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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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15386/18

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CONTENTS¹**ITEMS DEBATED**

Current affairs	4
Western Balkans	4
EU-African Union cooperation	5
Ukraine.....	5
Iran	6
Venezuela.....	6

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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.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED*FOREIGN AFFAIRS*

–	Conclusions on Libya.....	7
–	Conclusions on Myanmar/Burma.....	7
–	Conclusions on the EU strategy on India.....	8
–	Conclusions on women, peace and security.....	9
–	Restrictive measures - territorial integrity of Ukraine.....	9
–	Support for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons.....	10
–	International convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism.....	10
–	Relations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.....	11
–	Relations with Eritrea.....	11
–	Sanctions against Somalia.....	12
–	Sanctions against South Sudan.....	12
–	Relations with Jordan.....	13

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

–	EU Battlegroups.....	13
–	EUCAP Somalia.....	13
–	EUTM RCA.....	14

ENLARGEMENT

–	EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Council.....	14
–	EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Council.....	15

AGRICULTURE

–	Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies: health certification at import into the EU.....	15
–	Spirit drinks: registration of 'Tequila' as a geographical indication.....	15

ITEMS DEBATED

Current affairs

The High Representative and the foreign ministers spoke about human rights, given that the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council was taking place on Human Rights Day, which this year marked the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Western Balkans

Foreign ministers discussed the Western Balkans. Following a year of very intensive relations between the EU and the Western Balkans, this was an opportunity for ministers to take stock of the EU's engagement and cooperation with the region. They reaffirmed the EU's unequivocal commitment to the European perspective of the Western Balkans. They also recalled their expectations for the next steps in the region's progress on its European path, in particular on rule of law and fight against corruption.

Ministers discussed the latest developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, following-up on their exchanges at the previous Foreign Affairs Council, and recalled the need to form governments at all levels and to engage in making progress on the reform agenda. They also highlighted the importance of supporting efforts to implement the Prespa agreement between Skopje and Athens. Ministers expressed their support for the EU's strong focus on the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. In this context, they also voiced their concerns over the Kosovo government's decision to increase the tariffs on goods from Serbia and from Bosnia and Herzegovina to 100%, in clear violation of the Central European Free Trade Agreement.

EU-African Union cooperation

Foreign ministers discussed EU - African Union (AU) cooperation in view of the first inter-Summit EU-AU ministerial meeting which will take place on 21-22 January 2019 in Brussels. The meeting will cover three main themes: political aspects (peace, security and governance), economic aspects (investment, trade and skills) and multilateralism (strengthening cooperation in support of a rule based global order).

Ministers expressed their clear interest in strengthening the EU's strategic partnership with Africa. They highlighted the importance of engaging with youth. They noted the progress already made on cooperation on peace, security and governance, including through the signing of an EU-AU memorandum of understanding on 23 May 2018. On migration and mobility, they highlighted the work done in the framework of the joint Valletta action plan. Ministers also underlined the crucial role of the private sector and private investment in boosting EU-Africa relations. They welcomed the proposed new Africa-Europe alliance on sustainable investments and jobs.

[EU-Africa relations \(background information\)](#)

Ukraine

The Council discussed the latest developments in Ukraine. Foreign ministers recalled their **utmost** concern about the dangerous increase of tensions in the Azov Sea and Kerch Strait. They also reaffirmed that the EU does not recognise the 'elections' of 11 November 2018, which it considers illegal and illegitimate. The Council added nine persons involved in the so-called 'elections' to the list of those subject to restrictive measures over actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine.

Over lunch, the High Representative and the EU foreign ministers exchanged views with Ukrainian foreign minister Pavlo Klimkin. They focused on the latest developments in the Azov Sea and the security situation in Ukraine, as well as on possible EU support to assist the affected regions in south-east Ukraine.

Iran

The Council discussed Iran. Ministers focused on the implementation of the JCPOA, including ongoing EU efforts to preserve effective financial channels to Iran and to pursue legitimate trade relations against the background of the re-imposition of US sanctions on 5 November 2018. They also discussed concerns over recent behaviour by Iranian actors on European soil, Iran's ballistic missiles programme and other regional security aspects.

Venezuela

The Council discussed the situation in Venezuela. The High Representative updated the foreign ministers on the ongoing work on the possibility of establishing an international contact group which could, if conditions are met, help facilitate a political process. The Council also confirmed its firm stance on the targeted restrictive measures in place against Venezuela.

Foreign ministers also reiterated that the election on 20 May 2018 and its outcome lacked any credibility, as the electoral process did not ensure the necessary guarantees for inclusive and democratic elections. They agreed to have a common EU approach in view of the start of the second term of President Maduro on 10 January 2019.

The Council also recalled its commitment to supporting the population of Venezuela and, in neighbouring countries, to supporting the socio-economic inclusion of Venezuelans and the resilience of host communities. In this context, ministers welcome the additional €20 million allocated by the European Commission on 4 December 2018 to respond to the urgent needs of those affected by the socio-economic crisis in Venezuela.

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

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Conclusions on Libya

The Council adopted conclusions on Libya. The Council welcomes the outcome of the Conference for Libya hosted by Italy in Palermo on 12 and 13 November 2018, which followed the Paris Conference held on 29 May 2018.

The Council states that the status quo in Libya is a prevalent source of instability and insecurity for the Libyan people, its neighbours, and the entire region. It reiterates that there can only be a political solution to the Libyan crisis, and that this needs to come from the Libyans themselves through an inclusive political process, with full and equal participation and representation of women, and in full respect of international law, including human rights.

The conclusions express the full support of the EU and its member states for the recalibrated action plan presented to the UN Security Council on 8 November by the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative, Ghassan Salamé. The EU and its member states will actively accompany its three strands – political, security and economic – in line with the long-term comprehensive coherent approach to support the UN-led process towards transition and reconciliation. The Council will also address issues related to security, economic policy, stabilisation and migration.

[Read the full text of the conclusions on Libya](#)

Conclusions on Myanmar/Burma

The Council adopted conclusions on the situation in Myanmar/Burma. The Council expresses deep concern over the findings of the independent international fact-finding mission (FFM) of the UN Human Rights Council which conclude that gross human rights violations were committed in Kachin, Rakhine and Shan States, in particular by the Myanmar/Burma military (Tatmadaw). The European Union has consistently called for the accountability of those responsible for such crimes. The Council underlines that a new independent mechanism should be created to further investigate and prepare for fair and independent criminal proceedings, in full recognition of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

The Council intends to adopt additional restrictive measures against senior military and border guard police officers responsible for human rights violations, and is committed to keeping the list of designations under constant review. Recalling its conclusions of 26 February 2018, the Council reiterates its call for the government of Myanmar/Burma to take, without further delay, meaningful action and to make progress to address the issues of accountability and access for UN and humanitarian agencies to Kachin, Rakhine and Shan States, and to create conditions for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced persons to their places of origin. The Council further welcomes the cooperation extended so far to the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy, and reaffirms its continued strong support for Myanmar/Burma's democratic transition, peace and national reconciliation process and inclusive socio-economic development.

[Read the full text of the conclusions on Myanmar/Burma](#)

[EU - Myanmar/Burma relations \(EEAS factsheet\)](#)

Conclusions on the EU strategy on India

The Council adopted conclusions on the EU strategy on India. The Council endorsed the joint communication 'Elements for a European Union strategy on India' by High Representative Federica Mogherini and the European Commission, which, together with the conclusions, will provide the policy framework for the EU's deeper and broader engagement with India over the coming years.

The Council welcomes the increasing role and responsibility of India on the global stage, through its ambitious foreign policy and fast-growing economy. Through their strategic partnership, the EU and India aim to jointly promote peace and security and strengthen the rules-based global order.

In its conclusions, the Council seeks increased cooperation between the EU and India in the promotion of effective multilateralism, growth and prosperity in the EU and India and the wider Asian region, in tackling global challenges such as sustainable development, and in pursuing security interests.

[Read the full text of the conclusions on EU strategy on India](#)

[Joint Communication 'Elements for a European Union strategy on India', Commission press release, 20 November 2018](#)

[EU-India factsheet: A new strategy on India](#)

Conclusions on women, peace and security

The Council adopted conclusions on women, peace and security (WPS). The Council reaffirms the commitments of the European Union and its member states to the full implementation of the WPS agenda, which consists of UN security council resolution 1325 and its follow-up resolutions, ensuring that it is fully integrated into all EU policies and efforts in promoting the important role of women's engagement in support of sustainable peace, security, human rights, justice and development.

In its conclusions, the Council welcomes the new EU strategic approach to WPS. This approach emphasises the need for systematic integration of a gender perspective into all fields and activities in the domain of peace and security, and in EU external actions as a whole. It also emphasises the need to engage, empower, protect and support women and girls in order to help all countries achieve sustainable and lasting peace and security as intrinsic components of human rights and sustainable development.

[Read the full text of the conclusions on women, peace and security](#)

Restrictive measures - territorial integrity of Ukraine

The Council added nine persons to the list of those subject to restrictive measures over actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. They are listed because of their involvement in the so- called 'elections' in the so- called 'Donetsk People's Republic' and 'Luhansk People's Republic'. Through their actions, they further undermined the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine.

The EU considers these "elections" illegal and illegitimate and does not recognise them. In a declaration issued on 10 November 2018, the EU condemned these "elections", as they are in breach of international law, undermine the commitments taken under the Minsk agreements and violate Ukraine's sovereignty and law.

The measures consist of a travel ban and an asset freeze, meaning that these persons cannot enter the territory of any EU member state and all of the assets in the EU belonging to these persons are frozen and EU persons and entities cannot make any funds available to them.

The decision brings the total number of persons listed by the EU to 164. In addition, the EU imposed an asset freeze on 44 entities under this sanctions regime. The legal acts, including the names of the persons concerned, are available in the EU Official Journal.

[Overview of EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine](#)

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the "elections" planned in the so-called "Luhansk People's Republic" and "Donetsk People's Republic" for 11 November 2018](#)

Support for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons

The Council extended the implementation period for its decision on the provision of satellite imagery in support of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) missions in Syria for 12 months. This extension will allow the OPCW to continue implementing the activities and achieve its planned objectives.

The EU has provided more than €17 million for the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and €2.3 million in support of fact-finding activities related to the UN/OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism tasks.

[The EU and the crisis in Syria](#)

International convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism

The Council adopted a decision to provide EU assistance to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) in New York for the ongoing efforts to promote universal adherence to and effective implementation of the international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism (ICSANT). This is one of the key elements of the global nuclear security and anti-terrorism architecture.

The support is designed to increase the number of adherents to ICSANT, raise awareness among national policy- and decision-makers and enhance capacity-building, with a view to improving national legislation and strengthening the capacity of national stakeholders, including criminal justice officials, to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cases of nuclear terrorism.

ICSANT obliges states parties to cooperate in preventing or prosecuting acts of nuclear terrorism by adopting necessary legislative and technical measures to protect nuclear material, installations and devices, and to forestall unauthorised access to them by third parties. It also helps foster international cooperation that includes information sharing and assistance in connection with criminal investigations and extradition proceedings and information exchange related to the protection or recovery of unlawfully acquired material in response to sabotage or the credible threat thereof.

[Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Arms Export Control](#) (EEAS website)

Relations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 10 December 2018, the Council extended the restrictive measures currently in place against the Democratic Republic of the Congo until 12 December 2019. The sanctions comprise an asset freeze and a ban on entering the European Union and are targeted at 14 individuals. They were adopted on 12 December 2016 and 29 May 2017 in response to the obstruction of the electoral process, and the related human rights violations, in the DRC.

In its conclusions of December 2017, the Council called on all Congolese actors, and above all the Congolese authorities and institutions, to play a constructive role in the electoral process. In its decision, considering the upcoming elections, the Council reaffirms the importance of holding credible and inclusive elections in line with the aspiration of the Congolese people to elect their representatives. The Council will further review the restrictive measures in the light of and following the elections in the DRC and stands ready to adjust them accordingly.

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 22 November 2018](#)

[Council conclusions on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 11 December 2017](#)

Relations with Eritrea

The Council decided to repeal the EU's restrictive measures against Eritrea. This decision follows the adoption by the United Nations Security Council on 14 November 2018 of resolution 2444 (2018) terminating, with immediate effect, all UN restrictive measures against Eritrea.

The sanctions consisted of a ban on the sale and supply to and from Eritrea of arms and related material. There were no restrictive measures targeting individuals and entities.

[UNSC resolution 2444 \(2018\), UNSC website, 14 November 2018](#)

[Delegation of the EU to Eritrea](#)

Sanctions against Somalia

The Council amended its decision and regulation on restrictive measures against Somalia, following the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2444 (2018) of 14 November 2018. It is now possible to designate persons who commit acts involving sexual and gender-based violence.

The Council Decision and Regulation imposing restrictive measures in view of the situation in Somalia already contained a provision regarding sexual and gender-based violence, but only insofar as such acts were in violation of applicable international law in Somalia. The amended designation criteria now make it possible for the UN Sanctions Committee to sanction persons who commit acts involving sexual and gender-based violence, irrespective of applicable international law in Somalia.

The current sanctions regime regarding Somalia is a regime established by the United Nations and transposed by the EU. There are currently 15 persons and one entity (the terrorist group 'Al-Shabaab') on the sanctions list.

[UNSC resolution 2444 \(2018\), UNSC website, 14 November 2018](#)

Sanctions against South Sudan

The Council amended its decision and regulation on restrictive measures in view of the situation in South Sudan, following an update by the UNSC Sanctions Committee on 21 November 2018 of the information relating to one of the persons subject to restrictive measures. The total number of persons subject to EU restrictive measures in view of the situation in South Sudan is nine, of whom eight are listed by the UN.

[South Sudan: Council adopts conclusions, 16 April 2018](#)

Relations with Ukraine

The Council approved the position of the EU ahead of the fifth meeting of the Association Council with Ukraine that will take place in Brussels on 17 December 2018.

[EU-Ukraine relations](#)

Relations with Jordan

The Council adopted the position to be taken on behalf of the EU within the association council set up by the Euro-Mediterranean agreement establishing an association between the EU and Jordan.

[EU relations with Jordan](#)

[EU and Jordan adopted partnership priorities and compact, press release \(20/12/2016\)](#)

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

EU Battlegroups

The Council adopted a declaration concerning transport costs for land, sea and air deployment of battle groups, which renews for two years the same commitments as in the previous Council declaration. The Council therefore accepts that the Athena mechanism will bear as operational common costs incremental transport costs for land, sea and air deployment of battle groups at short notice to the joint area of operations.

Athena is a mechanism which handles the financing of common costs relating to EU military operations under the EU's common security and defence policy (CSDP).

[Athena - financing security and defence military operations](#)

EUCAP Somalia

The Council extended the mandate of the EU capacity building mission in Somalia, EUCAP Somalia until 31 December 2020. The Council also agreed on a budget of €66.1 million for the period 1 January 2019 until 31 December 2020.

The mission mandate is to enhance Somalia's maritime civilian law enforcement capacity, through supporting Somali authorities in developing the necessary legislation, strengthening the criminal justice chain in the maritime domain, and providing training and equipment. The mission also provides advice on policy to the Somalia ministry of internal security and the police, in support of initiatives from the EU and international partners.

EUCAP Nestor (now EUCAP Somalia) was launched in July 2012. In December 2016, it was decided that the mission will focus on Somalia to support authorities in strengthening their maritime security capacity in order to enable them to enforce maritime law more effectively, including to counter piracy. EUCAP Somalia is based in Mogadishu and the Head of Mission is Maria-Cristina Stepanescu (of Romania).

EUCAP Somalia is part of the EU's comprehensive approach to Somalia, which comprises diplomatic efforts, development support, humanitarian aid as well as engagement in the field of rule of law and law enforcement. It includes two complementary missions under the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy: EUNAVFOR Operation ATALANTA contributing to fighting piracy off the Somali coast and EUTM Somalia providing political and strategic level military advice to the Somali authorities and contributing to the development of the Somali National Army (SNA)'s own training capacity.

[EUCAP Somalia](#)

EUTM RCA

The Council amended the mandate of the EU military training mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) to include an interoperability pillar. This will enable the mission to provide strategic advice to the ministry of internal affairs and to the directors-general of the police and the gendarmerie, with a view to improving the interoperability of the police and the gendarmerie within the armed forces.

The Council launched EUTM RCA on 16 July 2016. The mission contributes to the EU's comprehensive approach and security sector reform in the country, with the aim of restoring security for the population throughout the Central African national territory.

[EUTM RCA](#)

ENLARGEMENT

EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Council

The Council established the EU's common position for the third meeting of the EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Council.

EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Council

The Council established the EU's common position for the fifth meeting of the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Council.

AGRICULTURE

Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies: health certification at import into the EU

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending annex IX to regulation 999/2001 and annex XV to Commission regulation 142/2011 as regards health certification at import into the Union concerning transmissible spongiform encephalopathies ([13380/18](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

Regulation 999/2001 lays down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies ('TSEs') in bovine, ovine and caprine animals. It applies to the production and placing on the market of live animals and products of animal origin and in certain specific cases to exports thereof. It also provides a legal basis for the classification of Member states and third countries or regions thereof according to their disease status for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) into those with a negligible BSE risk, a controlled BSE risk and an undermined BSE risk.

Spirit drinks: registration of 'Tequila' as a geographical indication

The Council decided not to oppose a Commission regulation amending Annex III to regulation 110/2008 as regards the registration of the spirit drink 'Tequila' as a geographical indication (GI - [14255/18](#)).

'Tequila' is a spirit drink that is traditionally produced in the United Mexican States by distilling juice extracted from Agave tequilana F.A.C. Weber (blue variety).
