



FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

8 April 2019 (Luxembourg)

The Foreign Affairs Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will start at 10.30 with a discussion on **current affairs** allowing ministers to review pressing issues on the international agenda.

The Council will discuss **Afghanistan**. This discussion will focus on recent developments and efforts to find a lasting and negotiated political solution to the conflict. The High Representative will debrief ministers on her visit to Afghanistan on 26 March. The Council will adopt conclusions on Afghanistan's peace process.

The Council will then have an exchange of views on the **Eastern Partnership** (EaP) in view of the EaP ministerial meeting (Brussels, 13 May). Ministers will discuss the implementation of the 20 deliverables for 2020 and the prospects for the EaP, which marks its 10th anniversary this year. This framework aims at strengthening the governance, economy, connectivity and society in the six Eastern partners: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

Over lunch, foreign ministers will discuss the situation in **Venezuela**, following the second ministerial meeting of the international contact group on 28 March in Quito, Ecuador.

The Council will adopt a number of conclusions and decisions without debate, including council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations on a framework for action.

Press opportunities:

+/- 10.20 Doorstep by High Representative Federica Mogherini

+/- 15.15 Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council

[Council meeting page](#)

[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 Council press office.

Current affairs

The Foreign Affairs Council will start with a discussion on current affairs. The High Representative and foreign ministers will touch upon the League of Arab State Summit (Tunis, 31 March), as well as Libya, following the Quartet meeting in Tunis on 30 March and in view of the National Conference to be held on 14-16 April 2019. They may also refer to the G7 ministerial meeting (Dinard, 5-6 April).

[Speech by High Representative F. Mogherini at the Arab League Summit](#), 31 March 2019

[Remarks by High Representative at the joint press conference following a meeting of the Libya Quartet](#), 30 March 2019

[G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, webpage](#) 5-6 April 2019

Afghanistan

Foreign ministers will have an exchange of views on the situation in Afghanistan. They are expected to focus on current peace efforts and to review EU engagement with the country. The High Representative will debrief ministers on her visits to Islamabad on 25 March and Kabul on 26 March. The Council will adopt conclusions on Afghanistan's peace process.

The Council is expected to reaffirm the EU's political commitment and long-term support to the people of Afghanistan on their path towards peace, security and prosperity. It is set to encourage the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban to intensify their efforts towards a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the conflict, and to underline that the EU supports all efforts to catalyse this process.

The Council is due to recommend that direct negotiations between Afghans, with the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban at their core, begin as soon as possible, ensuring an inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process. The Council is due to underline the importance of the meaningful participation of women in all peace initiatives, including formal and informal peace negotiations.

The Council are expected to confirm that the EU stands ready to support the following aspects of the process: to help make the peace process inclusive; to assist with reforms, including security sector reform; to act as a guarantor of a peace process, if requested by the parties; to assist with reintegration of fighters and their families; and to promote regional trade and connectivity.

The Council last adopted conclusions on Afghanistan on 19 November 2018, in which it reiterated its long-term commitment to support the people of Afghanistan in their path towards peace, security and prosperity, and that a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan is a cornerstone for the stability and development of the entire region. It also underlined the importance of economic cooperation between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, and stated that progress in regional economic cooperation and connectivity projects will bring tangible benefits to the people of Afghanistan and reinforce current peace efforts.

Since 2002, the European Union has provided €3.66 billion in development and humanitarian aid, making it the fourth largest donor in support of the Afghan people. Afghanistan is also the largest beneficiary of EU development assistance. Together with its member states, the European Union contributes more than €1 billion in development assistance per year to Afghanistan. At the October 2016 Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, the European Union and its member states pledged €5 billion in support for Afghanistan in the period 2016-2020. In November 2018, the European Commission allocated €474 million to support state building and public sector reform, health, justice, and elections, as well as address migration and displacement challenges in Afghanistan.

[EU relations with Afghanistan](#), background information

[Council Conclusions on Afghanistan](#), 19 November 2018

[High Representative Federica Mogherini visits Afghanistan](#), 26 March 2019

[Remarks by High Representative at the joint press point with Ashraf Ghani, President of Afghanistan](#), 26 March 2019

Eastern Partnership

The Council will discuss the Eastern Partnership, in view of the EaP ministerial meeting that will take place in Brussels on 13 May. Ministers will discuss the implementation of the 20 deliverables for 2020 and the prospects for the EaP, which marks its 10th anniversary this year. The 10th anniversary of the EaP will be marked by a high-level conference which will take place in Brussels on 14 May 2019.

Ministers will take stock of implementation of the 20 Deliverables and they are expected to acknowledge progress made in particular domains as well as discuss areas in which reforms should be stepped up.

They might engage in the start of a wider strategic reflection on the future relationship with Eastern Partnership countries post 2020, based on shared values and principles, and on the continuous approach of both inclusivity and differentiation.

Foreign ministers last discussed the Eastern Partnership at their informal meeting (Gymnich) on 31 January 2019. The last EaP ministerial meeting took place on 15 October 2018. EU and Eastern partners' foreign ministers reflected on progress in achieving by 2020 the 20 deliverables. The 20 deliverables for 2020 were adopted by the Eastern Partnership Summit, which took place on 24 November 2017. EU and Eastern partners' leaders agreed on a joint declaration reconfirming their commitment and the high importance they attach to the Eastern Partnership. They acknowledged among others the European aspirations of partners who signed association agreements with the EU, namely Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine; while recognising the right each of the six partner countries to choose the level of ambition they aspire to in their relations with the EU.

Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova signed association agreements with the EU, including deep and comprehensive free trade areas (DCFTAs) in 2014. The DCFTA with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova entered into force on 1 July 2016, and with Ukraine on 1 September 2017. The EU and Armenia signed a comprehensive and enhanced partnership agreement on deepening bilateral relations on 24 November 2017 which has been provisionally applied since 1 June 2018. In September 2018 the EU-Azerbaijan partnership priorities guiding the bilateral cooperation for the period 2018-2020 were endorsed. The EU and Azerbaijan have also been progressing on the negotiations on a new comprehensive agreement. In the last 3 years, EU-Belarus relations have developed on more positive agenda following the release of political prisoners in 2015. Negotiations on EU-Belarus partnership priorities have been progressing as well.

The EaP was launched in 2009. It sets out to promote political association and economic integration of the Eastern partners with 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 commitment to market economy principles.

[Eastern Partnership](#), background information

[Council Conclusions on Eastern Partnership](#), 15 November 2016

[Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit](#), 24 November 2017

Informal lunch: Venezuela

Foreign ministers will discuss the situation in Venezuela. They will review the outcome of the second ministerial meeting of the international contact group (ICG) on 28 March in Quito (Ecuador) and the missions deployed by the ICG to Caracas and discuss about the ICG's next steps.

Foreign ministers are also expected to discuss the latest developments in the country. This include the disqualifying of Juan Guaidó from public office for 15 years, the lifting of his parliamentary immunity, the arrest of Juan Guaidó's Chief of Staff Roberto Marrero, sustained and unaddressed electricity blackouts, as well as the apparent arrival of foreign troops in the country.

The ICG meeting of 28 March agreed on next steps, in line with the joint ministerial declaration, on its two tracks: facilitating humanitarian access, and creating the conditions for free, fair, transparent presidential elections. The ICG reiterated its grave concern with the rapid deterioration of the living conditions of millions of Venezuelans due to the lack of food, healthcare and basic services. It expressed its commitment to mobilise further assistance and to implement it in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

On the political track, the ICG underlined the need to restore Venezuela's full democracy and constitutional order in a peaceful manner and underlined that the solution to the crisis lies in giving the voice back to the people in democratic elections, in line with international standards. It agreed that the conduct of an electoral process towards new presidential elections should include an agreement based on a 4 point roadmap inter-alia:

1. re-institutionalise key state institutions, including the National Electoral Council and the Supreme Court of Justice;
2. enact provisions that would guarantee participation of all possible candidates and parties;
3. comprehensively update the voter registry, to include younger voters and Venezuelans abroad;
4. amend the legal framework for elections to allow deployment of international observers.

The ICG brings together the EU and eight of its member states (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) and countries from Latin America (Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Uruguay). The first meeting of the ICG took place on 7 February in Montevideo (Uruguay).

The Council has, since 13 November 2017, put in place restrictive measures against Venezuela. These include an embargo on arms and on equipment for internal repression, as well as a travel ban and an asset freeze on 18 officials responsible for human rights violations. The restrictive measures are aimed at encouraging democratic shared solutions that can bring political stability to the country and allow it to address the pressing needs of the population.

On 27 March, the European Commission announced the mobilisation of an additional €50 million in emergency assistance to Venezuela and in the region, bringing total assistance for the regional crisis to €117.6 million since 2018. This latest allocation of emergency assistance includes measures for shelter, healthcare, food assistance, nutrition services, access to safe water and sanitation as well as children's education. Impartial delivery of humanitarian aid through proper independent channels remains a priority for the EU.

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

[International Contact Group on Venezuela: ministerial declaration, 28 March 2019](#)

[Remarks by High Representative Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the 2nd meeting of the International Contact Group on Venezuela, 28 March 2019](#)

[Statement by the High Representative Federica Mogherini on the illegal decision to disqualify the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, from holding public office, 28 March 2019](#)

[Venezuela: EU increases emergency assistance by €50 million, 27 March 2019](#)

Other items

The Council is expected to adopt a number of decisions and conclusions without debate.

Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and establishing a framework for action by the member states and the EU institutions. The conclusions establish the aim of strengthening the effectiveness and impact of EU foreign policy by integrating international cultural relations in the range of its foreign policy instruments. They recognise the need for a cross-cutting approach to culture and inclusiveness. The conclusions also call on member states, the Commission and the EEAS to strengthen coordination and strategic guidance on the best way to promote international cultural relations.

[Draft Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action](#)

[Joint communication "Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations", 8 June 2016](#)

[Communication on a new European agenda for culture, 22 May 2018](#)

[Council conclusions on culture in the European Union's external relations, 23 May 2017](#)

[Conclusions on the need to bring cultural heritage to the fore across policies in the EU, 23 May 2018](#)

Framework on counter-terrorism between the UN and the EU

The Council is expected to give its approval to a framework on counter-terrorism between the UN and the EU. The UN and the EU share a deep conviction in and commitment to promoting multilateralism to address the global challenges the international community faces today, including the scourge of terrorism. The framework identifies areas for UN-EU cooperation and priorities until 2020.

[EU fight against terrorism](#)
