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## OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3690th Council meeting

**Foreign Affairs**

**Development**

Brussels, 16 May 2019

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

# P R E S S

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

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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.

**ITEMS DEBATED****2030 agenda for sustainable development**

Ministers discussed how to maintain momentum for the 2030 agenda and climate change in 2019 in view of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (8-19 July 2019), and the Climate Summit (23 September) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit (24-25 September).

They acknowledged that 2019 represents a unique opportunity to step up the implementation of the 2030 Agenda towards achieving the SDGs. They highlighted that it was an important moment for the EU to demonstrate leadership and to guarantee momentum for sustainable development initiatives.

EU development ministers recalled that the 2030 Agenda and the Paris agreement on climate change constitute fundamental elements of the EU's engagement within the global development architecture, and are vital for the EU's long-term prosperity.

[Council conclusions "Towards an ever more sustainable Union by 2030", 9 April 2019](#)

[High-level political forum on sustainable development](#)

[Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\) Summit](#)

**Youth and development**

EU development ministers discussed youth and development together with Jayathma Wickramanayake, the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

The Envoy outlined her vision and priorities for strengthening youth engagement. She underlined the need to avoid shying away from giving youth responsibility and empowering them with the necessary skills and access to institutions so they can make a difference in policy making. She described the social, economic and political barriers facing young people, particularly young girls. She outlined 6 recommendations for the way forward: 1) consider youth economic empowerment as a highway to social inclusion and other rights, 2) focus on transnational challenges, 3) ensure youth understand the value of multilateralism, 4) engage youth in politics and reduce the age gap between those who govern and the governed, 5) guarantee funding for youth in the long term, and 6) include youth in policy making at a horizontal level.

Ministers acknowledged that youth and youth organisations are essential social actors and that work should be done to advance their public role and to recognise them as equal partners. They agreed that all development action should have future generations as a priority.

They also agreed that youth should be increasingly involved in the design, implementation and review of national and local policies, and that barriers to their social, economic, cultural and political integration should be removed. Ministers also undertook to step up efforts to reduce the particular barriers facing young people, in particular young girls.

## **Sahel**

EU development ministers discussed the Sahel, following the adoption of Council conclusions by foreign ministers on 13 May 2019 and the meeting of EU defence and foreign ministers with their counterparts from the G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) on 14 May 2019.

They reiterated the Sahel's strategic importance for the EU and underlined the Union's continued commitment to the region, in particular in terms of humanitarian and development aid.

They recognised the importance of the integrated approach, which combines political dialogue, security cooperation (including through CSDP operations and direct support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force), and development aid. EU development ministers explored ways to address the recent deterioration in the security situation, and agreed that the response must be multi-faceted, and should address socio-economic issues as much as security ones.

They acknowledged the urgency in providing basic services to local populations, addressing climate change, and restoring state presence.

[The European Union and the Sahel, fact sheet \(EEAS\)](#)

[Sahel: EU takes further steps to better support the security of the region, 3 May 2019](#)

[Council conclusions on the Sahel, 25 June 2018](#)

**Informal lunch: Financial architecture for development**

Over lunch, development ministers discussed the future financial architecture for development. They focused on the most appropriate way to boost private investment in least-developed/fragile countries, and whether the relevant financial architecture guaranteed its effectiveness.

Ministers reviewed the best ways to ensure adequate coordination between national and EU mechanisms, as well as inclusive participation of member states and European financial institutions in this open architecture. They exchanged views on the steps needed to ensure a coherent, effective, integrated and inclusive European architecture for investment outside the EU.

## **OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

### **FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

#### **EU trust fund for Africa**

The Council adopted conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No. 32/2018, on the European Union emergency trust fund for Africa, entitled "Flexible, but lacking focus".

The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa is the largest EU trust fund, pools a total of €4.2 billion, and supports activities in 26 countries across three regions of Africa. The objective is to foster stability and contribute to better migration management, whilst addressing the root causes of destabilisation, forced displacement and irregular migration, in particular by promoting resilience, economic and equal opportunities and security and development in Africa.

The Council took note of the report's conclusions, including that the EUTF for Africa should focus more on specific actions likely to produce measurable results, and underlined four recommendations: 1) to improve the quality of objectives, 2) to revise the selection procedure for projects, 3) to take measures to speed up implementation, 4) to improve the monitoring of the EUTF for Africa.

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

[EU emergency trust fund for Africa](#)

#### **EU instruments for financing external actions in 2017**

The Council adopted conclusions on the 2018 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's instruments for financing external actions in 2017.

In general comments, the Council highlighted the importance of pursuing effective multilateralism and strengthening rules-based international cooperation, whilst reaffirming its unconditional support for human rights, democracy, good governance and the rule of law worldwide.

The Council expressed its concern over the shrinking space for civil society worldwide. It stressed that environmental degradation, climate change, extreme weather and natural disasters can offset development gains and economic progress, especially in poor countries.

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

## **Council conclusions on combating desertification in the EU**

The Council adopted conclusions on the European Court Auditors' Special Report No 33/2018 entitled "*Combating desertification in the EU: a growing threat in need of more action*".

The Council recognised desertification, land degradation and drought in the EU as serious issues that needed to be confronted, and welcomed the recommendations of the special report in that respect. In particular, it noted that international studies showed an estimated increase in desertification of 10% over the last decade in South and South-Eastern Europe and a constant increase further north .

It specifically underlined the vital role of sustainable management of land-based resources in order to address these threats.

The Council invited the Commission to 1) reflect on a funding scheme to map the degraded land; 2) engage on preserving and increasing the quality of soils and stopping soil degradation; and 3) take steps to make desertification, land degradation and drought projects eligible for funding under the existing EU funding mechanisms. The working party on International Environmental Issues agreed the conclusions on 12 April 2019.

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

## **Council conclusions on the 2019 Report on EU Development Aid Targets**

The Council adopted conclusions on EU development aid targets, in the form of its annual report to the [European Council](#). The report analysed trends with regard to commitments and delivery on the EU's official development assistance (ODA). The ODA is a major source of finance for least-developed countries and fragile states which particularly lack the domestic capacity to raise finance from other sources.

The Council noted that the EU and its member states had maintained their position as the largest ODA provider, accounting for almost 57% of the total ODA for developing countries from members of the OECD's development assistance committee. In 2018, EU ODA reached EUR 74.4 billion, representing 0.47% of EU gross national income. This total was EUR 731 million lower than in 2018, when the ratio was also higher, at 0.50%.

In this context, the Council expressed concern at the negative trend of EU collective ODA, which had decreased for the second year in a row, and regretted the deepening gap towards reaching the collective target to provide 0.7% of GNI as ODA.

The Council reaffirmed its political leadership and commitment to development aid.

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

### **Council conclusions on Policy Coherence for Development**

The Council adopted conclusions on policy coherence for development.

The Council recalled the Treaty obligation to take into account the objectives of development cooperation in all internal and external policies and underlined the importance of policy coherence for development as a fundamental part of the EU's contribution to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Council acknowledged the progress made on policy coherence for development, and called for further efforts to ensure that non-development policies take into account the development objectives of partner countries, thereby minimising negative impacts. The Council underlined the need to focus on sustainability, create win-win situations and enhance the positive impact of EU policies on developing countries, including by promoting synergies and reducing trade-offs between policies.

The Council reiterated its political commitment to promoting whole-of-government approaches, to ensure political oversight and coordination efforts at all levels, and to support evidence-based policy formulation and decision-making for SDG implementation.

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

[Policy coherence for development](#) (Commission webpage)

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