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## OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3726th Council meeting

**Foreign Affairs**

**(including Defence)**

Brussels, 11 and 12 November 2019

President **Federica Mogherini**  
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**

### **11 NOVEMBER (FOREIGN MINISTERS)**

#### **Current affairs**

The Foreign Affairs Council discussed pressing issues on the international agenda. The High Representative and foreign ministers followed up on their discussion on Syria at the last Foreign Affairs Council in October, and restated their commitment to halt arms exports to Turkey. They also noted the adoption of the framework for sanctions in response to Turkey's illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Ministers also referred to the situation in Bolivia and called on all to exercise a sense of responsibility to find a way towards credible elections and to avoid any further violence. They briefly touch upon Venezuela following the international solidarity conference on the Venezuelan refugee and migrant crisis (28-29 October). The Council also renewed sanctions on Venezuela for a year due to persistent actions undermining democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

The High Representative and foreign ministers briefly discussed the situation in Lebanon, expressing their expectations that a new government would be formed without delay and the EU's readiness to continue its support for the country.

They also referred to the situation in Hong Kong, Iraq and Libya.

#### **Regional security in the Gulf region and Iran**

The High Representative and foreign ministers discussed the security situation in the Gulf region. They noted that while tensions remain in the region, the situation has not escalated. They reflected on how the EU could support and encourage further de-escalation, in particular through initiatives allowing for ownership from the region itself.

The Council also discussed Iran, following the recent announcement by Teheran on the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), Iran's nuclear deal. Foreign ministers noted that it was increasingly challenging to preserve the JCPOA, but reiterated their commitment and their call to Iran to return to full compliance with the agreement, which remains extremely important for both European and regional security.

## **Afghanistan**

The Council discussed Afghanistan. The High Representative and foreign ministers stated that direct intra-Afghan talks are the only way in which to achieve a sustainable solution. They stated that the resumption of US-Taliban talks could, in this context, constitute a first step towards the relaunch of intra-Afghan negotiations. The Council also highlighted the need to reduce violence significantly and to create an environment that ensures safeguards rights and democratic . They emphasised the need to protect, in particular, the rights of women, children and minorities.

The High Representative and foreign ministers reiterated the EU's readiness to support an inclusive political process. They emphasised the EU's significant engagement with the country and the EU's commitment to the country's stability and prosperity.

## **Sudan**

EU foreign ministers discussed the situation in Sudan and had an informal exchange of views with the Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. They reaffirmed the EU's strong political commitment to supporting the civilian transitional government and the EU's readiness to provide financial aid for the transition and support for economic reform. They highlighted the need to ensure that the civilian transition remains an inclusive process and that young people and women assume a role in this context.

## **12 NOVEMBER (DEFENCE MINISTERS)**

### **Security and defence issues**

The High Representative and defence ministers held a discussion on security and defence issues. They reviewed the progress made and considered future priorities. The discussion was an opportunity to examine further ways in which the EU could enhance its capacity to act as a security provider, its strategic autonomy and its ability to cooperate with partners.

The Council focused, in particular, on PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation) and adopted a decision launching thirteen new PESCO projects. Defence ministers also discussed the coherence between PESCO and the other EU defence initiatives, including the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and the European Defence Fund.

## **CSDP missions and operations**

The Council discussed the current state of CSDP deployments, reflecting on achievements, challenges and areas for further improvement. The importance of ensuring adequate resources for the missions and operations to fulfil their mandate was stressed.

Defence ministers emphasised the EU's engagement in the Sahel and the relevance of naval operations, in particular EUNVAFOR Operation Atalanta. They encouraged the ongoing work on the coordinated maritime presences.

## **EU-NATO cooperation**

Defence ministers exchanged views on EU-NATO cooperation with NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana. They discussed, in particular, political dialogue, parallel and coordinated exercises and military mobility. Ministers reaffirmed the strong transatlantic link and the continued commitment of both organisations to close cooperation. Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana also briefed EU defence ministers on the state of play of preparations for the next NATO Leaders' Meeting to be held on 3-4 December in London

## **OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

### **FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

#### **Sanctions against Venezuela**

In the light of the ongoing political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and the continued undermining of democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights, the Council extended the restrictive measures against Venezuela for one year, until 14 November 2020. The measures include an embargo on arms and on equipment used for internal repression as well as a travel ban and an asset freeze on 25 listed individuals in official positions who are held responsible for human rights violations and/or for undermining democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela.

These measures are intended to help encourage democratic shared solutions in order to bring political stability to the country and allow it to address the pressing needs of the population. The targeted measures are flexible and reversible and designed not to harm the Venezuelan population.

[Council's response to the crisis in Venezuela](#)

#### **Framework for sanctions in response to Turkey's illegal drilling activities**

The Council adopted a framework for restrictive measures in response to Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. The framework will make it possible to sanction individuals or entities responsible for or involved in unauthorised drilling activities of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The sanctions will consist of a travel ban to the EU and an asset freeze for persons, and an asset freeze for entities. In addition, EU persons and entities will be forbidden from making funds available to those listed.

The framework for restrictive measures makes it possible to place under sanctions:

- persons or entities responsible for drilling activities related to hydrocarbon exploration and production not authorised by Cyprus within its territorial sea, exclusive economic zone (EEZ) or continental shelf. Such drilling activities include, where the EEZ or continental shelf has not been delimited in accordance with international law, activities which may jeopardize or hamper the reaching of such a delimitation agreement;
- persons or entities providing financial, technical or material support for the above mentioned drilling activities;
- persons or entities associated with them.

This decision is a direct follow-up to the Council conclusions of 14 October 2019, which were endorsed by the European Council on 17-18 October 2019, when the EU reaffirmed its full solidarity with Cyprus, regarding the respect of its sovereignty and sovereign rights in accordance with international law and invited the Commission and the European External Action Service to submit proposals for a framework for restrictive measures.

In its conclusions of 15 July 2019, the Council deplored the fact that, despite the European Union's repeated calls to cease its illegal activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey has continued its drilling operations within Cypriot territorial waters. The Council reiterated the serious immediate negative impact that such illegal actions have across the range of EU-Turkey relations. The Council called again on Turkey to refrain from such actions, act in a spirit of good neighbourliness and respect the sovereignty and sovereign rights of Cyprus in accordance with international law.

The Council already decided then, in the light of Turkey's continued and new illegal drilling activities, to suspend negotiations on the Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement and agreed not to hold the Association Council and further meetings of the EU-Turkey high-level dialogues for the time being. It also endorsed the Commission's proposal to reduce the pre-accession assistance to Turkey for 2020 and invited the European Investment Bank to review its lending activities in Turkey, notably with regard to sovereign-backed lending. The Council also decided that the High Representative and the Commission should continue work on options for targeted measures.



On 14 October 2019 the Council recalled and reaffirmed previous Council and European Council conclusions, including the European Council Conclusions of 22 March 2018 and 20 June 2019, strongly condemning Turkey's continued illegal actions in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Council expressed serious concerns over Turkey's illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean and deplored that Turkey had not yet responded to the European Union's repeated calls to cease such activities.

[Council decision concerning restrictive measures in view of Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean](#)

[Council conclusions on Turkey's illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, 14 October 2019](#)

[Council conclusions on Turkey's illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, 15 July 2019](#)

## **COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY**

### **New list of PESCO projects**

The Council adopted an updated list of 13 projects to be undertaken under PESCO. Today's decision brings to 47 the number of projects that are currently in place.

Five of the new projects focus on training, covering areas such as cyber, diving, tactical, medical as well as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence (CBRND) training. Other projects focus on enhancing EU collaborative actions as well as on capability development on sea, air and space.

The Council formally adopted the first set of 17 projects on 6 March 2018 and the second set of 17 projects on 20 November 2018.

On 11 December 2017, the Council adopted a decision establishing Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). PESCO enables EU member states to work more closely together in the area of security and defence. This permanent framework for defence cooperation allows willing and able member states to develop jointly defence capabilities, invest in shared projects, and enhance the operational readiness and contribution of their armed forces.

The 25 member states participating in PESCO are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

[Updated overview of the collaborative PESCO projects](#)

[Permanent Structured Cooperation \(PESCO\) - factsheet](#)

### **Status of mission agreement for EUTM Somalia**

The Council authorised the opening of negotiations with Somalia for an agreement on the status of the European Union Training Mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia).

The European Union military mission to contribute to the training of Somali security forces was launched on 7 April 2010. It aims to strengthen the Somali federal defence institutions and uses a three-pillar approach that focuses on training, mentoring and advising.

[EUTM Somalia](#)

### **EU requirements catalogue 2019**

The Council approved the EU Requirements Catalogue 2019, which identifies the military capability requirements for CSDP and takes into account the three strategic priorities set out under the EU Global Strategy.

[EU Global Strategy](#)

### **Single progress report on the development of EU military capabilities**

The Council noted the Single Progress Report on the Development of EU Military Capabilities from June 2018 to June 2019. The Single Progress Report reflects significant achievements in EU military capability development conducted under the guidance of the **European Union Military Committee (EUMC)**.

[European Union Military Committee](#)

## **EDA guidelines 2020**

The Council adopted the Guidelines for the European Defence Agency's work in 2020.

The European Defence Agency (EDA) is an intergovernmental agency that falls under the authority of the Council of the EU, to which it reports and from which it receives guidelines.

[European Defence Agency](#)

## **2019 EDA report to the Council**

The Council noted the Report of the Head of the European Defence Agency for 2019.

The European Defence Agency (EDA) is an intergovernmental agency that falls under the authority of the Council of the EU, to which it reports and from which it receives guidelines. Federica Mogherini is the Head of the European Defence Agency since November 2014.

[European Defence Agency](#)

## **EXSPEC for the EU Interoperability Exercise in 2020**

The Council approved the Exercise Specifications (EXSPEC) for the EU Interoperability Exercise 2020 (EUIX 2020). The exercise will take place in the timeframe 8-25 June 2020.

The European Union Interoperability Exercise (EUIX) is a technical, computer-based exercise. It is carried out on an annual basis and covers a wide range of Communication and Information Systems (CIS) and Command and Control (C2) interoperability topics.

## **EU POSITIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS**

### **EU's position in the EU-Pacific Interim Partnership Agreement Trade Committee**

The Council adopted the position of the European Union in the Trade Committee, set out under the Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Pacific States regarding the amendments of Annexes II and VIII to Protocol II of the Agreement.

The Partnership Agreement between the EU, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Samoa opens up trade in goods with the EU. The Solomon Islands and Tonga informed the European Commission that they also wish to join the Agreement.

## **EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA**

### **52nd meeting of the EEA Council**

The Council established the EU's common position for the 52nd meeting of the European Economic Area Council which is expected to take place in Brussels on 19 November 2019.

## **TRANSPORT**

### **Aviation – en route charges**

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken on behalf of the EU within the enlarged Eurocontrol commission. The aim is to ensure continued consistency with EU rules on transport concerning the principles used to establish the cost-base for en route charges and the calculation of the unit rate and conditions of application of the route charges system and conditions of payment.

([13468/1/19 REV 1](#); [13492/19](#)).