperation and greater regional integration, particularly through the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). EU policies towards the Maghreb region complement and develop the range of measures included in the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity in the context of the renewed approach to the European Neighbourhood Policy, which is based on the principle of differentiation. The Council also welcomes the emphasis the communication places on democratic reforms and inclusive economic development, as well as on the existing cooperation frameworks in the region, in particular the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the 5+5, and notes the role of the League of Arab States. Furthermore, the Council would emphasise that the regional cooperation initiatives are mutually reinforcing.

5. In view of the latest events in the Sahara/Sahel region, which highlight the severity of the terrorist threat to this region, to Europe and to the Maghreb, the Council welcomes the communication's proposals regarding security cooperation, including counter-terrorism and border surveillance, and asks the High Representative and the Commission to work in cooperation with the European Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, towards implementing these proposals in order to strengthen engagement with the countries in the region.
6. The Council looks forward to expanding the discussion on the proposals made by the High Representative and the Commission. The Council emphasises the importance of continued dialogue on communication with the Maghreb countries and of sharing the content of this dialogue with the public in these countries. In this context, it welcomes the proposal to launch a high level dialogue between the EU and the Maghreb countries, and hopes that a first meeting can be held soon to discuss issues of common interest. The Council would like to take stock of the implementation of the communication in December 2013."

Iraq – restrictive measures

The Council amended regulation 1210/2003 concerning certain specific restrictions on economic and financial relations with Iraq. This will permit the transfer of frozen funds to the successor arrangements to the Development Fund for Iraq put in place by the Government of Iraq under the conditions set out in UN Security Council resolutions 1483 (2003) and 1956 (2010).

Temporary reception of certain Palestinians

The Council extended the validity of national permits for the entry and stay of certain Palestinians in the EU, granted in accordance with common position 2002/400/CFSP, for a further 12 months.

Afghanistan – restrictive measures

The Council amended the restrictive measures in view of the situation in Afghanistan so as to take account of decisions taken by the United Nations. It updated one entry and deleted three other entries from the list of those subject to the sanctions. The restrictions consist in a travel ban and an asset freeze.

EU action against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

The Council approved the six-monthly progress report on the implementation of the EU strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, covering the second semester of 2012.

Tunisia – restrictive measures

The Council extended the sanctions against persons responsible for the misappropriation of Tunisian state funds, including former Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, by 12 months, i.e. until 31 January 2014.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

EU support for sustainable change in transition societies

The Council adopted conclusions on EU support for sustainable change in transition societies, see [17708/12](#).

The initiative refers to countries transforming their societies into inclusive democracies, in the EU's neighbourhood or elsewhere. EU support to transition processes will aim at promoting democratic governance, human rights and the rule of law, economic and social welfare, as well as peace and stability. Strong emphasis will be put on easing social inequality, with a focus on women's and children's rights. To achieve these goals, the EU will make use of the wide array of existing EU policies, ranging from the common foreign and security policy to development cooperation.

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

EU exercise programme 2013-2015

The Council approved the EU exercise programme for 2013-2015. It consists of different types of crisis management exercises.

Support for border management in Libya

The Council approved the crisis management concept for a possible civilian CSDP border security mission in Libya. For details, see press release [5823/13](#).