



Council of the European Union

PRESS
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BACKGROUND¹
Brussels, 15 April 2016

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Monday 18 April in Luxembourg

The Council, starting at 11.00, will be chaired by Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. It will be preceded by a meeting of the **EU-Tunisia Association Council** at [9:15].

The Council will start with an exchange of views with **Colombian High Commissioner for Peace**, Sergio Jaramillo. The EU Special Envoy for the peace process in Colombia, Eamon Gilmore, will also be present.

The Council will then discuss the **external aspects of migration**.

Over **lunch**, ministers will be joined by **UN High Commissioner for Refugees** Filippo Grandi to discuss the refugee and migration crisis.

In the afternoon, the Council will hold a debate on the EU's regional strategy for **Syria and Iraq and the Da'esh threat**. It will then take stock of relations with the EU's **Eastern partners**.

At 19.00, ministers of foreign affairs and ministers of defence will have a video conference with the Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj before moving to an informal joint dinner to discuss the situation in Libya. Council Conclusions will be adopted.

Press conferences on Monday 18 March:

+/- 10.30 following the EU-Tunisia Association Council
+/- 17.30 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.

External aspects of migration

The High Representative will update the Council on the EU's recent activities related to the external aspects of migration. Ministers will hold an exchange of views on the issue, in preparation for their lunch with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Filippo Grandi.

Filippo Grandi took over from António Guterres as UNHCR on 1 January 2016.

On 7 March 2016, EU heads of state or government held a meeting with Turkey to strengthen their cooperation on the migration and refugee crisis. The two sides agreed that Turkey would take back all migrants and refugees, including Syrians, who reach Greece illegally by sea. For every Syrian refugee returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian refugee will be resettled from Turkey to the EU. The resettlement process is carried out with the support of UNHCR.

In response to the migratory and refugee crisis in Europe, the EU stepped up its engagement and has strengthened its cooperation with third countries on migration, at both bilateral and multilateral levels. Building on the Rabat and Khartoum processes, the Valletta Summit on migration in November 2015 brought together more than 60 leaders from the EU and Africa who adopted a joint declaration as well as a detailed action plan, which should now be implemented.

[Statement of 7 March 2016 of EU heads of state and government](#)

[European Council conclusions of 18 February 2016 on migration](#)

[Valletta Summit on migration, 11-12 November 2015](#)

EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq and the Da'esh threat

The High Representative will update ministers on implementation of the EU's regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Da'esh threat, ahead of a forthcoming review of the strategy.

Ministers will assess implementation of the strategy and discuss the way forward.

The strategy was adopted by the Council on 16 March 2015. It is based on Council conclusions and a joint communication of the European Commission and the High Representative.

The joint communication outlines actions to be undertaken by the EU and its member states to help restore peace and security in Syria and Iraq.

The conclusions underline that the fight against Da'esh and other terrorist groups must be conducted in parallel with the search for lasting political solutions. Da'esh, which has committed barbaric acts against the peoples of Syria and Iraq, poses a threat to the EU's partners in the Middle East, a threat to wider international security and to Europe directly. It has sponsored terrorist attacks on European soil and against EU citizens overseas. The conclusions state that the EU will use all its means to tackle the threat posed by ISIL/Da'esh and its violent ideology.

With regard to Syria and Iraq, the ministers will discuss the implementation of the main chapters of the EU strategy and the impact of ongoing humanitarian and stabilisation efforts, in particular with regard to containing the political process and the spillover of the Syrian crisis at regional level. Ministers will also discuss support to the political process and democratic governance in both Syria and Iraq as an essential element in defeating Da'esh, given that its growth was possible partially because of state failures. The ministers will give political steering for the review of EU strategic priorities in order to adapt them to the changing realities in Syria and in Iraq.

[EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/ Da'esh threat](#)

[Response to foreign terrorist fighters and recent terrorist attacks in Europe](#)

Eastern Partnership

The Council will discuss 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 EaP ministerial meeting, the Council will look at 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.

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.

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, the provisional application of which started on 1 January 2016.

The EU and Armenia recently opened negotiations on a new framework for deepening bilateral relations. The EU is also moving forward in its relationship with Azerbaijan. 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.

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine participate with the EU in the EaP, which 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.

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

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

[Eastern Partnership \(Council website\)](#)

[EU Relations with Eastern Partnership \(EEAS website\)](#)

[Fact sheet on EU-Armenia relations](#)

[Fact sheet on EU-Azerbaijan relations](#)

[Fact sheet on EU-Belarus relations](#)

[Fact sheet on EU-Georgia relations](#)

[Fact sheet on EU-Republic of Moldova relations](#)

[Fact sheet on EU-Ukraine relations](#)

Libya

Foreign affairs ministers will be joined for dinner by the ministers of defence to take stock of recent developments in Libya, including potential civilian security support and the evolution of EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA.

This will be preceded by a video conference with Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, followed by the adoption of Council conclusions.

On 23 December 2015, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2259, granting international legitimacy to the Libyan Political Agreement to form a Government of National Accord (GNA), made up of the Presidency Council and a Ministerial Cabinet, as the sole legitimate government of Libya.

In January 2016, the Council adopted conclusions expressing full support for the political agreement signed on 17 December 2015 and welcoming the formation of Libya's Presidency Council. The EU and its member states urged all parties to implement fully the Libyan Political Agreement and to work in close partnership with the GNA once it is formed.

[Council conclusions on Libya, 18/01/2016](#)

Other items

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

Mission support platform

The Council will adopt conclusions on the mission support platform. It will welcome efforts to further enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of civilian CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) through the establishment of the mission support platform (MSP), aimed at improving the management, rapid deployment and efficient conduct of civilian CSDP 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.

In the margins of the Council

EU-Tunisia Association Council

The EU-Tunisia Association Council will convene for its twelfth session, before the Council.

The EU is expected to confirm the strategic importance of its privileged partnership with Tunisia, a partner in the Southern neighbourhood which has chosen democracy and human progress as values, and to reiterate its full support, mobilising all efforts, to Tunisia in the interconnected challenges it is facing with regard to consolidating its democratic achievements and implementing the new constitution, ensuring the security of all Tunisians and promoting socio-economic progress, especially for young people.

The following topics are likely to be discussed:

- Privileged Partnership: Reinforcement and perspectives of EU-Tunisia relations in the context of the revised European Neighbourhood Policy
- Socio-economic and security challenges in Tunisia
- EU support and accompanying measures to promote democracy and respond to challenges
- Political dialogue on matters of common interest.