



FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

28 May 2018

The Foreign Affairs Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will start at 9.30 with a discussion on **current affairs** allowing ministers to review pressing issues on the international agenda.

Foreign ministers will continue to discuss **Iran** and the **nuclear deal** (JCPOA) in light of the latest developments, in particular after the US decision to withdraw from the agreement.

Foreign ministers will exchange views on the political situation in **Venezuela**, after the presidential and regional elections on 20 May. The Council will adopt conclusions.

The Council will also discuss the situation in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**.

Over lunch, foreign ministers will discuss the **situation in Gaza** following recent developments, including with regard to Jerusalem.

The Council will discuss the state of play on discussions concerning the future partnership between the EU and the **African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries**, and the related negotiating directives. The current ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, the Cotonou agreement, is set to expire in February 2020.

The Council is expected to adopt a number of decisions and conclusions without debate, including Council conclusions on enhanced EU security cooperation in and with Asia and on strengthening civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

Press opportunities:

+/- 08.50 Doorstep by High Representative Federica Mogherini

+/- 16.30 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 pressing issues on the international agenda. The High Representative and ministers may refer to the EU-Western Balkans summit in Sofia on 17 May, recent developments related to North Korea and the situation in Yemen. The High Representative may also refer to the EU – AU "College to College" meeting which took place on 23 May. She may also announce the Somalia Partnership Forum on 25-26 June.

Iran

The Council will discuss Iran, in particular the Iran nuclear deal, the JCPOA, following the US withdrawal from the JCPOA as announced on 8 May. It will follow up on the EU leaders' discussion in Sofia on 16 May. The discussion will also build on the exchanges during the ministerial meetings of 15 May with the High Representative, the Foreign Ministers of the E3 (France, Germany, the UK) and the Foreign Minister of Iran, Mohammad Javad Zarif.

On 9 May, in a declaration by the High Representative Federica Mogherini on behalf of the 28 member states, the EU deeply regretted the US announcement. The declaration reaffirmed that the EU will remain committed to the continued full and effective implementation of the nuclear deal as long as Iran continues to implement its nuclear related commitments, as it has been doing so far and has been confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency in now 11 consecutive reports, with the most recent one on 24 May. The declaration also stressed that the lifting of nuclear related sanctions was an essential part of the agreement, and that the EU was committed to ensuring that this could continue to be delivered.

In Sofia on 16 May, EU leaders discussed the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and agreed unanimously that the EU will stay in the agreement as long as Iran remains fully committed to it. Additionally, EU leaders gave the Commission a green light to be ready to act whenever European interests are affected. On 18 May, the European Commission took steps to preserve the interests of European companies investing in Iran and demonstrate the EU's commitment to the JCPOA.

When Iran was discussed at the March and April Foreign Affairs Councils, foreign ministers underlined the importance of the JCPOA for the security of the region and beyond, and reiterated their full unity for the continuing implementation of JCPOA. Ministers also discussed concerns about Iran's ballistic missiles programme and the tensions in the region.

["European Commission acts to protect the interests of EU companies investing in Iran as part of the EU's continued commitment to the JCPOA", press release, 18 May 2018](#)

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU following US President Trump's announcement on the Iran nuclear deal \(JCPOA\), 9 May 2018](#)

[Remarks by Federica Mogherini on the statement by US President Trump regarding the Iran nuclear deal \(JCPOA\), 8 May 2018](#)

[Remarks by Federica Mogherini at the press conference following ministerial meetings of the EU/E3 and EU/E3 and Iran, 15 May 2018](#)

Venezuela

Foreign ministers will exchange views on Venezuela, following the presidential and regional elections on 20 May and the re-election of Nicolás Maduro for a second six-year term. The Council will adopt conclusions on Venezuela.

In a declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the 28 member states published on 22 May, the EU noted that presidential and regional polls went ahead without a national agreement on an electoral calendar and without complying with the minimum international standards for a credible process, not respecting political pluralism, democracy, transparency and rule of law. The EU said that it would consider the adoption of adequate measures.

The Council is expected to state that the elections and the outcome lacked credibility as the electoral process did not ensure the necessary guarantees for inclusive and democratic elections. It is also expected to reiterate that the EU is ready to help find a democratic way out of the current multidimensional crisis.

The Council will also highlight its deep concerns about the pressing humanitarian needs of the population and will call on the Venezuelan government to take immediate action to alleviate the impact of the crisis.

Ministers last discussed the situation in Venezuela in February's Foreign Affairs Council. They touched upon the political situation, but also the dire living conditions of the Venezuelans in the country and its neighbours, as more than 1.5 million people had already left Venezuela.

On 13 November 2017, the Council decided to put restrictive measures in place on Venezuela, imposing an arms embargo and equipment for internal repression and a framework decision on targeted restrictive measures. As the situation continued to deteriorate, the Council listed 7 individuals involved in the non-respect of democratic principles or the rule of law as well as in the violation of human rights on 22 January 2018. The measures include a travel ban and an asset freeze.

The restrictive measures aim to help foster democratic shared solutions that can bring political stability to the country and allow it to address the pressing needs of the population. As indicated in Council conclusions of 13 November 2017, constructive dialogue and negotiation are the only sustainable way to address the current crisis and to respond to the pressing needs of the people of Venezuela.

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the presidential and regional elections in Venezuela, 22 May 2018](#)

[G7 Leaders' Statement on Venezuela, 23 May 2018](#)

[Venezuela: EU sanctions 7 individuals holding official positions, 22 January 2018](#)

[Delegation of the European Union to Venezuela](#)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Council will discuss the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The Council will discuss the progress and the challenges in the electoral process which is expected to lead to the general election scheduled for 23 December 2018. Ministers are also expected to discuss the humanitarian situation, in the light of the recent Ebola outbreak declared by the Minister of Public Health of the DRC on 8 May 2018, and as 51 cases with 27 victims have been reported (figures of 23 May).

The Council adopted conclusions on the DRC most recently on 11 December 2017, following the announcement, on 5 November, of an electoral calendar. The conclusions stress that the government and the institutions in charge of organising the elections bear primary responsibility to ensure that the calendar is adhered to through a credible, legitimate, consensual and inclusive process. The conclusions also note that it will be of critical importance, in particular for the legitimacy of the institutions in charge of the transition, to respect the election date.

The Council has followed very closely the situation in the DRC since the beginning of the political crisis in 2016. As the situation kept deteriorating, restrictive measures were introduced by the Council in December 2016. They consist of an asset freeze and a travel ban and target 16 persons for their responsibility in serious human rights violations committed in DRC as well as for obstructing a consensual solution to the crisis.

[Council conclusions on the Democratic Republic of Congo, 11 December 2017](#)

[The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the EU \(EEAS website\)](#)

Gaza

Over lunch, foreign ministers will discuss the situation in Gaza following recent developments, including with regard to Jerusalem.

[Statement by the High Representative Federica Mogherini on violence in Gaza and latest developments, 14 May 2018](#)

EU- African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries partnership

Foreign ministers will discuss the future partnership framework with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, as the current agreement framing the partnership, the Cotonou agreement, is due to expire on 29 February 2020.

In view of the expiry in 2020 of the existing agreement, known as the Cotonou agreement, the Commission has put forward a recommendation to open negotiations to update the framework for cooperation with the ACP countries, together with draft negotiating directives, in December 2017.

Foreign ministers had an initial exchange on the Commission's recommendation and draft negotiating directives at the Foreign Affairs Council of January. Foreign ministers expressed broad support for the Commission's proposal to move towards an umbrella agreement at ACP level combined with three regional partnerships tailored to Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific respectively. They underlined the importance of building on the experience gained through cooperation under the existing Cotonou agreement,. On 22 May the Foreign Affairs Council for development confirmed its objective of finalising the negotiating directives as soon as possible, in order to be ready to launch negotiations with ACP partner countries by the end of August 2018, as foreseen in the Cotonou agreement.

In its recommendation, the Commission has proposed the negotiation of a substantially revised agreement consisting of a common foundation at ACP level, combined with three regional partnerships tailored for Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The common foundation should focus on common principles, values and the overarching objectives of the cooperation, including at international level. The three regional partnerships will have specific priorities and governance mechanisms adapted to each region. They will guide the effective operationalisation of the new agreement and become the centre of gravity for political dialogue and action.

The future agreement is expected to cover priority areas such as democracy and human rights, economic growth and investment, climate change, poverty eradication, peace and security and migration.

Over the last two decades, major developments have taken place not only within the EU and within the ACP group of states, but also at global level. The EU now consists of 28 member states. The ACP group of states, composed of 79 countries, is more diverse than ever. The economic situation of many ACP countries has improved, while others still face major challenges. At the same time, EU regional partnerships with Africa, with the Caribbean and with the Pacific have been strengthened. The future agreement is expected to take into account these developments and to respond better to global challenges.

[EU proposes a modernised partnership with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific countries, 12 December 2017](#)

[Cotonou agreement, Council website](#)

[Post-Cotonou process, Commission DG DEVCO website](#)

Other items

The Council is expected to adopt a number of decisions and conclusions without debate, including Council conclusions on enhanced EU security cooperation in and with Asia, Council conclusions on strengthening civilian CSDP, Council conclusions on an EU position on combatting the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) in light of the third review conference to review the implementation of the UN programme of action of SALW (New York, 18-29 June 2018), and Council conclusions on the Court of Auditors report on election observation mission.

Council conclusions on enhanced EU security cooperation in and with Asia

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on enhanced EU security cooperation in and with Asia. The Council is expected to recognise the increasing importance of Asian security for European interests and emphasise that Asian countries, regional organisations and platforms are crucial to help secure a more stable and peaceful world.

The Council will note that there are important possibilities to deepen EU security cooperation with its Asian strategic partners: China, India, Japan and the Republic of Korea. It will also underline the importance of deepening cooperation with other partners, along with ASEAN and its member states.

The Council is set to identify key areas for deeper security engagement: maritime security, cyber security, counter terrorism, hybrid threats, conflict prevention, the proliferation of chemical biological radiological and nuclear weapons and the development of regional cooperative orders.

The Council is due to underline the need for security cooperation in and with Asian partners to become more operational. To bring increased visibility and impact, the Council will call for tailor-made cooperation, grouping together EU security-related efforts with those of priority Asian partners.

[EU-ASEAN relations, factsheet](#)

[ASEM, factsheet and brochure](#)

Council conclusions on strengthening civilian CSDP

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on strengthening civilian CSDP, in follow-up to the process launched by the Council in November of last year. The Council will reaffirm that a strengthened civilian CSDP is an essential element of the EU's joined-up approach, working alongside other EU instruments in an integrated manner, in pursuit of its Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy.

The EU currently has 10 civilian CSDP missions deployed. Civilian CSDP is an important instrument through which the EU plays its role as a global security provider.

The Council is expected to identify a range of actions to make civilian CSDP more effective on the ground and identify ways in which civilian missions could contribute to tackling security challenges along the nexus internal/external security, alongside other EU instruments in a coordinated manner. The next steps are to present a civilian capability development plan by summer 2018 and to agree civilian CSDP compact by November 2018.