



## **FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL**

### **Monday 20 June in Luxembourg**

The Council, starting at 9.30, will be chaired by Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. It will discuss the **integrated EU policy for the Arctic** and adopt conclusions.

Foreign Affairs ministers will then review the situation in **Sahel**, taking stock of the **EU comprehensive approach to security and development** in the region. The High Representative will notably brief ministers on the Sahel G5 ministerial meeting of 17 June in Brussels.

Over lunch, ministers will discuss the **Middle East peace process**, as a follow up of the international conference which was held in Paris on 3 June. The Council is also expected to adopt conclusions.

The Council will exchange views on the recent political developments in the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**.

The Council will finally discuss visa liberalisation in the context of **EU-Georgia relations**.

In the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council, the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Council will take place at 17.30, chaired by Bert Koenders, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

#### Press opportunities on Monday 20 June:

|               |                                                                                    |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| +/- 09.20     | Doorstep statement by High Representative Federica Mogherini                       |
| +/- 16.30     | Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council                             |
| +/- 19.30 TBC | Press conference following the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Council |

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

## Arctic

The Council will discuss the joint communication on an **integrated EU policy for the Arctic** issued in April 2016 with a view to set out a coherent response to the environmental, economic and social challenges of the region. The joint communication follows the request by the Council to present proposals for further development of an integrated and coherent EU Arctic policy (Council conclusions, 12 May 2014). The Council is expected to adopt **conclusions**.

The European Union will step up its existing action and engagement, particularly in the **European Arctic**, with three EU Member States being members of the Arctic Council (Denmark, Finland and Sweden). The joint communication has three main areas of focus: 1) climate change and safeguarding of the environment, 2) sustainable development and 3) promoting international cooperation. Across these areas, research, science and innovation will be of key importance.

**Climate change** is affecting the Arctic severely with temperatures rising at twice the rate of the global average. The Arctic is thus already undergoing important environmental transformations affecting the people living there. These Arctic transformations also, in part, affect surrounding regions for instance with regard to weather patterns. Transformations in and around the Arctic also produce changes in areas such as tourism, fisheries, access to resources as well as demand for increased telecommunications capacity across the circumpolar Arctic.

For the EU it is therefore an important objective to contribute to **enhancing socio-economic resilience** in the Arctic region, which is home to **4 million inhabitants**, while also enhancing environmental resilience.

The EU acknowledges that the **Arctic States** carry the primary responsibility for tackling many issues within their territories. But a range of issues run across borders and in such contexts, regional and multilateral cooperation and solutions are essential. In such fora, the EU and its member states play a major role.

The joint communication reaffirms the EU's role in the Arctic region and the commitment of the EU to contribute to maintaining the Arctic as a zone of constructive dialogue and cooperation with all Arctic States. The EU will also cooperate with non-Arctic States who are engaging in Arctic matters as well as with non-State parties including international organisations, indigenous peoples, civil society and business representatives.

[Joint communication - An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic](#)

[Commission press release on the joint communication - 27 April 2016](#)

[EU Arctic policy \(EEAS website\)](#)

[Council conclusions on developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region of 12 May 2014](#)

# Sahel

The Council will discuss the EU **comprehensive approach to security and development** in the Sahel region. The High Representative will brief ministers on the second **EU - G5 Sahel ministerial meeting** that took place in Brussels on 17 June. The Council is expected to adopt **conclusions**, with a view to sending a strong message of EU commitment to the region.

The Sahel G5 comprises Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad. Over the past year, the EU has increasingly engaged with the Sahel G5, adopting an EU-G5 Sahel Roadmap during the Summit in Ndjamená on 20 November 2015.

Ministers will discuss **how to strengthen the political dialogue and partnership** and engage further with G5 countries on security and migration, including possibly through strengthening the regional dimension of ongoing **CSDP** missions (EUCAP Sahel Mali, EUCAP Sahel Niger, EUTM Mali).

Ministers will underline the importance of the full implementation of the **Mali peace agreement**, exactly one year after its signature. Being of key importance for security in the region, stability in Mali is critical for the Sahel. The EU will continue a high level of engagement and support in Mali using a wide spectrum of instruments.

The stability of the Sahel region is an important priority for Europe and the EU is committed to strengthening security and tackling the root causes of poverty in the region with the framework of its comprehensive approach. The region faces a number of significant challenges: spread of terrorism, extreme poverty, institutional weaknesses, exposure to climate change, fragile governance, radicalisation and violent extremism.

These challenges lead to **irregular migration** and related crimes such as trafficking of human beings and smuggling of migrants, with many - often young - people engaging in perilous journeys **towards Europe through Libya** and the Central Mediterranean route.

In 2016, the EU's development cooperation in the Sahel will include EUR 1.5 billion from the European Development Fund committed to new actions in the G5 Sahel countries as well as EUR 1.2 billion from the Valletta Emergency Trust Fund for Africa for additional projects. The EU has a special representative for the region, M. Angel Losada since December 2015.

[The EU and the Sahel - Factsheet](#)

[Council conclusions on the Sahel Regional Action Plan 2015-2020 of 20 April 2015](#)

CSDP missions in Sahel: [EUCAP Sahel Mali](#), [EUCAP Sahel Niger](#), [EUTM Mali](#)

## **The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

Ministers will exchange views on the recent political developments in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The situation had deteriorated following the announcement on 12 April of President Ivanov's decision to pardon 56 officials subject to investigation in connection with the wiretapping scandal. On 6 June, President Ivanov finally rescinded all pardons, allowing justice again to run its course and the special prosecutor to continue her work. The EU has welcomed this decision, underlining the critical necessity to take action on the urgent reform priorities and bring the country back on the path of law.

In May 2015, the revelations by the opposition on the existence of a wiretapping scandal triggered a political crisis in the country. On 2 June and 15 July, the Przino agreement, facilitated by the EU, saw the four main political parties commit themselves, inter alia, to respecting the rule of law, supporting the work of the special prosecutor, implementing the urgent reform priorities and working on conditions for credible elections.

[Statement by Commissioner Johannes Hahn on President Ivanov rescinding the pardons issued in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#)

[EU relations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia \(EEAS website\)](#)

## **Middle East Peace Process**

Over lunch, ministers will discuss the Middle East peace process in light of the ministerial meeting on a Middle East peace initiative which took place in Paris on 3 June 2016. After the discussion, the Council will adopt conclusions.

In its conclusions on the Middle East peace process adopted on 18 January 2016, the Council reaffirmed its support to calls by the Quartet for significant transformative steps, based on prior agreements, to be taken to restore confidence, de-escalate the ongoing violence and rebuild mutual trust. The EU recalled its willingness to engage further with its partners, including within the region, on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, towards a renewed multilateral approach to the peace process. EU Foreign ministers had their last discussion on the Middle East peace process in their Council meeting of 14 March 2016.

The EU is united in its commitment to achieve a two-state solution that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ending the occupation that began in 1967, and resolving all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict. Recent political and security developments, marked by increased violence and loss of innocents lives, remain a source of particular concern.

[Middle East Peace initiative - Joint communiqué, Paris, 03/06/2016](#)

[Council Conclusions on the Middle East peace process, 18/01/2016](#)

[The EU and the Middle East peace process \(EEAS website\)](#)

## **Visa liberalisation in the context of EU-Georgia relations**

The Council will discuss visa liberalisation in the context of EU-Georgia relations, focusing on possible external policy implications.

This discussion follows the general debate on visa policy held in the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting of 10 June during which there was not yet support for adopting a mandate to start the negotiations with the European Parliament on the proposal regarding visa liberalisation for Georgia.

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

## Other items

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

### **EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia**

The Council could adopt the legal decision extending the mandate of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia by one year and reinforcing it by adding two supporting tasks:

- capacity building and training of, and information sharing with, the Libyan coastguard and navy, as the legitimate Libyan authorities have expressed their readiness in this regard;
- contributing to information sharing, as well as implementation of the UN arms embargo on the high seas off the coast of Libya on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 2292.

This decision would formalise the political intent outlined in the Council conclusions of 23 May.

Since the operation had moved to the second phase of its mandate at high seas which enables the identification, capture and disposal of vessels used or suspected of being used by migrants' smugglers or traffickers, it has contributed to the arrest and transfer to the Italian authorities of 71 suspected smugglers and traffickers. The operation has also neutralised 139 vessels. In addition, the operation has helped save close to 16 000 lives.

[Council conclusions on EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia of 23 May 2016](#)  
[Statement by the High Representative on the adoption of Resolution 2292 by the UN Security Council of 14 June 2016](#)

### **Myanmar (Burma)**

The Council is due to adopt conclusions on an EU strategy vis-à-vis Myanmar (Burma), welcoming the credible elections that took place in November 2015 and thereby allowing a peaceful transfer of power in the country and the consolidation of democracy. The Council is expected to welcome the joint communication "Elements for an EU strategy vis-à-vis Myanmar/Burma: a special partnership for democracy, peace and prosperity" which lays out a plan for a coherent, ambitious and forward-looking EU engagement and intensified cooperation with the country in its transition process.

[Joint communication "Elements for an EU strategy vis-à-vis Myanmar/Burma: a special partnership for democracy, peace and prosperity"](#)

### **Economic partnership agreement with the East African Community**

The Council is expected to authorise, on behalf of the EU, the signature and provisional application of the economic partnership agreement (EPA) between the EU and the East African Community (EAC). The East African Community comprises Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. After that, in the margin of the Council, EU member states will be invited to pre-sign the EPA.

### **Child labour**

Two days ahead of the world day against child labour, the Council is expected to adopt conclusions on child labour, reaffirming its strong commitment to ensuring every child is protected from child labour including its worst forms and stressing the importance of eradicating the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict including child soldiers. The Council is due to underline the important role of workers' and employers' organisations, civil society, and the various new and ongoing public-private partnerships in addressing child labour and the importance of mainstreaming child labour in national action plans.

## **Business and human rights**

On the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the UN guiding principles on business and human rights (UNGPs), the main comprehensive framework providing the international community with the tools to address human rights violations by business, the Council is expected to adopt conclusions on business and human rights. The Council is due to reaffirm the EU strong and active engagement to prevent abuses and ensure remedy worldwide, and to ensure the UNGPs' implementation. Member states are in the forefront as regards in particular preparing national action plans on the promotion and implementation of the UNGPs. The Commission is working on an EU action plan on responsible business conduct.

## **Annual report on human rights - thematic part**

The Council is due to adopt the thematic part of the EU annual report on human rights and democracy in the world in 2015. The report will underline that 2015 has been a year of challenges for the EU and the international community at large, it will describe the EU human rights approach to conflicts and crisis, how the EU addresses the main human rights and democracy challenges worldwide, and how human rights are mainstreamed throughout EU external policies, including trade and development cooperation.

## **Food and nutrition security**

The Council is set to adopt conclusions on food and nutrition security. Substantial progress has been made to improve global food security, as the global hunger index shows that the level of hunger has fallen by 27% since 2000. However the total number of people chronically undernourished is still at 795 million. The Council is set to express the need to keep global food and nutrition security at the forefront of the EU development cooperation agenda and to further improve EU and member states coordination in tackling food and nutrition security challenges, notably through joint programming.

[Second biennial report by the Commission on "Implementing EU food and nutrition security policy commitments"](#)

# **In the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council**

## **EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Council**

The seventh meeting of the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Council will take place at 17.30 and will be chaired by Bert Koenders, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. The Stabilisation and Association Council will review progress in EU-Montenegro relations and take stock of the accession process, following the publication of the Commission's latest report in November 2015. The Stabilisation and Association Council is also expected to hold an exchange of views on the developments in the Western Balkans. As regards to the accession strategy, the EU is expected to encourage Montenegro to continue its efforts on the political criteria for accession, including the rule of law, public administration reform and implementation of the electoral legislation. The Stabilisation and Association Council is also due to discuss the economic criteria, the alignment to the *acquis communautaire* as well as pre-accession assistance.

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement between Montenegro and the EU entered into force in May 2010. The EU granted Montenegro the status of candidate country in December 2010. Accession negotiations were opened in June 2012.

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