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President **Federica Mogherini**
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/press>

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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

Humanitarian affairs

The Council discussed humanitarian affairs in preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit, which will take place in Istanbul on 23-24 May 2016. Ministers addressed both substance, including the main priorities for reform and how the EU and its member states can contribute to tangible improvements in humanitarian delivery, as well as process, in particular how the EU can best support the preparatory process leading up to Istanbul.

Many ministers underlined the timeliness of the discussion, as record funding figures are outpaced by even greater humanitarian needs. More than 60 million persons are currently displaced, the highest number since the second World War. The discussion stressed in particular the need for the Summit to reaffirm the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, and the importance of ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law in order to ensure access to vulnerable populations and safety of humanitarian workers. The need to strengthen the link between humanitarian and development aid, as well as to better integrate local actors in the humanitarian response were also mentioned.

Commission Vice-President Kristalina Georgieva briefed the Council on the work of the UN High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, which she co-chairs and which is expected to issue recommendations by January. As part of the World Humanitarian Summit preparatory process, the Panel seeks to address the questions of how to raise more humanitarian funds, how to make humanitarian funding more predictable, and how to spend the available funds more efficiently.

Migration, refugees and development

Ministers had an in-depth debate on migration, focusing on how development cooperation can help address the current common challenges faced by Europe and its partner countries. They agreed to step up the EU's level of engagement and strengthen cooperation with third countries on migration both at bilateral and multilateral level.

In particular, the Council exchanged views on how development cooperation and assistance can make an effective and short-term impact contribution to the crisis response. Ministers also explored how the EU can further improve its instruments and policies.

After the meeting, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy summarised the discussion as follows "Development cooperation is an important element of the EU comprehensive approach to migration. At this last foreign affairs Council meeting before the Valletta Summit with our African partners, we had a thorough discussion on how it can help dealing with refugees, displaced persons, and more generally migratory flows, recognising that our African partners themselves are at forefront of the challenges that we commonly face."

Gender and development

The Council had a discussion on gender and development and adopted conclusions on a new framework for results-oriented measures for "Gender equality and women's empowerment: transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020". (13201/15). In their discussion, ministers stressed in particular that implementation of the action plan is now key.

EU-ACP relations

Ministers had an initial exchange of view on future relations between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries in view of the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020. The Council will come back to the issue in their forthcoming meetings and will continue debating in a very open manner, on the basis of the consultation open on the future of the partnership.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Opening of consultations with Burundi as foreseen by Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement

The Council has approved a draft letter inviting Burundi to consultations in accordance with the procedure provided for under Article 96 of the EU-ACP Partnership Agreement in the event of failure to respect essential elements of the agreement, namely human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law. The objective of these consultations is to find an acceptable solution for the parties, through the identification of the measures to take in order to remedy to the non-respect of the agreement.

[Press release](#)

International Science and Technology Centre

The Council approved decisions on the [signing](#) and [conclusion](#) of an agreement continuing the [International Science and Technology Center](#) (ISTC).

The objectives of the ISTC include the promotion of the improvement of international mechanisms for the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Its headquarters is in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The Council authorised the opening of negotiations in October 2013 in follow-up to the withdrawal of Russia from the ISTC, with the other Parties agreeing that a new ISTC agreement was needed in order for the Center to effectively fulfill its mandate.

The original agreement establishing an ISTC was signed in 1992.

Restrictive measures in view of the situation in Guinea

The Council amended the restrictive measures in the view of the situation in Guinea. The restrictive measures are extended for a further year until 27 October 2016.

Restrictive measures against the leadership of the Transnistrian region of Moldova

The Council extended the restrictive measures against the leadership of the Transnistrian region of Moldova for a further year until 31 October 2016. These measures will be reviewed by the Council relevant preparatory body before 30 April 2016.

Afghanistan

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union stands firm in its commitment to Afghanistan and its people in this critical phase. The past months have seen a serious security situation, renewed terrorist attacks with record numbers of civilian casualties, and the concomitant internal displacement and exodus of thousands of Afghans, putting mounting pressure on the region and the European Union.
2. It is all the more urgent that the Government of Afghanistan and all partners in the region engage credibly to end conflict and ensure a stable environment. An Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process remains the prerequisite to any sustainable solution, which must retain major achievements including the respect for human rights and especially the rights of women. The EU condemns the recent Taliban attacks in Kunduz and the casualties inflicted on the civilian population and the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. They are a reminder of what is at stake: Afghanistan's stability, development and the progress made over many years.
3. The Council deplores the loss of life following the air strike on the hospital of Médecins Sans Frontières. It awaits the results of the different inquiries launched. The Council stresses how vital it is for all parties to comply with international humanitarian law and principles and to protect and respect medical and humanitarian facilities, aid agencies and their personnel.
4. The EU will continue to help address the root causes of migration, such as poverty, violations of human rights and instability, so as to reduce the incentives for irregular migration and to combat trafficking networks. The Council encourages efforts on reintegrating refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons, who are important for the development of the Afghan society.

5. It is crucial that the Afghan people can regain confidence in the future. The ambitious reform agenda outlined by President Ghani at the London conference 2014 and the “Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework” (SMAF) as presented at the Senior Officials Meeting in Kabul on 5 September 2015 are evidence of the National Unity Government's commitment to change and credible reform. In line with the EU strategy 2014-16, the EU strongly supports the National Unity Government's reforms on which further tangible progress is urgently needed.
6. Implementing the ‘Self Reliance’ reform agenda for economic growth, macro-economic stability, good governance and poverty reduction requires determined action by the National Unity Government as well as continued high levels of support by the international community, based on mutual accountability. Strong Afghan leadership in the reform process and the reinforced efforts to deliver services to its citizens will allow donors to substantially align their support with the Government's vision. Stable and inclusive democratic governance, including the reform of the electoral system and its institutions, progress on the rule of law, tackling the underlying drivers of corruption, and the promotion of human rights, in particular the rights of women and children, are key factors for both the Afghan Government and the international community.
7. The Council welcomes the decision to accept the invitation by the Government of Afghanistan to co-host the next comprehensive Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan in Brussels in 2016. Afghanistan will need the ongoing commitment of the international community at or near current levels to continue on the path to sustainability. The Ministerial Conference will set out the framework for the Government of Afghanistan and donors until 2020, contributing to a stable and reliable environment for Afghanistan to move progressively towards self-reliance. Concrete commitments and delivery by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community alike should underpin the Brussels Conference. The Council invites the HR and the Commission to pursue the preparations of the Brussels Conference jointly with the Government of Afghanistan and in close consultation with international partners and actors in the region."

Relations with Kazakhstan

The Council decided on the signing on behalf of the EU and provisional application of an enhanced partnership and cooperation agreement with Kazakhstan. The agreement puts a strong emphasis on democracy and the rule of law. It has an extensive title on trade, aiming at ensuring better regulatory environment for the economic operators in a number of areas, including government procurement and intellectual property rights. The agreement also foresees cooperation in 29 other key sector policy areas, including economic and financial cooperation, energy, transport, environment and climate change, employment and social affairs, culture, education and research.

Framework Agreement with Tunisia - conclusion of a protocol

The Council concluded the Protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean agreement establishing an association with Tunisia on a framework agreement between the EU and Tunisia on the general principles for the participation of Tunisia in Union programmes.

Restrictive measures against Zimbabwe

The Council amended the restrictive measures against Zimbabwe to de-list a deceased person.

Restrictive measures in view of the situation in Yemen

The Council amended the restrictive measures in view of the situation in Yemen to implement a UN update. The Security Council committee for the Yemen sanctions amended on 16 September 2015 the statement of reason for one listed person.

DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Policy coherence for development: 2015 EU Report

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council confirms its political engagement to Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) and recalls the Treaty obligation to take into account the objectives of development cooperation in the policies which are likely to affect developing countries, as well as to pursue these objectives in the overall framework of the Union's external action. The recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also emphasises the importance of policy coherence for sustainable development. PCD is a crucial contribution to increasing the effectiveness of the EU's development cooperation and its contribution to global sustainable development. In this context the Council welcomes the fifth biennial PCD report as an important tool for monitoring progress made on PCD since 2013 both at EU level and in the Members States.

2. The Council reiterates the shared ownership and responsibility of all EU actors in implementing PCD. It therefore welcomes that the Commission and Member States have made considerable progress in embedding PCD in their policies and procedures particularly in the five priority areas of Trade and Finance; Food Security; Climate Change; Migration; and Security. In addition, the Council encourages Member States to continue their efforts, including by setting up the appropriate legal frameworks with regards to PCD as well as by developing and sharing national PCD action plans, also considering the 2030 Agenda.
3. The Council favourably notes the new institutional organisation of the Commission as a policy coherence instrument in itself. Furthermore, the Commission's Better Regulation Package contains revised Impact Assessments guidelines and a "Tool Box" for assessing potential impacts of future EU initiatives on developing countries at an early stage of the preparation of an initiative. The Council encourages the Commission to share its first experiences of the application of impact assessments when available and to present concrete proposals on how to advance coherence in all EU policy areas with a clear goal to contribute to sustainable development.
4. It is important that the Commission and the Member States strengthen their efforts for more systematic assessment of impacts of their policies, taking into account effects on sustainable development including human rights and gender and integrate the results of these assessments into their policies and programmes. Recognising that measuring the actual and potential impacts of policies and of progress on PCD is a challenging endeavour, the Council invites the Commission and the Member States to step up efforts with regards to PCD-related research as a means to measure progress. It also looks forward to the results of the first independent and comprehensive evaluation of PCD at EU level which will be crucial for providing further guidance in this regard.
5. Recognising the pivotal role of EU delegations and Member State embassies, the Council notes with satisfaction the establishment of regular monitoring and reporting of PCD issues by delegations and calls on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to further improve ongoing efforts.
6. The Council invites the Commission to continue developing effective and coordinated training tools so as to raise awareness across different policy actors and to help facilitate the sharing of good practices between Member States.

7. With the adoption of the landmark “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” the international community has emphasised the interlinked and integrated nature of the world we live in. To implement this agenda at the national and global level, all countries will take ownership and will need to consider how policies in all areas can contribute to sustainable development and act accordingly. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, will further guide and inspire the formulation of these policies and their implementation. PCD will be an important part of the EU contribution to achieving broader policy coherence for sustainable development.
8. In this context, the Council invites the Commission and the EEAS, in close consultation with other partners, to present concrete proposals on how to better integrate PCD into the EU approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and calls for this new approach to be mainstreamed across the EU institutions. Future PCD reporting should reflect the new approach and lessons learnt of implementation challenges and of past reporting exercises. The Council looks forward to the next PCD report.
9. The new universal framework for sustainable development calls for more coherence between different policy areas and EU actors, requiring further coordination, dialogue and joint work at all levels within and between EU institution services, Council formations and working parties.
10. Increasing awareness of the benefits of PCD is an important first step towards achieving the ambitious objective of PCD. It is important to enhance dialogue and facilitate the sharing of good practices with the whole range of stakeholders such as civil society, private sector and relevant international organisations, including the OECD. Furthermore, the European Year for Development and events relating to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represent excellent opportunities to better communicate about development cooperation and PCD to the general public."

EU priorities for the 14th United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

The Council adopted conclusions on UNCTAD XIV: the EU's priorities for the 14th Conference on Trade and Development ([13175/15](#)).

EU Horn of Africa regional action plan 2015-2020

The Council adopted conclusions on the EU Horn of Africa regional action plan 2015-2020 ([13363/15](#)).

Special report of the European Court of Auditors 17/2014

The Council adopted conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' special report No 17/2014 'Can the EU's Centres of Excellence initiative contribute effectively to mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks from outside the EU?'.

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY

Opening of negotiation on the extension of the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan

The Council adopted a decision authorising the opening of negotiations with Afghanistan for an agreement extending the agreement on the Status of the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (hereafter the "SOMA for EUPOL Afghanistan"). EUPOL Afghanistan was established on 30 May 2007 and the current agreement between the EU and Afghanistan is due to expire on 13 October 2016.

EUNAVFOR Med - new name

The Council formally adopted the decision to replace the name of European Union military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED) by the name "EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA".

TRADE POLICY

Association agreement with Georgia: List of experts and arbitrators

The Council adopted a decision establishing the EU's position within the trade and sustainable development sub-committee and the association committee in trade configuration established by the association agreement between the EU and Georgia as regards the adoption of the rules of procedure of the sub-committee and its establishment of a list of experts on trade and sustainable development, as well as the creation of a list of arbitrators by the association committee.
