



FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Monday 14 March in Brussels

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

It will discuss areas of re-engagement with **Iran**, ahead of the High Representative's visit to Tehran in April.

It will then take stock of **EU-Russia** relations, underlining the need for unity and continuity of policy.

Over **lunch**, ministers will discuss the political and security situation in **Libya**. They will be joined by the UN Secretary General's special representative for Libya, Martin Kobler.

In the afternoon, the Council will discuss the state of play of the **Middle East peace process**.

After the Council, the EU-**Moldova** Association Council will meet at 18:00, followed by a dinner.

Press conferences on Monday 14 March:

+/- 16.00 following the Foreign Affairs Council

+/- 19.30 following the EU-Moldova Association 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.

Iran

The Council will discuss possible areas of re-engagement with Iran following “implementation day” of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the lifting of all nuclear-related EU sanctions.

The High Representative will brief ministers on her forthcoming trip to Tehran, together with a group of Commissioners, where she will explore different sectors of cooperation with Iran on the basis of the outcome of a high level dialogue held on 8 February. Possible areas of cooperation include trade, energy, environment, migration, human rights, as well as education, research and science.

On 16 January 2016, the Council lifted all nuclear-related economic and financial EU sanctions against Iran. This followed verification by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that Iran had implemented agreed nuclear-related measures as set out in a joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA).

The JCPOA was agreed on 14 July 2015 by China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, together with the EU High Representative. It is aimed at ensuring the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear programme while providing for the comprehensive lifting of all UN Security Council sanctions as well as EU and US sanctions related to Iran’s nuclear programme, following an agreed sequence of actions.

Following the lifting of sanctions, EU foreign ministers discussed Iran at an informal meeting in Amsterdam on 2 February 2016.

At the end of month, elections were held in Iran for the 290-seat parliament and the assembly of experts. A second round will take place in April for the remaining parliamentary seats which did not achieve the required threshold in the first round.

[Council lifts all nuclear-related economic and financial EU sanctions, press release 16/01/2016](#)

[EEAS information note on EU sanctions to be lifted under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action](#)

Russia

The Council will discuss the state of play of EU-Russia relations, which were last discussed in January 2015.

[EU prolongs economic sanctions by six months, Press release 21/01/2016](#)

Libya

For lunch, ministers will be joined by the United Nations Secretary General’s special representative for Libya, Martin Kobler, to take stock of recent developments in Libya.

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 urge all parties to implement fully the Libyan Political Agreement and to work in close partnership with the GNA once it is formed.

The humanitarian situation in Libya continues to deteriorate, with some 2.5 million people in need of assistance. The EU currently responds to the humanitarian needs in Libya by funding relevant projects for a total of € 27 million, and it has already committed a further € 13 million for 2016. This response is part of the package of immediate and substantial support in different areas totalling €100 million which the EU is ready to provide when a GNA requires it.

On 15 February 2016, the EU amended its integrated border management assistance mission in Libya (EUBAM Libya) to provide for a civilian planning capacity. The Council also extended the mission by six months until 21 August 2016.

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

Middle East Peace Process

The Council will discuss the latest developments in the region as well as an initiative led by France to convene an international conference in Paris by summer 2016 with the aim of relaunching the peace process in the Middle East.

The conference will bring together both Israeli and Palestinian parties on the ground, as well as partners in the region and key international actors such as the United States, the EU, the United Nations, Russia (the Middle East Quartet), members of the United Nations Security Council and the main Arab stakeholders.

France has appointed Pierre Vimont, former executive secretary-general of the European External Action Service, as special envoy for the peace conference proposal.

In 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.

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.

Recent political and security developments, marked by increased violence and loss of innocents lives, are a source of particular concern.

[Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process 18/01/2016](#)

[Statement by the Quartet's Principals 12/02/2016](#)

[The EU and the Middle East Peace Process \(EEAS website\)](#)

Other items

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

Burundi

The Council is expected to adopt a decision concluding consultations with Burundi under article 96 of the EU-ACP partnership agreement (Cotonou agreement), determining that the commitments proposed by the Burundian government are insufficient to address EU concerns.

In its decision, the Council will set out specific measures to be taken by the Burundian government that could lead to the resumption of full cooperation.

Central African Republic

The Council will adopt conclusions on the Central African Republic, congratulating Faustin-Archange Touadéra for his election as president, calling on all parties to recognize the legitimacy of the elected authorities and stressing the importance of finalising the electoral cycle.

The EU is expected to call for additional support from the international community, including in favour of the most vulnerable populations, in order to reinforce their resilience and to restart as soon as possible the developments projects on which the country's future depends.

The Council is also expected to approve the crisis management concept for a EU Military Training Mission in CAR, to train, advise and educate the Central African armed forces during a mandate of two years, within a wider SSR process. Planning is to continue with a view to deploying the mission before the end of the mandate of the current military advisory mission EUMAM RCA, subject to further decisions by the Council.

In the margins of the Council

EU-Moldova Association Council

The EU-Moldova Association Council will convene after the Council for its second meeting.

It will review the state of relations since it last met in March 2015 and recall the EU's commitment to strengthening political association and economic integration with the Republic of Moldova.

The EU is expected to:

- emphasise the key importance for the Republic of Moldova to undertake key reforms through accelerated implementation of the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agreement, especially on prevention and fight against corruption, in the justice, financial, energy, media sectors, money laundering and public administration reform
 - recall that EU assistance to the Republic of Moldova has been significant over the past years and that the EU and its member states are ready to further assist the country in its reform efforts,
 - urge the Republic of Moldova to quickly conclude an agreement with the IMF on a new financial support programme, which is essential for guaranteeing macro-financial stability.
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