

10351/19

(OR. en)

PRESSE 34
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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3700th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg, 17 June 2019

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

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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

Current affairs

The High Representative and foreign ministers discussed the most pressing issues on the international agenda. They referred to the situation in **Venezuela**, stressing their concern as the political and humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. They reiterated their call for a political, negotiated solution within the framework of the Venezuelan constitution that would ultimately lead to free, fair and credible presidential elections and their support for efforts in this direction.

The High Representative and foreign ministers also referred to the **Helms-Burton Act**, underlining the EU's commitment to protect its businesses and to draw on all appropriate measures to address the effects of the Helms-Burton Act, including in relation to the EU's WTO rights and through the use of the EU blocking statute.

They also discussed the situation in the Republic of **Moldova**, following the formation of the new government. They reiterated the EU's readiness to work with a reform-committed government, on the basis of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement.

The High Representative also referred to the first anniversary of the **Prespa agreement**, which was concluded between Greece and North Macedonia one year ago.

Common Foreign and Security Policy's effectiveness

Foreign ministers discussed the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)'s effectiveness. The major shifts underway in the global landscape and the challenges faced by the European Union in today's world call for **an even more effective foreign policy**. Ministers therefore reflected on practical ideas for enhancing the effectiveness of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). They looked in particular at how **coherence and consistency** could be further increased and reflected on possible ways to strengthen unity and effectiveness.

EU Global Strategy

Foreign and defence ministers discussed the EU Global Strategy on the basis of the third annual progress report by the High Representative: "**The EU Global Strategy: three years on, looking forward**". They took stock of progress made in the last three years and reflected on future perspectives. The Council also adopted conclusions on EU action to strengthen **rules-based multilateralism**.

[Strengthening multilateralism: Council adopts conclusions \(press release, 17/06/2019\)](#)

Ministers also focused on **security and defence cooperation**, and welcomed the substantive progress made to enhance the security of the Union and its role as a security provider and global actor, including through its Common Security and Defence Policy. The Council adopted conclusions on security and defence in the context of the EU Global Strategy.

[Security and defence: Council adopts conclusions \(press release, 17/06/2019\)](#)

[The EU Global Strategy: three years on, looking forward, report, June 2019](#)

[EU cooperation on security and defence \(background information\)](#)

Sudan

The Council discussed the situation in Sudan and adopted the following statement:

"Over the past six months the people of Sudan, with the strong participation of women and youth, have clearly and bravely demanded a new path for their country, one of democracy, political plurality, security and prosperity. This represents a historic opportunity for Sudan. A peaceful, united, democratic and prosperous Sudan remains crucial, including for the peace and stability of the region, and is a priority for the European Union.

The EU firmly condemns the violent attacks in Sudan on 3 June 2019, which resulted in the killing and injuring of many peaceful civilian protesters, as well as sexual and gender-based violence. It is clear that the responsibility lies with the Transitional Military Council (TMC) as the authority in charge of protecting the population. All human rights violations and abuses committed must be investigated in an independent and transparent manner, and perpetrators held accountable for their acts.

The EU calls for an immediate cessation of all violence against the Sudanese people, including extrajudicial, arbitrary and summary killings, beatings and sexual and gender-based violence, arrests and disappearances. It is the duty of the TMC to ensure the safety of all in Sudan. Members of the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) and other civilians that have been arrested and detained during recent events must be immediately released. Restrictions placed on freedom of assembly, freedom of the media, civic space and access to the internet must also be lifted.

The EU remains deeply concerned by the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Sudan, and remains committed to help addressing the needs of the population. Obstacles to the timely delivery of the humanitarian assistance need to be removed immediately, including in Khartoum. Staff and supplies need to be brought in urgently to provide humanitarian assistance to more than 8 million people in need. Attacks against hospitals, medical staff and patients must stop. Respect of international humanitarian law and protection of civilians must be ensured, including safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

The EU supports the call of the African Union (AU) for the establishment of a civilian-led transitional authority. To that end, the EU calls for the immediate resumption of negotiations between the TMC and the FFC, based on agreements reached so far. The EU also calls on the TMC to implement the required confidence-building measures, on the FFC to respond accordingly, and on both parties to refrain from unilateral moves.

The EU supports the leadership role of the AU and the mediation efforts led by the AU envoy to help to move the political transition process forward, in cooperation with Ethiopia, IGAD Chair. The EU commends the role of Ethiopia in facilitating the resumption of the talks. The EU also commends the decision of the AU's Peace and Security Council to suspend Sudan from participation in all AU activities until the effective establishment of a civilian-led transition authority, including the announcement that AU punitive measures would be applied if transition to such an authority is obstructed. The EU further calls on other regional and international actors to play a constructive and coordinated role in support of the leadership of the AU on this basis and stands ready to work with international partners in that regard.

The aspirations of the Sudanese people can only be met through an orderly, peaceful, inclusive and civilian-led transition that establishes the conditions for the return to constitutional order and democratic rule through transparent and credible elections, and full respect of human rights. The EU seizes this opportunity to recall the obligation of Sudan to cooperate with the International Criminal Court pursuant to the UNSC Resolution 1593.

A civilian-led transitional authority is the only partner with which EU-Sudan relations can be normalised. When Sudan embarks on a transition to civilian rule, the EU looks forward to supporting the country in tackling the social, economic and political challenges and implementing the necessary reforms, and will provide assistance accordingly."

Informal lunch on the Middle East

Foreign ministers had an exchange of views with the Foreign Minister of Jordan, **Ayman Safadi**. They focused on the latest developments in the region, including **Syria**, tensions in the **Gulf region**, and prospects for the **Middle East Peace Process**.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Council conclusions on the new EU strategy on Central Asia

The Council adopted conclusions on a new EU strategy on Central Asia, adapting the EU policy to new opportunities which have emerged in the region.

The Council welcomes the strengthening of relations between the EU and Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan since the adoption of the first EU strategy for Central Asia in 2007.

The Council endorses the Joint Communication on "The EU and Central Asia: New Opportunities for a Stronger Partnership" by the High Representative and the European Commission which, together with the Council conclusions, provides a new policy framework for EU engagement with the countries of Central Asia over the coming years. The new strategy focuses on promoting resilience, prosperity, and regional cooperation in Central Asia.

The Council underlines its commitment to conclude and implement ambitious and mutually beneficial Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (EPCAs) with the interested countries of the region. These agreements remain a cornerstone of the EU's engagement with Central Asia. The Council reiterates that the scope of the EU's relations is linked to the readiness of individual Central Asian countries to undertake reforms and strengthen democracy, human rights, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, as well as to modernise and diversify the economy, including by supporting the private sector, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, in a free market economy.

Recognising the strategic role of Central Asia in global efforts to promote Euro-Asian connectivity and stressing that these efforts should bring benefits to the region, the Council states that it looks forward to increased cooperation with Central Asian countries to promote sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based connectivity. The Council also emphasises the joint interest of the EU and of Central Asian states in intensifying cooperation to promote peace in Afghanistan.

[Council conclusions on the new EU strategy on Central Asia](#)

[Joint Communication on the EU and Central Asia: New opportunities for a stronger partnership, 15 May 2019 \(EEAS\)](#)

Council conclusions on the EU's engagement to the Black Sea regional cooperation

The Council adopted conclusions on the EU's engagement to the Black Sea regional cooperation.

The Council reaffirms its long-standing commitment to fostering prosperity, stability, and resilience in the Black Sea area. It emphasises the increasing strategic importance of the Black Sea area for the EU, and calls for enhanced EU involvement in the regional cooperation based on the Black Sea Synergy initiative. In particular, it highlights the importance of harnessing the new opportunities for economic development, resilience and connectivity in the region and beyond.

The Council remains concerned about the security challenges in the Black Sea area. In this context, it reiterates that respect for international law, including the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including freedom of navigation, as well as EU policy decisions and its non-recognition policy on the illegal annexation of Crimea, are fundamental to the EU's approach to regional cooperation in the Black Sea area.

[Council conclusions on the EU's engagement to the Black Sea regional cooperation](#)

EU human rights guidelines on safe drinking water and sanitation

The Council adopted conclusions approving EU human rights guidelines on safe drinking water and sanitation.

2.1 billion people worldwide lack access to safely managed drinking water services and 4.5 billion people lack safely managed sanitation services. Climate change will increasingly affect water availability and access. Across the globe, tensions and conflicts related to access to and use of water continue to rise as the threat of water scarcity spreads.

The approval of the EU human rights guidelines on safe drinking water and sanitation is one of many steps that the EU is taking to realise its commitment to ensure the progressive realisation of the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation for all, as well as its commitment to the human rights defenders fighting for these rights.

Building on existing human rights norms, these guidelines give instructions and guidance on how to use the available EU foreign policy tools, including development cooperation, to promote and protect the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation.

[Council conclusions on the EU human rights guidelines on safe drinking water and sanitation](#)

[EU human rights guidelines on safe drinking water and sanitation](#)

Sanctions on the Maldives

The Council decided to revoke the framework for restrictive measures against the Maldives that it adopted on 16 July 2018.

This framework provided for the possibility of imposing a travel ban and an asset freeze on 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. It was adopted following a deterioration of the political situation in the Maldives in the first half of 2018, particularly as institutions such as Parliament and the judiciary were being prevented from functioning properly. No persons or entities were listed under this sanctions regime.

Today's decision was taken in light of the Council's objectives and of the current situation in the Maldives. Since the inauguration of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih's administration in November 2018, the political situation has improved. The holding of peaceful and democratic parliamentary elections on 6 April 2019 was a welcome step. The government confirmed its firm commitment to consolidate democracy, ensure good governance, and promote respect for human rights during the fourth annual policy dialogue between the Maldives and the EU which was held on 11 March 2019.

[Maldives: EU adopts a framework for targeted sanctions \(press release, 16/7/2018\)](#)

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

Relations with the Pacific Alliance

The Council approved and authorised the signature on behalf of the EU of a joint declaration with the Pacific Alliance. The Pacific Alliance is composed of Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. The joint declaration expresses the strong interest of the EU and its member states in deepening their engagement with the Alliance. It sets out a framework to strengthen the partnership, with a focus on cooperation in areas such as economic integration, environment and climate, digital economy and student mobility, and research and innovation.

This declaration is a non-binding political statement which, following the endorsement by the Council, will be signed by the EU and the four countries of the Pacific Alliance at the earliest opportunity.

[The Pacific Alliance \(website\)](#)

TRADE POLICY

Relations with Samoa

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken, on behalf of the European Union, in the Trade Committee established under the Interim Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Pacific States, to take account of the accession of Samoa and of future accessions of other Pacific Island States.
