



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



7849/12

PRESSE 117  
PR CO 18

## **PRESS RELEASE**

3157th Council meeting

### **Foreign Affairs**

Brussels, 22 and 23 March 2012

President

**Catherine Ashton**

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and  
Security Policy

# **P R E S S**

## **Main results of the Council**

*The Council held an in-depth discussion about **Syria**, strongly condemning the brutal attacks and systematic human rights violations by the Syrian regime. Given the Syrian regime's continued use of violence against civilians, the Council reinforced the EU's restrictive measures once more.*

*The Council debated the situation in **Belarus** and reiterated its grave concern about the continued lack of respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law. Against that background, the Council strengthened restrictive measures against those responsible for the repression of civil society in that country.*

*One year after the adoption of the EU strategy for security and development in the **Sahel**, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to contribute to the development of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Sahel region. At the same time, the Council firmly condemned recent attempts to seize power by force in **Mali** and invited the Commission to take precautionary measures in the implementation of EU development cooperation as the situation warrants.*

*In their six-monthly meeting within the Council, EU defence ministers discussed the state of play concerning the **Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)** and the ongoing operations. The Council also adopted conclusions on the **pooling and sharing of military capabilities**, emphasising the urgent political necessity to retain and develop the military capabilities for sustaining and enhancing the CSDP.*

*In addition, the Council activated the **EU Operations Centre** in support of the CSDP missions in the Horn of Africa. This is the first activation of the Operations Centre.*

*The Council prolonged the **EU counter-piracy operation Atalanta** for two years and extended the forces' area of operations to include Somali coastal territory and internal waters.*

*The Council also reinforced EU restrictive measures adopted in response to serious human rights violations in **Iran** and prolonged them by 12 months. It also approved the implementing legislation for the most recent EU restrictive measures in response to the Iranian nuclear programme. This will ensure their full effect.*

**CONTENTS**<sup>1</sup>

<b>PARTICIPANTS</b> .....	<b>5</b>
---------------------------	----------

**ITEMS DEBATED**

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY .....	8
Operations .....	8
Military Capabilities .....	8
SAHEL.....	10
BELARUS .....	12
SYRIA.....	15

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED***COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY*

– EU/Albania - Crisis management operations .....	18
– EUNAVFOR Atalanta.....	18
– EU Operations Centre .....	18
– Women, Peace and Security .....	18

<sup>1</sup>

- 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.

*FOREIGN AFFAIRS*

–	Guidelines to EU policy on torture.....	19
–	Support for activities of the Organisation for the prohibition of chemical weapons .....	19
–	Relations with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan .....	19
–	Transnistria - restrictive measures .....	19
–	Afghanistan - restrictive measures .....	19
–	Iran - restrictive measures .....	20
–	EU-LAC Foundation .....	20

## **PARTICIPANTS**

### **High Representative**

Ms Catherine ASHTON

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

### **Belgium:**

Mr Didier REYNDEERS

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

Mr Michel TILLEMANN

Ambassador, Representative to the Political and Security Committee

### **Bulgaria:**

Mr Anyu ANGELOV

Minister for Defence

Mr Nikolay MLADENOV

Minister for Foreign Affairs

### **Czech Republic:**

Mr Jiří ŠEDIVÝ

Deputy Minister for Defence

Mr Jiří SCHNEIDER

Secretary of State and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs

### **Denmark:**

Mr Nick HÆKKERUP

Minister for Defence

Mr Villy SØVNDAL

Minister for Foreign Affairs

### **Germany:**

Mr Guido WESTERWELLE

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Christian SCHMIDT

Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Defence

### **Estonia:**

Mr Harri TIIDO

Ambassador, Representative to the Political and Security Committee

### **Ireland:**

Mr Eamon GILMORE

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

Mr Michael HOWARD

Secretary-General of the Irish Department of Defence

### **Greece:**

Mr Kostas SPILIOPOULOS

State Secretary for Defence

Mr Stavros DIMAS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

### **Spain:**

Mr Pedro MORÉNES EULATE

Minister for Defence

Mr José Antonio GARCIA-MARGALLO

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

### **France:**

Mr Alain JUPPÉ

Ministre d'État, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

Mr Jean-Louis FALCONI

Ambassador, Representative to the Political and Security Committee

### **Italy:**

Mr Giampaolo DI PAOLA

Minister for Defence

Mr Giulio TERZI DI SANT'AGATA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

### **Cyprus:**

Mr Demetris ELIADES

Minister for Defence

Ms Erato KOZAKOU-MARCOULLIS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

### **Latvia:**

Mr Edgars RINKĒVIČS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ms Dace TREIJA-MASI

Ambassador to the Political and Security Committee

### **Lithuania:**

Mr Vytautas UMBRASAS

Deputy Minister for Defence

Mr Audronius AŽUBALIS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

### **Luxembourg:**

Mr Jean-Marie HALSDORF

Minister for Defence

Mr Georges FRIDEN

Political Director

**Hungary:**

Mr Csaba HENDE  
Mr János MARTONYI

Minister for Defence  
Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Malta:**

Mr Tonio BORG  
Mr Godwin GRIMA

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Principal Permanent Secretary

**Netherlands:**

Mr Hans HILLEN  
Mr Uri ROSENTHAL

Minister for Defence  
Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Austria:**

Mr Norbert DARABOS  
Mr Michael SPINDELEGGER

Minister for Defence  
Vice Chancellor, Federal European and International  
Affairs

**Poland:**

Mr Tomasz SIEMONIAK  
Mr Radosław SIKORSKI

Minister for Defence  
Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Portugal:**

Mr José Pedro AGUIAR BRANCO  
Mr Paulo PORTAS

Minister for Defence  
Ministro de Estado, Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Romania:**

Mr Viorel OANCEA

State Secretary for Defence and Planning Policy, Ministry  
of National Defence  
State Secretary, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Ms Luminita ODOBESCU

**Slovenia:**

Mr Karl Viktor ERJAVEC  
Mr Aleš HOJS

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Minister for Defence

**Slovakia:**

Mr Róbert ONDREJCSÁK  
Mr Milan JEŽOVICA

State Secretary at the Ministry of Defence  
State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Finland:**

Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA  
Mr Marcus RANTALA

Minister for Foreign Affairs  
State Secretary

**Sweden:**

Mr Sten TOLGFORS  
Mr Carl BILDT

Minister for Defence  
Minister for Foreign Affairs

**United Kingdom:**

Mr William HAGUE

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

Mr Gerald HOWARTH

Minister for International Security Strategy

**Commission:**

Mr Štefan Füle  
Mr Andris Piebalgs  
Ms Kristalina Georgieva  
Mr Christian Danielsson

Member  
Member  
Member  
Deputy Secretary-General

The government of the acceding state was represented as follows:

**Croatia:**

Mr Ante KOTROMANOVIĆ

Ms Vesna PUSIĆ

Minister for Defence

Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

## **ITEMS DEBATED**

### **COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY**

The Council reviewed developments in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

#### **Operations**

The Council discussed the state of play concerning the EU's military CSDP operations and considered the way forward. These operations include Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EUNAVFOR Atalanta counter-piracy operation off the coast of Somalia, and the EU training mission for Somali forces.

The High Representative also briefed ministers about preparations for possible new CSDP activities.

#### **Military Capabilities**

The European Defence Agency (EDA) Steering Board met in the margins of the Council. For details, see the [EDA press release](#).

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the pooling and sharing of military capabilities:

- "1. The Council emphasizes the urgent political necessity to retain and develop the military capabilities for sustaining and enhancing CSDP. European cooperation on pooling and sharing of military capabilities represents a common response to European capability shortfalls, aiming at enhancing operational effectiveness in a context of financial austerity and a changing strategic environment. Military capabilities and the political will to generate forces underpin the EU's ability to contribute to security and stability through operational engagement.
2. In this context the Council welcomes the significant progress on concrete cooperative initiatives facilitated by the European Defence Agency (EDA) such as on Air-to-Air Refuelling, Medical Support, Training (Counter-IED, Helicopter Training Programme, Air Transport Crew, Fast Jet and Naval) and Maritime Surveillance. The EDA Steering Board on 22 March 2012 endorsed a Political Declaration on Air-to-Air Refuelling and welcomed a Declaration of Intent for the establishment of Multinational Modular Medical Units.



These projects, as well as other collaborative projects established by Member States within bilateral or regional frameworks, constitute a package of concrete initiatives developed so far as part of the Ghent process for strengthening defence cooperation. They underline the strong commitment of Member States to strengthen European military capabilities and demonstrate the added value of European actions and efforts in that regard and the long-term potential of pooling and sharing, bearing in mind the upcoming NATO Chicago Summit.

3. The Council also calls for further efforts in Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance, Future Military Commercial Satellites (SATCOM), Smart Munitions, and Naval Logistics and encourages continuous work on Training and Education facilitated by the EUMS.
4. The Council welcomes the cooperation between the EU and NATO on military capability development for crisis management, in particular the Pooling and Sharing and Smart Defence initiatives. It notes with satisfaction the productive contacts between the staffs of the two organisations, and strongly encourages these contacts to continue in a transparent manner in order to avoid duplication, ensure coherence and mutually reinforcing capability development.
5. While significant progress has been made, the Council reiterates the need for a more sustainable and structured policy on Pooling and Sharing in the longer term. Systematic cooperation will require a change of mindset and continuous political momentum and commitment. The Council encourages Member States, in the very early stages of their national processes, to systematically explore the possibility for Pooling and Sharing solutions.
6. In the context of further developing the systematic approach to Pooling and Sharing, the Council welcomes the work conducted in the framework of the EDA on enablers for multinational cooperation. Pooling demand, harmonising procedures for qualification/certification, and sharing surplus equipment, will support capability improvements and reduce through-life costs. Noting the potential of "Save and Reinvest", the Council invites EDA to explore this further.
7. Acknowledging the wider implications of defence for technology, innovation and growth, the Council notes with concern the overall reduction of defence Research and Technology investment and its implications on Europe's ability to develop future defence capabilities. The Council reiterates its commitment to cooperation in Research and Technology. It encourages the EDA and the Commission to pursue synergies with European policies and in particular in the field of Research and Technology, including regarding the new European Framework Programme for Research and Technology (Horizon 2020). This will contribute to strengthening the European Defence Industrial and Technological Base."

## SAHEL

The Council took stock of the implementation of the EU strategy for security and development in the Sahel region and discussed the challenges for the region.

It adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. One year after the presentation of an EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel and in the context of the turbulent events in the wider region coinciding with a new food crisis, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to contribute to the development of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Sahel region.
2. The Council firmly condemned attempts to seize power by force in Mali. It called for an immediate end of violence and the release of State officials, the protection of civilians, the restoration of civil, constitutional government and for the holding of democratic elections as planned. The EU will work closely with the African Union and ECOWAS. The Council invited the Commission to take precautionary measures in the implementation of EU development cooperation as the situation warrants. The Council underlined that direct support to the population will continue as well as humanitarian aid.
3. Underlining the importance of respect for the territorial integrity of Mali, the Council repeated its call for an immediate ceasefire in northern Mali and for an inclusive dialogue which the EU stands ready to support.
4. The Council expressed deep concern about the deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel region. It underlined its determination to support Sahel countries, in partnership with regional organisations and other international partners, in their efforts to fight against the interlinked challenges of poverty, terrorism, violent extremism and organised crime and to address spill-over effects of the recent crisis in Libya. In this context, the Council welcomed progress over the last 12 months in the implementation of the Strategy and the coordinated use of all EU instruments in the fields of development, governance, rule of law, migration and security to support the socio-economic development of Mali, Mauritania and Niger and to strengthen their capacities to deal with the scourges of terrorism and organised crime, including the trafficking of drugs and human beings.

5. The Council encouraged the strengthening of ongoing regional cooperation to accompany national strategies to promote the stability and development of the countries concerned. In this context, the Council welcomed the increased engagement of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations in support of regionally-owned processes and stressed the need to continue close consultation with regional organisations including the AU and ECOWAS.
6. In recognition of the particular security challenges faced by the States in the region, the Council approved the Crisis Management Concept for a civilian CSDP Advisory, Assistance and Training mission in Sahel, with an operational focus in Niger, to support Gendarmerie, Police Nationale and Garde Nationale to enhance their level of interoperability and law enforcement capacity, in particular to fight terrorism and organised crime while fully respecting Rule of Law and Human Rights. It underlined the need for taking forward operational planning without delay, with a view to deploy the mission by the end of summer 2012.
7. The fragile security of the region has been further exacerbated both by a deepening food and nutrition crisis affecting 15 million people and the humanitarian consequences of the conflict in northern Mali and the resulting high numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees whose safety and access to humanitarian assistance should be ensured. The EU has provided early humanitarian assistance for an amount of 123.5 million Euros and together with Member States will continue to provide such assistance to respond to the urgent needs of the most affected populations in the Sahel countries and the wider region. To this effect, an additional amount of 9 million Euros is being mobilised to provide emergency assistance to people affected by the conflict in northern Mali.
8. National ownership, regional solidarity, flexible funding, donor coordination and strengthened dialogue between humanitarian and development actors are essential to overcome the long-standing chronic food and malnutrition problems in the region and to build resilience. Building on national initiatives the EU is committed to stepping up its support to the countries in the region in their efforts to avert this type of crisis in the future and to achieve sustainable food and nutrition security. In this context, the EU plans to allocate an additional 164.5 million Euros to reinforce and complement existing development actions on food security in the region.
9. The Council invited the High Representative and the European Commission to accelerate implementation of the Sahel Strategy and to report regularly on progress."

The Council also approved the crisis management concept for a possible civilian CSDP mission to improve capacities to fight terrorism and organised crime in the Sahel region, initially focussing on Niger. The mission would advise the authorities on detailed plans to implement the Nigerian security strategy and provide specialised training for all relevant security actors of Niger. The adoption of the crisis management concept launches operational planning for the mission.

**BELARUS**

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

- "1. Recalling the Council conclusions on 31 January 2011 and 20 June 2011, the Council reiterates its grave concern about the continued lack of respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law in Belarus, and regrets that further repressive measures have taken place.
2. As the political prisoners have not been released and rehabilitated, and against the background of the further deterioration of the situation, the Council decided to designate additional persons responsible for serious violations of human rights or the repression of civil society and democratic opposition, to the list of those subject to travel restrictions and assets freezes. The Council also decided to designate further businessmen and companies benefitting from or supporting the regime and will agree further such designations at upcoming Council meetings if all Belarusian political prisoners are not released. The EU's restrictive measures remain open and under constant review.
3. The EU calls for the immediate release and rehabilitation of all remaining political prisoners. It condemns the rejection of the appeal of human rights defender and political prisoner Ales Byalyatski as well as the sentencing to two years in prison of Syarhei Kavalenka. The EU is deeply concerned about reports of torture and inhumane prison conditions of political prisoners, such as of former presidential candidates Andrei Sannikaw and Mikalay Statkevich and activists Dzmitry Bandarenka, Dzmitry Dashkevich and Mikalay Awtukhovich. The Council reminds the Belarusian authorities of their obligation under international law to ensure the respect of the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and of their responsibility to investigate reports thereof.
4. Recalling the statement of HR Ashton of 17 March 2012, the EU strongly condemns the execution of Uladzislaw Kavalyow and Dzmitry Kanavalaw. The EU reiterates its call on the authorities of Belarus to join a global moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its universal abolition. The EU opposes capital punishment under all circumstances.

5. The EU reiterates its call on the Belarusian authorities to stop all harassment of members of the opposition, human rights defenders, journalists and civil society, and not to hinder their freedom of movement. The EU also condemns the suppression of non-violent protests and the systematic use of the judicial system as a means of repression, including against peaceful protesters. It is furthermore strongly concerned about the introduction of new legislation that will further restrict the Belarusian citizens' freedoms of assembly, association and the free flow of information on the internet, as well as the provision of support to civil society.
6. The Council again urges Belarus to respect internationally recognised diplomatic immunities and privileges of EU diplomatic representations and their personnel in Minsk and to stop the ongoing harassment and intimidation.
7. In the context of the upcoming 2014 World Ice Hockey Championship, the EU will keep International and National Ice Hockey Federations informed about its deep concerns as regards the lack of respect by Belarus for human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles.
8. The EU reiterates its firm commitment to strengthening its engagement with the Belarusian people and civil society and to supporting the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people. The Council welcomes that the EU is now launching a "European dialogue on modernisation" with the Belarusian society on necessary reforms for the modernisation of Belarus and on the related potential development of relations with the EU, as well as possible EU support in this regard.
9. The EU calls on the Belarusian authorities to follow up on their previously announced intention to initiate a national dialogue with civil society and the opposition to pave the way for the holding of parliamentary elections in 2012 in line with international norms and standards. The EU calls on the Belarusian authorities to cooperate within the OSCE in view of a re-opening of the OSCE field presence in Belarus, and to adhere to and implement OSCE commitments across all three dimensions, in particular in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

10. The EU reiterates its readiness to launch negotiations for visa facilitation and readmission agreements which would enhance people-to-people contacts to the benefit of the Belarusian population at large, and strongly regrets the unconstructive position of the Belarusian authorities in not responding so far to the letter sent in June 2011 inviting them to start negotiations. In order to facilitate the issuing of visas to the Belarusian public, the Council welcomes that the EU Member States will strive to make optimal use of the existing flexibilities offered by the Visa Code, in particular the possibilities to waive and reduce visa fees for certain categories of Belarusian citizens or in individual cases. The Council recalls the possibilities of facilitating movement of persons living in border areas, and calls on the authorities of Belarus to take the necessary steps for the entry into force of all local border traffic agreements with its neighbouring EU member states in accordance with the EU *acquis* on local border traffic.
11. The Council will continue to follow closely the situation in Belarus. The Council reiterates its commitment to the policy of critical engagement, including through dialogue and the Eastern Partnership, and recalls that the development of bilateral relations is conditional on progress towards respect by Belarus for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The EU remains willing to assist Belarus to meet its obligations in this regard."

Against the background of the further deterioration of the situation in Belarus, the Council strengthened EU sanctions against the Belarusian regime. For details, see press release [7898/12](#).

**SYRIA**

The Council discussed the latest developments in Syria and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union is increasingly appalled by the unfolding situation in Syria and recalls the European Council conclusions on Syria of 1 and 2 March 2012. The EU strongly condemns the continued brutal attacks and systematic human rights violations by the Syrian regime, including the use of heavy weaponry in civilian areas, which risk exacerbating further the spiral of violence, sectarian clashes and militarisation, and endanger the stability of the region. President Assad must step aside to allow for a peaceful and democratic transition. The EU also condemns recent bomb attacks in Damascus and Aleppo causing scores of death and injuries. Acts of terrorism cannot be justified under any circumstances.
2. The European Union reiterates its deepest concerns at the increasingly worsening humanitarian plight of the Syrian civilian population as a result of continuous and widespread violence. The Syrian authorities must grant immediate, unimpeded and full access of humanitarian organisations to all areas of Syria in order to allow them to deliver humanitarian assistance and medical care. In this regard, the EU welcomes the recent visit of USG Valerie Amos to Syria and her efforts to agree a clear framework of humanitarian access with the Syrian authorities and takes note of the start of the preliminary humanitarian assessment in Syria. It also welcomes the outcomes of the Syria Humanitarian Forum, held in Geneva on 8 March, as well as the UN Security Council statement of 1 March 2012, deploring the humanitarian situation in Syria. It fully supports measures aimed at ensuring a coordinated, rapid and effective humanitarian response of the international community. In the light of growing needs, the EU and Member States have increased their financial support to humanitarian organisations and will continue to mobilise the necessary assistance. The EU is greatly concerned by reports of anti-personnel land mines being laid along the Syrian borders aiming to prevent Syrians from fleeing.
3. The EU welcomes the recent visit to Damascus of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States Kofi Annan and urges the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully with him. The EU recalls its full support for his mission and his efforts to stop violence and facilitate a peaceful Syrian-led and inclusive dialogue leading to a political solution that meets the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people on the basis of the UN General Assembly resolution of 16 February 2012 and League of Arab States resolutions, in particular those of 22 January, 12 February and 10 March 2012.

4. The EU reiterates its call for the UN Security Council to agree urgently on a resolution on Syria in order to obtain the cessation of violence, immediate and unhindered humanitarian access and leading to a political process in response to the aspirations of the Syrian people. It calls on all members of the Security Council, particularly Russia and China, to work together in an effort to stop the violence and to support fully the implementation of the League of Arab States resolutions. The EU welcomes the UNSC Presidential Statement of 21 March expressing its gravest concern at the deteriorating situation in Syria and full support to the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy of the UN and the LAS, Kofi Annan.
5. The EU welcomes the outcome of the debate of the UN Human Rights Council on Syria on 12 March 2012 and the adoption of the HRC resolution on 23 March 2012 on the human rights situation in the country and the extension of the mandate of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry. There must be a full investigation of the findings of the Commission of Inquiry which pointed to crimes against humanity and other gross violations of human rights committed in the country. The EU reaffirms that there should be no impunity for the perpetrators of such alleged crimes.
6. The European Union supports the Syrian opposition in its struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy for the Syrian people. The EU stands ready to step up its engagement with all representative members of Syrian opposition which adhere to non violence, inclusiveness and democratic values as they make progress to form a broad and inclusive platform. The Syrian National Council, recognised by the EU as a legitimate representative of Syrians, and other representatives of the opposition must unite now in the peaceful struggle for a new Syria that is democratic, pluralistic, stable and guarantees human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and where all citizens enjoy equal rights regardless of their affiliations, ethnicity, belief or gender. To this end, the EU urges all representative members of the opposition to set up an inclusive coordination mechanism under the auspices of the League of Arab States and to agree on a set of shared principles for working towards an orderly and peaceful transition .
7. Given the Syrian regime's continued use of violence against civilians, the EU approved today further designations of persons and entities to be subject to restrictive measures. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. The EU will also continue to urge the international community to join its efforts, in taking steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures and sanctions on the Syrian regime and its supporters. It calls on all Syrians to disassociate themselves from the repressive policy of the regime in order to facilitate a political transition.



8. As soon as a genuine democratic transition begins, the EU is ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria across all areas of mutual interest, including by mobilising assistance, strengthening trade and economic relations and supporting transitional justice and the political transition."

Given the Syrian regime's continued use of violence against civilians, the Council reinforced EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime. For details, see press release [7856/12](#).

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED****COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY****EU/Albania - Crisis management operations**

The Council authorised the signing and conclusion of a framework agreement with Albania for its participation in EU crisis management operations.

**EUNAVFOR Atalanta**

The Council extended the duration and the geographic scope of the EU's counter-piracy operation EUNAVFOR Atalanta. For details, see press release [7216/12](#).

**EU Operations Centre**

The Council activated the EU Operations Centre in support of the CSDP missions in the Horn of Africa. This is the first activation of the EU Operations Centre. For details, see press release [7858/12](#).

**Women, Peace and Security**

The Council endorsed revised EU policies on the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security in the context of CSDP missions and operations.

## **FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

### **Guidelines for EU policy on torture**

Following a review of the guidelines for EU policy on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the Council adopted a revised version, see [6129/12](#). They are an operational tool for contacts with third countries and in multilateral human rights fora so as to strengthen ongoing efforts to prevent and eradicate torture in all parts of the world.

### **Support for activities of the Organisation for the prohibition of chemical weapons**

In the framework of the EU strategy against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the Council decided to support the organisation for the prohibition of chemical weapons. A budget of EUR 2 140 000 is provided for projects facilitating science and technology, information exchange, visits to chemical weapons destruction facilities and the preparedness of states parties to prevent and respond to attacks involving chemicals.

### **Relations with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**

The Council agreed the position of the European Union and its member states within the EU-Jordan Association Council with regard to the EU-Jordan European Neighbourhood Policy action plan. The Council and the representatives of the governments of the member states adopted conclusions to this effect, see [7685/12](#).

### **Transnistria - restrictive measures**

The Council agreed to extend the suspension of EU restrictive measures against the leadership of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova until 30 September 2012. At the end of that period, the Council will review the restrictive measures on the basis of clearly defined benchmarks.

### **Afghanistan - restrictive measures**

The Council updated the list of individuals, groups, undertakings and entities subject to restrictive measures in view of the situation in Afghanistan, in the wake of changes adopted by the UN sanctions committee.

**Iran - restrictive measures**

The Council reinforced EU restrictive measures adopted in response to serious human rights violations in Iran and prolonged them by 12 months. For details, see press release [7853/12](#).

The Council also adopted the implementing legislation for the most recent EU restrictive measures in response to the Iranian nuclear programme. Its publication in the Official Journal will ensure the full legal effect of the sanctions adopted by the Council on 23 January. For details, see press release [7854/12](#).

**EU-LAC Foundation**

The Council authorised the opening of negotiations for an international agreement between the EU and its member states and the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries on the creation of the EU-LAC Foundation as an international organisation. It also adopted the negotiating directives for the Commission as the EU negotiator.

---