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3250th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg, 24 June 2013

President

Catherine Ashton

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy

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Main results of the Council

*The Council discussed the situation in **Syria**. After the meeting, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy underlined the EU's belief that the crisis must be solved through a political process. The total response from the EU and its member states to the crisis now exceeds EUR 1 billion.*

*The Council held an in-depth debate on the **Middle East peace process**. Following the debate, the High Representative reaffirmed the EU's commitment to a two-state solution and stressed that the EU fully supports the current efforts of the United States in support of the resumption of direct and substantial negotiations.*

*The Council extended the mandate of the **EU Special Representative** for the Southern Mediterranean, Mr Bernardino León, until 30 June 2014. It also prolonged the mandate of Mrs Patricia Flor, EU Special Representative for Central Asia, until 31 October 2014.*

*In order to facilitate diplomatic contacts between the EU and **Belarus**, the Council suspended the EU travel ban on Vladimir Makey, Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs. This decision does not reflect any change in the EU's policy of critical engagement with Belarus.*

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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.

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Mr Carl BILDT

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United Kingdom:

Mr David LIDINGTON

Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Commission:

Mr Andris PIEBALGS

Member

Ms Connie HEDEGAARD

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

Eastern Partnership

The Council took stock of the EU's Eastern Partnership, in preparation for the Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting in July in Brussels and the Eastern Partnership summit in November in Vilnius.

Climate diplomacy

The Council discussed EU climate diplomacy and adopted the following conclusions:

1. "Climate change is a decisive global challenge which, if not urgently managed, will put at risk not only the environment but also world economic prosperity, development and, more broadly, stability and security. The transition towards safe and sustainable low-carbon economy and society as well as climate resilient and resource efficient growth patterns worldwide are of paramount importance. Addressing the risk-multiplying threats of a changing climate, including potential conflict and instability, related to reliable access to food, water and energy, requires effective foreign policy responses at the global and EU level, as recognised in the European Security Strategy.
2. Recalling its conclusions of July 2011 on EU Climate Diplomacy and the Joint Reflection Paper from the High Representative and the Commission ("Towards a renewed and strengthened European Union Climate Diplomacy"), the Council welcomes the implementation steps taken collaboratively by all EU actors. The Council welcomes the continued activities to build awareness and capacities to tackle the strategic and security dimensions of climate change, including at the level of the UN Security Council, and takes note of the increasing engagement of Member States and partner countries in those efforts. The Council further welcomes the joined-up approach taken towards EU climate diplomacy, including through the strengthened role of the EU Green Diplomacy Network, that is contributing to strengthening the EU voice and efforts internationally in the fight against climate change.

3. The Council welcomes the positive results of the Durban and Doha climate conferences and acknowledges that a large number of countries, including major economies, but also middle and low income countries, representing all together more than 80% of global emissions, have meanwhile decided to undertake domestic emissions reductions. This represents a valuable starting point and shows that climate action is picking up speed in many countries. However, today's ambition level is still far from sufficient to limit global average temperature increases to less than 2°C from the pre-industrial level; recent authoritative reports from the IPCC and other institutions such as the World Bank¹, demonstrate the devastating consequences of current emission trends if left unchecked. To this end, the Council looks forward to the IPCC 5th Assessment Report.
4. Tackling climate change urgently, through mitigation and adaptation measures, is not only an environmental imperative but also, fundamentally, a necessary condition for peace and security, development and prosperity. Climate change threatens our social and economic well-being and financial capacities and could lead to increasing losses of individual lives and property as well as to considerable risks for sustainable development. Managing climate change represents a central challenge for sustainable development and it must be taken into account, in the overarching post-2015 agenda which should set out a single comprehensive and coherent framework that is supportive to the work of the UNFCCC.
5. The Council emphasises that UN climate negotiations have now entered a decisive phase towards a new single global legally binding climate agreement, applicable to all, that needs to be adopted by 2015 for it to enter into force by 2020 at the latest. The Council equally emphasises the need to advance work at the international level to close, as quickly as possible, the gap in the level of mitigation ambition in the period up to 2020 with a view to ensuring sufficient mitigation efforts by all Parties to limit global average temperature increases to less than 2°C from the pre-industrial level. Time is short and all efforts should be deployed to support this process by the EU and its Member States; there is a distinctive role for the EU and national diplomatic networks in promoting that partner countries adopt the domestic frameworks necessary to an ambitious global agreement.
6. These challenges undoubtedly call for a more pro-active and targeted EU climate diplomacy agenda aimed at maximising our collective efforts and further enhancing the EU climate voice internationally while remaining open for dialogue and cooperation. It will be necessary to build on the success achieved in Durban and Doha and to raise the profile of the climate challenge in political dialogues, intensifying outreach and cooperation activities with a wide range of countries and stakeholders, across government as well as within business and civil society, both to promote conclusion of a new climate agreement by 2015 and to encourage progressive and ambitious action by all to reduce global emissions from today on.

¹ "Turn Down the Heat: Why a 4°C Warmer World Must be Avoided"

7. In light of these pressing challenges, the Council recognises the need to further step up EU climate diplomacy efforts and welcomes the concrete steps laid out in the reflection paper jointly prepared by the High Representative and the Commission "An EU climate diplomacy for 2015 and beyond", notably the idea of developing a toolbox for EU climate diplomacy, with general and region and/or partner-specific messages in the run-up to 2015 and beyond. The Council therefore invites the High Representative and the Commission, in their respective role and competence, coordinating and working closely with Member States, to deploy EU climate diplomacy as identified in the joint reflection paper, including notably through joint and mutually reinforcing initiatives on the three strands of action. The Council also emphasises that energy security should be part of EU climate outreach.
8. The Council underlines the importance of mainstreaming climate diplomacy into EU and Member States' priority agendas and making even more use of diplomatic networks to promote joint efforts combating climate change. Constructive dialogue and cooperation with our partners in order to mitigate the emission of greenhouse gases, to switch to greener paths of energy production and other economic activities and to adapt to climate change in a conflict-sensitive manner are all important tasks for 21st century foreign services.
9. The Council foresees to review progress on an annual basis."

Middle East peace process

The Council debated recent events concerning the Middle East peace process. Following the discussion, the EU High Representative reaffirmed the EU's commitment to a two-state solution. The European Union fully supports the current efforts of the United States in support of the resumption of direct and substantial negotiations and welcomes the personal involvement and engagement of Secretary of State John Kerry.

Afghanistan

During lunch, ministers discussed the situation in Afghanistan, from a political, development and security perspective, in the presence of NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. "The European Union remains firmly committed to supporting state-building and long-term development in Afghanistan.

2. In order to establish the appropriate framework for future cooperation, the Council calls on the Government of Afghanistan to finalize negotiations rapidly on the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (CAPD). The text should fully reflect Afghanistan's international obligations.
3. The EU continues to be concerned at the overall security situation in Afghanistan. The EU condemns the indiscriminate attacks on Afghan civilians and the specific targeting of humanitarian aid organizations by insurgent groups.
4. The EU welcomes the announcement of the final tranche of the transition process on 18 June, recognizing the increased competence and effectiveness of the Afghan National Security Forces. For its part, the EU will continue to support Afghan efforts to strengthen civilian policing and the rule of law during transition and the decade of transformation.
5. Following the Council's decision to extend the EU's police mission EUPOL AFGHANISTAN until the end of 2014, strategic planning and programming for comprehensive EU action to support Afghan efforts in strengthening civilian policing and rule of law post 2014 will be taken forward. It should pursue a viable strategy that, drawing on all instruments and modalities, promotes an Afghan-owned sustainable approach to policing and the rule of law and reflects the priorities set out in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) and the CAPD. Close coordination with NATO will be ensured.
6. The EU will continue to support an inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process on the basis of the principles set out in the Bonn Conference Conclusions of December 2011. Lasting peace in Afghanistan will require an inclusive political settlement respecting the Afghan Constitution, including the rights of women, and comprising all national, regional and international stakeholders. The opening of a political office in Doha for the purpose of peace negotiations with authorised representatives of the Taliban is an important step. But there will be many further challenges along the way. The EU calls on all political forces in Afghanistan to support the peace process, and on the countries in the region to use their influence on parties to the conflict in Afghanistan to urge participation in substantive peace negotiations.
7. The EU welcomes the progress made in the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation. The EU reiterates that developing mechanisms of regional cooperation with participation of Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries can play an important role in promoting regional stability. The EU welcomes the confidence building measures adopted during the Ministerial Conference in Almaty and will provide support to those concerning trade facilitation, disaster risk reduction and counter-narcotics.

8. The TMAF remains a valid central political agreement stipulating the required steps the Government of Afghanistan needs to take to improve economic and political governance, both to put in place the fundamental measures for continued progress in Afghanistan and to benefit from the full extent of the international aid pledges made in Tokyo. Electoral reforms, financial transparency, revenue generation, progress on human rights, in particular the rights of women, and the rule of law remain paramount for achieving long term transformation in Afghanistan. The EU therefore calls on Afghanistan to make progress in the implementation of agreed commitments, with a view to a joint assessment which will be discussed at the Senior Officials' Meeting planned on 3 July in Kabul. The EU will promote further donor coordination and concerted international action when implementing this framework, with a view to ensuring that the TMAF is applied in an effective manner when taking decisions regarding assistance.
9. In the longer term, the EU and Member States will look to adopt a Joint Programming approach that will further strengthen coordination and results.
10. The EU will continue to support the preparation for presidential and provincial elections in April 2014 and parliamentary elections in 2015. The EU believes that the elections must be inclusive, transparent and credible in order that the outcome is accepted as legitimate by the people of Afghanistan. These elections will be a critical signal for many in both Afghanistan and the international community of the progress made in consolidating democracy and rule of law. The EU calls upon all parties in Afghanistan, including the Government and the Parliament, to ensure that the legal framework for the elections is in place. It is particularly important that the Independent Election Commission (IEC) is widely accepted as impartial, that a credible electoral complaints mechanism is agreed upon, that robust and effective fraud prevention mechanisms are put in place and that comprehensive security planning for the elections is undertaken. The EU encourages the Government of Afghanistan to appoint a new IEC chairperson through a transparent and consultative process.
11. The EU will continue to support reform efforts to foster the economic growth necessary for increased fiscal sustainability and the creation of jobs. In particular, the Government of Afghanistan needs to do more to stimulate the agricultural sector, which will be the engine for economic growth in the short-term and will continue to be the main source of employment for Afghans, as well as being vital for food security. Reforms are needed to improve the climate for potential investors, such as the approval of the Mining Law.
12. The full implementation of the reforms recommended by the international financial institutions is essential for the country's development, including systemic action to tackle corruption and improve the transparency and management of public funds.

13. The EU remains concerned about the human rights situation in Afghanistan. The EU calls on the Government of Afghanistan to take urgent action to address the unconstitutional position of the Chief Justice. Wider judicial reform is necessary to better implement the statutory measures concerning the rights of women, including the Eliminating Violence Against Women Law, and to improve their access to justice. The EU notes the appointment of new commissioners for the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). Reconciliation and reintegration would be facilitated by the publication of the AIHRC's report concerning human rights abuses committed between 1978 and 2001.
14. The EU continues to prioritize efforts to combat drug production and trafficking, and irregular migration. The issue of counter-narcotics should be addressed through coordination of efforts on interdiction, alternative livelihoods and other relevant measures, including support to the health sector.
15. With a view to defining the EU's strategic engagement with Afghanistan post 2014, the Council will hold a debate in the second half of 2013 on the role of the EU in Afghanistan in the coming years, in light of the evolving situation and the above objectives. This should lead to the development of a new strategy in place of the 2009 Action Plan that is aligned with the strategic thinking of the Government of Afghanistan, identifies deliverable objectives and timelines, and sets out a clear division of labour. The strategy should be ready for endorsement by mid-2014.
16. The Council welcomes the nomination of Mr Franz-Michael S. Mellbin as EU Special Representative for Afghanistan and thanks Mr Vygaudas Usackas for his outstanding service as EUSR."

Southern neighbourhood

The High Representative debriefed ministers from her recent trip to the Middle East and to Southern neighbourhood countries.

In addition, the Council debated the situation in Syria, especially the efforts for a political solution to the conflict. After the meeting, the High Representative underlined the EU's belief that the crisis must be solved through a political process. The overall response by the EU and its member states to the crisis now exceeds EUR 1 billion.

The Council also took stock of the effectiveness of the EU's response to the Arab Spring, as requested by the European Council of 7/8 February.

Western Balkans

The Council discussed the Western Balkans, in particular EU relations with Serbia and Kosovo, in preparation for the debate in the General Affairs Council of 25 June on the follow-up to the Council conclusions on enlargement of December 2012 ([17604/12](#)).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Relations with the Republic of Moldova

The Council approved the EU position for the fifteenth meeting of the EU-Republic of Moldova Cooperation Council, to take place on 25 June in Luxembourg.

Relations with Ukraine

The Council adopted the agenda and EU position for the sixteenth EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council, to take place on 24 June in Luxembourg.

Pakistan

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Pakistan:

1. "The European Union welcomes the historic May 2013 elections in Pakistan which marked a strengthening of democracy in Pakistan as a result of the first handover in the country's history from one civilian government to another after completing a full term. The EU notes that these elections were also the first to be held since Pakistan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 2010. The voter turnout was the highest since the 1973 elections, in spite of attempts by extremists who are opposed to democratic governance, to intimidate candidates and the electorate.
2. The EU applauds the strong commitment of the Pakistani people to democracy, and notes with satisfaction the increase in the number of women registered as voters, and female candidates, by comparison with 2008. The EU hopes that women's participation in political life in the country will continue to strengthen.
3. The Chief Observer of the EU's Election Observation Mission to Pakistan is expected to issue his final report and recommendations shortly. The EU hopes that these will serve as a contribution towards further improvements in the democratic process.

4. The EU welcomes the commitment of the new government to tackle economic, fiscal and energy reform, essential for creating growth and jobs and reducing poverty. Strengthening governance in these and other areas will be a major challenge for Pakistan. The EU supports the new government in urgently addressing these challenges, including by offering technical assistance should Pakistan request this, in line with commitments under the EU-Pakistan 5-Year Engagement Plan. The EU encourages Pakistan to address concerns regarding the respect for and promotion of human rights, including those of minorities, and freedom of religion and speech, and prioritise these issues.
5. The EU notes with concern the continuing terrorist attacks in Pakistan, which have claimed countless innocent lives, and reiterates its unequivocal commitment to working collaboratively with Pakistan in order to address the shared threat from terrorism both inside and outside its borders, including bringing perpetrators to justice. The EU affirms the need to enhance efforts on countering violent extremism and strengthen the rule of law. It notes with approval the upcoming Political Dialogue on counter-terrorism, and looks forward to swift progress in delivering on these areas.
6. Recalling its conclusions of March 2013, the EU looks forward to more intense work with the new government on the 5-Year Engagement Plan. Continued cooperation on trade should be part of this. The EU also looks forward to cooperation with the new government on migration issues including the full implementation of the readmission agreement.
7. The EU welcomes the signals sent by the new government of Pakistan to prioritize improving relations with India, building on recent progress in trade and visa facilitation. The EU also welcomes and encourages Pakistan's constructive role in promoting a secure Afghanistan and supporting an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. Pakistan's contribution to enhanced regional political and economic relations, and the stability and growth that this could bring, is essential.
8. Humanitarian challenges from natural and man-made crises continue to regularly confront Pakistan. The EU encourages Pakistan to take measures to provide access for humanitarian assistance to affected people, and to foster a climate of respect for humanitarian principles, in particular, by facilitating the work of humanitarian actors. The EU remains committed to working with Pakistan on measures to improve resilience and disaster risk reduction.
9. The Council agrees that it is important that close and continuing contacts with the new government in Pakistan should be pursued as soon as possible, including the resumption of the EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue which was initiated last year, and in the light of progress achieved, a third ad hoc Summit."

Yemen

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Yemen:

- "1. The European Union warmly welcomes the progress achieved so far by the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) and expresses its full support for its unhampered work. It reiterates the importance of respecting the agreed timelines for the conclusion of the NDC set out in the GCC initiative, to allow for a constitutional referendum followed by general elections. In order to do so, it calls on participants in the NDC to expedite procedural questions and address issues of substance as a matter of urgency. It welcomes the constitution of the Consensus Committee, which is expected to have an important role to bring the NDC to a successful and timely conclusion. Furthermore, it urges all Yemeni stakeholders to engage constructively in the NDC. The NDC is the only fully inclusive forum to adequately address the legitimate concerns of all strands of Yemeni society, including women and youth. The EU underlines the importance of communicating to the Yemeni general public on the progress of the NDC and expectations about outcomes.
2. In line with its conclusions of 19 November 2012, the EU reiterates its serious concern over all acts aimed at undermining, obstructing or derailing the transition process and which take advantage of the transitional process for partisan ends, including boycott of the NDC, interference from inside or outside Yemen, non-compliance with relevant Presidential decrees, and all acts of violence or instigation or provocation of violence. It therefore calls on all parties to support the peaceful and orderly transition process in Yemen, under the leadership of President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi.
3. The EU is specifically concerned about increasing tensions in the South, which pose a significant threat to Yemen's transition, its stability and integrity. It therefore urges all relevant representatives of the South to contribute to a peaceful solution of the underlying conflict within the framework of the National Dialogue. In this regard, it recalls the need for increased efforts towards an atmosphere conducive to political compromise and urges all relevant actors to refrain from media campaigns instigating intolerance and political polarization, whether directed from outside or inside the country, including by Aden Live television channel. At the same time, the EU calls upon the Yemeni authorities to implement the confidence building measures commanded by President Hadi without further delay, including the release of political prisoners of the South and the immediate rehabilitation of Southern army and civil service officers in the South.

4. The EU welcomes the Presidential decrees restructuring the military and civilian security sector and looks forward to their full implementation. It urges the Yemeni authorities rapidly to adopt and implement appropriate legislative and institutional frameworks on transitional justice, including the establishment of the National Commission of Inquiry and the National Human Rights Commission. It stresses the urgency for the government to progress on reforms in the political, economic and security sectors, and to tackle the humanitarian situation. The Government of Yemen must speed up the provision of basic infrastructure, services and employment opportunities to meet the needs of the Yemeni people.
5. The EU remains deeply concerned with the humanitarian situation in Yemen, which continues to worsen. An increasing proportion of the Yemeni population are food insecure or at risk of food insecurity. The high rate of child malnutrition is particularly troubling. In this context, the EU stresses the importance of improved humanitarian access.
6. The EU reaffirms its readiness to support inclusive, credible and transparent elections in Yemen. It also reaffirms its commitment to stand by the Yemeni authorities and people in their endeavour to create a better and sustainable future for all Yemenis."

Mali

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Mali:

- "1. The European Union (EU) welcomes the preliminary agreement to the presidential election and inclusive peace talks in Mali, signed on 18 June 2013 by the Malian authorities and northern Mali's non-terrorist armed groups. This preliminary agreement marks a major step towards holding the presidential election throughout Mali, making progress in the inclusive national dialogue and restoring state authority in northern Mali. The EU calls on all parties to implement the agreement.
2. Together with its regional and international partners, the EU will continue to support the process of national reconciliation and inclusive dialogue, which is open both to civilian representatives and to representatives of non-terrorist and non-criminal armed groups that have laid down their weapons. The EU stands ready to support the implementation of the preliminary peace agreement."

Relations with the Gulf states

The Council adopted the agenda for the EU-Gulf Cooperation Council joint council and ministerial meeting, to be held on 30 June in Bahrain.

Human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons

The Council adopted guidelines on the promotion and protection of all human rights of LGBTI persons, on the basis of existing international legal standards in this area. The guidelines are intended to enable the EU to proactively promote the human rights of LGBTI persons, to better understand and combat any structural discrimination they might face and to react to violations of their human rights.

Promotion of freedom of religion and belief

The Council adopted EU guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief. While the EU is not aligned with any specific religion or belief, the guidelines reflect the EU's determination to promote, in its external human rights policy, freedom of religion or belief as a right to be exercised by everyone everywhere.

Libya – EU action against proliferation of small arms

The Council allocated EUR 5 million from the EU budget in support of physical security and stockpile management activities to reduce the risk of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition in Libya and its region.

The project will inter alia assist the Libyan state institutions in developing a national strategy and standard operating procedures for physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) as well as in establishing a training framework on PSSM issues.

Belarus – restrictive measures

The Council decided to suspend the application of the EU travel ban on Vladimir Makey, Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs, with a view to facilitating diplomatic contacts between Belarus and the EU and its member states. This does not imply any change in the EU's policy of critical engagement with Belarus. For more details, see press release [11371/13](#).

Restrictive measures against those associated with Al-Qaida

The Council amended regulation 881/2002 imposing specific restrictive measures directed against persons and entities associated with the Al-Qaida network. Changes were made to implement decisions taken at the UN.

EU Special Representatives

- Central Asia

The Council prolonged the mandate of Mrs Patricia Flor, EU Special Representative for Central Asia, until 31 October 2014. The task of the Special Representative is to promote good and close relations between the EU and the countries of Central Asia on the basis of common values and interests as set out in relevant agreements. A budget of EUR 1 050 000 will be available for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014.

- Southern Mediterranean region

The Council extended the mandate of the EU Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean, Mr Bernardino León, until 30 June 2014. A budget of EUR 945.000 was allocated for the period of this extension. The Special Representative is entrusted with enhancing the EU's political dialogue and partnership with Southern Mediterranean countries, in particular those undergoing political reform and transition to democracy.

Relations with Afghanistan

The Council took note of the sixth implementation report of the EU action plan for Afghanistan, covering the period from March 2012 until March 2013.

UN General Assembly

The Council adopted the EU priorities for the 68th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations that will convene from 17 September 2013.
