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President

Federica Mogherini

High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy

P R E S S

CONTENTS¹

ITEMS DEBATED

Syria and recent developments in the region	3
Iraq	4
Ukraine	5
Other business	6
- Bosnia and Herzegovina	6
Lunch	7

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

– Middle East Peace Process	8
– Libya.....	10
– Libya sanctions - consolidation	12
– Council of Europe - Priorities for cooperation	12
– EUCAP Sahel Mali - financial reference amount.....	12
– Support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention	12
– Council assessment on EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia	12

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.

ITEMS DEBATED

Syria and recent developments in the region

The Council held a discussion on Syria and related developments in the region.

The High Representative asked the relevant services to prepare and present proposals in the coming weeks giving temporary trade preferences to Jordan in order to help the country address the economic needs of refugees from Syria.

Ministers took stock of recent progress in diplomatic efforts to end the conflict and discussed preparations, including the EU's position, for a Syria donors conference taking place in London on 4 February 2016. The Syria donors conference has three main objectives: to increase available funding to the most affected countries, address the long-term economic needs of refugees in the region and the increased protection of civilians.

Following the third meeting of the International Syria Support Group on 18 December 2015, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2254, which endorses a “roadmap” for a peace process in Syria and sets a timetable for talks. Ministers emphasized their full support for United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 and discussed how the EU can best facilitate its implementation. They condemned the targeting of civilians and stressed the importance of UN-led confidence building measures, including humanitarian access and respect of ceasefires.

They also discussed recent developments between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Iraq

The Council held an exchange of views on Iraq following the adoption of conclusions on 14 December 2015.

It asked the relevant services to work on the operationalisation of options aimed at helping Iraq to reform its security sector and public administration.

In its December conclusions, the Council expressed its support for the reform and reconciliation process in Iraq, as well as the fight against Da'esh.

The Council discussed the EU's political and material support to the country's domestic reform agenda and the building of national reconciliation. The EU's activities in Iraq focus on three main areas: capacity building for government structures, support for security sector reform and support for minorities. For the 2014-2017 period, the EU has earmarked €78 million for strengthening human rights and the rule of law, improving primary and secondary education, and providing access to sustainable energy for all.

Ukraine

The Council discussed Ukraine, with a focus on the country's reform process.

It praised the reform process put into place by Ukraine in difficult circumstances and expressed its strong expectation that reforms will continue, in particular those related to the justice sector, public administration, decentralisation and the fight against corruption.

Ministers shared their views on how the EU could best support the reforms, shortly after provisional application of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) part of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement began on 1 January 2016. They agreed that the DCFTA is an opportunity that requires a common and joint effort if the full benefits are to be felt by both sides.

The EU has been providing increased support for Ukraine's reform process, through a €12.8 billion support package. Since 2014, the EU and European financial institutions have provided financial support of over €7 billion. On 2 December 2015, a new EU programme in support of decentralisation worth €97 million (€90 million from the EU budget, €6 million from Germany and €1 million from Poland) was adopted.

Other business

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The Council discussed the possible submission by Bosnia and Herzegovina of an application to join the European Union.

On the margins of the Council:

Lunch

Over lunch, ministers held an exchange of views with the Jordanian foreign minister, Nasser Judeh, on foreign policy challenges in the region.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**FOREIGN AFFAIRS****Middle East Peace Process**

The Council approved the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council is deeply concerned that the continuing cycle of violence has led to a serious loss of human life in Israel and the Palestinian territory in recent months. The EU firmly condemns the terror attacks and violence from all sides and in any circumstances, including the death of children. The EU calls on political leaders to work together through visible actions to contribute to calm and address the underlying causes of the tensions. The EU recalls the special significance of the holy sites, and calls for upholding the status quo put in place in 1967 for the Temple Mount / al-Haram al-Sharif in line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan's special role.
2. The EU urges all parties to refrain from any action that would worsen the situation by way of incitement or provocation and calls on the parties to condemn attacks when they occur and adhere strictly to the principles of necessity and proportionality in the use of force. It commends both sides for upholding security coordination in the light of an extremely challenging situation. The EU welcomes progress on the Duma investigation and calls for Israel to hold all perpetrators of settler violence to account. The EU also calls on both sides to jointly and resolutely fight incitement and hate speech, for instance by establishing a mechanism to consult on incitement along the lines of their previous commitments.
3. The EU is convinced that only the reestablishment of a political horizon and the resumption of dialogue can stop the violence. Security measures alone cannot stop the cycle of violence. The underlying causes of the conflict need to be addressed. The EU reaffirms its support to the Quartet calls for significant transformative steps to be taken, consistent with the transition envisaged by prior agreements, in order to restore confidence and rebuild trust. The EU urges both sides to implement these measures at the earliest juncture possible. A fundamental change of policy by Israel with regard to the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Area C, will significantly increase economic opportunities, empower Palestinian institutions and enhance stability and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.
4. The EU is united in its commitment to achieving a two-state solution - based on parameters set out in the Council Conclusions of July 2014 - that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967, and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict. It strongly opposes all actions that undermine the viability of the two state solution and urges both sides to demonstrate, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to a two-state solution in order to rebuild trust and create a path back to meaningful negotiations. To this end, the EU will continue to closely monitor developments on the ground and their broader implications and will consider further action in order to protect the viability of the two-state solution, which is constantly eroded by new facts on the ground.

5. Securing a just and lasting peace, ending all claims, will require an increased common international effort. The EU, including through the action of its Special Representative, will work actively with all relevant stakeholders, including partners in the Quartet, notably the United States, in the region and in the United Nations Security Council, towards a renewed multilateral approach to the peace process. Recalling the spirit of dialogue and cooperation that presided over the Madrid Conference 25 years ago, the establishment of an International Support Group and a further international conference are both possible ways to contribute to this end. The EU recalls its willingness to engage further with regional partners on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative which provides key elements for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as the opportunity for building a regional security framework.
6. The EU recalls that compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law by states and non-state actors, including accountability, is a cornerstone for peace and security in the region. The EU calls for the protection of children, including ensuring the right to education in a safe and secure school environment. The Council highlights the importance of unhindered work of civil society both in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory and follows recent developments in this regard with concern.
7. Recalling that settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two state solution impossible, the EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscation - including of EU funded projects - evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins, illegal outposts and restrictions of movement and access. It urges Israel to end all settlement activity and to dismantle the outposts erected since March 2001, in line with prior obligations. Settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States.
8. The EU and its Member States are committed to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlements products. The EU expresses its commitment to ensure that - in line with international law - all agreements between the State of Israel and the EU must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. This does not constitute a boycott of Israel which the EU strongly opposes.
9. The EU urges all Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process which is an important element for reaching the two state solution. The EU will continue its support to Palestinian aspirations for Statehood. It is of the utmost importance that the positive results of the past are not lost and Palestinian institutions must continue to grow stronger, more transparent, more accountable and more democratic. The EU calls upon the government to work towards genuine and democratic elections for all Palestinians. Strong, inclusive and democratic institutions, based on respect of the rule of law and human rights, are crucial in view of the establishment of a viable and sovereign Palestinian State. To this end, the EU calls on all Palestinian factions to find common ground and to work together to address the needs of the Palestinian population."

Libya

The Council approved the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU fully supports the Libyan Political Agreement that was signed on 17 December 2015. It welcomes the formation of the Presidency Council, presided by Fayyez al-Sarraj. The EU recalls the endorsement of the Rome Communiqué of 13 December 2015 by the Security Council through Resolution 2259, adopted unanimously on 23 December 2015. The EU and its Member States will support the Government of National Accord (GNA) as the sole legitimate government of Libya and urges all Libyan institutions, including financial and economic ones, to accept the authority of the GNA. The EU recalls that Resolution 2259 calls upon all UN Member States to cease support to and official contact with parallel institutions that claim to be the legitimate authority but are outside of the Agreement as specified by it.
2. The EU underlines Libyan ownership of the political process and the importance of its continued inclusiveness, including through the continued participation of women, civil society, political and local actors. The EU strongly encourages all parties in Libya to seize this opportunity to endorse the Agreement and participate in the process. Those who hamper the implementation of the political agreement shall be held accountable.
3. The EU commends the work of and reaffirms its full support to the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General.
4. The EU calls for the timely adoption of the amendment of the constitutional declaration of 2011 and urges the Presidency Council to form the GNA, to be approved by the House of Representatives as foreseen in the Libyan Political Agreement. The EU welcomes the decision to establish a Temporary Security Committee to facilitate the implementation of the security arrangements outlined in the Libyan Political Agreement and calls on all Libyan actors to support and collaborate with the Committee. It underlines the urgent need to finalize the security arrangements for Tripoli.
5. The EU strongly condemns the recent terrorist attacks in Zliten and against oil installations in Libya, and all attempts to disrupt the stabilisation of the country. These attacks and the growing presence of Daesh and other extremist groups underline the urgent need for the implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement and particularly for the formation of the GNA as the only way for Libya to take the path of peace, stability and prosperity, and to tackle effectively the threats and challenges to Libya, including terrorism and human trafficking, while preserving its unity. The EU stands ready to support Libya in the fight against violent extremism.

6. The EU and its member States reiterate its full commitment to support Libya and to accompany the full implementation of the agreement, working in close partnership with the GNA once it is formed. The EU has a package of immediate and substantial support totalling 100m€ in a number of different areas. The implementation and pacing of individual actions will be prioritised in close coordination with the Libyan authorities as discussed by the High Representative together with the Presidency Council in their meeting of 8 January 2016. The EU will continue to provide aid through humanitarian organisations in a principled manner as well as short-term assistance to the direct benefit of the Libyan population in need; improved security conditions on the ground would facilitate its provision. The EU is also ready to consider support to the Libyan authorities, should they request it, in security sector reform, notably through training and advice.
7. The EU calls on all parties in Libya to ensure unhindered humanitarian access and security of humanitarian aid workers in order to facilitate the assistance and protection of civilians in need. The EU calls for further efforts to address the worsening humanitarian situation. In this regard the EU welcomes the UN humanitarian response plan."

Libya sanctions - consolidation

The Council adopted a regulation concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Libya. The regulation consolidates, for the sake of clarity, regulation 204/2011 as amended and implemented by a number of subsequent regulations, into a new regulation.

Council of Europe - Priorities for cooperation

The Council adopted the [EU priorities for cooperation with the Council of Europe in 2016-2017](#).

EUCAP Sahel Mali - financial reference amount

The Council set a financial reference amount of €14 850 000 to cover the expenditure related to the EU's CSDP mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali) between 15 January 2016 and 14 January 2017.

EUCAP Sahel Mali was launched on 15 January 2015. It has a mandate of 24 months.

Support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

The Council adopted a decision supporting the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). The decision operationalises elements of the EU's strategy against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and sets the implementation budget at €2 340 000.

Council assessment on EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia

The Council concluded that all the conditions have been met for EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia to implement UN Security Council Resolution 2240 on the high seas, in accordance with Council decision (CFSP) 2015/778. Operation Sophia is authorised to conduct boarding, search, seizure and diversion of vessels suspected of being used for human smuggling or trafficking on the high seas off the coast of Libya.