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President **Josep Borrell**
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy

P R E S S

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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.

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ITEMS DEBATED

Current affairs

Ministers discussed the latest developments concerning the Turkey-Libya memorandum of understanding on delimitation of maritime jurisdiction and on security and military cooperation, and expressed their concerns with the document. The Council also referred to the political situation in Libya, and in particular the Berlin process, which aims to find a sustainable solution to the situation in the country.

Ministers touched upon Ukraine, in the context of the Normandy Four summit which is taking place today in Paris. They also exchanged views on the situation in Iran, following the recent meeting of the Joint Commission of the JCPOA, as well as the recent protests in the country. The High Representative gave a briefing on the situation in Bolivia, Hong Kong and Moldova.

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the recent protests in Iran](#)

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the situation in Bolivia \(press release, 15 November 2019\)](#)

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on Hong Kong, 18 November 2019](#)

EU-Africa relations

Foreign ministers discussed EU-Africa relations in preparation for next year's ministerial and summit-level meetings between the EU and the African Union (AU). The discussion feeds into the debate on a new comprehensive strategy for Africa.

Ministers emphasised that 2020 will be a pivotal year in the relationship between Africa and the European Union. The next summit will be an important milestone in modernising and scaling up the EU's partnership with Africa.

The Council addressed the political, economic, security and demographic aspects of the relationship. It also touched upon important cross-cutting issues such as climate change and digitalisation.

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

Promoting and protecting human rights

The Council looked at the promotion and protection of human rights in the world, ahead of Human Rights Day on 10 December.

Foreign ministers assessed the EU's work on human rights, the instruments at its disposal and its priorities for the coming months. They also reaffirmed the EU's leadership in the protection and promotion of human rights worldwide.

The Council reflected on how to improve the EU toolbox on human rights, and the High Representative announced the launch of preparatory work on a possible horizontal sanctions regime to address serious human rights violations.

Ministers also focused on the shrinking space for civil society and the crackdown against human rights defenders in many parts of the world. In this context, the new Action plan for human rights and democracy (2020-2024) was raised. It will set the EU's level of ambition and priorities for the next five years.

Ministers also touched on gender equality and women's rights in view of Beijing +25.

[Protection and promotion of human rights \(background information\)](#)

Work ahead: priorities and working together more effectively

Over a working lunch, EU foreign ministers informally discussed the Foreign Affairs Council's working methods. The new High Representative shared his perspective on his priorities as well as on how the EU can work together more effectively to deliver operational outcomes.

[A stronger European Union within a better, greener and safer world, mission statement by the High Representative \(EEAS website\)](#)

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Restrictive measures against DRC

The Council decided to maintain individual restrictive measures against several personalities of the DRC and to lift these measures for two other persons, on the basis of an evaluation of the situation in the DRC.

The sanctions were adopted in response to the obstruction of the electoral process and human rights violations.

[Democratic Republic of the Congo: Council expresses its readiness for a gradual engagement in support of the government's reform agenda \(press release, 9 December 2019\)](#)

[How and when the EU adopts restrictive measures](#)

[Council decision amending decision 2010/788/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against the Democratic Republic of the Congo \(EU official journal, 10 December 2019\)](#)

[Council implementing regulation implementing article 9 of regulation \(EC\) No 1183/2005 imposing certain specific restrictive measures directed against persons acting in violation of the arms embargo with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo \(EU official journal, 10 December 2019\)](#)

Conclusions on the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Council adopted conclusions on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). They note that the most recent elections were the first peaceful transfer of power in the country's history, opening a window of opportunity for stability and inclusive development in the DRC and the region as a whole.

While noting the remaining important challenges faced by the country, the conclusions indicate the EU's readiness for a gradual engagement in support of the DRC government's reform agenda, based on reciprocal commitments. With the adoption of these conclusions, the EU reiterates its intention to remain a key partner and interlocutor of the DRC.

[Democratic Republic of the Congo: Council expresses its readiness for a gradual engagement in support of the government's reform agenda \(press release, 9 December 2019\)](#)

[EU delegation to the Democratic Republic of Congo](#)

Conclusions on Sudan

The Council adopted conclusions on Sudan, recognising the historic opportunity that Sudan's political transition offers to work towards a peaceful, democratic and prosperous country.

The conclusions highlight that Sudan's success remains crucial for stability in the Horn of Africa and the wider region and reaffirm the EU's commitment to accompanying Sudan on its political, economic and social reform path, in order to make the transition to democracy a success.

While welcoming the recent steps taken by the transition government, the conclusions state that the EU remains concerned by the deteriorating humanitarian situation and calls on the Sudanese authorities to remove the remaining bureaucratic obstacles to the work of humanitarian and development actors.

[Sudan: Council adopts conclusions \(press release, 9 December 2019\)](#)

[Foreign Affairs Council statement on Sudan, 17 June 2019](#)

[EU delegation to Sudan](#)

Conclusions on the civilian CSDP Compact

The Council today adopted conclusions on the civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Compact, reaffirming its commitment to making civilian CSDP more capable, more effective, flexible and responsive, and more joined up.

The conclusions highlight the significant contribution of the civilian CSDP missions to international peace and stability as an essential part of the EU's integrated approach to external conflicts and crises. They also emphasise the need to strengthen the EU's role and capacity to act as a security provider through CSDP.

[Civilian CSDP Compact: Council adopts conclusions \(press release, 9 December 2019\)](#)

[Common Security and Defence Policy \(EEAS website\)](#)

[Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy: EU strengthens its capacities to act, 19 November 2018](#)

EU Arctic policy

The Council today adopted conclusions on the EU Arctic policy.

While recognising the primary responsibility of the Arctic states for the development of the region, the Council notes that many of the issues affecting the region are of a global nature and are more effectively addressed through regional or multilateral cooperation. It notes that the EU should continue to make a significant contribution in both regional and multilateral fora which deal with Arctic matters.

In the light of the new challenges and opportunities across the Arctic and growing international interest, the Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to continue to actively implement EU Arctic policy, to initiate a process in order to update this policy and to continue to report to the Council regularly.

[EU Arctic policy: Council adopts conclusions \(press release, 9 December 2019\)](#)

[EU Arctic policy](#)

Council establishes civilian advisory mission in the Central African Republic

The Council established a European Union CSDP civilian advisory mission in the Central African Republic (EUAM RCA). The mission will be launched by the Council no later than in the spring of 2020. Accordingly, a core team will make the necessary preparations to allow the mission to reach its initial operating capability.

The aim of the mission is to support the reform of the internal security forces to enable the Central African Republic (CAR) authorities to mitigate the current security challenges in the country. EU experts will support the Ministry of the Interior and the internal security forces, the police and the gendarmerie, with the aim of helping in their deployment throughout the country.

The mission will be established in accordance with the crisis management concept (CMC) that was approved by the Council on 21 November 2019 and the subsequent operational planning documents.

[Central African Republic: Council establishes a civilian advisory mission \(press release, 9 December 2019\)](#)

[Council agrees on a future CSDP mission in the CAR \(press release, 21 November 2019\)](#)

[Military training mission in the Central African Republic \(EUTM RCA\)](#)

[CSDP missions and operations](#)

[Delegation of the European Union to the Central African Republic](#)

[Council Decision on the European Union CSDP Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic \(EUAM RCA\)](#)

Strengthening biological safety and security in Latin America

The Council adopted a Council decision in support of strengthening biological safety and security in Latin America in line with the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

On 28 April 2004, the UNSC adopted resolution 1540 (2004), which was the first international instrument to deal in an integrated and comprehensive manner with weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, and related materials.

[Council Decision in support of strengthening biological safety and security in Latin America](#)

[EU strategy against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction](#)

[Council Decision in support of the implementation of UNSCR 1540](#)

Destruction of Syrian chemical weapons

The Council extended the implementation period of the decision in support of the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons to a total of 48 months. This extension of the implementation period will allow the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is responsible for the technical implementation of the project, to reach the planned objectives of those activities.

[Council decision in support of the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons \(extension\)](#)

[EU strategy against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction](#)

[OPCW website](#)

SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South East Europe

The Council adopted a decision in support of SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South East Europe reducing the threat of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition. The project supported by this decision aims to deepen and complement the assistance by the EU to SALW control.

SEESAC (South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons) works to strengthen the capacities of national and regional stakeholders to control and reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, contributing to enhanced stability, security and development in South Eastern and Eastern Europe.

[Council decision in support of SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South East Europe reducing the threat of illicit small arms and light weapons \(SALW\) and their ammunition](#)

[Council adopts new EU strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, 19 November 2018](#)

[SEESAC website](#)

SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South East Europe

The Council extended by five months the implementation period of its support for SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South East Europe as referred to in decision 2016/2356.

SEESAC (South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons) works to strengthen the capacities of national and regional stakeholders to control and reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, contributing to enhanced stability, security and development in South Eastern and Eastern Europe.

[Council Decision amending Decision \(CFSP\) 2016/2356 in support of SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South-East Europe](#)

[Council adopts new EU strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, 19 November 2018](#)

[SEESAC website](#)

EU POSITIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS

EU's position in Ghana-EU EPA Committee

The Council adopted the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union within the Ghana-EU EPA (Economic Partnership Agreement) Committee regarding the adoption of Protocol 1 concerning the definition of the concept of 'originating products' and methods of administrative cooperation.

The Economic Partnership Agreement between Ghana and the European Union has been applied on a provisional basis since 15 December 2016.

CUSTOMS UNION

International convention on the harmonisation of frontier controls of goods

The Council adopted a decision setting out the position to be adopted on behalf of the EU within the administrative committee for the international convention on the harmonisation of frontier controls of goods.

The position gives support to a decrease in the frequency of the reporting mechanism on progress made to improve border crossing procedures for international road transport, so as to reduce the administrative burden on member states.

The international convention on the harmonisation of frontier controls of goods was agreed in Geneva in 1982 and entered into force in 1985. Its objective is to reduce barriers to international trade and facilitate the movement of goods at international level.