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3791st Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Defence issues

Brussels, 6 May 2021

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

The High Representative, Josep Borrell, briefed EU defence ministers about current affairs, reviewing a number of recent developments and upcoming events.

The Council was informed about the High Representative's recent trip to the Sahel, where he visited Mauritania, Mali and Chad. Ministers emphasised that stability in the region remains key for Europe's security.

Ministers then discussed Russia's recent military build-up in illegally annexed Crimea and on the Ukrainian border. The debate reaffirmed the EU's position that Russia must de-escalate and reduce tensions, and that the full implementation of the Minsk agreements is key to a lasting political solution.

The High Representative updated ministers on the EU's response to Mozambique's request for EU assistance to help address the security crisis and the terrorist threat in Cabo Delgado. In this context the EU is considering a potential EU training mission, to be launched as soon as possible.

Strategic compass

The Council exchanged views on the strategic compass, with a focus on crisis management.

After a discussion on the threat analysis in November 2020, which highlighted the need for the EU to be prepared for future challenges and crises, the Council discussed a concrete set of ideas and proposals for how to be ready to react to risks.

During the discussion ministers stressed the need for the EU to be more effective and take decisions faster. In particular, it was discussed how missions and operations could be launched more quickly, and how more incentives could be created to increase the number of personnel, staff and assets deployed to EU CSDP missions and operations.

The Council discussion based on the High Representative's proposal highlighted the need for more flexibility to better adapt the EU's civilian and military missions to the needs in each crisis, including through enhanced coordination and cooperation with other military operations conducted in ad hoc coalitions by member states or other partners.

Ministers also touched on the need for the EU to have fully equipped and prepared staff to react quickly to a crisis. In this context, they discussed the idea of an initial entry force that could be deployed as 'first responder' in an urgent crisis.

The strategic compass is scheduled for adoption by the Council in March 2022.

In the margins of the meeting

– *Informal lunch*

Over an informal working lunch, ministers exchanged views with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on operational engagement in theatres of common interest, from the Mediterranean to Afghanistan.

– *European Defence Agency steering board*

The European Defence Agency's steering board met in the margins of the Council meeting to review the state of play in the implementation of the coordinated annual review on defence (CARD) recommendations, looking in particular at collaborative opportunities in capability development, research and technology.

[Outcome of the EDA steering board meeting, 6 May 2021](#)

– *European Union Satellite Centre board*

The High Representative chaired, for the first time, the board meeting of the EU Satellite Centre (SatCen) at ministerial level. The board discussed the role of SatCen within the CFSP and beyond, with a focus on its future tasks and functions, and an appropriate level of ambition.

[Outcome of the SatCen board meeting, 6 May 2021](#)

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Council decisions on the participation of Canada, Norway and the United States of America in the PESCO project Military Mobility

Following requests from Canada, Norway and the United States of America to participate in the PESCO project Military Mobility, the Council adopted positive decisions authorising the coordinator of the project – the Netherlands – to invite the three countries.

Canada, Norway and the United States of America will be the first third states to be invited to participate in a PESCO project.

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

18th EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council meeting

The Council approved the position to be taken by the EU at the 18th meeting of the EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council, scheduled for 10 May 2021.

Restrictive measures against Syria

The Council adopted a Council implementing decision implementing decision 2013/255/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against Syria, including an amendment to the statement of reasons related to one of the listed persons.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Malta VAT exemption

The Council adopted an implementing decision authorising Malta to apply a special measure derogating from article 287 of directive 2006/112/EC on the common system of value added tax, and repealing implementing decision (EU) 2018/279.

The decision authorises Malta to exempt from VAT taxable persons whose economic activity consists principally in the supply of services with a low value added (high inputs), or the supply of services with a high value added (low inputs), and whose annual turnover is no higher than €30 000.

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Enlargement: Serbia and Montenegro

The Council has approved the revised enlargement methodology for the accession negotiations with Montenegro and Serbia. The Council also confirmed that the proposed changes could be accommodated within the existing negotiating frameworks with Montenegro and Serbia with the agreement of the respective countries.

EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement – notifications

The Council approved the notification by the EU in accordance with the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (8219/21).

DEVELOPMENT POLICY

EU position on the extension of the International Tropical Timber Agreement

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken by the EU in the International Tropical Timber Council on the extension of the 2006 International Tropical Timber Agreement for an initial period of five years (7550/21, 7261/21).

INTERNAL MARKET

Commission regulation amending annexes VII to XI to regulation (EC) no 1907/2006

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending annexes VII to XI to regulation (EC) no 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals (REACH).

The proposed regulation aims to provide more clarity on the obligations of registrants and on the role and responsibilities of the European Chemicals Agency under titles II and VI of the REACH regulation.

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 ([6065/21](#) + ADD 1).

Commission delegated regulation amending part 3 of annex VI to regulation (EC) no 1272/2008

The Council decided not to object to a Commission regulation that introduces, updates or deletes the harmonised classification and labelling of certain substances under part 3 of annex VI to regulation (EC) no 1272/2008 for the purposes of adapting the regulation to technical and scientific progress.

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. It can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects ([7007/21](#) + ADD 1).

RESEARCH

Council approval for the European Commission's signing of a joint statement on collaborative science efforts in the Arctic at the Arctic Science Ministerial

The Council authorised the European Commission to sign the joint statement on collaborative science efforts in the Arctic, as set out in document ST 7920/21, at the third Arctic Science Ministerial on 9 May 2021 ([7920/21](#)).

TRANSPORT**International maritime safety and environment protection**

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken on behalf of the EU, at the 103rd session of the Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organization and the 76th session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee of the International Maritime Organization, on the adoption of amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, the International Code on the Enhanced Programme of Inspections during Surveys of Bulk Carriers and Oil Tankers, the International Code for Fire Safety Systems and the International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-fouling Systems on Ships ([8112/21](#) + ADD 1, [7527/21](#)).

AGRICULTURE**EU position on Joint Committee on Organic Products**

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken on behalf of the EU within the Joint Committee on Organic Products established by the agreement between the EU and the Republic of Chile on trade in organic products ([7662/21](#), [7755/21](#), [7778/21](#)).

Transitional measures for the export of meat-and-bone meal as a fuel for combustion

The Council decided not to oppose a Commission regulation amending the EU regulation (142/2011) as regards transitional measures for the export of meat-and-bone meal as a fuel for combustion ([7010/21](#), [6348/21](#) + ADD 1).

Maximum residue levels for certain substances in or on certain products

The Council decided not to oppose a Commission regulation amending annexes II, III and IV to regulation (EC) no [396/2005](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards maximum residue levels for acequinocyl, acibenzolar-S-methyl, Bacillus subtilis strain IAB/BS03, emamectin, flonicamid, flutolanil, fosetyl, imazamox and oxathiapiprolin in or on certain products ([7848/21](#), [7216/21](#) + ADDs 1-2).