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President

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EU 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>).
• 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

High Representative Borrell briefed ministers on the legislative elections that took place on 6 December 2020 in Venezuela, and that the EU considered not to be free, fair or democratic. The High Representative stressed that the EU, Latin American partners in the International Contact Group and other stakeholders should come together to help Venezuelans to try to find a democratic, peaceful solution.

[Venezuela: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the elections for the National Assembly](#)

Ministers were informed about the situation in Georgia, where the majority and opposition parties must pursue efforts to find a way forward following the parliamentary elections.

The Council was updated on the latest developments surrounding Turkey ahead of the European Council on 10-11 December. In this context the High Representative reported that Turkey had not shown a fundamental change of direction, and the European Council would assess how Turkey had responded to the EU's offer for a constructive agenda and dialogue.

Ministers reviewed the situation in Belarus, where repressions by authorities against the population continue, and Ethiopia. About the latter, the High Representative stressed that a return to dialogue and a peaceful and sustainable settlement of the conflict were essential, and that the EU strongly supported the African Union initiative in this sense.

Transatlantic relations

Following an initial exchange of views held during the video conference of foreign affairs ministers on 19 November, the Council discussed how to reinvigorate the strategic partnership with the United States and engage with the new administration taking office in January 2021. Ministers stressed that a strong, reciprocal and far-sighted partnership should become the backbone of a renewed global alliance between the EU and the US.

In this context the Council adopted conclusions on EU-US relations.

[Council conclusions on European Union – United States relations](#)

Strategic autonomy

The Council had an exchange of views on how to enhance and operationalise the EU's strategic autonomy from a foreign and security policy point of view. Ministers were invited in particular to identify concrete political initiatives and projects that can help enhance the EU's capacity to act and have an impact globally.

During the debate it was stressed that the discussion on strategic autonomy goes together with and complements efforts to increase EU's resilience and strengthen multilateral engagement.

Other business

– *National Security Law imposed on Hong Kong*

The Council reviewed the implementation of the National Security Law imposed on Hong Kong on 30 June 2020, stressing that the political situation had deteriorated, with severe blows to political pluralism and freedom of opinion. The EU will continue to implement the Council conclusions expressing political support for Hong Kong's autonomy under the "One Country, Two Systems" principle, and, if necessary, further measures could be considered at a later stage.

– *Global human rights sanctions regime*

Few days ahead of the International Human Rights Day on 10 December, the Council adopted a decision and a regulation establishing a global human rights sanctions regime that will allow the EU to target individuals, entities and bodies responsible for, involved in or associated with serious human rights violations and abuses worldwide, no matter where they occurred.

[EU adopts a global human rights sanctions regime](#)

– *Lebanon*

The Council adopted [conclusions on Lebanon](#).

– *Civilian CSDP Compact 2021*

The Council adopted [conclusions on the Civilian CSDP Compact](#) reaffirming its commitment to strengthen the civilian branch of the Common Security and Defence Policy.

– *EU Peace Mediation*

The Council adopted [conclusions on EU Peace Mediation](#).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

Foreign Affairs

Report on EDA's Activities in 2020

The Council endorsed the Report of the European Defence Agency for 2020. The report summarises the key deliverables and the future priorities for EU military capability development, namely the EU battle-tank.

Informal videoconference of the members of the EU-Uzbekistan Cooperation Council

The EU adopted its position on the EU-Uzbekistan Cooperation Council due to take place on 17 December 2020. EU cooperation with Uzbekistan focuses mainly on rural development and the agriculture sector, including horticulture, irrigation, water management, livestock and professional education. The last Cooperation Council took stock of developments in relations between the EU and Uzbekistan over the past year, noting with satisfaction the intensity of contacts at all levels,

[Delegation of the European Union to Uzbekistan](#)

Conclusions on Lebanon

The Council approved conclusions on Lebanon recovery and reforms.

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

Informal videoconference of the members of the EU-Algeria Association Council

The EU adopted its position on the EU-Algeria Association Council due to take place on 7 December 2020. Leaders are set to talk about regional cooperation, as well as the prevention of and the fight against **terrorism and radicalisation**.

[Delegation of the European Union to Algeria](#)

Conclusions on Civilian CSDP Compact

The Council approved conclusions on the CSDP Compact.

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

Conclusions on EU Peace Mediation

The Council approved conclusions on EU Peace Mediation whereby the Council reaffirms its support to peace mediation as a key tool of conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding under the Common Foreign and Security Policy when addressing risks to peace.

Council Decision and Regulation concerning restrictive measures against serious human rights violations and abuses

The Council decided to approve a new EU human rights sanctions regime. The framework will allow the EU to list individuals, entities and bodies (state and non-state) for committing gross and serious violations of human rights wherever they may have occurred.

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

EU positions for international negotiations

EU position regarding amendments to the Agreement further to the accession of Samoa and Solomon Islands

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken, on behalf of the EU, in the Trade Committee established under the Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Community, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part, as regards the amendment to be made to the Agreement to take account of the accession of the Independent State of Samoa and of Solomon Islands (11629/20 and 11630/20).

EU position regarding amendment of certain provisions of Protocol II (rules of origin)

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken on behalf of the EU in the Trade Committee established under the Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Community, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part, as regards the amendment of certain provisions of Protocol II concerning the definition of the concept of 'originating products' and methods of administrative cooperation (10898/20 and 10899/20).

EU position regarding the establishment of the Rules of Procedure of the Trade and Special Committees

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken on behalf of the EU within the Trade Committee established under the Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Community, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part, as regards the establishment of the Rules of Procedure of the Trade Committee and the Rules of Procedure of the Special Committees (11958/20 and 11960/20).

AGRICULTURE

Listing co-formulants which are not accepted for inclusion in plant protection products

The Council decided, by written procedure, not to oppose the adoption of a European Commission Regulation amending Annex III to Regulation (EC) 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council listing co-formulants which are not accepted for inclusion in plant protection products ([12233/20](#) + [ADD1](#), [12688/20](#)).
