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ITEMS DEBATED

Libya

The Council discussed the situation in Libya and the UN-brokered talks on Libya taking place in Geneva. It adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU welcomes the holding of the UN-facilitated Libyan political dialogue process started in Geneva. The EU is encouraged by the two rounds of talks at political level and by the launch of discussions between municipal and local council representatives. The EU commends the efforts by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (UNSRSG) Bernardino León in bringing the parties to the table. The EU believes that it is important for this process to be as inclusive as possible so that all Libyans feel represented by the decisions there adopted. It commends those who have participated in the Geneva discussions and calls on those who have not joined so far to participate in these discussions which are critical to the peace, stability and security of Libya.
2. The EU renews its full support to the efforts of the UNSRSG to secure a negotiated settlement and to the work of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and it is looking forward to the launch of the other envisaged tracks. The EU is willing to contribute to the Confidence Building Measures as agreed in the Geneva talks and it is exploring with UNSMIL how to assist the UN in the different dialogue tracks envisaged for the process.
3. The EU is convinced that there is no military solution to this conflict. Only a political solution can provide a sustainable way forward and contribute to peace and stability in Libya. It is critical at this stage to have an unconditional ceasefire that it is respected and upheld by all sides.
4. The EU expresses its profound concern at the continued violence and deplores the loss of life caused by the ongoing political divisions and conflict on the ground. It condemns the attack on the Greek vessel on 4 January that resulted in the loss of lives of EU citizens.
5. The EU believes that the independence and proper functioning of the Central Bank of Libya, National Oil Corporation and other key financial institutions must be preserved and protected. The EU condemns actions against Libya's national assets, financial institutions and natural resources, which risk depriving the Libyan people of the benefits of the sustainable development of their economy.
6. The EU reiterates its readiness to introduce as soon as it is deemed necessary and in full coordination with UNSRSG, restrictive measures against spoilers of the dialogue process in line with UNSCR 2174 which allows for the listing of individuals who threaten the peace, stability or security in Libya, or who undermine its political transition. Those responsible for violence and those who obstruct or undermine Libya's democratic transition must face consequences for their actions.

7. The EU recalls its firm condemnation of terrorism in all its forms, including the attack against the Corinthia hotel in Tripoli on 27 January, and reiterates that terrorism has no place in the future of a peaceful and democratic Libya. The EU is concerned by evidence of increased activity of terrorist and extremist groups and recognizes the potential threat that these groups present to the future stability of the country, region and the EU.
8. The EU welcomes the public statements of support for the UN-facilitated Libyan political dialogue from the African Union and the League of Arab States and encourages neighbours and regional partners to engage constructively in support of the UN coordination efforts. The EU reiterates its call on external parties to refrain from actions that might exacerbate current divisions and undermine Libya's democratic transition, to strictly respect the arms embargo, and to fully support the UN-led dialogue process.
9. The EU reaffirms its strong condemnation of all human rights violations and abuses in Libya, use of violence against civilians, institutions and public intimidation. The EU stresses the need to ensure accountability for all violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. It believes that internal and international accountability mechanisms should be strengthened in order to address all abuses and violations and therefore calls on relevant institutions to investigate these crimes. It reiterates its support to the efforts of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to end impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole. The cooperation of all relevant actors in Libya with the ICC is of crucial importance.
10. The EU calls on all parties in Libya to ensure the protection of civilians and the facilitation of assistance to people in need by ensuring safe, unhindered and timely humanitarian access and the security of humanitarian aid workers. The EU supports all efforts made to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation, notably the displacement of people and disruption of access to basic services. The humanitarian situation requires additional international support to respond to the displacement and needs of the affected population. The EU is already the largest donor of assistance in Libya and has recently scaled up its support to alleviate the precarious conditions of those vulnerable groups like the internally displaced or migrants directly or indirectly affected by the Libya crisis.
11. The EU stands by the Libyan people and reaffirms its commitment to continue supporting Libya in its transition. The EU will continue to support key Libyan institutions such as the High National Electoral Commission and the Constitutional Drafting Assembly. EU support continues in other sectors like reconciliation, civil society, promotion of human rights and migration. When the political and security situation in Libya allows, the EU stands ready to enhance its support to Libya, including in areas such as rule of law, security sector reform, migration and economic cooperation, making full use of all its instruments, including, if appropriate, CSDP activities, building inter alia on achievements of its CSDP Mission EUBAM Libya.

12. The EU notes the upcoming review of UNSMIL's mandate due for March and looks forward to continuing discussions with UN in view of a possible role for the EU supporting the future UNSMIL in areas where the EU has a proven value added.
13. The EU remains strongly committed to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Libya."

Iraq and Syria

The Council took note of the joint communication by the High Representative and the Commission on an EU comprehensive regional strategy on Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL / Da'esh threat.

Counter-terrorism

Over lunch, ministers discussed the contribution of EU external action to the fight against terrorism.

The Council adopted the following conclusions on counter-terrorism:

- "1. The Council strongly condemns the recent attacks, which have been carried out by terrorist groups and individuals in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Terrorism poses a direct threat to all countries and all people regardless of their ethnic background, religion or belief. In a globalised world, such threats can only be countered through international cooperation and determined national action. In this context, the Council reiterates the EU's strong support to relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council, in particular Resolutions 2170 and 2178, and calls on all countries to take the necessary measures to ensure their swift implementation with full respect for human rights and the Rule of Law.
2. The Council calls for comprehensive action against terrorism in line with the 2005 EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy and in full compliance with international law, fundamental values and international human rights standards. While Member States have the primary responsibility for addressing terrorism, the EU as such can add value in many ways. The actions taken in the area of justice and home affairs need to be complemented by external engagement and outreach, especially to countries in the Middle East, North Africa, the Sahel and the Gulf. Close coordination between internal and external action on the one hand, and between relevant EU actors and EU Member States on the other hand, will enhance the impact of our common efforts. We need to put more emphasis on the prevention of terrorism, in particular countering radicalisation, on recruitment, equipment and financing of terrorism, and address underlying factors such as conflict, poverty, proliferation of arms and state fragility that provide opportunities for terrorist groups to flourish.

3. Against this background, the Council decides to step up, as a matter of urgency, its external action on countering terrorism in particular in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, including Yemen, and North Africa, in particular also Libya, and the Sahel. Counter-terrorism (CT) will be mainstreamed fully into EU foreign policy. It calls for accelerated implementation of the EU Syria and Iraq and Counter-Terrorism/Foreign Fighters Strategy (adopted on 20 October 2014) with a particular focus on foreign terrorist fighters and the EU's Maghreb Communication. The Council welcomes the Joint Communication on EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat and looks forward to its implementation as soon as possible.
4. More specifically, the Council welcomes the following initiatives to be implemented in the course of 2015, building on those actions that are already taking place in the field of Justice and Home Affairs and in Foreign and Security Policy.

Strengthening partnerships with key countries

- Mainstreaming counter-terrorism in the EU's political dialogue with third countries to promote international cooperation and implementation of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.
- Conducting targeted and upgraded security and counter-terrorism dialogues with Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Cooperation with Turkey should also be enhanced in line with the GAC conclusions of December 2014.
- Strengthening political dialogue with the League of Arab States, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the African Union and other relevant regional coordination structures, such as the G5 Sahel.
- Developing counter-terrorism action plans starting with Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, including on measures to dissuade and disrupt foreign terrorist fighters' travel as well as to manage their return. Attention will also be given to targeted CT/CVE cooperation with the Western Balkan countries as well as with other countries affected by foreign terrorist fighters phenomenon. Given the importance of the creation of networks of policy makers and security experts on both sides of the Mediterranean, a Ministerial segment will be added to the Euromed group on foreign terrorist fighters established by the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator and the EEAS.
- Deploying security/counter-terrorism experts in a number of key EU Delegations to strengthen their capacity to contribute to European counter-terrorism efforts and to liaise more effectively with relevant local authorities, while further building-up of counter-terrorism capacity within the EEAS.

Supporting capacity building

- Launching further capacity-building projects and activities with interested MENA countries addressing law enforcement, criminal justice, security sector reform, including crisis infrastructure, crisis and emergency response, border control and aviation security, strategic communication, radicalisation, dealing with the foreign terrorist fighters threat, recruitment and financing of terrorism, paying due regard to international human rights standards, in close cooperation with Europol, Eurojust, Frontex and CEPOL.
- The EU will respond positively to Iraq's request of CT assistance. Projects will be launched shortly to assist countries in the MENA region to implement UNSCR 2178 on foreign terrorist fighters, to prevent radicalization in Jordan and the Maghreb. Further CT capacity building assistance to countries in the region will be provided in the coming months, in particular related to the threat of foreign terrorist fighters, including fighters returning to their countries of origin and security sector reform. The Radicalization Awareness Network will work with interested countries in the region on prevention of radicalization.
- The EU will work to develop frameworks for information exchange and ways for the EU agencies to engage more strategically with the countries in the region to strengthen law enforcement and judicial cooperation.

Countering radicalisation and violent extremism

- Supporting international initiatives on countering radicalisation and terrorism such as the first International Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism (“Hedayah”) in Abu Dhabi, and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) in Geneva, while the successful EU Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) offers expertise to engage with local communities as well as with third countries. The High Representative, the Commission and the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator will participate in the upcoming Summit on Countering Violent Extremism and related side events in Washington DC on 18-20 February 2015.
- Improving strategic communication, developing an outreach strategy to the Arab World, including developing counter-narratives to terrorist propaganda, promoting fundamental rights, and taking into account the increasingly frequent misuse of the internet in radicalisation, engaging through social media and enhancing communication in Arabic. In this process, we can draw on the expertise of the Syria Strategic Communications Advisory Team.

- Facilitating interfaith dialogue, civil society dialogue, people-to-people contacts, academic and cultural exchanges. Exploring the possibility of creating a Round of Eminent Persons from Europe and the Muslim world, to encourage more intellectual exchanges and promote wider thematic dialogues on the roots and ramifications of terrorism and radicalisation on our societies. In this context, inviting relevant EU Institutions to explore further cooperation opportunities with actors such as the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue of Cultures in Alexandria, the UN Alliance of Civilisations in New York and the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and intercultural dialogue in Vienna.
- Addressing the underlying factors of radicalization by supporting initiatives across the region with regard to youth, education, vocational training, job opportunities, civil society, security sector reform, role of women. The EU will work with faith-based organizations, as appropriate.
- Inviting the EU Special Representative for Human Rights to continue his efforts to defend and advocate freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief and other universal values in particular in the MENA region.

Promoting international cooperation

- Continue supporting cooperation with the UN on counter-terrorism capacity building initiatives in the MENA region. The EU will enhance further its engagement in the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) , including by actively shaping GCTF inspired initiatives such as Hedayah in Abu Dhabi, the Global Community Engagement Resilience Fund (GCERF) and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law in Malta.
- Enhancing cooperation with key partners and countries on countering financing of terrorism, in particular Da'esh financing. The EU hosted a workshop to counter Da'esh financing together with US, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, Norway, Japan, and UN agencies in Brussels on 4-5 February 2015 with the aim to step up outreach and capacity building efforts in third countries. The EU will engage with countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council in a dialogue on countering financing of terrorism, in particular Da'esh financing, and will closely cooperate with partners, including in the anti-ISIL coalition.
- Reinforcing, within the existing parameters, the role of EU INTCEN as the hub for strategic intelligence assessment at EU level, including on counter-terrorism.
- Regarding the Passenger Name Record data (PNR), we fully endorse the Riga JHA Ministers Joint Statement, and are looking for sound solutions to the exchange of PNR with relevant third countries.

- Combating illicit accumulation and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and their ammunition in line with the 2005 EU Strategy, in particular in the Western Balkans and Libya, and promotion of the Arms Trade Treaty in our Southern Neighbourhood.

Addressing underlying factors and ongoing crises

- Given the role unresolved conflicts play in the context of radicalization and recruitment, the EU will mobilize even more to attempt finding solutions and re-think current policies and approaches. The EU will mitigate terrorist and stability threats through its comprehensive approach combining diplomatic, socio-economic, development, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and crisis management tools.
 - Inviting the High Representative and the Commission to continue to ensure sufficient funds and coherent use of instruments to address the threat of terrorism and move effectively from early warning to early action. CT, including prevention of radicalization, will, where appropriate, be mainstreamed into programming of assistance, making full use of the OECD guidelines on terrorism prevention. The EU delegations in the region have been asked to work with their host governments to identify quickly opportunities for twinning and TAIEX projects in the CT context.
5. These Conclusions will serve as an input of the Foreign Affairs Council for discussion at the informal meeting of EU Heads of State and Government on 12 February 2015. The Council agreed to review progress in implementation at its next meetings, also in view of upcoming European Council meetings."

Yemen

The Council took stock of developments in Yemen. It adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU is following recent developments in Yemen with grave concern. The violence witnessed in Sana'a, in Mareb and in several other provinces, which led to the announcement of the resignations of President Hadi and of Prime Minister Bahah and his Cabinet on 22 January, as well as subsequent developments over the last two weeks have put the promises of the Yemeni transition in jeopardy. These developments are hindering prospects for a prosperous, stable, democratic and united Yemen, and threaten the territorial integrity of the country and the stability of the region, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation.
2. The EU calls on all political forces, particularly the Houthis, to take clear responsibility for their actions, starting by unequivocally rejecting violence and coercion as political tools. Disrespect for State institutions, as well as attacks on and restriction to movements of officials are unacceptable. The EU calls for the immediate release of President Hadi, Prime Minister Bahah and members of the Cabinet from house arrest.
3. In this context, the EU is gravely concerned by the unilateral so-called Constitutional declaration issued by Ansar Allah on 6 February, which it considers to have no legitimacy. The EU recalls that only a broad political consensus amongst the main political groups, setting a clear path towards a Constitutional referendum and elections, can provide a sustainable solution to the current crisis and urges all parties to return to genuine dialogue and inclusive negotiations, in particular those conducted by the UN. In this regard, the EU welcomes and supports the announcement of the resumption of inclusive negotiations today under UN auspices. The framework provided by the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, the National Dialogue Conference's (NDC) outcomes and the Peace and National Partnership Agreement should remain the reference points for the Yemeni transition. All regional actors should contribute positively to this process.
4. The EU urges all actors to work constructively towards the swift finalization of a new Constitution which meets the legitimate aspirations of the Yemeni people, reflects the NDC Outcomes, and preserves the unity and territorial integrity of Yemen to which the EU is strongly attached.
5. The EU recalls the urgency for a stable and legitimate political framework to enact much needed economic reforms, including by taking decisive actions to improve fiscal sustainability and fighting corruption in the public administration, in support of those most in need. The severe humanitarian crisis may further deepen if political stability is not restored. The EU urges all parties to safeguard humanitarian principles and ensure humanitarian access on the ground.

6. The EU expresses its deep concern about intensified terrorist attacks, including by Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) within Yemen. It condemns such terrorist attacks in the strongest terms and reiterates its firm commitment and enduring determination to tackle terrorist violence, in Yemen and the broader region.
7. The EU continues to closely follow the situation in Yemen and stands by the Yemeni people at this critical juncture and reaffirms its commitment to continue supporting Yemen in its transition."

Africa

– ***Boko Haram***

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Boko Haram:

- "1. The Boko Haram terrorist actions in north-eastern Nigeria are becoming a growing threat not only for the peace and security of Nigeria but to the whole region including Cameroon, Chad and Niger. The Council stresses the importance of an urgent, comprehensive response to the insurgency, to prevent further terrorist and criminal acts perpetrated by Boko Haram, including stronger governance and economic development.
2. Recalling the European Union's (EU) Statement of 19 January 2015 and its Conclusions of 12 May 2014, the Council condemns the continuing violence and appalling atrocities committed by Boko Haram on civilians, including women and children. It expresses its sincere condolences to the people and governments of countries affected. The perpetrators of these gross violations of international humanitarian law, human rights and dignity must be held to account. The international community cannot rest while such outrages are being committed and stands united against such acts of cruelty.
3. The Council is particularly concerned about the humanitarian consequences of the attacks and their impact on Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger and recalls the primary responsibility of States to protect civilians on their territory in accordance with the obligations under international law. Thousands have been killed. Over one and a half million people have been displaced within Nigeria and hundreds of thousands to neighbouring countries. Families have been separated, girls abducted, children orphaned and women and girls sexually abused.

The EU pledges to continue providing immediate relief to those in need and to increase its efforts at regional level. It commends the work of humanitarian agencies in delivering such relief and encourages them to scale-up their presence. At the same time, the Council underlines the need of the Nigerian government to increase the response to the urgent humanitarian crisis caused by the Boko Haram insurgency and recalls the EU's readiness to assist. International humanitarian efforts should be appropriately coordinated by the United Nations (UN) in order to enhance delivery capacity and prevent the refugee crisis from escalating out of control.

4. The scale of the Boko Haram extremist threat requires a Nigerian, as well as a collective and comprehensive response to defeat terrorism in full respect of human rights. The European Union notes that the responsibility to address the immediate security challenges lies primarily with the countries most affected, and calls upon them to urgently intensify their cooperation and coordination. In this respect, it commends the Chadian army's recent assistance to the Cameroonian forces already engaged in the fight against Boko Haram. The Council welcomes and supports the decision of the States in the region, endorsed by the African Union (AU), to deploy a multinational force, to be endorsed by the UN Security Council, once the concept of operations is finalised. In this regard it salutes the AU preparatory meeting that was held in Yaoundé from 5 to 7 February. It also welcomes actions already undertaken under the aegis of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, following high-level security conferences held in Paris, London, Abuja and Niamey since May 2014.
5. The EU stands ready with its partners - the UN, the AU, regional organisations, the individual States concerned as well as the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) - to provide support to the region with its full range of instruments, including the possibility of recourse to the African Peace Facility and EU crisis management tools. The EU will also look at ways to help the countries concerned strengthen their own capacities to handle the challenge, including the root causes of the radicalisation and violence, whilst encouraging intergovernmental cooperation amongst them. The Council emphasises that the crisis can only be overcome when all forces concerned abide by international humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law and practices in support of the communities they are tasked to protect.
6. At the same time, the Council reaffirms its determination to assist Nigeria at the national and local level as well as other countries affected in their efforts to promote the sustainable economic development of the Lake Chad region, fight corruption, provide the social and educational needs of its population and meet up with the aspirations of their young people.
7. The Council invites the HR and the Commission to take forward appropriate actions and propose necessary decisions, notably on the basis of a Political Framework for Crisis Approach (PFCA), including an assessment of the needs of the countries affected by the menace of Boko Haram. The PFCA should include a gender perspective. The Council will remain closely involved in this issue and will revert when necessary."

– *Nigeria elections*

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the Nigeria elections:

- "1. Africa's vigorous democratic culture is demonstrated by the large number of elections to be held on the continent in 2015. The European Union reaffirms its wider policy of support for peaceful, inclusive, transparent and credible elections and its readiness to assist Nigeria in this respect. The European Union will also be providing electoral support to a number of countries in Africa this year.

The European Union will be focusing with particular interest on the Nigerian Presidential, Parliamentary and Gubernatorial elections: the largest single exercise in democracy in Africa. The conduct and quality of this electoral process will be key for the future of Nigeria, the region and the continent. The EU is therefore disappointed by the postponement of the elections on the basis of security advice delivered at very late notice.

2. The European Union strongly urges the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to ensure the necessary arrangements are in place for transparent and well-run elections. It calls on all parties to respect the independence of INEC, ensure that elections take place without further delay and enable each eligible Nigerian citizen to cast their vote fairly, including those affected by the security situation in the north east of the country.
3. The Council welcomes the signing of the "Abuja Accord", on 14 January 2015, in which political leaders committed to preventing electoral violence before, during and after the elections. It is essential for both the people of Nigeria and for Nigeria's international standing that this commitment is honoured without exception throughout the electoral process, irrespective of results. The EU would be particularly concerned by deliberate attempts to undermine the electoral process, by violent or any other means, and would have to consider swiftly how to respond. The European Union underlines that all disputes over the conduct or results of the elections should be dealt with through the proper judicial processes. In this respect, the Council calls upon the Nigerian security services to fulfill their obligation to support the constitution and to maintain law and order during the electoral process in an even-handed and proportionate manner, to allow all eligible citizens to exercise freely and peacefully their democratic rights. As the media have an important role to play in the delivery of transparent elections, the EU calls on all authorities to ensure full media freedoms and access.
4. To support these efforts the European Union has provided a package of assistance to the Nigerian electoral process totaling € 35 million, and at the invitation of the Nigerian authorities, has deployed an EU electoral observation mission led by MEP Mr Santiago Fisas Ayxelà, who will be returning to Nigeria this week to undertake a continued and comprehensive assessment of the elections, in cooperation with other observer missions."

– *Mali*

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Mali:

- "1. The EU is deeply concerned by the persisting violence in northern Mali, which is a threat to the security, stability, territorial integrity and development of the country and the wider Sahel region. The European Union calls on all parties in Mali to respect the cease-fire agreement of 23 May 2014 and the Declaration of Cessation of Hostilities of 24 July 2014. It is fundamental that all active armed groups on the ground refrain from any kind of violence.
2. The substantive disagreement between Malian parties can only be settled by constructive dialogue in the context of the talks in Algiers, due to resume shortly. The Council urges all parties to use this unique opportunity for dialogue and reconciliation constructively, and show the necessary political will and flexibility during negotiations to reach an inclusive and durable political solution as swiftly as possible.
3. As a co-mediator, the European Union, notably through its EUSR for the Sahel, remains committed to the Algiers process and is ready to assist parties in their efforts to reach and implement a lasting peace agreement. In the context of its comprehensive approach, the EU is committed to continue using its relevant instruments, including its CSDP Missions EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Mali. It stands ready to facilitate the implementation of the future political agreement, through its active participation in the proposed monitoring Follow-up Committee, in close cooperation with the United Nations and the African Union.
4. At the same time, efforts at local level should be reinforced, aiming at having an inclusive dialogue between all relevant stakeholders in Mali and making a start with the reconciliation process.
5. The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), is essential for the security and stability of Mali. The Council reiterates its full support for MINUSMA in the implementation of its mandate and its efforts to protect civilians. It also supports the active engagement of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General –Mr. Mongi Hamdi- to reach and implement such a lasting peace agreement. The EU condemns the attacks that have been made on UN peacekeepers and civilians and urges all parties involved, to refrain from violence and respect their commitments for a peaceful resolution of their differences. Concerning the events of 27 January in Gao, which caused the killing of civilians, the EU welcomes the opening of an enquiry.

6. The European Union remains committed to supporting Mali's path towards development, peace, reconciliation and stability. Integral to this is that progress is made by the Malian Government in terms of governance, democracy, rule of law, reform of the justice and security sectors and fight against impunity. Stabilisation efforts must aim at creating security for the population. Civilians, especially women and children, have to be protected. Resources available in the 11th European Development Fund, other EU instruments and Member States bilateral instruments will provide a significant contribution to the development of all the Malian territory, including the northern regions. The next follow-up conference of the donor round table "*Ensemble pour le Renouveau du Mali*" - organised in May 2013 by the EU, France and Mali - which will take place in Bamako on 17 February will be an opportunity for the international community to assess the results of the aid and assistance which has been pledged to help Mali, as a whole, to stabilise and recover. The best way to monitor progress after this last phase of the Brussels process will be further discussed by the international community along with the Malian authorities.

7. The European Union emphasises that the situation in Mali is intrinsically linked to that of the wider Sahel region as a whole, and that a strengthened integrated regional approach to deal with the instability is essential, as reflected in its Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, implemented amongst others through the efforts of the EUSR for the Sahel, in coordination with other international partners and through strong partnerships with regional partners, including through the implementation of their own Sahel strategies. In this context, the Council stresses the importance of tackling, including through coordinated international cooperation, the following priority areas: notably youth, border management, migration and mobility, preventing and countering radicalisation, fight against illicit trafficking and transnational organised crime. In this regard, it looks forward to the early finalisation of the EU Regional Action Plan for the Sahel."

– *Central African Republic*

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the Central African Republic:

- "1. L'Union européenne (UE) reste fermement engagée en République Centrafricaine (RCA) pour soutenir un processus durable de sortie de crise. Les accords de Libreville en janvier 2013, de N'Djamena en avril 2013, et de Brazzaville en juillet 2014, endossés par le Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies, restent le cadre de référence incontournable pour tous les acteurs nationaux, régionaux et internationaux. L'UE réaffirme son plein soutien au travail des autorités de transition, en se félicitant de leur coopération étroite avec l'ONU, l'UA et la CEEAC. Elle appelle à la poursuite du processus politique conduit sous l'impulsion du chef d'Etat de la transition, avec l'appui du Médiateur pour la crise centrafricaine, dans le respect du cadre fixé par le Conseil de sécurité, y compris du régime de sanctions individuelles. L'UE appelle à cet égard tous les acteurs en RCA et tous les pays de la région à coopérer avec le Comité des sanctions du Conseil de sécurité. L'UE félicite la CEEAC pour sa prise de position ferme lors de la concertation d'Addis Abeba du 31 janvier 2015 à l'égard de toute démarche parallèle pouvant compromettre les efforts en cours de la communauté internationale visant à rétablir la paix, la sécurité et la stabilité en RCA. Le forum de Bangui constituera une étape décisive de ces efforts. Dans cette perspective, l'UE salue la tenue depuis le 21 janvier de consultations populaires inclusives autour des valeurs de paix, de dialogue et de réconciliation. Les centrafricains doivent s'approprier pleinement le processus.
2. L'UE salue les efforts des forces internationales, MINUSCA, Sangaris et EUFOR RCA, qui coopèrent sur le terrain pour protéger les civils et contribuer à la stabilisation du pays. En dépit des progrès, la situation reste fragile. A cet égard, l'UE condamne fermement les récents enlèvements à Bangui. Elle est particulièrement préoccupée par les entraves au bon déroulement des consultations sur le terrain dans le cadre du processus de réconciliation et de paix, en particulier dans le centre et le nord-est du pays. La violence des groupes armés constitue une menace pour la population centrafricaine, l'Etat et son intégrité territoriale.
3. L'UE demeure favorable à la recherche d'une solution pour une cessation effective et durable des hostilités. Les groupes armés actifs en RCA sont appelés à participer à ce processus en respectant le cadre de la transition et les principes de lutte contre l'impunité pour les responsables de crimes graves au regard du droit international. L'UE appelle les autorités de la transition et tous les pays de la région à continuer de coopérer avec la Cour Pénale Internationale.

4. Au moment où l'opération européenne EUFOR RCA aura achevé son mandat au 15 mars 2015 et transféré sa mission dans la capitale à la mission des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République centrafricaine (MINUSCA), une nouvelle mission militaire de conseil de l'UE (EUMAM RCA), établie le 19 janvier 2015, d'une durée d'une année, sera déployée à Bangui en appui des Centrafricains et en étroite coordination avec la MINUSCA dans le cadre de son mandat dans le domaine de la RSS. EUMAM RCA fournira au gouvernement centrafricain des conseils d'experts, y compris en matière de genre et droits de l'homme, dans la perspective de la réforme des Forces Armées Centrafricaines (FACA) en une force armée professionnelle, démocratiquement responsable et représentative des composantes de la nation. Le Conseil devra agréer le lancement de cette nouvelle mission PSDC, qui devrait atteindre sa capacité opérationnelle initiale le 1er mars 2015. A cette fin, l'UE souligne l'importance d'une finalisation rapide de la génération de force d'EUMAM RCA. L'UE salue la bonne coopération avec les autorités centrafricaines et les autres partenaires sur place, notamment l'ONU.
5. La transition en RCA devra aboutir à des élections présidentielles et législatives bien organisées, libres, justes, crédibles. A cet égard, l'UE appelle les autorités concernées à apporter les précisions indispensables à la poursuite du processus électoral, en particulier les modalités de mise en œuvre des opérations électorales, afin de pouvoir mobiliser tous les acteurs dans le respect du calendrier électoral prévu. Sur cette base, l'UE confirme sa disponibilité à contribuer immédiatement aux élections en RCA dans le cadre du programme d'appui de l'ONU, et invite les autorités de transition, avec le soutien de l'ONU, à rechercher activement la mobilisation d'autres bailleurs.
6. L'UE reste fortement préoccupée par la situation humanitaire en RCA. Elle s'inquiète en particulier du sort des populations déplacées et isolées à l'intérieur du pays ainsi que des populations réfugiées dans les pays voisins. L'UE condamne les exactions graves et répétées des groupes armés contre les populations civiles et les travailleurs humanitaires. Les besoins restent immenses, et la mobilisation des bailleurs doit se poursuivre et s'intensifier.
7. Consciente des graves difficultés que traverse la RCA en matière de ressources, l'UE travaille conjointement avec le FMI et les autorités centrafricaines au rétablissement progressif des équilibres budgétaires nécessaires à la RCA, en vue de leur importance pour le bon fonctionnement des services essentiels de l'Etat."

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ukraine - restrictive measures

The Council adopted a set of additional listings concerning separatists in Eastern Ukraine and their supporters in Russia, consisting in an asset freeze and a travel ban on 19 persons and 9 entities involved in action against Ukraine's territorial integrity.

To give space for current diplomatic efforts, the Council put the entry into force of the measures on hold until Monday 16 February. It fully supported and endorsed the political process towards a meeting in Minsk.

Restrictive measures - Côte d'Ivoire

The Council amended the EU restrictive measures against Côte d'Ivoire. The changes provide for a derogation to enable the licencing of certain equipment for civilian mining projects.

Code of conduct for outer-space activities

The Council allocated €1.2 billion for action in support of its proposal for an international code of conduct for outer space activities during the next two years. The funds will be used for awareness raising activities as well as for maintaining a framework for the multilateral process on the code of conduct.

Exercise programme for 2015 to 2019

The Council approved the exercise programme of the European Union under the Common Foreign and Security Policy for the years 2015 to 2019.

Relations with Tunisia

The Council approved the conclusion, on behalf of the EU and its member states, of a protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement with Tunisia so as to take account of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU.

EU priorities at UN human rights fora

The Council adopted the following conclusions on EU priorities at UN Human Rights Fora in 2015:

- "1. The EU is deeply committed to the realisation of universal and indivisible human rights. The EU reaffirms its strong commitment to the role and work of the United Nations bodies tasked with the promotion and protection of human rights as spelt out in the EU Strategic Framework for Human Rights and Democracy.
2. Through close cooperation with all countries, institutions and stakeholders, the EU will participate actively at the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly sessions of 2015. The EU will express its concerns and positions, contribute to debates in a constructive manner and pursue thematic and country-specific initiatives.
3. The EU welcomes the new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. The dedication and work of the High Commissioner and his staff are invaluable to human rights efforts worldwide. The EU will continue to support and defend the independence and integrity of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
4. The EU will continue to promote full cooperation with, and support to, the UN Human Rights Council Special Procedures, supporting their free and unfettered cooperation with relevant interlocutors. The EU also reaffirms its commitment to the Universal Periodic Review and calls upon all countries to effectively and constructively cooperate with this mechanism. The EU restates its unwavering support for the independence and impartiality of the UN Human Rights Treaty Body system so it is able to fulfil its mandate.
5. The UN is a vital forum for international action against human rights violations and abuses. The EU is committed to working at the UN to prevent and respond to such violations and abuses, and to fight persistent discrimination and violence. As such, the EU remains extremely concerned by the situations in Iraq and Syria and will ensure that they are addressed in the strongest terms in the UN human rights fora. The EU condemns the brutal atrocities perpetrated by ISIL/Da'esh and in particular those against women and girls, and vulnerable groups, and calls for an immediate end to all human rights violations and abuses. In Syria, the ongoing grave human rights violations and abuses, committed in particular by the Assad regime, and terrorist groups, demand accountability and an end to impunity, including through the Commission of Inquiry.
6. The human rights impact of the conflict in eastern Ukraine and of the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation will also be brought to the fore. The EU is concerned by the growing number of victims and serious human rights violations and abuses in the eastern Ukraine and further deterioration of the human rights situation in Crimea, particularly the continuing persecution and intimidation of the Crimean Tatars. Moreover the EU will continue to call on all parties to the crisis in eastern Ukraine to respect international humanitarian law and principles to protect civilians.

7. In view of the dire human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the EU strongly supports the investigatory work conducted by the Commission of Inquiry and will ensure follow-up to its report and recommendations. Deeply concerned by the continuing human rights violations and the high rate of executions in Iran, the EU will continue to call for tangible improvement and support the extension of the Special Rapporteur's mandate.
8. Following the consensus UN General Assembly resolution on Myanmar/Burma, which reflects progress made as well as the remaining concerns, the EU will continue to call for human rights improvements in the country. While welcoming the commitments announced by the new Sri Lankan government on rule of law and reconciliation, the EU will encourage the government to work with the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights and the UN Human Rights Council to address ongoing human rights concerns and make credible domestic progress on reconciliation.
9. The EU calls on all parties in the conflict in the Central African Republic to end attacks against the civilian population and to implement the resolution of the HRC Special Session. The EU will press for an adequate and effective response from the HRC to the worrying state of affairs in South Sudan, where hostilities have led to large-scale human rights violations. The EU will continue to support the HRC's efforts to address the worrying human rights situation in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, and Mali.
10. The EU will refer to persistent violations of human rights in Belarus and therefore seek renewal of the UN Special Rapporteur's mandate and call for the unconditional release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners. The EU will also continue to pay close attention to the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. Taking into account developments on the ground the EU will also, when appropriate, draw attention to the situation of human rights in other countries.
11. The United Nations is the central forum for defending and advancing the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and ensuring that they are fully observed. The right to freedom of opinion and expression online and offline will continue to be upheld by the EU as a fundamental human right and cornerstone of democracy and peace. In view of recent cases of intimidation, persecution, and inhuman punishment, such as flogging, close attention will be paid to the safety of journalists, bloggers, and other media actors.
12. Freedom of association and assembly are key elements of democracy, and yet these freedoms are being restricted in many countries. The EU will continue to address these restrictions, as well as all forms of intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders, and civil society representatives. Similarly, the EU will continue to ensure that multilateral fora remain open and safe spaces for these actors, and will speak out against any reprisal targeting those who cooperate with the UN human rights bodies.

13. The EU holds that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and we therefore firmly oppose all forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Furthermore, the EU notes the 50th anniversary of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The EU reaffirms its strong opposition against all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. The EU will continue to work against all forms of discrimination, including antisemitism. The EU will also continue to advocate Freedom of Religion or Belief and will call for greater efforts to protect the rights of persons belonging to religious minorities.
14. Twenty years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action the EU is ever more engaged, in partnership with UN agencies, in the advancement of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls, and women's rights. We remain committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences and in this context sexual and reproductive health and rights. As we also celebrate the 15th anniversary of UN Security Council resolutions 1325, the EU steps up its work on women and peace and security. The EU opposes all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence in armed conflict.
15. In accordance with its longstanding policy, the EU works to advance all rights of children worldwide, including the right to education, and to step up the protection of children affected by armed conflict. The EU is also engaged in the protection of girls from abuse and harmful practices. The EU will continue to foster international cooperation to address current challenges, including against the trafficking in human beings, which is a grave human rights violation and a severe form of organized crime.
16. Following the strong cross-regional support to the resolution on a moratorium on the death penalty at UNGA 69, the EU will continue to support the work of the UN towards the abolition of the death penalty worldwide. The EU will also pursue efforts to put an end to torture, and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment.
17. The year 2015 offers the international community a rare opportunity to agree on a truly transformational and comprehensive approach to poverty eradication and sustainable development worldwide. The EU will continue to call for a rights-based approach, encompassing all human rights, and gender equality, for the post-2015 agenda. We will also intensify our efforts to promote and protect economic, social and cultural rights. The EU will also contribute to the further implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
18. The EU supports all efforts to mainstream human rights across the United Nations' work, including in development, and peace and security, as well as its ongoing efforts to prevent and to step up its responses to acute human rights crises. The EU will work in partnership with countries from all regions and regional organisations, including through the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, to actively support an effective UN human rights system that can foster the realisation of all human rights for all people everywhere."

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

Supplement to the Force Catalogue 2014

The Council took note of a supplement to the Force Catalogue 2014, containing the contribution from Serbia in addition to those of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and of Montenegro.

Common military list

The Council approved the annual update of the common military list of the European Union, which defines the scope of the EU's common rules on arms exports and of its arms embargos.

Annual report on arms exports

The Council took note of the sixteenth annual report on arms exports by EU member states, in accordance with the EU's common rules on arms exports.

INSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Committee of the Regions: new members from Germany and the United Kingdom

The Council appointed on 5 February 2015, by written procedure, members of the Committee of the Regions from Germany and United Kingdom for the period from 26 January 2015 to 25 January 2020.

The Council already appointed on 26 January 2015 the new members of the Committee of the Regions from the other EU countries for the next five years.

See press release: [Committee of the regions: appointment of new members for the next five years](#)

[List of new members from Germany and the UK](#)