



FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

19 November 2018

The Foreign Affairs Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will start at 11.00 with a discussion on **current affairs**, allowing ministers to review pressing issues on the international agenda.

Foreign ministers will discuss **Central Asia** ahead of the EU-Central Asia ministerial meeting that will take place on 23 November.

The Council will discuss **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, following the elections held on 7 October. The discussion will cover issues related to the reform process in the country.

Foreign ministers will review the latest developments in **Ukraine**, including in eastern Ukraine and the Azov Sea.

Over lunch, foreign ministers will discuss the latest developments in **Yemen**, focusing on the humanitarian crisis and the tools that the EU could use in its response to the situation.

In the afternoon, foreign ministers will be joined by defence ministers for a discussion on EU cooperation in security and defence. They will review the initiatives part of the implementation of the EU Global Strategy in this area, including the permanent structured cooperation (**PESCO**), the coordinated annual review on defence (**CARD**), the **European defence fund**, military mobility, the military planning and conduct capability (MPCC), the civilian CSDP compact and the proposal for a **European Peace Facility**. The Council is expected to adopt **conclusions** on security and defence.

Press opportunities:

- +/- 9.50 Doorstep by High Representative Federica Mogherini
- +/- 16.30 Press conference

[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 foreign ministers may briefly discuss the outcome of the **international conference for Libya** hosted by the Italian Government in **Palermo** on 12-13 November. They may also raise the **Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA)** following the entry into force of US sanctions on 5 November 2018.

[Conference for Libya, 12-13 November 2018 \(website of the Italian government\)](#)

[Joint statement on the re-imposition of US sanctions due to its withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\), by High Representative Federica Mogherini and Foreign Ministers Jean-Yves Le Drian, Heiko Maas and Jeremy Hunt, and Finance Ministers Bruno Le Maire, Olaf Scholz and Philip Hammond, 2 November 2018](#)

Central Asia

Foreign ministers will have a discussion on Central Asia - Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - ahead of the 14th EU-Central Asia ministerial meeting that will take place on 23 November in Brussels. The debate will provide an opportunity to assess the recent significant changes in the region, in particular domestic reform processes and the new momentum in regional cooperation as illustrated by the Central Asia summit held in Astana on 15 March 2018 and summit of the *International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea* (IFAS) held on 28 August in Avaza Turkmenbashi. In this context, ministers will discuss opportunities for stepping up EU engagement in Central Asia in areas such as support to reforms and economic development, support to new dynamics in regional cooperation, as well as the promotion of sustainable connectivity and of regional conditions for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The discussion will feed into the preparation of the new EU strategy on Central Asia expected to be adopted in 2019. This new strategy will update the *EU strategy for Central Asia* of 2007, which currently provides the framework for regional and bilateral cooperation with Central Asian partners.

[EU-Central Asia relations, factsheet](#)

[The EU and the countries of Central Asia held their High-level Political and Security Dialogue \(press release, 10/07/2018\)](#)

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Council will discuss Bosnia and Herzegovina, following the elections held on 7 October. The discussion will cover issues related to the reform process in the country.

In the conclusions on Bosnia and Herzegovina/Operation EUFOR Althea adopted at its meeting on 15 October 2018, the Council stated that it expects all leaders in the country to engage constructively on government formation at all levels, in the interests of all citizens. The Council also recalled that it expects the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities to prioritise taking forward the reforms needed to advance on its EU path, ensuring the full and effective implementation of the reform agenda.

Bosnia and Herzegovina applied for EU membership in February 2016. The opinion of the European Commission on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for EU membership is currently under preparation. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to advance on the reform of its electoral framework. It also needs to take further steps to strengthen the rule of law and engage in public administration reforms. Progress is also needed on the economic reform agenda agreed with the EU, aimed at tackling the difficult socio-economic situation. EU financial pre-accession assistance earmarked for 2018-2020 is €263.8 million. The EU is also engaged in Bosnia and Herzegovina through a military-led mission, EUFOR Althea.

[Bosnia and Herzegovina: Council adopts conclusions and confirms continued presence of Operation EUFOR Althea \(press release, 15/10/2018\)](#)

[Joint statement by High Representative Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn on the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 8 October 2018](#)

Ukraine

The Council will exchange views on the latest developments in Ukraine, in particular the situation in the Azov Sea and the "elections" in the so-called "Luhansk People's Republic" and "Donetsk People's Republic" on 11 November 2018. Ministers may also touch upon the reform process in Ukraine and the EU's support for it.

At the EU-Ukraine summit that took place in Brussels on 9 July, the EU reiterated its unwavering support for and commitment to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The EU and Ukraine also reaffirmed their continued commitment to strengthening the political association and economic integration of Ukraine with the EU, on the basis of the Association Agreement.

The EU recognised the substantial progress made by Ukraine in its reform process, which is essential both to meet the demands of Ukraine's citizens and to strengthen Ukraine's resilience to the external challenges it faces. The EU and Ukraine will have the opportunity to review the progress on reforms, as well as many other issues of relevance for bilateral and global cooperation, at their forthcoming Association Council meeting scheduled for 17 December 2018.

The Council last discussed Ukraine during its meeting on 19 March, following the High Representative's visit to Kyiv on 11-12 March.

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the "elections" planned in the so-called "Luhansk People's Republic" and "Donetsk People's Republic" on 11 November 2018](#)

[Speech by High Representative Federica Mogherini on the situation in the Sea of Azov Joint statement following the 20th EU-Ukraine Summit Brussels, 9 July 2018](#)

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

Yemen

Over lunch, the High Representative and foreign ministers will discuss the situation in Yemen. It will be an opportunity to exchange views on the ongoing EU efforts, in particular regarding political, humanitarian and development support, and to explore further ways to strengthen the UN-led process. The discussion takes place in the aftermath of intensification of military operations in and around the port of Hodeidah, including airstrikes.

The Council last adopted conclusions on Yemen on 25 June 2018, in the context of an exacerbated humanitarian crisis, with more than 22 million people - 80% of the population - in need of humanitarian or protection support. The Council underlined that sustainable peace can only be achieved through negotiations with the meaningful participation of all relevant parties, including civil society, women and youth. The EU reiterated that there cannot be any military solution to the conflict, and underlined its strong support for the UN Special Envoy, Martin Griffiths, and his efforts to bring about an inclusive political solution.

Since 2015, the EU has contributed more than €234 million in humanitarian funding to Yemen. This commitment was further reinforced at the High Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen held in Geneva in April 2018, where the EU pledged another €107.5 million in new funding for 2018 to help civilians most in need across the country. The EU has also been co-funding the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM), to impartially verify and inspect incoming commercial goods, and ensure sufficient access for both humanitarian and commercial commodities to the country. It has also contributed €173 million to several development assistance projects in Yemen in support of displaced persons, rural resilience, health and nutrition, and food security.

[Council conclusions on Yemen, 25 June 2018](#)

[Statement by the High Representative Mogherini and Commissioner Stylianides on the latest developments around Hodeidah, Yemen on 4 August 2018](#)

[Yemen and the EU](#)

Security and defence

Foreign ministers will have a joint session with defence ministers to review progress in the context of the implementation of the EU Global Strategy in the area of security and defence. This discussion comes two years after the Council agreed a new level of ambition and welcomed the implementation plan of the Global Strategy on security and defence.

They may touch upon the following actions:

- the **civilian CSDP compact**,

The Council and the member states meeting within the Council are expected to adopt conclusions establishing a civilian CSDP compact. The aim is to strengthen the EU capacity to deploy civilian crisis management missions. The objectives of such missions are to reinforce police, rule of law and civil administration in fragile and conflict settings. The compact is also expected to emphasise further steps to increase the contributions of these missions to the EU's wider response to tackle security challenges - see also below, "other items"

- the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (**MPCC**),

The MPCC currently has responsibility for the operational planning and conduct of the three non-executive military CSDP missions. In its conclusions, the Council is set to agree to further strengthen and develop the MPCC.

- the **permanent structured cooperation - PESCO**,

The Council is due to adopt a decision updating the list of projects, launching 17 new projects - see below, "other items"

- the **Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD)**,

CARD promotes enhanced defence cooperation among member states through greater transparency on defence plans. It will help member states to identify future cooperative opportunities to deliver on key military defence capabilities and benefit from economies of scale. The European Defence Agency in its role as CARD Secretariat has conducted a trial run. Findings and recommendations will be presented and discussed in the EDA steering board - see also below, "in the margins"

- the **European Defence Fund**,

The Council is expected to adopt its position (partial general approach) on the Commission proposal to establish a European Defence Fund in the framework of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) - see below "other items"

- the proposal by the High Representative for a **European Peace Facility**,

The European Peace Facility would be an off-EU budget fund with a proposed allocation of €10.5 billion. It was proposed on 13 June 2018 by the High Representative, with the support of the Commission. The aim of the facility would be: funding the common costs of military missions and operations under the Common Security and Defence Policy (currently covered by the Athena mechanism); contributing to the financing of military peace support operations led by other international actors (currently covered by the African Peace Facility); and providing support to third states' armed forces to prevent conflicts, build peace and strengthen international security.

- **military mobility**,

The aim of military mobility is to address the obstacles which are hampering the movement of military equipment and personnel across the EU and beyond. The High Representative and the Commission presented a joint communication on improving military mobility in the EU on 10 November 2017 and an action plan on 28 March 2018. The Council is expected to take a step forward in the implementation of the action plan. Military mobility is also an area identified for stronger cooperation between the EU and NATO as well as a project and a commitment in the framework of PESCO.

[EU cooperation on security and defence \(background information\)](#)

Other items

The Council is expected to adopt a number of decisions and conclusions without debate, including the points outlined below.

Council conclusions on Pakistan

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Pakistan, following the holding of the July 2018 general elections. It is due to state the EU's willingness to engage with the new government of Pakistan to support its efforts in advancing social and economic reforms, ensuring access to education, and addressing poverty and inequality through good governance and the respect of the rule of law.

The Council is expected to urge Pakistan to live up to its international commitments with regards to the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law. In the conclusions, the EU is set to draw particular attention to the freedom of religion or belief, abuses of the blasphemy law, the freedom of expression and media, the shrinking space for civil society, the rights of the people belonging to minorities, and women's and children's full enjoyment of their human rights.

The Council is also expected to reiterate the EU's wishes to strengthen cooperation with Pakistan in the fields of security and defence, sustainable development, trade and migration. The Council will call on Pakistan to step up its engagement in constructive initiatives to support peace in Afghanistan and intensify its pursuit of cooperation with neighbouring countries, which would contribute to regional stability.

The conclusions are also expected to underline that the EU also look forward to engaging with Pakistan on sustainable connectivity as a positive contribution to regional stability, prosperity and development. The Council is set to express its expectation that the new framework for engagement with Pakistan, the EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan, will be signed at the earliest possible occasion.

[EU Delegation to Pakistan](#)

[Statement by the Spokesperson on the elections in Pakistan, 27 July 2018](#)

Council conclusions on Afghanistan

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Afghanistan. The Council is due to reaffirm its long-term commitment to support the people of Afghanistan in their path towards peace, security and prosperity, and to welcome the provisional application of the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (CAPD) as an important step in bilateral relations between the EU and Afghanistan.

The Council is set to underline that the Geneva ministerial conference on Afghanistan on 27-28 November 2018 will be an important opportunity to take stock of progress on mutually agreed reforms made since the Brussels Conference in 2016 and set a forward-looking agenda for peace, stability and sustainable development. The Council is also expected to recall the EU support for political dialogue and economic cooperation between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries and the wider region, including Central Asian countries, through the establishment of networks and partnerships that develop sustainable connectivity.

[EU-Afghanistan relations, factsheet](#)

[EU Delegation to Afghanistan](#)

Council conclusions on water diplomacy

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on water diplomacy. It is set to recall that water is a prerequisite for human survival and dignity and a fundamental basis for the resilience of both societies and the environment. It will underline that water is vital for human nutrition and health, and essential for ecosystem management, agriculture, energy and overall planetary security.

The Council is expected to note the potential of water scarcity to affect peace and security, as water related risks can have grave human and economic costs, all of which can have direct implications for the EU, including through migration flows. The Council is due to affirm its intention to enhance EU diplomatic engagement on water, as a tool for peace, security and stability, and to firmly condemn the use of water as a weapon of war. The Council is expected to underline the EU's commitment to promoting transboundary and integrated water management as well as effective water governance.

The Council is also set to reaffirm the EU's commitment to the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, as components of the right to an adequate standard of living. It is also to underline the EU's strong commitment to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and to highlight that progress on Goal 6 ("Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all") is essential for the achievement of other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Council is expected to stress the essential link between water and climate change and to welcome recent discussions at the UN Security Council linking water, climate, peace and security.

The Council is expected to confirm EU's continued commitment to address water challenges around the world and to give the necessary consideration to the importance of water and sanitation in the programming of future financial and technical cooperation with partner countries.

[EU water diplomacy \(EEAS\)](#)

Council conclusions on Sudan

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Sudan, which remains crucial for the peace and stability of the wider Horn of Africa. With the 2020 elections on the horizon and the dynamics in the region opening a new chapter of cooperation within the Horn, the Council is expected to reaffirm the EU's readiness to engage in an evolving dialogue and cooperation with Khartoum, depending on progress shown by Sudan in committing to internal reforms, including human rights and good governance, facilitation of humanitarian assistance, sustainable peace and a constructive role in the region.

In its conclusions, the Council is also expected to urge the Sudanese authorities to fully respect the rights to freedom of expression, press, access to information, association and peaceful assembly, in compliance with international human rights law. The Council is set to underline that the run-up to 2020 elections should be an opportunity for Sudan to demonstrate its commitment to reforms by allowing the full participation of all its citizens in an inclusive political process and without restrictions to individual rights.

In this regard, the Council is expected to express its deep concern with the shrinking space for the civil society and the persecutions against human rights defenders, students, political activists, journalists, and other media workers, as well as with the situation for women and girls.

[EU delegation to Sudan](#)

Council conclusions on Ethiopia

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Ethiopia. In its conclusions, the Council is expected to note that Ethiopia has witnessed momentous change and that political and economic reforms have gained a new impetus under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. It is due to state that his ambitious agenda towards a more democratic and just Ethiopian society is a positive example for the region and beyond.

The Council is expected to welcome the commitment of the government of Ethiopia to multi-party democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and gender equality. It is also due to encourage the government to continue its efforts in this regard and towards developing an inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders, including federal and regional authorities, opposition groups, civil society, youth groups and media, on sustainable solutions towards better governance, justice and accountability, elections, job creation, and security challenges.

[Statement by High Representative Federica Mogherini on reconciliation and economic integration in the Horn of Africa](#)

[Ethiopia and the EU](#)

[EU delegation to Ethiopia](#)
