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Foreign Affairs

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

P R E S S

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¹ • 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>).
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ITEMS DEBATED

Current affairs

High Representative Josep Borrell briefed ministers on Russia and the events around the detention of Alexei Navalny. The Council condemned the mass detentions and police brutality seen over the weekend and called on Russia to immediately release Navalny and all those detained. The High Representative informed the Council about his upcoming visit to Moscow.

Ministers were then informed about the EU strategy for sharing COVID-19 vaccines with the EU's partners.

The Council also touched on relations with the United States, and the EU's plans to work with the new US administration on a wide range of key global issues, including climate change, Iran and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and cooperation in multilateral fora.

Ministers then discussed all aspects of the EU's relations with Turkey as identified in the December Council conclusions, including sanctions, and reaffirmed the importance of engaging with Turkey in order to move forward with the dialogue and further develop the basis for cooperation.

The case of Giulio Regeni was also raised. The High Representative stressed that this was a serious matter for the entire EU, and continued to call on Egypt to fully cooperate with the Italian authorities, in order to ensure accountability and that justice be served.

The Council briefly discussed the situation of migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the situation in the Horn of Africa and the Tigray region.

Climate and energy diplomacy

The Council exchanged views on climate and energy diplomacy, with a focus on promoting the external dimension of the European Green Deal.

During the discussion, ministers stressed the need to engage with Africa and highlighted the importance of 2021 for ensuring the success of COP26, the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference. The High Representative emphasised that accelerating climate action and managing the energy transition is and will remain at the core of the EU's foreign and security policy.

The Council adopted conclusions on this topic.

[Council adopts conclusions on climate and energy diplomacy](#)

Other business

– *Japan*

The Council held a discussion with the Foreign Minister of Japan, Toshimitsu Motegi. They discussed their approaches to the Indo-Pacific, and agreed that increased EU engagement in the region, together with strengthened cooperation with Japan and other like-minded partners on issues of common interest and concern would be beneficial. In this context, Japan and the EU expressed their shared interest in developing cooperation in areas such as connectivity, maritime security, environment and climate change, trade and investment, digital issues, and promoting multilateralism and upholding the international rules-based order. High Representative Josep Borrell confirmed the EU's interest in developing its own approach to the Indo-Pacific region, and expressed appreciation for Japan's free and open Indo-Pacific strategy.

EU ministers and Minister Motegi discussed their serious concerns regarding the situation in Hong Kong and agreed to continue to closely coordinate their response to the imposition of the National Security Law by Beijing.

– *UK*

During an informal lunch, ministers discussed EU-UK cooperation on common foreign, security and defence policy. The High Representative stressed that the EU stands ready to engage with the UK on major global issues, such as climate change and the global response to the coronavirus pandemic.

– *Conclusions*

The Council adopted conclusions on Venezuela and the pilot case for the coordinated maritime presences concept in the Gulf of Guinea.

– [Venezuela: Council adopts conclusions on the outcome of the legislative elections](#)

– [Gulf of Guinea: Council conclusions launching the pilot case for the coordinated maritime presences concept](#)

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Coordinated maritime presences

The Council approved conclusions (5387/21) launching the first pilot case of the coordinated maritime presences (CMP) concept in the Gulf of Guinea.

The CMP mechanism aims to increase the EU's capacity as a reliable partner and maritime security provider, offering greater European operational engagement, ensuring a permanent maritime presence and outreach in Maritime Areas of Interest as established by the Council, and promoting international cooperation and partnership at sea.

For more details, see [press release](#).

Venezuela

The Council approved conclusions (5582/21) regarding the outcome of the legislative elections held on 6 December 2020 and EU policy towards Venezuela going forward.

For more details, see [press release](#).

Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) ministerial declaration on sustainable blue economy

The Council approved the ministerial declaration on sustainable blue economy ahead of the conference for the promotion of sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean region, due to take place on 2 February 2021.

Comprehensive and enhanced partnership agreement between the EU and the Republic of Armenia

The Council approved the conclusion, on behalf of the EU, of the comprehensive and enhanced partnership agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their member states, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part.

HOME AFFAIRS

Europol – deputy executive director

The Council selected Jean-Philippe Lecouffe as a deputy executive director of Europol.

Under the Europol regulation, before appointment, the candidate selected by the Council may be invited to appear before the competent committee of the European Parliament, which then gives a non-binding opinion. The General Secretariat of the Council will now inform the European Parliament that the competent committee can proceed to the hearing provided for in the regulation.

ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS

2021 alert mechanism report – Council conclusions

The Council approved conclusions on the 2021 alert mechanism report ([5605/21](#)).

The report marks the start of the annual macroeconomic imbalances procedure. It identifies 12 member states for which in-depth reviews need to be prepared to identify and assess the severity of possible macroeconomic imbalances: Croatia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden. These member states were already identified as having imbalances or excessive imbalances in February 2020. The new reviews will help to assess progress in correcting these imbalances.

Overall, the report concludes that the COVID-19 crisis has aggravated a number of existing macroeconomic imbalances in member states and is giving rise to new risks. As such, the current situation affirms the need to make the best use of available EU support measures.

Draft Council recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area – approval

The Council approved the draft Council recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area ([14356/20](#)).

In view of the current crisis, the 2021 euro-area recommendation focuses on short-term measures to support the recovery and ensure the proper functioning of the EMU. The recommendation places a strong emphasis on the use of the recovery and resilience facility, which provides policy guidance on priorities that member states should include in their recovery and resilience plans. It calls on member states to use policy tools including their recovery and resilience plans to:

- ensure a policy stance which supports the recovery
- further improve convergence, resilience, and sustainable and inclusive growth
- strengthen national institutional frameworks
- ensure macrofinancial stability
- complete the EMU and strengthen the international role of the euro

The recommendation will be submitted to the [European Council](#) in March for endorsement, prior to formal adoption by the Council.

Delegated acts in the field of financial services – non-objection

The Council decided not to object to the following Commission regulations:

- Commission delegated regulation amending technical standards laid down in delegated regulation (EU) 2016/2251 as regards to the timing of when certain risk management procedures will start to apply for the purpose of the exchange of collateral ([14319/20](#))
- Commission delegated regulation amending regulatory technical standards laid down in delegated regulations (EU) 2015/2205, (EU) 2016/592 and (EU) 2016/1178 as regards the date at which the clearing obligation takes effect for certain types of contracts ([14320/20](#))

The regulations are delegated acts pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. They can now be published and enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

ENERGY

Decommissioning nuclear facilities and radioactive waste

The Council adopted a regulation establishing a dedicated financial programme for decommissioning of nuclear facilities and management of radioactive waste, and repealing Council regulation (Euratom) No 1368/2013.

The regulation establishes the dedicated financial programme for the decommissioning of nuclear facilities and management of radioactive waste for the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2027. It provides support to Bulgaria and Slovakia for the safe decommissioning of units of their nuclear reactors. It also provides support for the implementation of the decommissioning process at the Commission's nuclear installations on the Joint Research Centre (JRC) sites, and for the management of radioactive waste from these installations. The regulation lays down the objectives of the programme, its budget for the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2027, the methods of implementation and the forms of EU funding ([5161/21](#), [12566/20](#)).

Ignalina power plant (Lithuania)

The Council adopted a Council regulation establishing the nuclear decommissioning assistance programme of the Ignalina nuclear power plant in Lithuania and repealing regulation (EU) No 1369/2013.

The regulation establishes the assistance programme for the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2027 and lays down the objectives of the programme, its budget for the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2027, the methods of implementation and the forms of EU funding ([5162/21](#), [12569/20](#)).

Ecodesign

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of Commission regulation (EU) .../... of XXX amending regulations (EU) 2019/424, (EU) 2019/1781, (EU) 2019/2019, (EU) 2019/2020, (EU) 2019/2021, (EU) 2019/2022, (EU) 2019/2023 and (EU) 2019/2024 with regard to ecodesign requirements for servers and data storage products, electric motors and variable speed drives, refrigerating appliances, light sources and separate control gears, electronic displays, household dishwashers, household washing machines and household washer-dryers and refrigerating appliances with a direct sales function.

The Commission regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that, now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation unless the European Parliament objects ([5057/21](#), [13766/20](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

TRANSPORT

Rail passengers' rights

The Council adopted its position at first reading on a regulation on rail passengers' rights and obligations ([5206/21](#), [12262/20](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

For more details, see [press release](#).

Aviation safety

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of the agreement on civil aviation safety between the EU and Japan ([5037/21](#), [9292/20](#), [15260/19](#)).

Euro-Mediterranean aviation agreement

The Council adopted a decision on the EU position to be taken within the joint committee established by the Euro-Mediterranean aviation agreement between the EU and Morocco ([14026/20](#), [14008/20](#), [14010/20](#)).

AGRICULTURE

Substances used in the manufacture of food supplements

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a regulation amending directive [2002/46/EC](#) as regards nicotinamide riboside chloride and magnesium citrate malate used in the manufacture of food supplements and as regards the units of measurement used for copper ([5090/21](#), [13029/20](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

Hygiene of foodstuffs as regards food allergen management

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a regulation amending the annexes to regulation (EC) No [852/2004](#) on the hygiene of foodstuffs as regards food allergen management, redistribution of food and food safety culture ([5137/21](#), [13069/20](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

Maximum residue levels for chlordecone in or on certain products

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a regulation amending annex III to regulation (EC) No 396/2005 as regards maximum residue levels for chlordecone in or on certain products ([5229/21](#), [14013/20](#) + ADD 1-2).

Maximum residue levels for some substances in or on certain products

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a regulation amending annexes II, III and V to regulation (EC) No 396/2005 as regards maximum residue levels for benalaxyl, benalaxyl-M, dichlobenil, fluopicolide, proquinazid and pyridalyl in or on certain products ([5230/21](#), [14075/20](#) + ADD 1-2).

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a regulation amending annexes II and III to regulation (EC) No 396/2005 as regards maximum residue levels for diclofop, fluopyram, ipconazole and terbuthylazine in or on certain products ([5231/21](#), [14077/20](#) + ADD 1-2).

Botanical species containing hydroxyanthracene derivatives

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a regulation amending annex III to regulation (EC) No 1925/2006 as regards botanical species containing hydroxyanthracene derivatives ([5221/21](#), [13668/20](#)).

Application date of the amendments to certain production rules for organic products

The Council did not raise objections to the approval of a delegated act amending delegated regulation (EU) 2020/427 as regards the date of application of the amendments to certain detailed production rules for organic products in annex II to regulation (EU) 2018/848 ([5363/21](#)).

FISHERIES

Fisheries agreement with Mauritania

The Council adopted a decision on extending the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the fisheries partnership agreement between the European Community and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (14046/20 + ADD 1, [11260/20](#)).

Fisheries agreement with the Cook Islands

The Council adopted a decision on extending the implementation of the sustainable fisheries partnership agreement between the EU and the Cook Islands. The aim of the agreement is to ensure continued cooperation on the promotion of a sustainable fisheries policy and the sound exploitation of fisheries resources in the Cook Islands' waters. The agreement also allows EU vessels to carry out their fishing activities in these waters (14095/20 + ADD 1, [11262/20](#)).

Fisheries negotiations with Norway and the UK

The Council adopted a decision authorising the European Commission to open negotiations, on behalf of the EU, on the conclusion of a fisheries agreement with the UK and Norway. Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, a number of fish stocks in the North Sea can no longer be considered as stocks shared bilaterally between the EU and Norway only. The three parties now need to agree on the measures necessary to coordinate their fishing practices and ensure the conservation and development of the stocks concerned (5237/21 + ADD 1, [13291/20](#) + ADD 1).