



FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council

16-17 November 2015 in Brussels

Monday 16 November

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

Ministers for Foreign Affairs will start with a discussion on the **Middle East peace process** and take stock of the current state of play.

The Council will then discuss **migration**, following-up on the High Level Conference on the Western Balkans route on 8 October, the **Valletta Summit** on migration on 11-12 November and the informal meeting of heads of states or government of 12 November.

Over lunch, ministers will have an exchange of views on **Syria**, focusing on the political process under UN auspices, as well as the security and humanitarian situation. The situation in Libya might be discussed.

In the afternoon, the Council will discuss relations with the **Eastern partners** and the latest political developments across the region, taking into account the commitments made at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga. The High Representative will share her assessment of the situation in Ukraine and Georgia following her visit to these countries.

After the Council, the second **EU-Georgia Association Council** will take place at 18.00 (TV/photo opportunity), chaired by Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili. High Representative Mogherini will lead the EU delegation.

In the margins of the Council, EU ministers for Foreign Affairs will sign the EU-Kazakhstan enhanced partnership and cooperation agreement.

On Tuesday 17, the Council will continue with the defence items (see separate background brief).

Press conferences on Monday 16 November:

+/- 16.00 Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council

+/- 19.30 Press conference following the EU-Georgia 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

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

Middle East peace process

The Council will discuss the situation in the Middle East, in light of the increased violence in October notably in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. The recent escalation of violence on the ground is a reminder of the crucial and urgent need to resume a political process leading towards final status negotiations.

The EU supports a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that should lead to an independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace and security. A comprehensive peace should fulfil the legitimate aspirations of both parties, including those of Israelis for security and those of Palestinians for statehood.

As stated in the Council conclusions adopted on 20 July, the EU is committed to working with all sides, including through implementation of existing agreements, to allow the socio-economic development of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The EU has stressed that actions such as the easing of restrictions must be part of a fundamental change of policy with regard to the occupied Palestinian territory. In a statement of 30 September, the Middle East Quartet noted that positive and significant policy shifts, particularly in Area C, will be critical to increasing the Palestinian Authority's ability to address key economic, security and institutional challenges, and can be advanced while respecting Israel's legitimate security needs.

The EU has a strategic interest in ensuring an end to the conflict and is willing to actively contribute to a negotiated solution of all final status issues. The EU supports the engagement of regional partners, namely Jordan, Egypt, Saudi-Arabia, and the League of Arab States. It considers the Arab Peace Initiative of key strategic importance for any future comprehensive agreement and is ready to engage in joint work with regional partners on this basis of the Arab Peace Initiative.

In her recent meetings with the Prime Minister of Israel and the Palestinian President, High Representative Mogherini underlined the need to explore ways to stop violence, calm down the situation and start implementing measures on the ground, consistent with prior agreements, to have improvements for the population, both the Israeli and the Palestinian, giving new perspectives on the political process.

The Quartet meeting in Vienna on 23 October 2015 reaffirmed its strong commitment to act in coordination with regional and international stakeholders in an effort to stabilise the situation and to assure and actively support a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The presence of EU Special Representative Fernando Gentilini is also expected during the discussion.

[Council conclusions on the Middle East peace process, 20 July 2015](#)

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

Migration

The Council will discuss migration, following up on the High Level Conference on the Western Balkans route on 8 October, the Valletta Summit on migration held on 11-12 November and the informal meeting of heads of state or government in Valletta on 12 November. Ministers are expected to take stock of the results of the Summits and discuss implementation.

A broad foreign and security policy approach is essential to strengthen cooperation with countries of origin and transit in both addressing root causes of forced displacement and irregular migration and managing migratory flows.

The global approach to migration and mobility adopted in 2005 and updated in 2011 provides the overarching framework for the EU's external migration policy. The Rabat process, launched in 2006 in cooperation with countries of Western and Central Africa, the European Commission and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) also promotes dialogue on migration and development. In a similar vein, the Khartoum process was established in 2015 with the countries of the Horn of Africa.

In response to the unprecedented migratory and refugee crisis, the EU stepped up its engagement and has strengthened its cooperation with third countries on migration both at bilateral and multilateral level. Building on the above mentioned existing processes, the Valletta Summit brought together more than 60 leaders from the EU and Africa and adopted a joint political summit declaration as well as a detailed action plan, which should now be implemented.

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

[Informal meeting of heads of states or government, 12 November 2015](#)

[Interactive map - Migration crisis: what do the EU and its member states do?](#)

[Council conclusions on migration, 12 October 2015](#)

[Finding solutions to migratory pressures](#)

Syria

Over lunch, ministers will have a discussion on Syria, taking into account the recent diplomatic efforts, including the discussions on Syria in Vienna on 30 October and 14 November 2015. They will discuss the perspectives offered by these talks for a possible de-escalation of the conflict and how the EU can best facilitate further progress towards a political solution. They will also be invited to express their views on how to foster outreach to Syrian opposition and regional actors and on the promotion of confidence building measures in the humanitarian field. This discussion follows the in-depth debate at the October Council meeting, when Council conclusions on Syria were adopted.

The EU approach to the Syrian crisis has two tracks: 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.

The EU implements the EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Da'esh threat adopted in March 2015.

On the political process, the EU continues to support the efforts of UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura to achieve a peaceful inclusive transition for Syria. The High Representative Federica Mogherini is representing the EU in the Vienna discussions on Syria. The meeting of 30 October brought "for the first time all actors around the table", leading her to qualify the meeting as "a historical one", giving hope for the beginning of a political process under the UN auspices. The participants agreed upon a Joint Communiqué and will meet again in Vienna on 14 November.

On the fight against terrorism, the EU is not to be militarily involved but actively contribute with non-military means the objectives of the Global Coalition to counter Da'esh. The EU engagement goes from reducing the threats of radicalisation and the recruitment of new foreign terrorist fighters in European countries, to working to stop the flow of revenues to Da'esh

On the humanitarian side, the EU is the leading donor in the response to the Syria crisis with a total of more than € 4.2 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. The EU trust fund established in 2015 in response to the crisis, the Madad fund, is now equipped with over € 500 million mostly from the EU budget, an amount expected to double by additional contributions from EU member states and other donors.

More than 12 million Syrians – more than half of the population - are in need of urgent assistance inside Syria. Half of the population has been displaced internally or to neighbouring countries. More than 4 million Syrians have fled Syria and became refugees in neighbouring countries, mostly in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan.

[Final declaration on the results of the Syria Talks in Vienna - 30 October](#)

[Council conclusions on Syria - 12 October](#)

[Statement by members of the small group of the Global Coalition to counter ISIL - 4 November](#)

[Council conclusions of 16 March on the EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Da'esh threat](#)

Eastern partners

In the afternoon, the Council will hold a discussion on Eastern Partners, with a focus on Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. It will be briefed by the High Representative on her visits to Ukraine and Georgia on 9 and 10 November, where she met with high ranking officials and members of civil society.

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine participate in the Eastern Partnership (EaP), launched in 2009. It sets out to promote political association and economic integration in 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 the commitment to a market economy. In 2014, the EU supported the Eastern Partnership with a budget of €730 million.

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

[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-Ukraine relations](#)

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

Other items

The Council is expected to take a number of decisions without discussion ("A-items"):

Burundi

The Council is set to adopt conclusions on Burundi. The recent political and security developments, marked by increased violence, extrajudicial killings and public messages containing elements of hate speech are deeply worrying.

The Council conclusions are expected to call on all parties to avoid both violence and inciting violence, and to engage in inclusive political dialogue, mediated by Uganda on behalf of the East African Community (EAC), as the only way forward to exit the crisis.

The EU has requested on 26 October the opening of consultations foreseen under article 96 of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. These consultations should be seen as a way of supporting the EAC and African Union-led processes and decisions concerning Burundi. Preparations of the consultations are ongoing. The Council conclusions are due to call the Burundian authorities to engage fully and constructively in these consultations.

[EU requests the opening of consultations under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement](#)

[EU relations with Burundi](#)

Sri Lanka

The Council is set to adopt conclusions on Sri Lanka, welcoming the significant advances since the presidential elections in January 2015 to restore democratic governance, initiate a process of national reconciliation and re-engage with the international community. The conclusions will state the active support of the EU and its member states to the new reform-oriented dynamism in Sri Lanka to overcome underlying causes of the past conflict.

The Council is expected to notably welcome proposals by the Government of Sri Lanka to establish a judicial mechanism to investigate allegations of violations of human rights and a Commission for Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Non-Recurrence. The EU is also set to underline the importance of devolution of political power to the provinces and to encourage the Government of Sri Lanka to take early steps to build confidence of communities, as well as to take further action on human rights concerns.

The Council will encourage Sri Lanka to continue necessary preparatory work before applying at the appropriate time for the tariff preferences provided under the special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance (GSP+). It will also be encouraged to take the further measures necessary to comply with the EU legislation on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, so that the current ban on fishery exports to the EU can be lifted as soon as possible.

[EU relations with Sri Lanka](#)

Yemen

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Yemen. The Council is expected to reaffirm its strong support for a political settlement and for the efforts of the UN Secretary General and his Special Envoy for Yemen to resume negotiations, urging all parties to engage constructively and in good faith in the UN-facilitated negotiations, while implementing immediate confidence-building measures enabling a sustainable ceasefire.

Yemen is experiencing an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe, with 21 million people or 80% of the population in need of humanitarian assistance and 6 million in need of immediate life-saving assistance. The Council is expected to express deep concern over the situation and call on all parties to ensure the respect of international humanitarian and human rights law. The EU has so far committed collectively more than € 200 million worth of humanitarian assistance in 2015.

[EU relations with Yemen](#)

EU support to transitional justice

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the EU's support to transitional justice. The Council is expected to reaffirm the EU's intention to play an active and consistent role in its engagement with partner countries and international and regional organisations in support of transitional justice processes. The Council will also adopt the EU's policy framework on support to transitional justice and invite the High Representative and the Commission, in close cooperation with EU Member States, to commence its implementation. The EU will then be the first regional organisation to adopt a transitional justice policy.

Meetings in the margin of the Foreign Affairs Council

EU-Georgia Association Council

This will be the second meeting of the EU-Georgia Association Council.

The EU-Georgia Association Agreement was signed in June 2014 and the start of the provisional application of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) was on 1 September 2014. The first EU-Georgia Association Council was held on 17 November 2014.

The discussion will review the overall state of EU-Georgia relations over the last year.

The meeting is expected to focus on the implementation of the Association Agreement; political developments and reform; economic and sectoral cooperation; trade and trade-related matters/ DCFTA; as well as foreign and security policy. Participants will also discuss the Eastern Partnership and European neighbourhood policy.

The EU stands by its partners who have chosen closer political association and economic integration with the EU. The EU supports Georgia's reform agenda through financial and technical cooperation. More than 100 projects are currently being carried out in Georgia. On 18 July 2014, Georgia signed a Memorandum of Understanding fixing the priorities for EU cooperation for the period of 2014-2017 with an indicative financial allocation in the range of €335–410 million.

At the meeting, the EU is due to underline the importance of Georgia continuing its development into a stable pluralist democracy with strong democratic institutions, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, free media and an independent judiciary and prosecution.

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