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Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg, 18 and 19 April 2016

President **Federica Mogherini**
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy

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- 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

FOREIGN AFFAIRS ITEMS

External aspects of migration

The Council discussed the EU's activities relating to the external aspects of migration. It agreed on the need to put more focus on both the Eastern and the Central Mediterranean routes. It assessed progress in implementing the EU's agreement with Turkey, and also reviewed EU measures and initiatives taken on the Central Mediterranean route.

Ministers underlined actions on the fight against traffickers and smugglers, notably with the EU naval operation EUNAVFOR MED Sophia, the EU's support to Africa through the Emergency Trust Fund, the launch of a series of comprehensive high level dialogues on migration with African countries and the work with countries of the G5 Sahel.

The High Representative informed the Council that over the last six months, the EU's naval operation in the Mediterranean Sea had saved 13000 lives, arrested 68 smugglers and neutralised 100 vessels.

Eastern Partnership

The Council discussed political developments in the Eastern partner countries and how best to take forward the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP), ahead of the annual EaP ministerial meeting on 23 May 2016.

To prepare the ministerial meeting, the Council assessed the EaP framework in the context of increased differentiation of bilateral relations; ways to support EaP countries to continue reforms; and how the EaP can contribute to strengthening stability in the region. It emphasized the importance of implementing reform commitments.

The fourth Eastern Partnership summit was held in Riga on 21-22 May 2015. It reconfirmed the strategic importance the EU attaches to the EaP and demonstrated strong engagement and a firm determination to pursue closer, tailor-made relations with the six partner countries.

Since the 2015 Summit, and with a view to the next EaP Summit in 2017, cooperation in the EaP has been focusing on 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 the EaP partners, as also provided for by the European Neighbourhood Policy review, which also focuses on stability.

Libya

The Council approved the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU welcomes the arrival of the Presidency Council in Tripoli on 30 March 2016 and commends the courage and determination of Prime Minister Serraj, the other members of the Presidency Council and supporting actors on the ground. This move helps pave the way for the effective government of the country by the Government of National Accord (GNA) and for addressing the needs of the Libyan people.
2. The success of the GNA will depend on the collective efforts and cooperation of the Libyan people and their leaders. The EU underlines the Libyan ownership of the political process and the importance of its inclusiveness, notably through the continued participation of political and local actors, women and civil society. The EU, alongside Libya's neighbouring countries, the UN and the international community, stands ready to support the GNA, at its request, to help it restore peace and stability in Libya.
3. The Libyan Political Agreement, signed in Skhirat on 17 December 2015, endorsed by the UN Security Council through Resolution 2259 adopted unanimously on 23 December 2015, remains the basis for political progress in Libya. The Libyan Political Agreement has been fully supported by the EU, which considers the GNA as the sole legitimate government in Libya. The EU calls upon all stakeholders, particularly those in the region, to continue to urge all parties in Libya to engage constructively with the GNA and all other institutions included in the Libyan Political Agreement. The EU stresses that UNSCR 2259 includes a call to cease support to and official contact with parallel institutions that claim to have legitimate authority but are outside the Agreement.
4. The EU welcomes the acknowledgement of the authority of the GNA by various national institutions, including the Central Bank, the National Oil Company, and the Libyan Investment Authority, as well as Libyan municipalities. It looks forward to the immediate, orderly and peaceful transfer of power to the GNA, and urges existing militias and armed groups to respect its authority. In this respect, the EU urges the House of Representatives and other institutions, including the nascent State Council, to fulfil the roles assigned to them under the Libyan Political Agreement.
5. The EU reaffirms its full support to the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General Martin Kobler in their efforts to ensure the full implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement by all parties, and will continue to actively support their work.

6. The EU has implemented restrictive measures against three individuals who have obstructed the implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement and the political transition. The EU will review its restrictive measures should their behaviour change and, if necessary, may introduce additional restrictive measures against other individuals who threaten the peace, stability or security in Libya, or who undermine its political transition.
7. The EU reiterates its commitment to fully provide a package of immediate and substantial measures in support of the GNA and the Libyan people totalling €100m in a number of different areas, to be defined and prioritised in close cooperation with the GNA and in coordination with UNSMIL. The EU welcomes the meeting co-chaired in Tunis on 12 April by UNSMIL and the UK on how the international community can support the priorities set out by the GNA to bring peace, security, stability and prosperity to the Libyan people. In this respect, the newly established Stabilisation Facility for Libya will be an important tool. The EU continues to provide short-term assistance through various funding instruments, including via support to municipalities and the provision of essential services to the Libyan population in need. Improved security conditions on the ground would facilitate the effective delivery of EU assistance. The EU stands ready to support the GNA in managing migration and asylum, in close coordination with UNHCR and IOM, taking into account the outcome of the Valletta Summit.
8. The EU strongly condemns all attempts to disrupt the stabilization of Libya and reiterates its grave concern at the growing threat of terrorism including by Daesh and affiliates. This threat highlights the urgent need for the GNA to unite Libyan forces from all regions as the only way for Libya to take the path of peace, stability and prosperity, while preserving its unity and territorial integrity.
9. The EU stands ready to offer security sector support in response to possible GNA requests. Should a Libyan request be forthcoming and following consultations with the Libyans, a possible civilian CSDP mission could support Libyan efforts inter alia through advice and capacity building in the fields of police and criminal justice including on counter-terrorism, border management, countering irregular migration and smuggling of migrants and trafficking of human beings, as part of broader Security Sector Reform support. This possible mission could draw upon the existing planning capacity of EUBAM Libya. In addition to the possible civilian mission, further consideration will also be given to support that can be provided through EUNAVFOR MED Sophia, by enhancing its capacity to disrupt the business model of human smugglers and trafficking networks and to contribute to broader security in support to the legitimate Libyan authorities, for example through potential capacity building for the Libyan Coastguard, and the implementation of international law. The EU will ensure that its contribution responds to the requests and needs of the Libyan authorities guaranteeing full Libyan ownership, and is coordinated and coherent with other international support under the overall coordination of UNSMIL. Furthermore, the EU recognises the importance of the security of Libya's borders for regional and European security. In this regard, the EU will consider ways of enhancing its regional support, including through existing CSDP activities in the Sahel.

10. The EU reaffirms its strong condemnation of all human rights violations and abuses in Libya. The EU will strongly support the GNA in the protection and the promotion of human rights.
11. The EU is deeply concerned with the deteriorating humanitarian situation and calls for urgent efforts to address the situation in the most affected areas, including Benghazi. In this regard, the EU welcomes the UN humanitarian response plan and stands ready to provide further assistance. 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."

DEFENCE ITEMS

European Defence Agency Steering Board

Defence ministers met in the format of the European Defence Agency (EDA) steering board, under the chairmanship of Federica Mogherini as the head of the agency. All member states except Denmark participate.

Ministers discussed the implementation of the policy framework for long-term and systematic cooperation, endorsed by member states in November 2014, on the basis of an interim report prepared by the EDA. A full report will be conducted by the agency and the EEAS in autumn 2017. The interim report was compiled by the EDA on the basis of questionnaires sent to and completed by member states. It highlights that they in general support the policy framework and its objective to provide a coherent basis for defence cooperation in Europe, from priority setting through to in-service support.

Ministers also discussed strategic autonomy considerations based on an EDA food for thought paper on implications of Europe's strategic autonomy on CSDP.

The agency updated ministers on the progress achieved on a number of topics including the four key capability programmes (air-to-air refuelling, governmental satellite communications, cyber defence and remotely piloted aircraft systems RPAS), research, incentives for defence cooperation and efforts aimed at countering hybrid threats.

Finally, ministers adopted a range of recommendations for the implementation of key tasking and next steps in defence capabilities cooperation.

Hybrid threats

The Council approved the following conclusions:

- "1. The increasing use of hybrid strategies and operations by state and non-state actors in the immediate and wider EU neighbourhood requires swift and appropriate action to prevent and counter hybrid threats to the Union and its Member States as well as partners. The Council underlines the need to mobilise EU instruments to this end, in line with the Conclusions by the European Council of June 2015 and the Council Conclusions on CSDP of May 2015, while recognising the primary responsibility of Member States for security and defence and taking into account relevant ongoing work as regards both internal and external policies.
2. In this context, the Council welcomes the Joint Communication on countering hybrid threats and fostering resilience of the EU and its Member States as well as partners. It invites the relevant Council instances, the European Defence Agency and other relevant bodies to examine, in a timely and coherent manner, the proposed actions, with due respect for respective procedures and the competences of the Member States, the Commission and the High Representative, ensuring a cross-sectoral approach and appropriate follow-up. The Council also invites Member States to consider establishing a European Centre of Excellence.
3. The Council welcomes the intention of the High Representative to create an EU Hybrid Fusion Cell, and highlights the possible CSDP contributions to countering hybrid threats and the need for closer dialogue, cooperation and coordination with NATO, respecting the principles of inclusiveness and autonomy of decision-making of each organisation, as well as with other partner organisations.
4. The Council invites the Commission and the High Representative to provide a report by July 2017 to assess progress."

Capacity building in support of security and development

The Council discussed the EU's efforts to build capacities in support of security and development, in order to enable partner countries and regional organisations to prevent and manage crises by themselves.

The High Representative highlighted the political support in both the Council and the Commission for a legislative proposal on the funding modalities. She called for outstanding legal issues to be resolved as soon as possible, so that a proposal could be presented.

The High Representative informed ministers on progress in developing this policy, concrete projects and funding options. A public consultation launched on 1 April 2016 and ending on 27 May 2016 is expected to lead to a legislative proposal addressing these issues. The High Representative also outlined her plans towards a new EU-wide strategic framework for supporting security sector reform, in light of the tasking by the FAC in May 2015.

The Council discussion focused on the security-development nexus and on the question of a sustainable solution regarding the defence sector and the financing of equipment and infrastructure in third countries.

Other business

– ***Afghanistan***

Under "other business", the High Representative informed the Council that the EU will continue to support the Afghan civilian police beyond the end of this year.

Meetings in the margins of the Council

– ***EU-Tunisia Association Council***

[Joint statement by High Representative Federica Mogherini and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, Khemaies Jhinaoui.](#)

– ***Exchange of views with Colombian High Commissioner for Peace in Colombia, Sergio Jaramillo***

The Council started with an exchange of views with Colombian High Commissioner for Peace in Colombia, Sergio Jaramillo. EU Special Envoy for the peace process in Colombia, Eamon Gilmore, was also present. Member states pledged strong support for the peace process and emphasized the need for implementation of the peace agreement to lead to a sustainable peace. All member states were invited to participate in an EU trust fund established to help Colombia in its transition to peace.

– ***Lunch***

For lunch, ministers were joined by UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi for a discussion on the refugee and migration crisis.

– ***Dinner***

Ministers of foreign affairs and ministers of defence held an informal joint dinner to discuss the situation in Libya.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mission Support Platform

The Council approved the following conclusions:

"A stronger and more effective Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) remains essential in today's increasingly unpredictable and rapidly changing security environment. Recalling its CSDP conclusions of 18 May 2015, the Council welcomes the efforts to further enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of civilian CSDP through the establishment of a Mission Support Platform (MSP), aimed at improving the management, rapid deployment and efficient conduct of civilian crisis management missions. The MSP will be established in coordination between the Commission and the European External Action Service to provide support and bring forward greater efficiencies, flexibility and economies of scale to civilian CSDP missions.

The Council emphasises that the establishment of the MSP is a part of an effort to take forward a Shared Services Centre concept. The results that the MSP is expected to deliver shall be presented to the Council through regular reports on the impact of the MSP on improving the effectiveness of CSDP missions and financial benefits for the CFSP budget. The Council will reassess the performance of the MSP and its possible further evolution after two years at the latest."

ACP-EU Council of Ministers

The Council approved the agenda of the 41st session of the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, which will take place in Dakar (Senegal) on 28-29 April 2016.

European Union Special Representative - Middle East Peace Process

The Council adopted a decision extending the mandate of Fernando Gentilini as the European Union Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process until 28 February 2017. His mandate was set to expire on 30 April 2016.

European Union Special Representative - Central Asia

The Council adopted a decision extending the mandate of Peter Burian as the European Union Special Representative for Central Asia until 28 February 2017. His mandate was set to expire on 30 April 2016.

Temporary reception of certain Palestinians

The Council adopted a decision extending by 24 months, as of 31 January 2016, the validity of national permits for entry and stay granted by member states for the temporary reception of certain Palestinians.

Iran sanctions

The Council adopted a decision supplementing the statement of reasons for its restrictive measures against Bank Saderat Iran.

Force Catalogue 2015

The Council took note of the Force Catalogue 2015 and of its supplement agreed by the EU Military Committee.

COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

EUTM Central African Republic

The Council adopted a decision approving the launch of a military training mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) to contribute to the country's defence sector reform.

The mission will be based in Bangui and operate for an initial period of two years. Following up an EU military advisory mission (EUMAM RCA), it will work towards a modernised, effective and democratically accountable Central African Armed Forces (FACA). It will provide strategic advice to the CAR's Ministry of Defence, military staff and armed forces, as well as education and training to the FACA.

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

EU crisis management exercise MULTILAYER 2016

The Council agreed the exercise specifications for the EU crisis management exercise MULTILAYER 2016, which involves the exercising of different layers of the EEAS crisis response system and its interaction with other EU crisis response structures.

AGRICULTURE

Milk products - Ceilings for buying in skimmed milk powder and butter

On 15 April the Council adopted by written procedure a regulation doubling the current quantitative ceilings for buying in skimmed milk powder (SMP) and butter in the context of public intervention ([7801/16](#)).

The new measure increases to 218 000 tonnes for SMP and to 100 000 tonnes for butter, the quantitative limitations for the buying-in at a fixed price in 2016.

The regulation, which amends [regulation 1370/2013](#), seeks to help the milk sector in the prevailing severe market situation.

This measure is part of a broader package of support measures to European farmers announced at the Agriculture Council of 14 March ([7611/16](#)).

The regulation is published in the EU's [Official Journal of 19 April](#).
