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Foreign Affairs

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

P R E S S

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¹ • 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.

ITEMS DEBATED

Current Affairs

Foreign ministers reviewed pressing issues on the international agenda. The High Representative and foreign ministers referred in particular to the situation in Gaza and to the meeting of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in Vienna on 6 July. They also referred to international meetings, including the Western Balkan Summit (London, 10 July), the EU-CELAC ministerial meeting (16-17 July) and the Somalia Partnership Forum (Brussels, 17 July).

Eastern Partnership

The Council discussed the Eastern Partnership, ahead of the Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting in October. Foreign ministers reaffirmed the commitment of the EU to the region, to the reform agenda and to the priorities identified as the '20 deliverables for 2020', to achieve stronger economy, governance, connectivity and society. The Council confirmed the continuing relevance of the tailored-made and differentiated approach, allowing each of the six countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) to choose the level of ambition they aspire to in their relations with the EU.

Ministers noted the progress made in the six countries. They also underlined the need to step up reforms in areas such as governance, justice, the fight against corruption, economic reform and the business environment. They expressed particular concern over the situation in the Republic of Moldova.

Finally, ministers highlighted the importance of using the opportunity to the 10th anniversary of the partnership in 2019 to highlight the EU's commitment to the region.

[Eastern Partnership \(background information\)](#)

[Eastern Partnership - 20 Deliverables for 2020](#)

Libya

The Council discussed Libya following the visit by the High Representative Federica Mogherini to the country on 14 July, where she inaugurated the premises of the European Union Delegation in Tripoli. EU foreign ministers welcomed the return of a permanent physical EU presence in Libya, which highlights the importance of the EU's work for the stability, security and prosperity of the country.

Foreign ministers reiterated their support to UN Secretary General's Special Representative Ghassan Salamé. On the political process, they stressed that the work towards elections must be accelerated and that a proper constitutional and legal framework must be in place before they take place.

They noted with satisfaction that the recent crisis in the Oil Crescent had been resolved, while underlining the importance of addressing its causes. They agreed that the EU should increase its work with the United Nations to ensure that revenues from oil can be distributed in a transparent manner.

Foreign ministers also highlighted the results of the EU's work on the ground on migration, in particular the support for the IOM and UNHCR, which has, for example, allowed for the voluntary return of 28 000 migrants to their country of origin. They agreed to keep the EU's focus on cooperation and partnership with Libya, but first and foremost with the United Nations agencies and the African Union.

North Korea

Over lunch, foreign ministers discussed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). They reiterated their full commitment to support efforts towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula and the EU's readiness to facilitate steps towards this objective. In line with the EU's policy of critical engagement, they also underlined the importance of continuing to maintain pressure through sanctions, while keeping channels of communication open. They also agreed to encourage the DPRK to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as a logical step to transforming recent positive political statements into verifiable and legally binding commitments.

[Factsheet on the EU and the DPRK \(EEAS\)](#)

[EU restrictive measures against North Korea \(background information\)](#)

OTHER ITEMS

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Council conclusions on the International Criminal Court

The Council adopted conclusions on the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute (17 July). The Council highlights the valuable contribution of the ICC to the fight against impunity. At a time when the rules-based international order is facing increased pressure, the strengthening of its criminal justice system is more important than ever.

The Council recalls that the EU has been a strong supporter of the Court since its creation and has used the instruments at its disposal to help increase support of the Court. As the world's first and only permanent international criminal court for the investigation and prosecution of the most serious crimes, the ICC demonstrates the international community's resolve to end impunity for the most heinous crimes and to foster a culture of accountability.

Sanctions on the Maldives

The Foreign Affairs Council adopted a framework for targeted restrictive measures against persons and entities responsible for undermining the rule of law or obstructing an inclusive political solution in the Maldives as well as persons and entities responsible for serious human rights violations. This decision makes it possible, if the situation does not improve, to impose a travel ban and an asset freeze on relevant individuals and entities.

This decision is a direct follow up to the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 26 February 2018 on the Maldives. The Council considered that the situation was not in accordance with the principles of democratic rule and separation of powers, and indicated it may consider targeted measures if the situation did not improve.

In its conclusions, the Council called on the government of the Maldives to engage with the leaders of the opposition in a genuine dialogue that paves the way for credible, transparent and inclusive Presidential elections.

[Council conclusions on the Maldives, 26 February 2018](#)

[EU Delegation to Sri Lanka and the Maldives](#)

Iran: blocking statute

The Council indicated its intention not to object to the "Commission delegated regulation amending the Annex to Council Regulation (EC) No 2271/96 of 22 November 1996 protecting against the effects of extra-territorial application of legislation adopted by a third country, and actions based thereon or resulting therefrom."

Following the request by European leaders on 16 May, the European Commission launched a formal process to activate the blocking statute by updating the list of US sanctions on Iran falling within its scope on 6 June 2018. The blocking statute allows companies to recover damages arising from US extraterritorial sanctions, from the person causing them, nullifies the effect in the EU of any foreign court judgements based on them and requires EU persons not to comply with such sanctions, unless explicitly authorised by the Commission to do so. The aim is to have the measure in force on 7 August 2018, when the first batch of US sanctions takes effect.

By indicating its intention not to object, the Council allows for a swifter adoption of the Commission delegated regulation. The European Parliament also needs to either pronounce itself before the deadline of 6 August 2018 or let the deadline pass without objecting for the delegated act to enter into force and produce effects.

[European Commission acts to protect the interests of EU companies investing in Iran as part of the EU's continued commitment to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, 18 May 2018](#)

Euro-Mediterranean agreement with Morocco

The Council adopted a decision on the extension of tariff preferences in the Association Agreement with Morocco to the Western Sahara. The decision complies with European Court of Justice's ruling on the liberalisation agreement on agricultural and other products of December 21st 2016.

This decision has two main objectives. On the one hand, it will ensure that products from Western Sahara can be exported to the EU with trade preferences and thus favour the development of Western Sahara. On the other hand, it should allow the EU to continue reinvigorating its partnership with Morocco. It also shows the way forward for the EU-Morocco Fisheries agreement in the following months.

The Council also requested the consent of the European Parliament, which is necessary for the agreement to be modified.

Common Foreign and Security Policy report 2018

The Council endorsed the annual report on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) for 2018. This year's CFSP report— our priorities in 2018 is a concise, forward-looking document encapsulating the EU's work on CFSP, including Common Security and Defence Policy in 2018, under the umbrella of the EU Global Strategy.

The overall aim of the EU for 2018 remains to continue to project the EU as a reliable and responsible partner in an ever more uncertain global environment. This means that the EU's global engagement must also be based on continued efforts to strengthen our instruments and our internal cohesion and effectiveness.

Relations with Uzbekistan

The Council adopted negotiating directives for the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission to negotiate an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Uzbekistan. The new agreement will replace the 1999 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and further strengthen the EU-Uzbekistan relations.

The future agreement is expected to cover areas such as political dialogue and reforms, rule of law, justice, freedom and security, human rights, migration, trade, as well as economic and sustainable development. It will promote favourable business and investment environment. It will also provide for cooperation on foreign policy issues and global challenges such as climate change, corruption and the fight against terrorism.

Under its new leadership, Uzbekistan has achieved significant progress in recent years as regards reforms, to improve human rights, to develop regional cooperation with its Central Asian neighbours and international partners, and to promote security and stability in the region. Through the envisaged Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the EU is ready to step up its engagement to further support these efforts and to bring the bilateral relations to a new level in the interest of both the EU and Uzbekistan.

Relations with Turkmenistan

The Council gave its agreement on the proposal to open an EU Delegation to Kuwait to Turkmenistan. It will allow the EU to better support the country's efforts to tackle security challenges, to work on connectivity and to promote human rights in the country.

Relations with Kuwait

The Council gave its agreement on the proposal to open an EU Delegation to Kuwait. The EU Delegation is expected to open, in principle, in 2019. It will also cover Qatar. Currently, relations with Kuwait and Qatar are covered by the EU Delegation in Riyadh.

Relations with Singapore

The Council concluded the partnership and cooperation agreement between the EU and Singapore. This agreement will create a framework for more structured political co-operation. It will upgrade EU-Singapore co-operation on a range of areas: international stability, justice, security, development, combatting terrorism, countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; justice, freedom and security including combatting organised crime and cooperation against illicit drugs. It will also cover fields such as human rights, information society, energy, transport, education and culture, environment and natural resources, as well as scientific and technological co-operation.

Its signature is expected to take place in the margins of the Asia-Europe Meeting summit on 18-19 October in Brussels, together with the EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement and the Investment Protection Agreement.

Al-Qaida restrictive measures

The Council added one person to the list of persons and entities subject to sanctions under the EU autonomous Daesh/Al Qaida sanctions regime. The sanctions consist of an assets freeze and a travel ban to the EU.