



FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

19 March 2018

The Foreign Affairs Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will start at 9.00 with a discussion on **current affairs**, allowing ministers to review pressing issues on the international agenda. The UK is expected to raise the Salisbury attack under this point.

Foreign ministers will have an exchange of views on **Ukraine**. The High Representative will debrief ministers on her visit to Kyiv on 11-12 March. The Council will exchange views on latest developments, and in particular on the reform process. Ministers may also discuss the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and refer to the 4th anniversary of the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

Following their discussion at the Gymnich meeting of 15-16 February and the Foreign Affairs Council of 26 February, the ministers will discuss the latest development in **Syria** in the presence of UN Secretary General's Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. The Council will discuss ways of supporting and revitalising the UN-led political process. Ministers will also discuss the humanitarian situation in Syria, notably in Afrin and Eastern Ghouta. They are expected to urge all those involved to implement UNSC resolution 2401 without delay.

EU foreign ministers and the High Representative will have an informal lunch with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of **Republic of Korea** (South Korea) Kang Kyung-wha which will focus on **the situation on the Korean Peninsula**. The discussion is expected to touch upon the latest announcement made by the DPRK's leadership and look ahead to the Summit between Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in foreseen for April and the announced meeting between Jong-un and US President Donald Trump. Ministers will also look at the ways the EU can support the efforts of South Korea towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the DPRK.

The Council will then discuss **Iran**, including on the implementation of the JCPOA. Ministers are also expected to touch upon the role of Iran in the region.

Press opportunities:

- +/- 08.45 Doorstep by High Representative Federica Mogherini
- +/- 12.30 Press statements by High Representative Federica Mogherini and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea Kang Kyung-wha
- +/- 17.00 Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council

[Press conferences and public events via video streaming](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

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

Current affairs

The Foreign Affairs Council will start with a review of the pressing issues on the international agenda. The High Representative and foreign ministers may touch upon the Russian presidential elections. Under this point, the UK will raise the poisoning of Sergey and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury involving the use of nerve agent.

Ukraine

Foreign ministers will have an exchange of views on Ukraine. The High Representative will debrief ministers on her visit to Kyiv on 11-12 March. The Council will exchange views on latest developments, and in particular on the reform process. Ministers may also discuss the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and refer to the 4th anniversary of the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

The EU is supporting Ukraine in its ambitious reform process, including in the fight against corruption. The most recent Association Council between the EU and Ukraine on 8 December 2017 welcomed Ukraine's progress in pursuing a comprehensive reform agenda despite significant security challenges, and assessed steps in the implementation of the Association Agreement, while underlining the need to step-up reform efforts.

The EU continues to condemn and does not recognise the Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. The EU remains committed to supporting the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, combining its support for dialogue and diplomatic efforts with pressure through restrictive measures. More than 10 000 people have lost their lives in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine conflict, and the humanitarian situation remains worrying, with 3.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.

[Remarks by High Representative Federica Mogherini at the joint press point with Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, 12 March 2018](#)

[Remarks by High Representative Federica Mogherini at the joint press point with Mr Volodymyr Groysman, Prime Minister of Ukraine](#)

[Speech by High Representative Federica Mogherini at the Taras Shevchenko University](#)

[EU relations with Ukraine \(background information\)](#)

[EU-Ukraine relations, Factsheet](#)

Syria

Following up on their discussion at their informal meeting (Gymnich) on 15 February and the Foreign Affairs Council on 26 February, foreign ministers will exchange views on the latest developments in Syria in presence of the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. The Council will discuss supporting and revitalising the intra-Syrian political process mediated by the United Nations in Geneva.

Ahead of the second Brussels conference on "Supporting the future of Syria and the region" on 24-25 April 2018, the Council will also discuss the dire humanitarian situation in Syria, and in particular in Afrin and Eastern Ghouta. They are expected to continue to urge all those involved to fully and immediately implement the UNSC Resolution 2401. This resolution calls for a 30-days cessation of hostilities without delay, with the only exception of operations against UN-listed terrorist organisations.

The second Brussels conference will be co-chaired by the EU and the UN. It will be the opportunity to mobilise both humanitarian aid for the Syrians inside the country and in the region, as well as further political support at international and regional level to the intra-Syrian negotiations in Geneva. Like the first Brussels conference, it is expected to bring together participants from more than 70 countries and organisations at ministerial level.

The Council adopted the EU strategy on Syria on 3 April 2017, ahead of the first Brussels Conference. The EU remains committed to finding a lasting political solution to the conflict in Syria under the existing framework agreed by the UN Security Council. As set out in Council conclusions adopted on 3 April 2017, the EU believes that there can be no military solution to the conflict and strongly supports the work of the UN SG's Special Envoy and the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva.

13.1 million Syrians are now in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria, including 6 million internally displaced persons. 420 000 are still living under siege conditions, and a further 5.4 million Syrian refugees are being hosted by Syria's neighbours and the wider region. The EU and the member states have so far mobilised more than € 10.6 billion in humanitarian aid and in support of stabilisation in response to the crisis in Syria since 2011.

The Council has put in place targeted EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime in view of the gravity of the situation in the country. The list of individuals and entities subject to sanctions is reviewed and updated on a regular basis. So far, in total, 257 persons are targeted by a travel ban and an assets freeze as a consequence of their being responsible for the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria, benefiting from or supporting the regime, and/or being associated with such persons, while 67 entities are targeted by an assets freeze.

[Syria: Council response to the crisis](#)

[Council conclusions on Syria, 3 April 2017](#)

[Brussels conference on "Supporting the future of Syria and the region", 4-5 April 2017](#)

Informal lunch with South Korean Foreign Minister

EU foreign ministers and the High Representative will have an informal lunch with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Korea (South Korea) Kang Kyung-wha which will focus on developments in the Korean Peninsula. The discussion is notably expected to touch upon the latest announcement by the leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea), Kim Jong-Un. This includes the expected Summit meeting between Kim Jong-un and Republic of Korea President Moon Jae-in, foreseen for April, as well as the announced Summit meeting between Kim Jong-un and US President Donald Trump, foreseen by May.

The High Representative has welcomed the recent announcement as a positive development in her statement of 9 March and in a speech at the European Parliament on 13 March. The DPRK's reported commitment to enter into negotiations on denuclearisation and refrain from testing nuclear weapons or missiles during these negotiations were also noted. The High Representative underlined that if corroborated, these announcements could create the necessary conditions towards a negotiated solution.

The EU fully supports the objective of the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. It is committed to the full implementation of UNSC resolutions by all UN member states, and will continue advocating strict implementation by all, as this is essential if the sanctions are to be effective and in order to keep up the pressure on the DPRK to engage concretely towards denuclearisation.

[Council conclusions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea \(DPRK\) of 17 July 2017](#)

[The EU and the DPRK \(EEAS factsheet\)](#)

[EU restrictive measures against North Korea \(background information\)](#)

Iran

The Council will then discuss Iran, including the need to continue implementing the JCPOA. Ministers will touch upon other issues outside the scope of the JCPOA, such as increasing tensions in the region.

As reiterated by all 28 Foreign Ministers in their statement of 16 October 2017, which was endorsed by the European Council on 19 October, the EU remains committed to the continued full and effective implementation of the JCPOA. The agreement is delivering on keeping the Iranian nuclear programme in check and under close surveillance. This has been confirmed 10 times by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under a comprehensive and strict monitoring system.

The EU also expressed its concerns related to ballistic missiles and increasing tensions in the region in the statement of 16 October 2017, and reiterated the need to address them outside the JCPOA.

[The EU and Iran \(EEAS website\)](#)

[EU statement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action](#)

[Joint statement by the EU High Representative and the Iranian Foreign Minister, and text of the JCPOA \(EEAS website\)](#)