



FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL (including defence)

14-15 November 2016

The Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will start on Monday at 9.30.

Before the Council, at the invitation of the High Representative, ministers of Foreign Affairs will have an informal dinner on Sunday to exchange views on the way forward in the **EU-US relations** following the US elections.

The Council will start with a discussion on the recent developments in **Turkey**. Ministers will continue with a debate on the **Eastern Partnership**, in particular in view of the next EaP Summit. The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the Eastern Partnership.

Over lunch, ministers will discuss the **Southern Neighbourhood**, focusing on Syria. The High Representative will inform of her intensified outreach to key actors in the region, in line with the European Council mandate and in full support of the work of the UN Special Envoy de Mistura. Ministers may also address the situation in Iraq. There will be an information point on Libya.

In the afternoon, foreign ministers will have a **joint session** with defence ministers on the **implementation plan on security and defence** of the EU global strategy. The Council is expected to adopt conclusions setting out the level of ambition and the way forward.

On 15 November, the European Defence Agency steering board will meet before the Council starts. After that, the Council will start with a discussion on **EU-NATO cooperation**, in the presence of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg for part of the discussion. The Council will then discuss the state of play of **CSDP operations**, focusing on the situation in Libya and the Mediterranean, in particular on EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia. The NATO SG will also be present for this discussion.

Press opportunities on Monday 14 November:

- +/- 09.15 Doorstep statement by High Representative Federica Mogherini
- +/- 18.00 Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council

Press opportunities on Tuesday 15 November:

- +/- 08.15 Doorstep statement by High Representative Federica Mogherini
- +/- 13.30 Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council (Defence)

[Press conferences and public events by video streaming](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

Monday 14 November

Turkey

Ministers will be invited to exchange views on recent developments in Turkey. This follows the declaration issued by the High Representative on behalf of the EU of 8 November. The EU expressed its grave concern about these recent developments, namely on:

- renewed considerations to introduce a bill to parliament to reinstate the death penalty
- continued restrictions on the freedom of expression, including social media, with further closures of media outlets and arrest warrants against journalists, including the editor-in-chief of Cumhuriyet newspaper and several members of its staff
- the arrest of the co-chairs of the country's second largest opposition party, HDP, as well as the detention of several of its Members of Parliament.

The EU and its member states recalled their condemnation of the 15 July coup attempt and, while recognising the need for Turkey to take proportionate action, called on Turkey to safeguard its parliamentary democracy, including the respect for human rights, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms and the right of everyone to a fair trial, also in conformity with its commitments as a candidate country. In this regard, the EU and its member states will continue to follow and assess the situation very closely and they stand ready to continue political dialogue with Turkey at all levels, within the established framework.

[Full declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the latest developments in Turkey - 8 November 2016](#)

In its conclusions of 18 July 2016, the Council condemned the attempted coup in Turkey and reiterated its full support to the legitimate institutions of the country. The Council called for restraint to be shown by Turkish authorities, including by the police and security forces.

[Full text of the Council conclusions on Turkey- 18 July 2016](#)

Eastern Partnership

The Council will discuss current multilateral and bilateral relations with the six Eastern Partnership countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Ministers will have an exchange of views on the implementation of the Partnership and possible deliverables to be achieved in 2017, notably with a view to the next Eastern Partnership Summit.

The discussion may focus on the current situation in Ukraine, the recent elections in Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Belarus, as well as ongoing work for new agreements with Armenia and with Azerbaijan. Foreign ministers may touch upon the impact of the visa liberalisation legislative process on relations with Georgia and Ukraine.

The Council is expected to adopt **conclusions on the Eastern Partnership**.

The last EaP Summit, which took place in Riga on 21 and 22 May 2015, reconfirmed the strategic importance the EU attaches to the partnership and demonstrated strong engagement and a firm determination to pursue closer, tailor-made relations with the six partner countries.

Since then, cooperation between the EU and the EaP countries has been focusing on the implementation of commitments across the key areas of cooperation agreed at Riga, namely the strengthening of institutions and good governance; mobility and people-to-people contacts; taking advantage of market opportunities; and enhancing interconnections, notably in the areas of transport and energy.

The EU has continued consolidating its differentiated and tailor-made relations with each of the EaP partners, as also provided for by the European Neighbourhood Policy review, which has a particular focus on stability.

EU Foreign Affairs ministers took stock of the progress in this area at the 7th annual Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting of 23 May 2016, where they met their counterparts from the 6 Eastern European countries. The next EaP Summit is expected to take place in the autumn of 2017.

Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova signed association agreements with the EU, including deep and comprehensive free trade areas (DCFTAs), in June 2014. Provisional application of these agreements began in the autumn of 2014, except for the DCFTA part of the association agreement with Ukraine, which is provisionally applied as of 1 January 2016. The association agreement with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova entered into force on 1 July 2016.

The EU and Armenia opened negotiations on a new framework agreement for deepening bilateral relations at the end of last year. A mandate for negotiations of a new framework agreement with Azerbaijan is due to be adopted by the Council. Recognising positive developments in Belarus, the EU decided in February 2016 not to prolong most of its restrictive measures and is implementing several measures aimed at enhancing cooperation. Tangible steps by Belarus to respect democracy and human rights will continue to be necessary for the shaping of the EU's future policy towards this country.

The EaP was launched in 2009. It sets out to promote political association and economic integration with the EU, as well as multilateral dialogue and cooperation among the EaP countries. It is based on the common values of democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights and freedoms, and commitment to market economy principles.

[Council conclusions on review of the European Neighbourhood Policy \(December 2015\)](#)

[Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership summit \(Riga, 21-22 May 2015\)](#)

Southern Neighbourhood

Over lunch, ministers will discuss the Southern Neighbourhood, focusing on Syria. They may also address the situation in Iraq. There will be an information point on Libya.

Ministers will follow up on developments in Syria since their last discussion at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 17 October 2016. In its conclusions of 20 October 2016, the European Council invited the High Representative to continue, together with the Commission, pursuing the EU humanitarian initiative and medical evacuations in cooperation with the UN. It also invited the High Representative to report on her intensified outreach to key actors in the region on a political transition and on preparations for post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction. The High representative will inform on her recent outreach efforts in this context.

Ministers will take stock of the latest dramatic developments on the ground and exchange on how to support the UN efforts to get the parties in the conflict back to the negotiation table of the political process, in Geneva.

The EU and the member states have so far mobilised more than € 8.9 billion in humanitarian aid in response to the crisis in Syria. In February 2016, they pledged more than € 3 billion for 2016-2017.

Ministers may also discuss the situation in other Southern Neighbourhood countries, in particular Iraq and Libya.

[Syria: Council response to the crisis](#)

Implementation plan on security and defence

Foreign affairs ministers and defence ministers will have a joint session on the implementation plan on security and defence. The Council is expected to adopt conclusions.

The **implementation plan on security and defence** is part of the **follow-up to the EU global strategy on foreign and security policy**. The High Representative presented the EU global strategy "**Shared vision, common action: a stronger Europe**" to the European Council on 28 June. The strategy is intended to guide EU foreign and security policy in the years to come. The Council adopted conclusions on the global strategy on 17 October 2016.

Security and defence is one of the priority areas for the work on implementation of the EU global strategy, which also includes resilience building and integrated approach to conflicts and crises, strengthening the nexus between internal and external policies, updating existing or preparing new regional and thematic strategies and stepping up public diplomacy efforts.

The work on security and defence is conducted in synergy with the work on the **Commission European Defence Action Plan** as well as in regards to the implementation of the joint declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of NATO. The implementation plan, together with the Council conclusions, is expected to be presented at the European Council meeting of December.

The implementation plan will be presented by the High Representative, taking into account her roles as Vice-President of the European Commission and Head of the European Defence Agency, to member states at the Council meeting. It sets out the EU **level of ambition** for security and defence, the **operational implications** of such ambition and to put forward a number of **actionable proposals**.

The level of ambition revolves around three main priorities as defined in the EU global strategy: (1) responding to external conflicts and crises; (2) building capacities of partners and (3) protecting the EU and its citizens. From the level of ambition in these three areas, the implementation plan defines principles and requirements for implementation, including types of possible CSDP civilian and military operations.

The plan proposes a number of actionable proposals to:

- set capability development priorities;
- deepen defence cooperation;
- adjust EU institutional structures, tools and (financial) instruments including for situational awareness, planning and conduct of missions and operations, as well as rapid response toolbox (including EU battlegroups) and to increase financial solidarity and flexibility;
- actively take forward partnerships in security and defence including with NATO, the United Nations, the African Union, the OSCE and key bilateral partners.

The implementation plan also proposes to draw on the full potential of the Treaty on the European Union, including the consideration of a permanent structured cooperation (PESCO).

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions welcoming the implementation plan. These conclusions will set out the level of ambition as well as concrete actions. These actions will assist the EU and its members states in addressing further Europe's current and future security and defence needs.

[EU global strategy on foreign and security policy \(document pdf\)](#)

[EU global strategy on foreign and security policy \(website\)](#)

Tuesday 15 November

European Defence Agency Steering Board

Ministers of defence will meet at 8.30 within the European Defence Agency (EDA) Steering Board under the chairmanship of Federica Mogherini in her capacity as Head of the Agency. All member states participate except Denmark.

Ministers are expected to discuss and approve the agency's 2017 general budget based on a formal proposal by the High Representative. The budget proposal reflects the increasing demands on the Agency as well as expected additional tasks resulting from the new EU global strategy and its implementation plan on security and defence. Ministers will also approve EDA's three-year planning framework (2017-19) the objectives of which are to plan and prioritise EDA's work.

Furthermore, ministers will take note of progress made on the implementation of the agency's 'key taskings' in the various capability programmes and be briefed on the planned next steps, notably in the context of the taskings that will emerge from the Council conclusions on the EU global strategy implementation plan on security and defence.

The Steering Board is expected to agree to the review of the capability development plan and to task the EDA to present a new set of EU priorities for military capability development for Steering Board adoption by spring 2018.

EDA will also present ministers with proposals for the potential establishment of a 'cooperative financial mechanism' the objective of which would be to overcome the lack of budgetary synchronisation between Member States and the problems that this causes for the launch of cooperative defence cooperation projects. Ministers are set to give their green light to set up a working group within EDA in view of submitting a legal and financial package and associated recommendations in spring 2017.

[European Defence Agency \(website\)](#)

Foreign Affairs Council (Defence)

EU - NATO Cooperation

Starting at 10.00, the Council will have a discussion on **EU-NATO cooperation**. Ministers of defence will take stock of the cooperation between the EU and NATO in the context of the implementation of the **EU-NATO joint declaration**. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg will also take part in the discussion.

The joint declaration signed by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of NATO was adopted on 8 July 2016 in the margins of the NATO Summit in Warsaw.

The first of its kind, it follows the discussion on EU-NATO cooperation at the European Council on 28 June 2016, and, in line with the call from EU Heads of state or government, marks the importance of further strengthening EU-NATO cooperation at a time of unprecedented security challenges from the East and the South.

Areas of strengthened practical cooperation between the EU and NATO, as set out in the Joint Declaration, include: countering hybrid threats; operational cooperation including at sea; cyber security and defence; defence capabilities; defence industrial cooperation; exercises; and building the defence capabilities of partners to the East and South.

The Joint Declaration mandated the EEAS and NATO international staff, together with the Commission services where appropriate, to develop concrete options for implementation to be presented to the respective Councils by December 2016.

[EU-NATO joint declaration](#)

[European Council conclusions, 28 June 2016](#)

CSDP operations

Ministers will also discuss the state of play of EU CSDP operations, focusing on the situation in Libya and the Central Mediterranean. Ministers will be briefed in particular on the latest developments regarding the new tasks of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia: training the Libyan coastguard and navy and contributing to the implementation of the UN arms embargo on the high seas off the coast of Libya. The NATO Secretary General will attend this discussion.

EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia

EUNAVFOR MED, the EU's military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean, was launched on 22 June 2015 in order to counter the smuggling and trafficking of migrants and to help reduce further loss of life at sea. Its aim is to undertake systematic efforts to identify, capture and dispose of vessels and enabling assets used, or suspected of being used, by migrant smugglers or traffickers.

On 28 September 2015, the Political and Security Committee (PSC) agreed to start the first step of phase 2 of EUNAVFOR Med on 7 October 2015. The operation was renamed "Sophia" on 26 October 2015. During phase 2, the EUNAVFOR MED assets conduct boarding, search, seizure and diversion, on the high seas, of vessels suspected of being used for human smuggling or trafficking.

Since then, the operation has contributed to the apprehension and transfer to the Italian authorities of 101 suspected smugglers and traffickers and neutralised 345 vessels. In addition, the operation has saved more than 29 500 lives. 25 EU Member States are contributing to the operation, that comprises 2215 personnel.

On 20 June 2016, the Council extended until 27 July 2017 Operation Sophia's mandate reinforcing it by adding two supporting tasks: training of the Libyan Navy Coast Guard and Navy and contributing to the implementation of the UN arms embargo on the high seas off the coast of Libya, in accordance with the UN Security Council resolution 2292 (2016). On 30 August and on 6 September 2016, the PSC authorized the commencement of these supporting tasks.

Since then, the operation has started a 14-weeks training of Libyan coastguard and Navy for 78 embarked trainees and their mentors. The operation has also started contributing to the implementation of the arms embargo on the high seas off the coast of Libya, conducting already its first boat-inspection in this framework on 14 September 2016, having checked 7 merchant vessels and queried 122 in this framework.

The operation is headquartered in Rome, Italy.

[Factsheet on EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia](#)

[EU NAVFOR Med Operation Sophia \(EEAS website\)](#)

[EU NAVFOR Med Operation Sophia starts training of Libyan Navy Coast Guard and Libyan Navy \(press release - 27 October 2016\)](#)

[Finding solutions to migratory pressures](#)

Other items

The Council is due to take a number of decisions without discussion, including:

Iran

The Council is due to adopt conclusions on Iran, welcoming the fact that the JCPOA is being implemented by all sides and calling for a continued full and effective implementation throughout the lifetime of the agreement. The Council should express its will to further develop relations with Iran in areas of common interest, including human rights, as outlined in the April joint statement agreed between the High Representative and the Iranian Foreign Minister.

The Council is also expected to express its concern with the escalation of tensions in the region, to encourage a more constructive regional environment, as well as to end the violence in Syria and support the resumption of a political process.

[Iran: Council lifts all nuclear-related economic and financial EU sanctions](#)

[Council conclusions on the agreement on Iran's nuclear programme of 20 July 2015](#)

[EU restrictive measures against Iran](#)

[EU relations with Iran](#)

EU-wide strategic framework to support Security Sector Reform

The Council is expected to endorse the joint communication "Elements for an EU-wide strategic framework to support Security Sector Reform (SSR)". The Council is expected to call on all EU actors for a swift implementation of the EU SSR framework.

SSR provides foundations contributing to the establishment of effective democratic control and accountability of the security sector and is therefore relevant in all contexts - including stable ones - to improve governance and human security, and throughout the whole conflict cycle.

SSR is a key component of conflict prevention by addressing potential crisis factors, as well as of crisis management and conflict resolution, post-conflict stabilisation, peace-building and state-building by reinstating accountable security institutions and restoring effective security services to the population, thus providing the environment for sustainable development and peace.

Fifth review conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions welcoming the upcoming fifth review conference of the Convention on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects (CCW) taking place in Geneva from 12-16 December 2016.

The Council is expected to confirm that the conference represents an opportunity to keep the Convention responsive to new developments and strengthen its implementation.

The CCW is a unique international forum gathering diplomatic, legal and military expertise. It offers a flexible way to respond to new developments in weapons technologies and to support the implementation of an essential part of international humanitarian law which contributes to preventing and reducing the suffering of both civilians and combatants.