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President **Federica Mogherini**
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy

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¹ • Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
 • Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
 • Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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ITEMS DEBATED

Current affairs

The High Representative and foreign ministers held an exchange of views on the most pressing issues on the international agenda. In particular, they expressed their concern over developments in Libya. They urged all parties to immediately implement 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 to work towards peace and stability in Libya.

Foreign ministers also referred to the implementation of the penal code order in Brunei-Darussalam. They expressed their strong opposition to the imposition of punishments such as the severing of limbs, whipping, and stoning to death, which amount to torture and acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. These are prohibited by the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which was signed by Brunei-Darussalam in 2015.

The Council noted that on 3 April 2019 the US extended until 1 May 2019 the title III waiver preventing the extra-territorial application of the 1996 Helms-Burton Act against EU companies. This 2-week extension follows recent 45-day and 30-day extensions, whereas previous practice was to extend by 6 months. Foreign ministers reiterated the EU's strong opposition to the extraterritorial application of unilateral restrictive measures, which it considers contrary to international law.

Afghanistan

Ministers discussed the situation in Afghanistan. They focused on current peace efforts and how the EU can best contribute to these efforts. The High Representative briefed ministers on her visits to Islamabad on 25 March and Kabul on 26 March.

The Council adopted conclusions on the Afghanistan's peace process:

- "1. Recalling previous Council Conclusions on Afghanistan, notably those of 19 November 2018, the EU hereby reaffirms its political commitment and long-term support to the people of Afghanistan on their path towards peace, security and prosperity.
2. The EU encourages the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban to intensify their efforts towards a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the conflict. The EU supports all efforts to catalyse such a process, which has created a political opportunity that should be seized.

3. Direct negotiations between Afghans, with the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban at their core, should begin as soon as possible, ensuring an inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process. The EU strongly supports a process that respects the sovereignty and independence of Afghanistan and the dignity of its people. The EU stands ready to support the peace process, including its implementation, with the aim of preserving and building upon the political, economic and social achievements of the people of Afghanistan since 2001, which should be irreversible. Any future peace agreement must be to the benefit of all parties. The EU commends the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan on its commitment to achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan.
4. The Afghan peace process requires the full support and constructive involvement of the entire international community, in particular key regional and international stakeholders. The EU must be associated from the outset to all stages of the peace process. The EU confirms that it 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 invites the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commission to implement these actions as the peace process progresses. In this respect, the Council welcomes the role of the Special Envoy of the EU for Afghanistan.
5. In order to provide substantial support for the implementation of a peace agreement and to contribute effectively to the reconstruction needs of the country, the Council considers it important that a peace agreement be negotiated in an inclusive way, is approved by the Government of Afghanistan and that it (i) entails the renunciation of violence; (ii) counters any threat of transnational terrorist organizations acting from Afghan territory; (iii) adheres to the rule of law and respect for the universal human rights of all Afghans, in particular as regards women, children, and persons belonging to minorities, consistent with the UN Charter, international law and as enshrined in the Afghan Constitution; and (iv) ensures the continuity of the Afghan State, its institutions, the constitutional order and Afghanistan's international obligations, and implements any changes to these through a legitimate and inclusive process; and (v) allows for possibilities to ensure accountability, including through transitional justice, and to address the grievances of the victims of the conflict in Afghanistan. The EU stands ready to contribute, both politically and financially, to the implementation of a peace settlement that embodies these values and principles.
6. In line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the EU reiterates the importance of a meaningful participation of women in all peace initiatives, including formal and informal peace negotiations. Acknowledging the achievements of the last 18 years and in order to strengthen the sustainability of any peace settlement, the EU is committed to support increased women's participation at all levels of Afghan society.

7. The EU reiterates the importance of the Government of Afghanistan and all relevant stakeholders working towards improved, inclusive, credible and transparent presidential, provincial council and district council elections in 2019, which are an essential element for a strengthened democracy and stability in Afghanistan, by effectively implementing lessons learned of the 2018 parliamentary elections."

Eastern Partnership

Ministers discussed the Eastern Partnership (EaP) with a view to the EaP ministerial meeting (13 May) and the high-level event (14 May) which will mark the 10th anniversary of the partnership. Ministers highlighted the importance of the partnership, which is based on shared values and principles, and an approach combining inclusivity and differentiation.

Ministers welcomed the progress achieved with Eastern Partnership countries within the "20 deliverable for 2020" framework, and in particular the tangible and concrete results in trade, people-to-people contact, visa liberalisation, transport, connectivity, infrastructure and economic reform. They agreed that implementation of reforms in sectors such as governance, anticorruption and the judiciary require additional efforts. in the implementation of reforms.

[Eastern Partnership](#)

Venezuela

Foreign ministers exchanged views on Venezuela. They discussed the outcome of the second meeting of the International Contact Group on 28 March in Quito (Ecuador). They agreed to step up work on the two tracks of the ICG: facilitating humanitarian access, and creating the conditions for free, fair, transparent presidential elections.

Ministers noted the improvements in recent days on humanitarian access. They agreed on the need to intensify the work to start a political process leading to a democratic and peaceful transition.

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

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

UN-EU counter-terrorism framework

The Council endorsed the framework on counter-terrorism developed jointly by the UN and the EU. The framework identifies areas for UN-EU cooperation and priorities until 2020.

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 is expected to be signed on the occasion of the 2nd UN-EU high-level counterterrorism dialogue in New York on 24 April.

[EU fight against terrorism](#)

EU strategy against weapons of mass destruction (2018)

The Council endorsed the 2018 progress report on the EU Strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The EU Strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction was initially adopted on 12 December 2003.

European Court of Auditors' report on strengthening the capacity of the internal security forces in Niger and Mali

The Council adopted conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' special report No 15/2018 entitled "Strengthening the capacity of the internal security forces in Niger and Mali: only limited and slow progress".

The Council appreciates that, despite the challenging context and operational inefficiencies, the missions have contributed to strengthening the capacity of the forces responsible for internal security.

The Council underlined the relevance of the five recommendations formulated by the Court of Auditors: 1) to take measures to improve the operational efficiency of the missions; 2) to improve the occupancy rate of staff posts in the missions; 3) to set mandates and budgets to match operations and provide for an exit strategy; 4) to increase the focus on sustainability; 5) to improve indicators, monitoring and evaluation.

The Council noted that since the publication of the report, measures have been taken towards the implementation of recommendations 1 and 2, and welcomes the progress achieved.

Council conclusions on strengthening the capacity of the internal security forces in Niger and Mali (7285/19)

[EUCAP Sahel Mali](#)

[EUCAP Sahel Niger](#)

Relations with Pakistan

The Council authorised the signature of the EU-Pakistan strategic engagement plan on behalf of the EU.

Since its adoption in 2012, the EU-Pakistan 5-year engagement plan has provided the overall political framework for the EU's engagement with Pakistan, building on the EU-Pakistan Cooperation Agreement, which has defined the legal framework of EU-Pakistani relations since 2004. The EU-Pakistan 5-year engagement plan expired at the end of 2017.

On 25 March 2019, on the occasion of the 4th Pakistan-EU strategic dialogue in Islamabad, the High Representative and the Pakistani Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that agreement had been reached on the text of the strategic engagement plan.

In the new strategic engagement plan, several sectors of thematic cooperation have been reinforced or introduced, with special attention to peace and security, democracy, rule of law, good governance, human rights and migration, as well as energy and climate change, education, culture, science and technology.

[EU delegation to Pakistan](#)

Relations with Mexico

The Council concluded the third protocol to the EU-Mexico Agreement establishing an Association between the EU and Mexico, to take account of the accession of Croatia to the EU.

The third protocol was signed by the parties on 27 November 2018, and the European Parliament gave its consent on 12 February 2019.

[EU delegation to Mexico](#)

Agreement establishing the EU-LAC International Foundation

The Council concluded the agreement establishing the EU - Latin America and the Caribbean International Foundation. The agreement establishing the foundation was signed on 26 October 2016 and the European Parliament gave its consent on 4 October 2017. For the agreement to enter into force, it was required that 8 parties of each region, including Germany and the EU, had deposited their respective instruments of ratification or accession with the depositary. This minimum was reached on 6 February 2019, allowing for the conclusion of the agreement, which will enter into force on 17 May 2019.

The objective of the foundation is to strengthen the bi-regional partnership between the EU, its member states, and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

[EU-LAC Foundation: constitutive agreement signed, press release, 26 October 2016](#)

[EU- LAC International Foundation](#)

Relations with Egypt

The Council concluded a protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an Association between the EU and Egypt, to take account of the accession of Croatia to the EU.

The protocol was signed by the parties on 10 April 2017, and the European Parliament gave its consent on 12 March 2019.

[EU delegation to Egypt](#)

Relations with Israel

The Council concluded a protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an Association between the EU and Israel, to take account of the accession of Croatia to the EU.

The protocol was signed by the parties on 20 December 2018, and the European Parliament gave its consent on 26 March 2019.

[EU delegation to Israel](#)

Relations with Vietnam

The Council authorised the opening of negotiations with Vietnam for an agreement to establish a framework for its participation in EU crisis management operations.

[EU delegation to Vietnam](#)

EU action in Yemen - review

The Council endorsed the continuation of the EU's action in support of the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM), from 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019. The EU is contributing €4.9 million to UNVIM for one year. This project was established in September 2018, with provision for a review after 6 months.

Its objective is to contribute to the restoration of the unimpeded free flow of commercial items to Yemen through a transparent and effective clearance process for commercial shipments destined for Yemeni ports not under the control of the government of Yemen. The EU's support is also geared towards implementing UN Security Council resolutions 2451 and 2452, which were adopted to endorse the Stockholm Agreement signed by the parties to the conflict.

[EU delegation to Yemen](#)

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**Financial action task force**

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to endorse the ministerial declaration and the revised mandate of the financial action task force at its meeting of 12 April 2019 in Washington DC.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989. Its objective is to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system. (7934/19, ADD1, ADD2)

Appointment of a member of the Single Resolution Board

The Council adopted a decision to appoint Sebastiano Laviola as member of the Single Resolution Board for a term of five years.

The Commission submitted its proposal on 30 January 2019. The European Parliament approved it on 14 March 2019.

The Single Resolution Board is the central resolution authority within the banking union. Together with the national resolution authorities of participating member states, it forms the Single Resolution Mechanism whose purpose is to ensure the orderly resolution of failing banks with minimal costs for taxpayers and the real economy. ([7492/19](#), [5580/19](#))

Transitional provisions for the UK on clearing obligations

The Council adopted two decisions not to object to the following delegated acts linked to the European market infrastructure regulation:

- on the date until which counterparties may continue to apply their risk management procedures for certain OTC derivative contracts not cleared by a central counterparty ([7964/19](#)).
- on the date at which the clearing obligation takes effect for certain types of contracts ([7963/19](#)).

Both delegated acts put in place transitional arrangements in order to address the consequences of the UK leaving the European Union. ([7965/19](#))

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Approval of EU-Canada ocean partnership

The Council authorised the Commission to sign the Declaration by the European Union and Canada concerning the establishment of an Ocean Partnership, as set out in document [7999/19](#), at the forthcoming EU-Canada summit. ([7652/19](#))

The instrument provides a general framework and establishes areas of cooperation on ocean affairs, building on existing cooperation frameworks and based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It covers a range of areas such as ocean governance, marine and maritime science, conservation and sustainable management of ecosystems, challenges and opportunities relating to the Arctic Ocean and Atlantic Ocean, implementation of the Paris Agreement, introduction of practices to reduce pollution in oceans, implementing high environmental standards for deep sea exploration, promoting sustainable fishing and the overall management and protection of the marine environment.

INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY**Amendments to annex XVII of regulation 1907/2006**

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending annex XVII to regulation (EC) N° 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals (REACH).

The regulation imposes a maximum concentration limit of 2 ppb by weight for the presence of (3,3,4,4,5,5,6,6,7,7,8,8,8-tridecafluorooctyl) silanetriol and any its mono-, di- or tri-O-(alkyl) derivatives (those derivatives are referred to as TDFAs) combined with organic solvents in spray products.

The Commission regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation, unless the European Parliament objects.

([5561/19](#) + [5561/19 ADD 1](#))

Amendments to annex to regulation 440/2008

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending the Annex to regulation 440/2008 laying down the test methods pursuant to regulation 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals.

The regulation stipulates that two new test methods for the assessment of ecotoxicity and nine new test methods for the determination of toxicity to human health should be laid down, as well as seven test methods should be updated.

([6800/19](#)+ [6800/19 ADD 1](#) +[6800/19 ADD 2](#))

TRANSPORT**Civil aviation research and development – cooperation with the USA**

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of Amendment 1 to the Memorandum of Cooperation NAT-I-9406 (civil aviation research and development) between the USA and the EU ([7384/19](#); [5800/18](#) + COR 1-2). The amendment extends the scope of cooperation between the parties to all phases of air traffic management modernisation, including deployment activities, with the goal of ensuring global interoperability. It also modifies the structure and governance of the Memorandum of Cooperation so as to optimise the implementation and management of the cooperative activities carried out thereunder.

EU-USA agreement on cooperation in the regulation of civil aviation safety

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the EU, of an agreement amending the Agreement between the United States of America and the European Community on cooperation in the regulation of civil aviation safety ([7383/19](#); [7482/18](#)). This agreement ("Amendment 1") creates the possibility to cooperate in additional areas where both parties so desire.

Maritime transport agreement EU-China-Croatia

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union and of the member states, of the Protocol amending the Agreement on maritime transport between the European Community and its member states, of the one part, and the government of China, of the other part, to take account of the accession of Croatia to the EU ([7490/19](#); [5083/15](#); [5880/15](#)).

CULTURE

Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action

The Council adopted Conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action ([ST 7749/19](#)).

The conclusions set the aim of strengthening the effectiveness and impact of EU foreign policy by integrating international cultural relations in the range of the EU's foreign policy instruments and recognize the need for a cross-cutting approach to culture and inclusiveness, among other aspects. 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.
