

Brussels, 11 March 2016

7588/16

(OR. en)

PRESSE 19

Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on Recent Developments in the South China Sea

The EU is committed to maintaining a legal order for the seas and oceans based upon the principles of international law, as reflected notably in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). This includes the maintenance of maritime safety, security, and cooperation, freedom of navigation and overflight.

While not taking a position on claims to land territory and maritime space in the South China Sea, the EU urges all claimants to resolve disputes through peaceful means, to clarify the basis of their claims, and to pursue them in accordance with international law including UNCLOS and its arbitration procedures.

The EU is concerned about the deployment of missiles on islands in the South China Sea. The temporary or permanent deployment of military forces or equipment on disputed maritime features which affects regional security and may threaten freedom of navigation and overflight is a major concern. The EU therefore calls on all claimants to refrain from militarisation in the region, from the use or threat of force, and to abstain from unilateral actions.

The EU encourages further engagement in confidence building measures which seek to build trust and security in the region. The EU fully supports regional ASEAN-led processes and is looking forward to a swift conclusion of the talks on a 'Code of Conduct' which will further support a rules-based regional and international order. In this connection, the EU reiterates its offer to share best practices on maritime security.

The Candidate Countries Montenegro* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

*Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/press>

7588/16

1
EN