



FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Monday 18 January in Brussels

The Council, starting at 10.00, will be chaired by Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

It will start with a discussion on **Syria and recent developments in the wider region**.

The Council will then hold a debate on **Iraq**, following up on its conclusions from 14 December 2015 and discussing their implementation. The Council will take stock of the EU's political and material support to the Iraqi reform process and national reconciliation.

Over **lunch**, ministers will hold an exchange of views with the **Jordanian foreign minister**, Nasser Judeh, discussing foreign policy challenges in the region.

In the afternoon, the Council will discuss **Ukraine**, focusing on how the EU can support the country's domestic reform agenda.

Press conferences on Monday 18 January:

+/- 16.30 Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council

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Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu>

Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery on: www.eucouncil.tv

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

Syria and recent developments in the region

The Council will hold a comprehensive discussion on Syria and related developments in the region.

Ministers will take stock of recent progress in diplomatic efforts to end the conflict and discuss preparations for the Syria donors conference. They will discuss recent developments between Saudi Arabia and Iran, including how the EU can help de-escalate the situation.

Following the third meeting of the International Syria Support Group on 18 December 2015, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2254. The EU has been actively engaged in the International Syria Support Group and supports the Vienna peace process. Resolution 2254 endorses a “roadmap” for a peace process in Syria and sets a timetable for talks. Ministers will discuss how the EU can best facilitate implementation of resolution 2254 and support UN-led confidence-building measures, including humanitarian access and the respect of ceasefires.

The Council will be asked to coordinate the EU's position ahead of the Syria donors conference. The conference, taking place in London on 4 February 2016, 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.

The EU approach to the Syrian crisis has two tracks: the search for a political solution to end the long-running conflict, under the UN framework, and the fight against Da'esh and other terrorist organisations. The EU is also fully engaged in addressing the humanitarian aspects.

On the political process, the EU continues to support the efforts of UN special envoy Staffan de Mistura to achieve a peaceful inclusive transition for Syria.

Regarding the fight against terrorism, the EU is implementing a regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Da'esh threat, adopted in March 2015. The EU itself is not involved in military activities, but is participating in the coalition with complementary activities that contribute to the fight against Da'esh and terrorist organisations in Syria and in Iraq. The EU's engagement goes from reducing the threat of radicalisation and the recruitment of new foreign terrorist fighters in European countries to working to stop the flow of revenues to Da'esh

On the humanitarian side, the EU is the leading donor in the response to the Syria crisis with a total of more than €5 billion mobilised since 2011 by the Commission and EU member states collectively in humanitarian, development and stabilisation assistance inside Syria and to Syrian refugees and their host communities in neighbouring countries. The EU trust fund established in 2015 in response to the crisis, the Madad fund, is now equipped with over €500 million mostly from the EU budget, an amount expected to double by additional contributions from EU member states and other donors.

More than 13.5 million Syrians – more than half of the population inside Syria - are in need of urgent assistance. Half of the population has been displaced internally or to neighbouring countries. More than four million Syrians have fled Syria and become refugees in neighbouring countries, mostly in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan.

[European Council conclusions on external relations, 17-18 December 2015](#)

[Council conclusions of 16 March on the EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Da'esh threat](#)

[EU's relations with Syria \(EEAS website\)](#)

Iraq

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

It will discuss 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, support for security sector reform and support for minorities. For the 2014-2020 period, the EU has earmarked €75 million for strengthening human rights and the rule of law, improving primary and secondary education, and providing access to sustainable energy for all.

The Council will hold a debate on the fight against Da'esh and the challenges lying ahead. On 14 December, the Council welcomed progress in the fight against Da'esh throughout 2015 by the Iraqi security forces, including the Peshmerga. Subsequently, before the end of the year, the Iraqi forces retook Ramadi from Da'esh control.

The EU has been closely involved in Iraq's recovery and reconstruction, contributing over €1bn, including humanitarian aid, since 2003. EU development aid has supported democracy, good governance, human rights, economic growth and poverty reduction by strengthening capacity and institutions in the areas of criminal justice, basic services, elections and civil society organisations.

In May 2012, the EU and Iraq signed a partnership and cooperation agreement. The agreement marks the first-ever contractual relationship between the EU and Iraq. It provides a framework for advancing dialogue and cooperation, including for political and social issues, human rights, the rule of law, migration, the environment, trade, culture, energy, transport and security.

[Council Conclusions on Iraq, 14/12/2015](#)

[EU relations with Iraq \(EEAS website\)](#)

Ukraine

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

Ministers will be asked to give their views on how the EU can best support the reforms, shortly after provisional application began on 1 January 2016 of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) part of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. The second EU-Ukraine Association Council, held on 7 December 2015, acknowledged the importance of further accelerating reforms in the following areas: the constitution, the fight against corruption, the justice system, public administration, electoral legislation, decentralisation, the civilian security sector, energy, public finance management and the business climate.

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 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.

Cooperation with Ukraine takes place within the context of the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP), one of the two dimensions of the European Neighbourhood Policy. It sets out to promote political association and economic integration 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 the commitment to a market economy. Ukraine signed its association agreement with the EU, including the DCFTA, in March and June 2014. Large parts of the agreement have been provisionally applied as of 1 November 2014.

[Joint Press Release following the Association Council meeting between the European Union and Ukraine, 07/12/2015](#)

[EU relations with Ukraine](#)

[EU announces more than €100 million for Ukraine to support decentralisation reform and re-enforcement of local governance, 7 December 2015 \(European Commission website\)](#)

Other items

The Council is expected to take a number of decisions without discussion ("A-items"), including:

Middle East Peace Process

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the Middle East peace process.

The EU's objective is to reach a solution to the conflict on the basis of two states (Israel and Palestine) living side by side in peace and security and in good relations with their neighbours. The recent political and security developments, marked by increased violence, are a source of great concern.

The Council conclusions are expected to reaffirm the EU's unity and commitment to work with all sides for a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

[Council conclusions on the Middle East peace process, 20 July 2015](#)
[The EU and the Middle East peace process \(EEAS website\)](#)

Libya

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Libya.

The EU fully supports the Libyan Political Agreement of 8 October 2015 and the results of the international conference in Rome on 13 December 2015, which backed the formation of a national unity government in Libya and pledged economic and security support to help stabilise the country.

The Libyan political dialogue and efforts to find an agreement on a national unity government are on-going. The EU has expressed its readiness to work with the Government of National Accord, once it is formed, to offer immediate and substantial support in a number of different areas, defined together with the Libyan authorities.

The conclusions are expected to confirm the EU's position and readiness to provide economic and security support to help stabilise the country.

[Council conclusions on Libya, 12/10/2015](#)

[Remarks by HRVP Federica MOGHERINI following the meeting with the Libyan Presidency Council and with Libyan Designate-Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, 08/01/2016](#)