



FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

10 December 2018

The Foreign Affairs Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will start at 8.30 with a discussion on **current affairs** allowing ministers to review pressing issues on the international agenda.

Foreign ministers will discuss the **Western Balkans**. They will take stock of the current situation and the EU's engagement with the region.

The Council will then discuss **EU - African Union (AU) cooperation** in view of the first inter-summit EU-AU ministerial meeting on 21-22 January. The debate is expected to cover three main themes: political aspects (peace, security and governance), the economy (investment, trade and skills) and multilateralism (strengthening cooperation in support of the rules-based global order)

Foreign ministers will then discuss recent developments in **Ukraine**, including in preparation for their informal lunch with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin.

The Council will discuss **Iran**. Ministers are expected to focus on the implementation of the JCPOA, including the EU's efforts to preserve the legitimate trade relations with Iran. They may also discuss concerns over recent behaviour by Iranian actors on European soil, Iran's ballistic missiles programme and relevant regional issues.

Foreign ministers will have an informal lunch with Ukrainian Foreign Minister **Pavlo Klimkin**.

In the afternoon, the Council will discuss **Venezuela**. Ministers will follow up on their exchange of views of 15 October 2018 when they agreed to explore the possibility of establishing an international contact group which could, if conditions are met, help facilitate a political process. The discussion is also taking place against the background the start of the second term of President Maduro on 10 January 2019.

Press opportunities:

+/- 08.15 Doorstep by High Representative Federica Mogherini

+/- 15.30 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 foreign ministers may raise the situation in **Sri Lanka** and **Syria**. They may also refer to the joint **action plan on disinformation** presented by the High Representative and the Commission on 5 December 2018, and to **human rights**, given that the Council takes place on the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

[Statement by the Spokesperson on the situation in Sri Lanka, 10 October 2018](#) and [joint local statement by the EU delegation in Colombo, 8 November 2018](#)

[The EU and the crisis in Syria](#)

[Joint action plan on disinformation, Commission press release, 5 December 2018](#)

[Protection and promotion of human rights \(background information\)](#)

Western Balkans

The Council will discuss the Western Balkans. Ministers will take stock of the situation in the region and the EU's engagement. Foreign ministers are expected to discuss latest developments in the region, including in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and regarding the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue.

Foreign ministers of NATO allies also discussed the Western Balkans on 5 December 2018, in the presence of High Representative Federica Mogherini.

The Council discussed Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) during its last meeting on 19 November 2018, following the elections held on 7 October. As stated in its conclusions of 15 October 2018, the Council expects all leaders in the country to engage constructively on government formation at all levels, and the BiH authorities to prioritise the reforms needed to advance on its EU path. The opinion of the European Commission on BiH's application for EU membership is expected next year.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, parliamentary votes on the constitutional changes to implement the Prespa agreement between Skopje and Athens took place on 19 October and 2-3 December, with the necessary majority of members of parliament voting in favour. The final vote is expected in January. The Council is expected to discuss latest developments in taking forward the agreement. In the framework of the EU-facilitated dialogue for the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, the High Representative Federica Mogherini hosted on 8 November 2018 a meeting of the High Level Dialogue with President Hashim Thaçi of Kosovo and President Aleksandar Vučić of Serbia. The EU expects Serbia and Kosovo to swiftly deliver on a legally-binding agreement, given the direct link between comprehensive normalisation of relations between them and the concrete prospects for their respective European paths.

The EU reaffirmed its unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans in the Sofia declaration of 17 May 2018 and in the June 2018 Council conclusions. It welcomed the shared commitment of the Western Balkans partners to European values and principles, and to the vision of a strong, stable and united Europe, underpinned by historic, cultural and geographic ties and by mutual political, security and economic interests.

[Remarks by High-Representative Federica Mogherini upon her arrival to the NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting, 5 December 2018](#)

[Joint statement by High Representative Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn on the consultative referendum in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 1 October 2018](#)

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

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

[Federica Mogherini hosted a meeting of the High Level Dialogue with President Thaçi of Kosovo and President Vučić of Serbia, 8 November 2018](#)

[EU-Western Balkans summit in Sofia, 17/05/2018](#)

EU - African Union cooperation

Foreign ministers will discuss EU - African Union (AU) cooperation in view of the first inter-Summit EU-AU ministerial meeting which will take place on 21-22 January in Brussels. The debate is expected to cover three main themes:

- political aspects: peace, security and governance
- economic: investment, trade and skills
- multilateralism: strengthening cooperation in support of a rule based global order

The discussion is expected to focus on the implementation of the outcome of the 5th AU – EU Summit that took place in Abidjan on 29 and 30 November 2017, marking a mile stone in reshaping the partnership into an even stronger, mutually beneficial partnership better adapted to a rapidly evolving global context. Investing in youth –the Summit's central theme - remains a key priority in Africa-EU cooperation and relations as does the importance of working both for and with youth. African and European leaders agreed to bring the partnership to a new level around four strategic priorities: (i) investing in people – education, science, technology and skills development; (ii) strengthening resilience, peace, security and governance; (iii) migration and mobility and (iv) mobilising investments for African structural sustainable transformation. Priority areas also importantly reflect on the importance of promoting gender equality and empowerment of women.

On the political aspects, ministers may refer to the memorandum of understanding on peace, security and governance signed by the AU and the EU on 23 May 2018, which provides an opportunity to engage in a more strategic way with the AU.

On the economic aspects, ministers may refer to the proposal for an Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs, which was discussed by development ministers on 26 November 2018. The proposal sets out a comprehensive economic agenda complementing the political strand of the partnership with job creation at its heart, bringing together the different elements of our work to create conditions for investment, to promote investment in critical sectors of digital solutions, energy, transport and agriculture and to ensure that the necessary skills are available. The EU remains Africa's largest trade and investment partner, with approximately 40% of FDI stock worth €291 billion in 2016.

On multilateralism, ministers may refer to the third trilateral AU-EU-UN meeting of Principals in the margins of the last UNGA which demonstrated the engagement to reinforce synergies in crises areas, as well as at political, economic and operational levels in tackling global challenges. At the Abidjan Summit, the AU and the EU agreed to boost their cooperation on the global scene, working together to promote the rule based global order with the UN at its core and to support effective multilateralism. The AU and the EU called for stronger mutual engagement, and agreed to strengthen their high-level policy dialogue to adopt a more coordinated approach and converging positions in international negotiations.

[Africa and the EU](#)

[Final Declaration of the AU - EU summit in Abidjan](#)

[Towards a new 'Africa - Europe Alliance' \(Commission press release, 12/09/2018\)](#)

Ukraine

The Council will then discuss recent developments in Ukraine, including in preparation for their informal lunch with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin.

Over lunch, the High Representative and foreign ministers will exchange views with Ukrainian foreign minister Pavlo Klimkin. They are expected to focus on the latest developments in the Azov Sea and the security situation in Ukraine, as well as possible EU support to assist the affected regions in south-east Ukraine.

On 28 November 2018, a declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU expressed the EU's utmost concern about the dangerous increase in tensions in the Azov Sea and Kerch Strait. The EU recalled that the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia in 2014 remains a direct challenge to international security, and reconfirmed their condemnation of this violation of international law. The EU reiterated its full support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

The Council last discussed Ukraine during its meeting on 19 November 2018. Foreign ministers reiterated their unwavering support for and commitment to Ukraine's territorial integrity. In this context, they recalled that the EU does not recognise the "elections" of 11 November 2018 in the so-called "Luhansk People's Republic" and "Donetsk People's Republic" that it considers as illegal and illegitimate. They affirmed their readiness to consider appropriate targeted measures in response. Foreign ministers recalled that the full implementation of the Minsk agreements remain essential. They also highlighted the EU's continued humanitarian engagement in Eastern Ukraine, addressing the needs of those most affected by the conflict.

Ministers also touched upon the EU's support for the reform process in Ukraine. 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 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.

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the escalating tensions in the Azov Sea, 28 November 2018](#)

[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](#)

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

Iran

The Council will discuss Iran. Ministers are expected to focus on the implementation of the JCPoA, including the ongoing EU's efforts to preserve effective financial channels to Iran and pursue legitimate trade relation, including in light of the re-imposition of US sanctions on 5 November 2018. They are also likely to discuss concerns over recent behaviour by Iranian actors on European soil, Iran's ballistic missiles programme and relevant regional security aspects.

This discussion follows the short exchange under current affairs during the previous Foreign Affairs Council (19 November 2018). During this exchange, ministers highlighted their continued full support for the Iran nuclear deal. They noted that the agreement continues to be implemented by Iran, as confirmed by 13 reports issued by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). At the same time, they expressed their full solidarity with those member states which have recently witnessed unacceptable activities by Iranian actors on European soil, and affirmed their readiness to consider an appropriate and targeted response.

The EU continues to deeply regret the further re-imposition of sanctions by the United States, following the latter's withdrawal from the JCPoA. The JCPoA was unanimously endorsed by the UN Security Council by UN Security Council resolution 2231/2015. It is a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture and crucial for the security of Europe, the region, and the entire world. The EU has repeatedly underlined that the JCPoA is working and delivering on its goal, that is to ensure that Iran's nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful.

All JCPoA participants acknowledged at the ministerial meetings in Vienna on 6 July and in New York on 24 September that sanctions lifting is an essential part of the agreement and reiterated their commitment towards the preservation and maintenance of effective financial channels with Iran, and the continuation of Iran's export of oil and gas.

In this context, in their joint statement of 2 November, the High Representative and the Foreign Affairs and Finance ministers of France, Germany and the United Kingdom stated their commitment to advance the intensive work to set up a Special Purpose Vehicle. This would enable continued sanctions lifting and the economic benefits associated with this process to reach Iran and will allow European exporters and importers to pursue legitimate trade. Further work must be done to assist and reassure economic operators pursuing legitimate business under EU law. This is in addition to a number of measures that were already taken in August this year regarding the entering into force of the updates to the Blocking Statute and to the lending mandate of the European Investment Bank.

[Joint statement 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](#)

[Implementation of the JCPoA: Joint Ministerial Statement, 24 September 2018](#)

[Statement from the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, 6 July 2018](#)

Venezuela

The High Representative and foreign ministers will discuss the situation in Venezuela. Ministers will follow up on their exchange of views of 15 October 2018, when they agreed to explore the possibility of establishing an international contact group which could, if conditions are met, help facilitate a political process.

The discussion is also taking place in view of the start of the second term of President Maduro on 10 January 2019, following the elections on 20 May 2018. In its conclusions of 28 May 2018, the Council stated that the election and its outcome lacked any credibility as the electoral process did not ensure the necessary guarantees for inclusive and democratic elections

The Council also recalled its readiness to help find a democratic way out of the current multidimensional crisis, through a meaningful and result-oriented negotiation, conducted in good faith, that includes all relevant Venezuelan political actors.

The EU is committed to supporting the population of Venezuela and, in neighbouring countries, to supporting the socio-economic inclusion of Venezuelans and the resilience of host communities. To that end, the European Commission allocated an additional €20 million to respond to the urgent needs of those affected by the socio-economic crisis in Venezuela on 4 December 2018. This comes on top of the €35.1 million in emergency aid and medium-term development assistance announced in June 2018 to support the Venezuelan people and the countries in the region most affected by this crisis

Since 13 November 2017, the Council has had targeted restrictive measures in place on Venezuela. These include an embargo on arms and on equipment for internal repression, together with restrictive measures (travel ban and an asset freeze) on 18 individuals involved in non-compliance with democratic principles and the rule of law as well as in serious human rights violation. 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.

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

[EU steps up assistance for victims of the Venezuela crisis, Commission press release, 5 December 2018](#)

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

Other items

The Council is expected to adopt a number of decisions and conclusions without debate, including Council conclusions on Myanmar/Burma, on Libya and on women, peace and security.

Council conclusions on Myanmar/Burma

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the situation in Myanmar/Burma. The Council is due to express deep concern over the findings of the independent international fact-finding mission (FFM) of the UN Human Rights Council which conclude that gross human rights violations were committed in the Kachin, Rakhine and Shan states, in particular by the Myanmar/Burma military (Tatmadaw). The European Union has consistently called for the accountability of those responsible for such crimes. The Council is expected to underline that a new independent mechanism established by the UN Human Rights Council in September 2018 to further investigate and prepare for fair and independent criminal proceedings should operate in full recognition of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

The Council will recall its conclusions of 26 February 2018, including its call on the government of Myanmar/Burma to take, without further delay, meaningful action in particular with regard to making progress on accountability, access for the UN and humanitarian agencies to Kachin, Rakhine and Shan states, and to creation conditions for voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced persons to their places of origin.

The Council intends to adopt additional restrictive measures against senior military and border guard police officers responsible for human rights violations and is committed to keeping the list of designations under constant review.

[Council conclusions on Myanmar/Burma, 26 February 2018](#)

[EU - Myanmar/Burma relations \(EEAS factsheet\)](#)

[EU delegation in Myanmar/Burma](#)

Council conclusions on an EU Strategy on India

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on an EU Strategy on India. The Council is due to endorse the Joint Communication “Elements for a European Union strategy on India” by the High Representative and the European Commission, which, together with the conclusions, will provide the policy framework for the EU’s deeper and broader engagement with India over the coming years.

The Council is set to welcome the increasing role and responsibility of India on the global stage, through its ambitious foreign policy and fast growing economy. Through their Strategic Partnership, the EU and India aim at jointly promoting peace and security, and strengthening the rules-based global order.

In its conclusions, the Council is expected to seek increased cooperation between the EU and India in the promotion of effective multilateralism, growth and prosperity in the EU and India and the wider Asian region, in tackling global challenges such as sustainable development, and in pursuing security interests.

[Joint Communication “Elements for a European Union strategy on India”, Commission press release, 20 November 2018](#)

Council conclusions on Libya

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Libya. The Council is due to welcome the outcome of the Conference for Libya hosted by Italy in Palermo on 12 and 13 November 2018, which followed the Paris Conference held on 29 May 2018.

The Council is due to state that the status quo in Libya is a prevalent source of instability and insecurity for the Libyan people, its neighbours, and the entire region. It is expected to reiterate that there can only be a political solution to the Libyan crisis, and that this needs to come from the Libyans themselves through an inclusive political process, with full and equal participation and representation of women, and in full respect of international law, including human rights.

The conclusions are expected to express the EU and member states full support to the recalibrated action plan presented by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ghassan Salamé on 8 November to the UN Security Council. The EU and its members states they will actively accompany its three strands – political, security and economic – in line with the long-term comprehensive coherent approach to support the UN-led process towards transition and reconciliation. The Council will also address issues related to security, economic policy, stabilisation and migration.

[EU-Libya relations \(EEAS website\)](#)

Council conclusions on Women, Peace and Security

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The Council is due to recall the commitments of the European Union and its member states to the full implementation of the WPS agenda, which consists of the UN security council resolution 1325 and its follow-up resolutions, ensuring that it is fully integrated into all EU policies and efforts in promoting the important role of women's engagement in support of sustainable peace, security, human rights, justice and development.

In its conclusions, the Council is expected to welcome the new EU strategic approach to WPS, which emphasises the need for systematic integration of a gender perspective into all fields and activities in the domain of peace and security, and overall in EU external actions, as well as the need for the EU to engage, empower, protect, and support women and girls in order to help all countries achieving sustainable and lasting peace and security as intrinsic components of human rights and sustainable development.

[EU Statement – United Nations Security Council: Promoting the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and Sustaining Peace through Women's Political and Economic Empowerment, 25 October 2018](#)