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President **Federica Mogherini**
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

Foreign ministers discussed the most pressing issues on the international agenda, among them the case of the missing Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi, where the EU expects a full and transparent investigation by the Saudi authorities in full cooperation with the Turkish authorities.

Libya

The Council discussed Libya. The discussion focused on the political process, the stability of the country, and the economic situation. Foreign ministers reiterated the EU's support for the political process under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative Ghassan Salamé. They reiterated the EU's unity in its determination to support a Libyan-found solution for the Libyan people, under UN auspices.

The discussions were part of the preparations for the upcoming high-level meeting on Libya which will take place in Palermo (Italy) on 12-13 November 2018. The Council underlined the importance of holding both presidential and parliamentary elections as soon as possible, and the need to put in place a proper constitutional and legal framework before the elections take place.

[EU-Libya relations, factsheet](#)

External aspects of migration

The Council discussed the external aspects of migration together with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi. Ministers were also briefed by the Director-General of the International Organisation for Migration António Vitorino. They took stock of progress and recent developments, and underlined the importance of the strategic partnership between the EU, the IOM and the UNHCR in Libya.

The Council emphasised the significant results delivered through the joint efforts of the EU, its member states and UN agencies. Irregular migration flows to Europe have been significantly decreased, and efforts to better tackle irregular migration and to fight smuggling networks have been considerably strengthened, in particular through Operation Sophia. Significant EU funding is also being allocated under a wide range of instruments to projects in countries of origin and transit. Over the past three years the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa has in particular demonstrated its added value as a swift and effective implementation tool with a view to addressing the root causes of instability, forced displacement and irregular migration and contributing to good migration management.

[EU migration policy \(background information\)](#)

Central African Republic

The Council discussed and adopted conclusions on the Central African Republic (CAR). In its conclusions, the Council underlines that the situation in the CAR is still very fragile and that the EU remains engaged in support of the country. The EU emphasises the need to continue working, through its various instruments, to help the CAR get back on the road to stability, peace and development and to meet the aspirations of its entire population for lasting peace and reconciliation.

The EU reiterates its support for the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation under the auspices of the African Union and the leadership of President Touadéra to reach a peace and reconciliation agreement, to create the conditions for the complete disarmament of armed groups and to strengthen State authority, while preserving the unity and integrity of the CAR.

The EU also stresses the importance of inclusive involvement of all institutions and all actors of Central African society, including women, youth and civil society. The EU calls on all international actors, especially those engaged in the CAR, to support the action of the government and the African Initiative in a properly coordinated and fully transparent manner.

The Council also welcomes the commitment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in CAR (MINUSCA), in particular to support the CAR authorities in carrying out the security sector reform process and to help them restore State authority.

The Council emphasises that the security situation, including hybrid threats, confirms the need to continue to strengthen the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), and welcomes the request by the CAR for additional assistance for the Internal Security Forces, notably by means of civilian engagement. Ministers invited the EEAS to establish and deploy as soon as possible a civil-military interoperability pillar within EUTM RCA, tasked with providing strategic advice in this area.

The EU remains concerned by the humanitarian situation in the CAR and emphasises the need for the international community to mobilise in response to the humanitarian emergency, and reiterates its own ongoing engagement through the Bêkou Trust Fund. The EU remains strongly committed to the CAR, with an envelope of EUR 487 million allocated for the period 2017-2020.

[Council conclusions on the Central African Republic](#)

[EUTM RCA](#)

Venezuela

Over lunch, the High Representative and foreign ministers discussed the situation in Venezuela and its impact in the region, including on migration.. Ministers reaffirmed the EU's strong position on the political crisis in Venezuela. Since the crisis can only be addressed through a political process, they agreed to explore the possibility of establishing a contact group which could, if conditions are met, help facilitate such a process.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Chemical weapons restrictive measures

The Council adopted a new regime of restrictive measures to address the use and proliferation of chemical weapons. This decision is a direct follow-up to the conclusions of the European Council of 28 June 2018.

The EU will now be able to impose sanctions on persons and entities involved in the development and use of chemical weapons anywhere, regardless of their nationality and location.

The restrictive measures target persons and entities who are directly responsible for the development and use of chemical weapons as well as those who provide financial, technical or material support, and those who assist, encourage or are associated with them.

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

This decision contributes to the EU's efforts to counter the proliferation and use of chemical weapons, which poses a serious threat to international security. It supports the global prohibition of chemical weapons as laid down by the Chemical Weapons Convention, against a background of increasing chemical attacks in various parts of the world.

[Council decision concerning restrictive measures against the proliferation and use of chemical weapons](#)

[Council Regulation concerning restrictive measures against the proliferation and use of chemical weapons](#)

[Sanctions: how and when the EU adopts restrictive measures](#)

Connecting Europe and Asia

The Council adopted conclusions on "Connecting Europe and Asia – Building blocks for an EU strategy", following the joint communication of the Commission and the High Representative of 19 September. The strategy will feed into the upcoming Asia-Europe meeting (ASEM) summit on 18-19 October.

The Council underlines that the EU will promote an approach to connectivity which is sustainable, comprehensive, and rules-based, and will advance investment and trade. This European approach is based on high standards of social and environmental protection and inspired by the EU's internal market, enabling countries to achieve higher levels of quality of life while guaranteeing respect for individual rights.

The Council calls for strengthened cooperation at the regional level between the EU and Asia, noting that the EU should consider developing regional approaches for sustainable connectivity, identifying opportunities for cooperation.

[Connecting Europe and Asia - building blocks for an EU strategy \(European Commission press release, 19 September 2018\)](#)

[Asia-Europe Meeting \(ASEM\), 18-19/10/2018](#)

Council conclusions on Bosnia and Herzegovina/ Operation EUFOR Althea

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. The Council reiterates its unequivocal commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective as a single, united and sovereign country. Following the elections on 7 October, and recalling the Conclusions of June 2018, the Council expects all leaders to engage constructively on government formation at all levels, in the interests of all citizens. The Council recalls that it expects the BiH authorities to prioritise taking forward the reforms needed to advance on in its EU path, ensuring the full and effective implementation of the Reform Agenda.

2. In this context, the Council welcomes the continued presence of Operation Althea, which in the follow up of the Strategic Review 2017 has refocused on its core mandate, while retaining the elements of capacity building and training deemed to be still necessary and phasing out the other elements no longer relevant. In this context, as part of the overall EU strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Council confirms the EU's readiness to continue at this stage the executive military mandate of Operation Althea to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities to maintain the safe and secure environment, under a renewed UN mandate.

3. The Council looks forward to the presentation of the next Strategic Review in 2019 as a basis for discussion with Member States on EUFOR's tasks and options for the future of the Operation, also bearing in mind the need to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress in its EU integration process and taking into account the security situation on the ground.

4. The Council recognises the importance of continued coordination of EUFOR Althea with other international actors on the ground.

5. The EU continues at the same time to urge the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the support of the international community, to accelerate their efforts to address the disposal of excess ammunition, weapons and explosive devices, as well as demining and other outstanding issues.

Mali: EU stabilisation action in Mopti and Ségou

The Council decided to extend the EU stabilisation action in Mopti and Ségou (EUSTAMS) for a period of three months, following an initial operating period of one year. This decision was taken in light of the progress achieved by the stabilisation action, the importance of ensuring its continuity through follow-up activities and the need to capitalise on its results and on the knowledge derived from it for future EU programmes in Mali.

On 4 August 2017, the Council launched an EU stabilisation action to advise the Malian authorities in Mopti and Segou on governance-related issues, and support the planning and implementation by the Malian authorities of activities aimed at reinstating the civilian administration and basic services in the region.

[Mali: European Union supports the stabilisation in the central regions of Mopti and Segou](#)

[EU Delegation to Mali](#)

Sanctions against ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaeda

The Council has extended the EU restrictive measures against ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaeda and persons, groups, undertakings and entities associated with them until 31 October 2019.

The Council also decided to add one person to the list of persons and entities associated with them and targeted by the sanctions, bringing the total number of persons currently on the list to 2. This EU sanctions regime complements the sanctions imposed by the United Nations.

[Fight against terrorism: EU strengthens its legal arsenal against ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaida](#)

[Response to foreign terrorist fighters and recent terrorist attacks in Europe \(background information\)](#)

Relations with Vietnam

The Council adopted new rules of procedures for the Joint Committee established by the EU-Vietnam Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Partnership and Cooperation (PCA). The PCA between the EU and Vietnam entered into force on 1 October 2016.

The rules of procedure are meant to establish the technical way of working of the Joint Committee and the sub committees under the PCA. The agreed text encompasses the human rights dimension, as the sub committee on good governance, rule of law and human rights will complement the existing human rights dialogue and thus create another opportunity for the EU and Vietnam to discuss human rights issues.

[Delegation of the EU to Vietnam](#)

Relations with Tunisia

The Council agreed on the signing, on behalf of the EU, of a protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the EU and Tunisia, in order to take account of the accession of Croatia to the EU.

The Euro-Mediterranean Agreement between the EU and Tunisia was signed in Brussels on 17 July 1995. The Agreement entered into force on 1 March 1998. According to the act of accession of the Republic of Croatia to the EU, Croatia accedes to the international agreements signed or concluded by the EU and its Member States by means of a protocol to those agreements. The negotiations on the protocol with Tunisia were successfully concluded on 11 May 2018. Croatia can therefore accede to the agreement, which created a free trade area between the EU and Tunisia.

[Relations between the EU and Tunisia](#)

[EU and Tunisia trade relations](#)

Common Foreign and Security Policy exercises programme 2018-2022

The Council adopted the EU programme of exercises and exercise-related activities under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) for the period 2018-2022. The exercise programme reflects the EU requirements for exercises set out in the EU Exercise Policy.

[Exercise policy of the EU under the CFSP](#)

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

EUAM Iraq

The Council extended the mandate of the EU Advisory Mission, EUAM Iraq, until 17 April 2020 and agreed on a budget of € 64.8 million for the period from 18 October 2018 to 17 April 2020.

The Council also updated the mandate of the mission to reflect lessons learnt during the first year of the mission and following its strategic review. The mission will now pursue three strategic objectives:

- provide advice and expertise to the Iraqi authorities at strategic level to identify and define the requirements for the coherent implementation of the security sector reform civilian-related aspects of the Iraqi National Security Programme and associated plans,
- identify opportunities at national, regional and provincial levels for further EU engagement in support of the needs of the civilian security sector reform,

- assist the EU Delegation in the coordination of the EU's and member states' support in the field of security sector reform, ensuring coherence of EU action.

The mission contributes to the implementation at strategic level of a comprehensive strategy countering terrorism and organised crime with specific reference to border management, financial crime, money laundering and the trafficking of cultural heritage. The mission works in coordination with key international actors operating in Iraq, including the NATO mission in Iraq.

EUAM Iraq was launched on 16 October 2017 to support the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Iraqi National Security Programme. This programme aims at building state institutions capable of consolidating security and peace and preventing conflicts under the rule of law, and outlines a number of threats to national security, including terrorism, corruption and political instability. The mission is based in Baghdad. The Head of mission is Markus Ritter (Germany), currently leading 52 staff.

[Delegation of the EU to Iraq](#)

[EUAM Iraq Website](#)

[EUAM Iraq Factsheet](#)

PESCO commitments

The Council adopted a recommendation providing detailed guidance on the objectives and progress indicators for the fulfilment, by each participating member state, of the binding commitments they undertook when the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) was launched at the end of 2017.

On this basis, the participating member states will review and update as necessary their national implementation plans, which will be submitted in January 2019. These plans will be assessed by the PESCO Secretariat, consisting of EEAS, including the EU Military Staff (EUMS), and the European Defence Agency (EDA). This will provide the basis the annual PESCO report by the High Representative to the Council on the progress made by each participating member state in the fulfilment of their commitments.

[Q&A on Permanent Structured Cooperation](#)

[EU cooperation on security and defence \(background information\)](#)

[Factsheet on Permanent Structured Cooperation \(EEAS\)](#)

Operation EUFOR Althea

The Council approved the High Representative's report on the operation commander's 28th six-monthly-report on Operation EUFOR Althea.

The High Representative supports the Operation's Commander's assessment and conclusions expressed in the 28th six-monthly-report on Operation EUFOR Althea, which contained the regular six-monthly reporting on the security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and EUFOR activities, including on the preparations for the country's general elections on 7 October 2018.

[EUFOR Althea](#)

[EU in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)

RESEARCH

European Atomic Energy Community - Research and Training Programme (2019-2020)*

The Council adopted a regulation on the research and training programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for the years 2019 and 2020. This regulation, which complements the Horizon 2020 framework programme for research and innovation, establishes the research and training programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for the period from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2020. ([12431/18](#), [12551/18 ADD 1](#))

Second Arctic Science Ministerial meeting - Joint Statement

The Council approved a joint statement for the occasion of the second Arctic Science Ministerial meeting taking place in Berlin on 25 and 26 October 2018. The joint statement will be signed by the Commission on behalf of the European Union. ([12678/18](#))