



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESS RELEASE

3230th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 11 March 2013

President

Catherine Ashton

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

*Ministers discussed the situation in **Syria** with Lakhdar Brahimi, United Nations and Arab League Special Representative for Syria.*

*Following a review, the Council prolonged and reinforced EU restrictive measures in response to serious **human rights violations in Iran**.*

*The Council held a comprehensive debate on the EU's strategic partnership with **Russia**, ahead of a discussion at the European Council of 14/15 March.*

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- 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

High Representative

Ms Catherine ASHTON

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Belgium:

Mr Didier REYNDERS

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, External Trade and European Affairs

Bulgaria:

Mr Ivan NAYDENOV

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs

Czech Republic:

Mr Karel SCHWARZENBERG

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Denmark:

Mr Nicolai WAMMEN

Minister for European Affairs

Germany:

Mr Guido WESTERWELLE

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ireland:

Mr Eamon GILMORE

Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

Greece:

Mr Dimitrios KOURKOULAS

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr José Manuel GARCIA-MARGALLO

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

France:

Mr Laurent FABIUS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Italy:

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Hungary:

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Minister for Foreign Affairs

Austria:

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Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for European and International Affairs

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Minister for Foreign Affairs

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State Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, with responsibility for European Affairs

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Slovenia:

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State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Slovakia:

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Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Finland:

Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Sweden:

Mr Carl BILDT

Minister for Foreign Affairs

United Kingdom:

Mr William HAGUE

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

Commission:

Mr Andris PIEBALGS

Member

Mme Kristalina GEORGIEVA

Member

Mr Štefan FÜLE

Member

.....

The Government of the Acceding State was represented as follows:

Croatia:

Ms Vesna PUSIĆ

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED

Russia

The Council held a comprehensive debate on the EU's strategic partnership with Russia, ahead of a discussion at the European Council of 14/15 March. Domestic developments, foreign policy cooperation and the state of the EU-Russia relationship featured in the debate.

Ministers agreed to continue to seek constructive engagement with Russia in areas of common interest and to strengthen the overall strategic relationship, while recalling Russia's commitments to guarantee democratic rights and freedoms in line with commitments undertaken in the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will report on the outcome of the discussion to the European Council.

Japan

The Council discussed EU relations with Japan, in view of the EU-Japan summit on 25 March. The summit is due to launch negotiations with Japan on a free trade agreement and a framework agreement. The global economic situation and regional security in South-East Asia will also be on the agenda.

Iraq

The Council exchanged views on the situation in Iraq, including on the impact of the conflict in Syria.

Southern neighbourhood

The Council took stock of developments in its Southern neighbourhood, focusing on Egypt, Libya and Tunisia.

Syria

During a working lunch, ministers discussed the situation in Syria with Lakhdar Brahimi, United Nations and Arab League Special Representative for Syria.

Following the discussion, the EU High Representative highlighted that the EU would continue to strongly support his efforts to create space for political dialogue between the opposition and representatives of the regime. The only solution to this crisis was a political one, and the EU was ready to assist in any way possible. At the same time, the EU was determined to increase assistance to the Syrian population and support to the opposition.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**FOREIGN AFFAIRS****Arms Trade Treaty**

The Council authorised the Commission to negotiate the Arms Trade Treaty in the framework of the United Nations on those matters coming under the exclusive competence of the Union.

Update of the common military list of the EU

The Council adopted the annual update of the EU's common military list, which defines the items subject to EU common rules on the control of exports of military technology and equipment.

Iran - restrictive measures

The Council extended and reinforced the EU sanctions against Iran that were imposed in view of serious human rights violations. For more details, see press release [6324/13](#).

Pakistan

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Pakistan:

1. "Recalling its conclusions of June 2012, the European Union reiterates its strong and continued commitment to deepening and widening relations with Pakistan. At the centre of this commitment is the strengthening of democracy in Pakistan.
2. The EU looks forward to upcoming elections that are peaceful, credible, transparent, inclusive and acceptable to the Pakistani people. They should, for the first time, enable the transition of power from one elected government to the next under the stewardship of an independent Election Commission. Furthermore, it is very important that the elections take place in an environment free from intimidation and coercion. The EU is ready to assist by deploying an election observation mission, as a tangible sign of our support for the democratic process.

3. The EU supports Pakistan in upholding the rule of law and human rights. The EU strongly condemns all acts of violence, including sectarian violence and violence against women, children and vulnerable religious minorities. The EU urges the Pakistani authorities to take the necessary action to protect the rights of all citizens affected and to bring to justice the perpetrators. It is essential for the country's future that all Pakistani children have the right to receive an education free from the threat of violence by extremists.
4. The Strategic Dialogue forms the bedrock of deeper EU-Pakistan relations for the long term. The EU looks forward to re-energizing the 5-Year Engagement Plan, on which this dialogue is based with the next Pakistani Government, including through early meetings of ministers and senior officials, and in light of progress achieved, this could lead to a third EU-Pakistan summit. Recognising that Pakistan's next government will need to take urgent action to ensure essential political, institutional, economic, fiscal and energy reforms, the EU calls on Pakistan's political parties to build the momentum necessary to reach agreement on these. The Council confirms that the 5-Year Engagement Plan should remain the basis for assistance to Pakistan. As part of its engagement, the EU has already afforded Pakistan improved market access by introducing autonomous trade preferences for which the EU has obtained a waiver in the WTO.
5. Pakistan plays an important role in fostering stability in South Asia, including through the "Heart of Asia initiative". The EU encourages renewed understanding and continuing progress in India-Pakistan relations and supports the further development of regional trade links, which would strongly benefit the whole region. The EU welcomes and encourages Pakistan's constructive role in promoting a secure Afghanistan and supporting an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process."

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

CSDP lessons learned

The Council took note of the first common civilian-military annual CSDP lessons learned and best practices report for 2011 as well as of the lessons of CSDP support to security sector reform.
