



FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Monday 15 February in Brussels

The Council, starting at 9.30, will be chaired by Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

It will start with a debate on **climate diplomacy**, following a global agreement on climate change reached at the Paris climate conference in December 2015.

The Council will then discuss the political, security and humanitarian situation in **Syria**.

Over **lunch**, ministers will hold an exchange of views with the **Lebanese foreign minister**, Gebran Gerge Bassil, discussing common challenges in the region. They will confirm the EU's continued solidarity and support to Lebanon in a very difficult regional and domestic situation.

The Council will also discuss relations with **Belarus**, including the future of restrictive measures. It will also address the situation in **Moldova**.

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

Press conferences on Monday 15 February:

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| +/- 16.30 | following the Foreign Affairs Council |
| +/- 20.25 | following the EU-Kyrgyzstan Cooperation 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.

Climate diplomacy

The Council will highlight the role of European climate diplomacy in encouraging implementation of the global agreement on climate change reached in December 2015. It will adopt conclusions.

At the Paris climate conference (COP21), 195 countries adopted the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal.

In conclusions adopted in July 2015, the Council asked the High Representative and the Commission "to report back in early 2016 the outcome of the COP21 and its implications for climate diplomacy as well as to propose further actions".

In a paper entitled "European climate diplomacy after COP21: Elements for continued climate diplomacy in 2016", the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) propose three areas for continued action.

As a follow-up, the Council in its conclusions is expected to set out the parameters for a 2016 climate diplomacy action plan, with key messages focused around the three main strands:

- Maintaining climate change advocacy as a strategic priority in diplomatic dialogues, public diplomacy and external policy instruments;
- Supporting implementation of the Paris agreement and the intended nationally determined contributions (INDC), in the context of low-emission and climate-resilient development;
- Increasing efforts to address the nexus of climate change, natural resources, prosperity, stability and migration.

The Council is expected to acknowledge the priority to be placed on securing ambitious global implementation of intended nationally determined contributions, i.e. the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions that 187 countries committed to undertake.

It will underline that diplomatic outreach should also focus on the negotiations in the International Civil Aviation Organisation and the International Maritime Organisation to address greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the Montreal protocol negotiations on the hydrofluorocarbons amendment.

- Commission webpage on the Paris agreement on climate
http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/international/negotiations/future/index_en.htm

Syria

The Council will discuss the political, security and humanitarian situation in Syria. Ministers will be briefed on the outcome of the Syria donors' conference held in London on 4 February 2016, and of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) meeting in Munich on 11 February 2016.

At the London conference, the EU and its member states pledged more than €3 billion to assist the Syrian people inside Syria as well as refugees and the communities hosting them in neighbouring countries during 2016. From its own budget, the EU will spend €2.4 billion in 2016 and 2017.

Shortly before the conference, UN-brokered peace talks with the Syrian government and opposition were suspended, three days after they began, following military escalation in the country. Negotiations are scheduled to resume on 25 February 2016.

The Council will discuss how the EU can best facilitate implementation of UN Security Council resolution 2254 and support UN-led confidence-building measures and the respect of ceasefires, while ensuring full and safe access for humanitarian aid to all people in need, through delivery of assistance in an impartial and principled manner.

Resolution 2254 was adopted unanimously, following the third meeting of the ISSG on 18 December 2015. The EU has been actively engaged in the ISSG and supports the Vienna peace process. Resolution 2254 endorses a "roadmap" for a peace process in Syria and sets a

timetable for talks. The EU fully supports the efforts of UN special envoy Staffan de Mistura to achieve a peaceful inclusive transition for Syria.

The EU approach to the Syrian crisis involves both 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 humanitarian side, the EU is the leading donor 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. An EU trust fund established in 2015 in response to the crisis, the Madad fund, is now doted with over €500 million mostly from the EU budget, an amount expected to double with 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 become refugees in neighbouring countries, mostly in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan.

- Press release on the outcome of the February 2016 Syria donors' conference http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/2016/040216_syria-london-conferencet_en.htm
- Statement of the ISSG, 11/12 February 2016: http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2016/160212_01_en.htm
- European Council conclusions on external relations, 17-18 December 2015
- EEAS webpage on relations with Syria: <http://eeas.europa.eu/syria/>

Belarus

The Council will discuss the situation in Belarus and relations with the country, including the future of restrictive measures. It is expected to adopt conclusions on Belarus.

In its conclusions, the Council is expected to express its concern at the human rights situation in Belarus, while acknowledging the steps taken by Belarus over the last two years that have contributed to improving EU-Belarus relations. It will recognise that there is an opportunity for relations to develop on a more positive agenda and that progress in a variety of fields can be achieved through enhanced channels of communication.

In view of the 2016 parliamentary elections, the Council is expected to urge the Belarusian authorities to swiftly take forward recommendations contained in the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights' (OSCE/ODIHR) report on the conduct of the 11 October 2015 presidential elections. It will welcome Belarus' growing openness to dialogue and cooperation with the OSCE/ODIHR.

On 29 October 2015, the Council suspended until 29 February 2016 an asset freeze and a travel ban applying to 170 individuals and a freeze on the assets of three companies in Belarus. An arms embargo and restrictive measures against four people, who were involved in unresolved disappearances in Belarus, continues to apply.

The decision to temporarily suspend most of the restrictive measures was taken in response to the release of all Belarusian political prisoners on 22 August 2015, and in a context of improved EU-Belarus relations. It followed presidential elections held on 11 October 2015 in an environment free from violence.

An EU-Belarus partnership and cooperation agreement was negotiated in 1995, but its ratification has been frozen since 1997 because of the political situation in the country.

- October 2012 Council conclusions on Belarus
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/132836.pdf

- October 2015 press release on the suspension of Belarus restrictive measures
<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/10/29-belarus/>
- EEAS webpage on relations with Belarus
http://eeas.europa.eu/belarus/index_en.htm
- Fact sheet http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/131029_01_en.pdf

Moldova

The Council will discuss the situation in Moldova and the EU's relations with the country. It will adopt conclusions focusing on the necessary reforms Moldova needs to carry out in line with its association agreement in order to fulfill citizens' expectations.

The discussion will take stock of the current political and financial situation in the country and the implementation of political and economic reforms laid out in the EU-Moldova association agreement. It will also address ways for the EU to further engage with Moldova.

In particular, the Council will discuss how best to encourage Moldova to undertake the most pressing reforms, such as addressing banking frauds, strengthening the rule of law and the fight against corruption. The Council will also discuss the conditions for EU support, also in view of resuming the disbursement of financial support to Moldova, currently suspended, once all conditions are met.

The Moldovan authorities have requested a programme with the IMF, which is necessary for EU macro-financial assistance. The IMF will send a fact-finding mission to the country between 23 and 29 of February 2016.

Following the signing of a partnership and cooperation agreement in 1994, Moldova joined the EU's Eastern Partnership in 2009. On 27 June 2014, Moldova signed an association agreement, which was provisionally applied as from 1 September 2014, allowing for enhanced cooperation in the field of foreign and security policy, trade and investment opportunities, and the development of common values such as democracy, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

The first EU-Moldova Association Council meeting was held on 16 March 2015.

As a result of the association agreement, the EU's support to Moldova has significantly increased. For the years 2014 to 2017, between €335 million and €410 million has been set aside for Moldova under the European neighbourhood policy instrument alone. Additional funds are made available to Moldova through regional programmes.

- EEAS factsheet on EU-Moldova relations http://eeas.europa.eu/factsheets/docs/eu-moldova_factsheet_en.pdf
- [Press releases on the first EU-Moldova association council meeting/](#)

Other items

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In her opening remarks, the High Representative is expected to address the latest developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). On 15 February, BiH plans to submit its application for EU membership. The application will be a matter for the General Affairs Council to consider.

Libya

In her introductory remarks, the High Representative is also expected to share her political assessment of the situation in Libya and brief ministers on the planned international and EU support.

In January 2016, the Council adopted conclusions expressing full support for the political agreement signed on 17 December 2015 and welcoming the formation of the Presidency Council. The EU and its member states will support the Government of National Accord (GNA) and urge all Libyan institutions to accept the authority of the GNA. The EU will accompany the full implementation of the political agreement, working in close partnership with the GNA once it is formed. The EU has a package of immediate and substantial support totalling €100 million in different areas.

The United Nations Security Council on 23 December 2015 unanimously adopted resolution 2259, granting international legitimacy to the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) to form a GNA, made up of the Presidency Council and a Ministerial Cabinet, as the sole legitimate government of Libya.

Resolution 2259 calls upon all UN member states to cease support to and official contact with parallel institutions that claim to be the legitimate authority but are outside the agreement.

[January 2016 Council conclusions on Libya](#)

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

Burundi

The Council will adopt conclusions on Burundi, firmly condemning the use of force and calling for an inclusive political dialogue to resolve the crisis there.

Recent developments, marked by increased violence, extrajudicial killings and public messages containing elements of hate speech are a cause of deep concern.

The Council will recall Burundi's commitments in the area of rule of law, democratic principles and human rights and measures which will follow in the absence of positive signals.

Somalia

The Council will adopt conclusions on Somalia, reaffirming its commitment to support the development and stability of Somalia, and stressing the importance of renewing the Somali Compact beyond 2016.

The Somali Compact, launched at the Brussels “new deal conference for Somalia” in September 2013, has provided an essential framework for reconstruction of the country. It has allowed for coordinated support to the Somali authorities for the promotion of an inclusive political process, security, the rule of law and socio-economic development. It is the keystone of Somalia's partnership with the international community.

The Council will address political progress and relevant security issues, including the role played by the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). The Council is expected to confirm its intention to extend the mandates of the three CSDP missions and operation, with a view to further enhancing the EU's comprehensive approach in Somalia and the Horn of Africa.

UN human rights

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions setting out the EU's priorities in UN human rights fora for 2016. They will provide a basis for further EU diplomatic action and initiatives on thematic and country-issues in relevant UN fora.

EU border assistance mission in Libya

The Council is expected to extend by six months, until 21 August 2016, the mandate of the civilian EU integrated border management assistance mission in Libya.

Meeting in the margins of the Council

EU-Kyrgyzstan Cooperation Council

The 14th meeting of the EU-Kyrgyzstan Cooperation Council will be held after the Council.

The partnership and cooperation agreement with the Kyrgyz Republic has provided a legal framework for bilateral relations since 1999. It outlines three pillars of cooperation: political dialogue, economic relations and cooperation in a variety of sectors, such as social, finance, science, technology and culture.

Economic relations between the EU and the Kyrgyz Republic are developing, with annual trade currently at about €478 million. The Kyrgyz Republic has been a member of the WTO since 1998 and benefits from the EU's generalised system of trade preferences (GSP), a preferential access to the EU market in favour of developing countries. The EU is currently assessing Kyrgyzstan's application for its enhanced "GSP+", which would grant the full removal of tariffs on essentially the same product categories as those covered by the GSP. Technical and financial support to the Kyrgyz Republic is provided through the EU's development cooperation instrument.

The Cooperation Council will follow up on recent exchanges between the EU and the Kyrgyz Republic in the margins of the Astana ministerial meeting on 21 December 2015 and earlier sessions of political dialogue and bilateral consultations carried out by the EU's special representative for Central Asia. The Cooperation Council is expected to discuss partnership and cooperation between the EU and the Kyrgyz Republic, key aspects of bilateral relations, development cooperation, economic and political developments as well as security issues in the region and in the world, focusing on aspects that were not addressed in a recent regional ministerial meeting in Astana. It will take stock of progress in implementing the EU-Central Asia strategy and of internal developments in the Kyrgyz Republic following successful elections in October 2015, including the strategic priorities of the Kyrgyz government, progress of democratic reforms and the human rights situation.

- [EEAS factsheet on EU-Kyrgyzstan relations](#)