



FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL 13-14 May 2019 (Brussels)

The Foreign Affairs Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will start at 14.00 with a discussion on current affairs, allowing ministers to review pressing issues on the international agenda, in particular the situation in **Venezuela**.

The Council will discuss **Libya**, starting with an exchange of views with the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative Ghassan Salamé. This discussion is expected to focus on recent developments in the country and possible steps that the EU could take to avoid further escalation of the conflict.

Foreign ministers will then have an exchange of views on the **Sahel**, to prepare for their discussion the next day with the EU defence ministers and together with the foreign and defence ministers of the G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger). The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the Sahel.

The Council is also expected to adopt a number of decisions and conclusions without debate, including conclusions on EU relations with Latin American and Caribbean countries, and the 2018 EU annual report on human rights and democracy in the world.

Prior to the Council, at 10.00, EU foreign ministers will meet with their counterparts from the **Eastern Partnership**, for their annual meeting. The meeting takes place against the background of the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership and a high-level conference on 14 May.

On Tuesday 14 May, the Council will resume at 9.30 with a **session of foreign ministers and defence ministers on the Sahel**, together with their counterparts of the **G5 Sahel countries** (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger).

Defence ministers will then continue their meeting ([see background note for the defence part](#)).

Press opportunities:

Monday 13 May:

- +/- 9.45 Doorstep by High Representative Federica Mogherini
- +/- 11.30 Family photo of the Eastern partnership ministerial meeting
- +/- 17.30 Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council

Tuesday 14 May:

As of 7.45 (tbc) Opportunity for doorstep statements

- +/- 12.00 Family photo of EU and G5 Sahel countries foreign and defence ministers
- +/- 16.15 Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council (Defence)

[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 situation in **Venezuela**. They may also refer to Ukraine, following the second round of the Presidential elections on 21 April 2019 as well as the Russian decree enabling the simplified issuing of passports in certain areas of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The JCPOA (Iran's nuclear deal) may also be raised, in view of Iran's recent announcement.

[Venezuela: Statement from the Ministerial Meeting of the International Contact Group, 7 May 2019](#)

[Remarks by High Representative Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the meeting of the International Contact Group, 7 May 2019](#)

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the latest developments in Venezuela, 30 April 2019 and Statement by the International Contact Group on the latest developments in Venezuela, 1 May 2019](#)

[Statement by the Spokesperson on the Russian decree enabling the simplified issuing of passports in certain areas of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions, 25 April 2019](#)

Libya

The Council will discuss Libya, starting with an exchange of views with the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative Ghassan Salamé. This discussion is expected to focus on recent developments in the country and additional steps that the EU could take to avoid further escalation of the conflict.

The Council touched on the situation in Libya at its last meeting on 8 April. Foreign ministers expressed their concern over developments. They urged all parties to implement immediately a humanitarian truce, refrain from any further military escalation and return to the negotiations. They reiterated their full support for the efforts of the UN Special Representative Ghassan Salamé in working towards peace and stability in Libya.

Subsequently, the High Representative issued a declaration on behalf of the EU stating that "The military attack launched by the LNA on Tripoli and the subsequent escalation in and around the capital are endangering civilians, including migrants and refugees, and disrupting the UN-led political process, with the risk of serious consequences for Libya and the wider region, including the terrorist threat." The EU called on all parties to immediately cease all military operations and asking the LNA and all the forces that had moved into Tripoli or its vicinity to withdraw. The EU also reminded the parties in this confrontation that they must respect international law, including international humanitarian law, and that those who violate it will be held accountable.

The EU coordinates the efforts towards a political solution in the framework of the Libya Quartet (European Union, United Nations, African Union and League of Arab States). It provides bilateral assistance to Libya in the field of governance, health, youth and mediation, as well as humanitarian support. It also cooperates with Libya on migration and the protection of migrants. The EU supports in particular the work of UN agencies, including the IOM, as regards the voluntary return of migrants from Libya to their country of origin. The EU is also engaged in providing targeted support to Libya through its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations EUBAM Libya and EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia.

[Declaration by the High Representative Federica Mogherini on behalf of the EU on the situation in Libya, 11 April 2019](#)

[EU-Libya relations, factsheet](#)

Sahel

The Council will discuss the Sahel and adopt conclusions reaffirming that the Sahel is a strategic priority for the EU and its member states. The various meetings taking place during the week of 13 May demonstrate this sense of priority and the **EU's integrated approach to the region**. Foreign ministers will first have a discussion to set out the political framework. This will prepare for their discussion with EU defence ministers the next day (14 May), also together with the foreign and defence ministers of the G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger), which is expected to focus on security aspects. On Thursday 16 May, EU development ministers will discuss how to step up the EU's long-term engagement with and support for the region.

The conclusions are expected to take note of the **many challenges** that the authorities and the populations of the region face: i) political, in particular serious shortcomings in governance, the rule of law and the protection of human rights; (ii) security, with the expansion of the terrorist threat, extremist violence, organised crime including trafficking in human beings, climate change having a negative impact on natural resources and fuelling local conflicts; (iii) development, with endemic poverty, high population dynamics, low socio-economic cohesion; (iv) these elements contribute to increased food insecurity, increased migratory pressure and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation. It is in this context that inter-community conflicts have resurfaced significantly in recent months in several countries in the region. The Council will reaffirm that addressing these challenges and shortcomings is primarily the responsibility of the Sahelian States and that the international community supports them in their efforts.

The EU is committed to the security and development of the Sahel, and is the **leading partner in the region**. It has a comprehensive approach integrating political and diplomatic dialogue, security and stability, and development and humanitarian support.

The **political and diplomatic dialogue** is focused around the EU-G5 Sahel political partnership, including ministerial meetings and the implementation of the EU Sahel strategy, the regional action plan as well as the Malian peace process. The EU High Representative holds regular meetings with her G5 Sahel counterparts to review and strengthen cooperation and coordination in areas of interest such as development, governance, and security. In addition, the EU acts as a guarantor of the Malian peace process.

The EU also supports the **security and stability** of the region through three CSDP missions: EUCAP Sahel Mali, EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Niger with a reinforced regional approach. The missions include training, advising, as well as direct support to security forces with the ultimate objective of reinforcing respective national capacities. In addition, the EU assists in the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

Total **development cooperation** support from the EU and its member states to the G5 Sahel countries amounts to € 8 billion for the period 2014-2020. The EU provides long-term assistance to the Sahel mainly through the EU trust fund for Africa (through which €930 million has already been mobilised), and the European development fund, which for the period of 2014-2020 has allocated €628 million for Burkina Faso, €542 million for Chad, €664 million for Mali, €160 million for Mauritania, and €686 million for Niger. The EU is also a major **humanitarian donor**, with more than €250 million allocated to G5 Sahel populations over the past two years.

[The European Union and the Sahel, fact sheet \(EEAS\)](#)

[Sahel: EU takes further steps to better support the security of the region, 3 May 2019](#)

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

Other items

The Council is expected to adopt a number of decisions and conclusions without debate, in particular:

Council conclusions on EU relations with Latin America and the Caribbean

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on EU relations with Latin America and the Caribbean, following the joint communication by the High Representative and the Commission on the "EU, Latin America and the Caribbean: Partnering for prosperity, democracy, resilience and global governance" of 17 April 2019.

The Council is set to note that relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have strengthened significantly over the last decade: together, the EU and LAC account for 25% of the world's GDP, a third of UN members and almost half the members of the G20. Joint action by the two regions has been instrumental in the achievement of landmark multilateral agreements such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

The Council is due to underline that the LAC and the EU are key partners with common values and interests, which should work even more closely in the multilateral framework, most notably at the UN and at the WTO, to promote democracy, the rule of law, the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, growth, employment, investment, economic opportunities and sustainable development, to build more resilient societies, preserve and promote peace and security, multilateralism and a rules-based international order.

[Joint communication on the "EU, Latin America and the Caribbean: Partnering for prosperity, democracy, resilience and global governance", 17 April 2019 \(press release\)](#)

2018 EU annual report on human rights and democracy in the world

The Council is expected to adopt the 2018 EU annual report on human rights and democracy in the world. The report notes that in 2018 the EU remained at the forefront of the protection and promotion of human rights in a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape. The EU engaged in activities across the globe in line with the objectives set out in the EU action plan on human rights and democracy (2015-2019). In a volatile and unpredictable world, the Action Plan has been instrumental in moving forward the human rights agenda.

In this 70th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the EU strongly supports the promotion and protection of human rights at the heart of multilateralism - particularly important at a time when there have been serious negative trends in human rights and democracy around the world. The year saw an increase in threats and violations against journalists and other media workers, further shrinking the space for free journalism. In line with the priorities of the Global Strategy for the EU's foreign and security policy, the EU continued to firmly oppose any unjustified restrictions of the rights of freedom of association and of peaceful assembly.

The report also notes that this year was not only about human rights challenges and setbacks; there was also positive change. In 2018, the EU acted to identify and support positive human rights narratives, building on the vision of a human rights-based 2030 Agenda. The EU-led 'Good Human Rights Stories' initiative launched at the 73rd United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) generated broad cross-regional resonance and aims to provide an effective vehicle for positive change in the future.

[EU annual reports on human rights and democratisation \(EEAS website\)](#)

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

Ahead of the Council

Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting

EU foreign ministers will meet with their counter-parts from the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) as well as key stakeholders active in the region for their annual meeting. The meeting, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will start at 10.00 on 13 May 2019. It will be followed by a working lunch, marking the 10th anniversary of the **Eastern Partnership**.

Ministers are expected to highlight importance of the partnership, which has successfully provided a framework to enhance **political association** and deepen **economic integration** between the EU and its partners, as originally stated in the Prague Summit declaration of 2009. The partnership has **provided structured cooperation mechanisms** through which the EU has supported a wide range of reforms in partner countries, covering economic development, governance, connectivity and people-to-people contacts.

Foreign ministers will review progress in the commitments made at the last Eastern Partnership Summit of November 2017. They will discuss the implementation of the agenda of **"20 deliverable for 2020"** framework. The meeting will also allow ministers to reflect on future cooperation and discuss **political priorities** for the coming period.

On the same day, beginning at 18.30, President Tusk will host the leaders of the Eastern Partnership countries for dinner. On Tuesday 14 May, a high level conference dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the partnership will take place at the European Commission (Charlemagne building).

[Eastern partnership 10th anniversary](#)

[Eastern Partnership, background information](#)