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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3498th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

(including defence issues)

Brussels, 14 and 15 November 2016

President **Federica Mogherini**
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy

P R E S S

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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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ITEMS DEBATED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Turkey

Ministers restated their **concerns regarding recent developments in Turkey** as set out by the High Representative in her declaration on behalf of the EU on 8 November 2016. In their debate, they particularly highlighted worrying renewed considerations in Turkey to introduce a bill to parliament to reinstate the death penalty. They also underlined that Turkey is a key partner of the EU in the areas of the economy, security, migration and foreign policy, in particular with regard to Syria and Iraq. The Council recalled the EU's **condemnation of the 15 July coup attempt**. While recognising the need for Turkey to take proportionate action, ministers also recalled that, **as a candidate country, Turkey is expected to uphold the highest standards of democracy**, including respect for human rights, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms and the right of all to a fair trial. EU ministers agreed on the importance of continuing **political dialogue** with Turkey at all levels.

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the latest developments in Turkey, 8 November 2016](#)

Eastern Partnership

The Council discussed current multilateral and bilateral relations with the six Eastern Partnership countries: **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine**. Ministers exchanged views on the implementation of the Partnership and possible deliverables to be achieved in 2017, notably with a view to the next **Eastern Partnership Summit in November 2017 in Brussels**.

The Council adopted conclusions on the Eastern Partnership.

Read the [full text of the conclusions](#).

Southern Neighbourhood

Over lunch, ministers discussed the Southern Neighbourhood, focusing on **Syria**. The High Representative informed the Council of her **recent outreach efforts with key actors in the region**, in line with the European Council mandate and in full support of the efforts of the UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. The High Representative referred to, in particular, her most recent visits to Iran on 29 October and to Saudi Arabia on 31 October. In its conclusions on Iran, which were adopted without debate, the Council welcomed this outreach and invited the High Representative to continue her work. The Council expressed its concern over the escalation of tensions in the region, and called for a more constructive regional environment, as well as an end to the violence in Syria and support for the resumption of a political process.

There was also an information point on Libya.

JOINT SESSION OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE MINISTERS

Security and defence

Foreign ministers had a **joint session** with defence ministers on the **implementation plan on security and defence** under the EU global strategy. The Council **adopted conclusions** setting out the level of ambition and the way forward.

[Conclusions on implementing the EU global strategy in the area of security and defence](#)

[Implementation plan on security and defence](#)

MEETING OF DEFENCE MINISTERS

EU-NATO cooperation

The Council had a discussion on **EU-NATO cooperation** with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. Ministers of defence took stock of the cooperation between the EU and NATO in the context of the implementation of the EU global strategy on security and defence and of the **EU-NATO joint declaration**. The High Representative and the NATO Secretary General informed on the ongoing work in this regard, where 40 concrete proposals are being developed in the seven areas identified in the joint declaration for deepening cooperation. The proposals are expected to be presented and adopted at the respective Councils of the two organisations in early December. EU ministers underlined the need for **comprehensive EU-NATO coordination and complementarity** and the commitment of the EU to a strong transatlantic relationship.

[EU-NATO joint declaration](#)

CSDP operations

The Council then discussed the state of play of the **CSDP operations**, focusing on the situation in Libya and the Mediterranean. The NATO SG was also present for this discussion. In this context, the ongoing cooperation between the EU naval operation to combat smugglers and traffickers in the Central Mediterranean EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia, and NATO Operation Sea Guardian on situation awareness and logistics was of particular relevance.

The High Representative also updated ministers on the two supporting tasks of **EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia**. The **training of 78 embarked Libyan Navy coastguards and Navy** and their mentor is ongoing. The operation is also contributing to the implementation of the **UN arms embargo** on the high seas off the coast of Libya in accordance with the UN Security Council resolution 2292 (2016), conducting already its first boat-inspection in this framework on 14 September 2016, having checked 7 merchant vessels and queried 122 in this framework.

[EU NAVFOR Med Operation Sophia \(EEAS website\)](#)

[Finding solutions to migratory pressures](#)

European Defence Agency steering board

Before the Council, defence ministers met in the format of the European Defence Agency (EDA) steering board, under the chairmanship of Federica Mogherini as the head of the agency. All member states except Denmark participate.

Ministers discussed and approved the agency's 2017 general budget, which for the first time since 2010 is increased, reaching €1 billion.

Ministers took note of progress made on the implementation of the agency's 'key taskings' in the various capability programmes, including air-to-air refuelling, government satellite communications, cyber defence and remotely piloted aircraft systems. The Steering Board agreed to the review of the capability development plan and tasked the EDA to present a new set of EU priorities for military capability development for Steering Board adoption by spring 2018.

EDA also presented ministers with proposals for the potential establishment of a 'cooperative financial mechanism' the objective of which would be to overcome the lack of budgetary synchronisation between member states and the problems that this causes for the launch of cooperative defence cooperation projects. Ministers are set to give their green light to set up a working group within EDA in view of submitting a legal and financial package and associated recommendations in spring 2017.

[European Defence Agency \(website\)](#)

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Syria

The Council also adopted a decision adding 17 ministers and the governor of the Central Bank of Syria to the list of sanctions against the Syrian regime for the violent repression of the civilian population.

For more information see the [press release](#).

[Syria: Council response to the crisis](#)

Iran

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Iran:

- "1. Recalling the July 2015 Council conclusions and the joint statement agreed by the HRVP and Foreign Minister Javad Zarif at their April meeting, the European Union expresses its will to develop further its relations with Iran, in a manner fully consistent with the JCPOA.
2. The European Union reiterates its resolute commitment to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which is a multilateral endeavour by the E3/EU+3 and Iran. It welcomes that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is being implemented by all sides. It notes that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has issued four reports since Implementation Day verifying Iran's nuclear related commitments. It underlines the need for Iran to continue to cooperate fully and in a timely manner with the IAEA and it supports the Agency work in monitoring Iran's implementation of the deal. It encourages Iran to ratify the additional protocol to its safeguards agreement. The European Union reiterates the need for continued full and effective implementation of the JCPOA throughout the lifetime of the agreement. The European Union confirms its support to the High Representative in her role as Coordinator of the Joint Commission.
3. The European Union is committed to support the full and effective implementation of the JCPOA including by the lifting of nuclear related economic and financial sanctions and engaging with the private sector and economic operators, especially banks, to promote growth in trade and investment. In particular, extensive guidance has been provided on the lifting of sanctions to ensure the new regulatory framework is clear. The Council will continue to reach out to all relevant parties on this issue.

4. The European Union welcomes and looks forward to the continued issuing of export licenses by the US Office of Foreign Assets Control for the transfer of commercial passenger aircraft and related parts and services to Iran. The sale of a significant number of aircraft to Iran's airlines will be an important signal for the successful implementation of the JCPOA. The aircraft's exclusively civil aviation end-use will enhance the people's mobility and contribute to a safer commercial aviation environment.
5. The upholding of commitments by all sides is a necessary condition to continue rebuilding trust and allow for continued, steady and gradual improvement in relations between the European Union, its Member States and Iran as stated by the July 2015 Foreign Affairs Council.
6. The Council reiterates its support to the development of EU-Iran relations in areas of common interest such as political dialogue, human rights, economic cooperation, trade and investment, agriculture, transport, energy and climate change, civil nuclear cooperation, environment, civil protection, science, research and innovation, education, including through university exchanges, culture, drugs, migration, regional and humanitarian issues as outlined in the Joint statement agreed by the HRVP and the Iranian Foreign Minister in their April meeting. The Council supports a coordinated EU strategy of gradual engagement with Iran that is comprehensive in scope, cooperative where there is mutual interest, critical when there are differences and constructive in practice. As part of that the Council fully supports the prompt opening of an EU Delegation in Iran as a key step to deliver the broad cooperation agenda.
7. The Council welcomes the expansion of the EU's economic relationship with Iran as a result of the implementation of the JCPOA and reaffirms its support for Iran's WTO accession as a way to promote market related reforms and achieve reintegration into the global economy and the rules based trading system. For Iran to fully benefit from the lifting of sanctions, including the full reengagement of European banks and businesses, it is important that it addresses obstacles related to economic and fiscal policy, business environment and rule of law. The Council welcomes Iran's adoption of, and high-level political commitment to, a Financial Action Task Force Action Plan to address its strategic anti-money laundering/combating the financing of terrorism deficiencies, and its decision to seek technical assistance and urges its timely and swift implementation. The EU and its Member States are open to cooperate with Iran in these areas, including providing technical assistance for the implementation of the FATF action plan, and consider the use of export credits to facilitate trade, project financing, and investment in Iran. The Council welcomes the prospect of extending the third country lending mandate of the European Investment Bank (EIB) to Iran.

8. The Council notes the Iranian President's pledge to improve human rights in the country. However it remains concerned with the human rights situation, in particular the frequent use of death penalty including against juvenile and drug offenders. The EU opposes the use of the death penalty in all circumstances. The Council underlines the need to ensure equal rights of women, and persons belonging to all minorities, including ethnic and religious minorities, respecting freedom of expression, assembly and association and implementing the treaties to which Iran is a party as well as acceding to those conventions to which it is not yet a state party. It also calls on Iran to cooperate with and grant access to the UN special rapporteur. The EU aims at addressing these issues in a constructive manner, including through a dialogue on human rights, which would further identify areas of cooperation in this field.
9. The Council expresses its concern with the growing tensions in the region and supports ways to promote a more constructive regional environment. Iran plays an important regional role and it is of utmost importance that it takes tangible and constructive steps that would help make an improved regional situation a reality. The EU emphasises its balanced approach to the region and urges all countries in the region to work towards de-escalation of tensions and avoiding actions which feed violence, sectarianism and polarisation. In this sense the Council expresses its concern with the regional military build-up, including Iran's missile programme and calls upon Iran to refrain from activities which may deepen mistrust, such as ballistic missile tests, which are inconsistent with UNSCR 2231, and the statements associated with these.
10. The EU reiterates its conclusions on Syria of 17 October 2016^t and calls urgently for an end to the excessive and disproportionate attacks by the Syrian regime and its allies, both deliberate and indiscriminate, against civilian populations, humanitarian and healthcare personnel and civilian and humanitarian infrastructures. Therefore the Council urges Iran to use its influence on the Syrian regime to end the violence against civilian populations, humanitarian personnel and civilian and humanitarian infrastructures, enable full unhindered country-wide humanitarian access and engage constructively in a negotiated political process. The Council also encourages Iran to fully contribute to laying the ground for the resumption of an inclusive and Syrian led political process under UN auspices. The Council welcomes the outreach of the High Representative in this respect and invites her to continue this work with key actors in the region in support of the efforts of the UNSE Staffan de Mistura."

[EU restrictive measures against Iran](#)

[EU relations with Iran](#)

Security Sector Reform

The Council adopted conclusions on security sector reform (SSR). It endorsed the joint communication 'Elements for an EU-wide strategic framework to support Security Sector Reform (SSR)'.

Read the [full text of the conclusions](#).

Fifth review conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

The Council adopted conclusions welcoming the upcoming the fifth review conference of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW).

The conference will take place in Geneva from 12-16 December 2016 and represents an opportunity to keep the Convention responsive to new developments and strengthen its implementation.

Read the [full text of the conclusions](#).

Relations with Azerbaijan

The Council authorised the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to open negotiations on and reach, on behalf of the European Union and its member states, a Comprehensive Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

For more information see the [press release](#).

Relations with Kazakhstan

The Council agreed in principle on the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Kazakhstan and requested the consent of the European Parliament. The agreement will strengthen political dialogue and improve cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan in a broad range of areas ([12409/16](#)).

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

EULEX Kosovo: Council adopts budget until 14 June 2017

The Council adopted a reference amount for the EU rule of law mission (EULEX Kosovo) of EUR 23.25 million until 14 June 2017 to cover the expenditure of EULEX KOSOVO for the implementation of its mandate in Kosovo.

The central aim of the civilian mission EULEX Kosovo is to assist and support the Kosovo authorities in the rule of law area, specifically in the police, judiciary and customs areas. EULEX Kosovo was launched in 2008. The headquarters of the mission are located in Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo.

Single progress report on the development of EU military capabilities

The Council took note of the single progress report on the development of EU military capabilities from November 2015 to October 2016 (13719/16).

Report by the Head of the European Defence Agency

The Council took note of the report by the Head of the European Defence Agency (14107/16).

