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President

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EU 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.

ITEMS DEBATED

Current affairs

The High Representative and foreign ministers referred to developments on Iran. They recalled their commitment to the JCPOA (Iran's nuclear deal) and highlighted the importance of continuing efforts to de-escalate tensions.

The High Representative and foreign ministers briefly discussed Libya. They expressed their full support for the resumption of the UN-led political process.

The High Representative also touched upon Venezuela, and encouraged ministers to participate in the International solidarity conference on the Venezuelan refugee and migrant crisis which will take place on 28-29 October.

[International solidarity conference on the Venezuelan refugee and migrant crisis](#)

Syria

The Council discussed Syria in light of the latest development in the country. The UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen briefed ministers on the political process. He informed them about his work in the run-up to the first meeting of the Constitutional Committee, which is planned for the end of October. He also expressed his concerns over the risks of Turkey's military action in north-east Syria for the political process. Foreign ministers reiterated their full support to the Special Envoy's efforts.

Foreign ministers then discussed Turkey's military action in north-east Syria and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council recalls the 9 October 2019 Declaration of the High Representative on behalf of the European Union and urges Turkey again to cease its unilateral military action in North East Syria and to withdraw its forces.

2. The EU condemns Turkey's military action which seriously undermines the stability and the security of the whole region, resulting in more civilians suffering and further displacement and severely hindering access to humanitarian assistance. It makes the prospects for the UN-led political process to achieve peace in Syria far more difficult. It also significantly undermines the progress achieved so far by the Global Coalition to defeat Da'esh, stressing that Da'esh remains a threat to European security as well as Turkey's, regional and international security.

The European Union remains committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian state. These can be assured only through a genuine political transition in line with UNSCR 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, negotiated by the Syrian parties within the UN-led Geneva process.

3. Turkey is a key partner of the European Union and a critically important actor in the Syrian crisis and the region. Turkey's security concerns in North-East Syria should be addressed through political and diplomatic means, not with military action, and in accordance with international humanitarian law.
4. The continued efforts of the international community, including at the UN Security Council, in order to stop this military unilateral action are urgently needed. The Council calls for a ministerial meeting of the International Coalition against Da'esh in order to address how to pursue its efforts in the current context.
5. In this context, and taking into account the fact that Turkey's military action with its dramatic consequences is still ongoing, the EU recalls the decision taken by some Member States to immediately halt arms exports licensing to Turkey. Member States commit to strong national positions regarding their arms export policy to Turkey on the basis of the provision of the Common Position 2008/944/CFSP on arms export control, including the strict application of criteria 4 on regional stability. The relevant Council working group will meet later this week to coordinate and review the Member states' positions on this matter.
6. The EU recalls that it will not provide stabilisation or development assistance in areas where the rights of local populations are ignored or violated. The EU remains engaged in its efforts towards effectively addressing the serious humanitarian and refugee crisis in light of evolving needs."

Turkey's illegal drilling activities

The Council discussed Turkey's continued drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, including further drilling activities 45 nm off the southern coast of Cyprus. It adopted the following conclusions:

"In light of Turkey's continued illegal drilling activities in the eastern Mediterranean, the Council reaffirms its full solidarity with Cyprus, regarding the respect of its sovereignty and sovereign rights in accordance with international law. It recalls its conclusions of 15 July 2019 in all its parts, and notably that delimitation of exclusive economic zones and continental shelf should be addressed through dialogue and negotiation in good faith, in full respect of international law and in accordance with the principle of good neighbourly relations.

The Council, based on preparatory work already undertaken, agrees that a framework regime of restrictive measures targeting natural and legal persons responsible for or involved in the illegal drilling activity of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean is put in place, and invites the High Representative and the Commission to swiftly present proposals to this effect."

Ukraine

The Council had a brief exchange in preparation for the exchange of views with the Ukrainian Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko over the working lunch.

EU foreign ministers reaffirmed to Foreign Minister Prystaiko the EU's strong commitment to Ukraine, both to its territorial integrity and security and to its government's efforts on the reforms process.

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

Afghanistan

The discussion was postponed to the Foreign Affairs Council meeting of 11 November 2019 due to time-constraints.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Sanctions and conclusions on Nicaragua

The Council adopted a framework for targeted restrictive measures in view of the situation in Nicaragua.

This framework provides for the possibility of imposing targeted and individual sanctions against persons and entities responsible for human rights violations or abuses or for the repression of civil society and democratic opposition in Nicaragua, as well as persons and entities whose actions, policies or activities otherwise undermine democracy and the rule of law in Nicaragua. Sanctions consist of a travel ban to the EU and an asset freeze for persons, and an asset freeze for entities. In addition, EU persons and entities are forbidden from making funds available to those listed.

The Council also adopted the following conclusions on Nicaragua:

- "1. The European Union (EU) recalls its Council Conclusions of 21 January 2019, as well as various statements made since April 2018, in which it expressed its concern at the deteriorating political and social situation in Nicaragua and firmly condemned the repression by security forces and pro-government armed groups of political opponents, demonstrators, independent media and civil society organisations that has been ongoing since April 2018. It rejected the use of anti-terrorist laws to persecute and criminalise dissenting opinions. The EU also affirmed its determination to use all its instruments to support a peaceful and negotiated solution to the crisis and its intention to monitor the situation in the country closely to react to further deterioration of human rights and the rule of law.
2. Since the Council Conclusions of January 2019 the overall situation of human rights and democratic governance remains highly concerning. Institutional and legislative measures adopted with the stated purpose of reconciliation, such as the Amnesty Law adopted by the Nicaraguan National Assembly this June, were imposed without consultations and do not comply with relevant international principles. The report of the Group of Independent Experts on human rights violations committed since 18 April 2018 has not been followed up. Accountability is an important element for truth, justice and reconciliation. Positive steps in the release of a substantial number of political prisoners have not been accompanied by the implementation of the totality of the March 2019 agreements between the government and the Civic Alliance, notably on the reestablishment of civil and political rights. The continued refusal to resume the dialogue with the opposition conveys a negative signal on the willingness of the government to work towards a peaceful and democratic way out of the crisis.

3. As a consequence, and in addition to on-going political and diplomatic efforts to support justice and democracy, the Council has today decided to adopt a framework for targeted restrictive measures. The adopted framework allows for a gradual and flexible approach regarding restrictive individual designations for a travel ban and assets freeze as appropriate. Specific designations can thereafter be added in case of a continued stalemate and further deterioration of the human rights and rule of law or reversed in case of positive and decisive steps. The EU underlines that its restrictive measures are targeted and are designed not to harm the Nicaraguan population.
4. In this context, the EU recalls the three main areas in which tangible progress needs to be made in order to create the conditions for a peaceful and democratic exit to the crisis: 1) the implementation in full of the 29 March 2019 agreements to strengthen civil and political rights and guarantees, including the reestablishment of political freedoms and the legal status of banned civil society organisations, the voluntary and safe return of exiles and the release of the remaining political prisoners and charges dropped. This also means stopping the harassment and intimidation of released political prisoners and their families and guaranteeing their safety and physical integrity. 2) full cooperation with and the return of international human rights bodies to Nicaragua, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR); and 3) an agreement on electoral and institutional reforms between the government and the opposition, including the Civic Alliance aimed at guaranteeing fair and transparent elections.
5. The EU urgently calls upon the government of Nicaragua and all parties to constructively re-engage in a meaningful, results-oriented and comprehensive national dialogue, including on the adoption of electoral reforms according to international standards as an essential step to restore trust in public institutions. The EU stands ready to provide its support if so requested by the parties.
6. The EU reaffirms its commitment to continue to work towards a peaceful way out of the current crisis and to support the Nicaraguan people in fulfilling their pressing needs and aspirations."

[Nicaragua: Council adopts conclusions, 21 January 2019](#)

Council conclusions on Thailand

The Council took note of a presentation by the High Representative on political developments in Thailand following the March 2019 elections. In this context, and recalling its conclusions of 11 December 2017, the Council now considers it appropriate for the EU to take steps towards broadening its engagement with Thailand, including on issues of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic pluralism, by preparing for the timely signature of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA). The Council also stresses the importance of taking steps towards the resumption of negotiations on an ambitious and comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Council conclusions on Cameroon

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Cameroon:

- "1. The EU welcomes the halting of prosecution by the military courts of Maurice Kamto and supporters of his party, the Cameroon Renaissance Movement, and of individuals arrested and detained in the context of the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions. These decisions are a significant gesture of goodwill.
2. Three years after the crisis began, a national dialogue recently held in Yaoundé offered a first opportunity to open up prospects for a sustainable exit from the crisis. The EU calls for this process to be continued in order to develop responses to meet the population's legitimate expectations, while encouraging the involvement of all those concerned both inside the country and from the diaspora, including women, young people and civil society.
3. The EU reiterates the importance of respecting and promoting human rights, the rule of law and the fundamental freedoms of the citizens of Cameroon. The EU will continue to call on Cameroon's authorities and institutions to act in a proportionate manner, while respecting the obligations stemming from Cameroon's Constitution and the international treaties and conventions on human rights to which Cameroon has subscribed. In particular, the principle of access to justice and the right to a fair trial before an independent court must be respected. In the face of worrying restrictions on political space, the EU considers that respect for the freedom of assembly, the freedom of expression and the involvement of civil society in the public debate are essential for any democratic and pluralistic state. For this reason, the EU calls for the whole of Cameroon's opposition to be able to express themselves freely, in accordance with the law, and to participate without hindrance in the process of national dialogue and in the local and general elections planned for 2020.

4. The EU remains concerned and strongly condemns the continued violence and the level of insecurity in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon, especially where the civilian population is affected. Numerous and serious violations of human rights continue to be reported and predatory crime has become widespread. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has reported that severe abuses have been committed, including arbitrary arrests and detentions, the burning of homes, the excessive use of force against civilians and sexual violence. This has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, forcing more people into exile, with almost 42 000 refugees in Nigeria and 530 000 internally displaced people in the North-West and South-West regions. The economic situation is also severely affected.
5. The EU reiterates that the primary responsibility for protecting the population and maintaining security lies with the Cameroonian authorities. Access by humanitarian organisations and health workers to the populations affected must be ensured. The fight against impunity and compensation for all victims must also be guaranteed.
6. The use of violence in these regions is not the answer. The EU reaffirms the need for all parties in Cameroon to respect the rule of law and resolve this crisis peacefully through an inclusive dialogue. In coordination with its international and regional partners, the EU will continue to support all efforts, such as the facilitation work by the Swiss authorities, able to build on this momentum.
7. The EU also reaffirms its commitment to the economic development and stability of Cameroon as a partner at the crossroads between the Sahel and Central Africa and as an important player in the fight against Boko Haram and in the peace process in the Central African Republic. Improving the stability of Cameroon will help to strengthen this cooperation, including its trade and investment dimensions. The EU expresses its hope that Cameroon will find the ways and means to achieve a national revival that will bring about the lasting reconciliation the country so greatly needs.
8. The EU will remain committed to addressing the humanitarian needs of the populations affected and reiterates the importance of ensuring safe and unhindered humanitarian access to the entire country."

Council conclusions on Bosnia and Herzegovina / Operation EUFOR Althea

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Bosnia and Herzegovina / Operation EUFOR Althea:

- "1. The Council reiterates its unequivocal commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective as a single, united and sovereign country. Taking into account that since last year's general elections, governments have not yet been formed in Bosnia and Herzegovina on State and Federation levels, the Council renews its call on Bosnia and Herzegovina to proceed with government formation and start work without any further delay, in the interest of all citizens. The Council recalls that effective implementation of reforms is necessary to advance on the EU path. In addition, the Council recalls its Conclusions of June 2019, which took note of the Commission's opinion.
2. The Council welcomes the continued presence of Operation Althea, which in the follow up of the Strategic Reviews 2017 and 2019 has refocused on its core mandate, while retaining the collective training as a task of the Operation. In this context, as part of the overall EU strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Council confirms the EU's readiness to continue at this stage the executive mandate of Operation Althea to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities to maintain the safe and secure environment, under a renewed UN mandate.
3. The Council looks forward to the presentation of the next Strategic Review in 2021 as a basis for discussion with Member States on EUFOR's tasks and options for the future of the Operation, also bearing in mind the need to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress in its EU integration process and taking into account the security situation on the ground.
4. The Council recognises the importance of continued coordination of EUFOR Althea with other international actors on the ground.
5. The EU continues at the same time to urge the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to accelerate, with the support of the international community, their efforts in the disposal of ammunition, weapons and explosives surplus, as well as in demining."

Council conclusions on democracy

The Council adopted conclusions on democracy. The conclusions underline that in today's world, democracy is being challenged and called into question. While democracy remains strong in many countries, in others there is a growing trend towards authoritarianism. The Council notes that the challenges to democracy are multi-fold and need to be countered urgently and comprehensively.

Ten years after the last Council conclusions on democracy support in the EU's External Relations, the EU renews its commitment to democracy in a significantly changed global context. One of the aims of the EU's external action is to advance democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as set out in the Article 21 of the Treaty. As underpinned by the EU Global Strategy, strengthening democracy externally is also in the Union's strategic interest, contributing to core aspects of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (multilateralism, development, peace and security, migration).

The Council agreed to further develop a common and practical EU response to promote positive trends and to address new and shared challenges to democracy.

[Full text of the Council conclusions on democracy](#)

Sanctions addressing the use and proliferation of chemical weapons

The Council today extended restrictive measures by the EU addressing the use and proliferation of chemical weapons until 16 October 2020. These sanctions, which consist of a travel ban to the EU and an asset freeze for persons, as well as an asset freeze for entities, currently apply to nine persons - five linked to the Syrian regime and four involved in the Salisbury attack - and one organisation, the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC), the Syrian regime's principal entity for the development of chemical weapons.

On 15 October 2018, the Council adopted a horizontal sanctions regime to address the use and proliferation of chemical weapons as a follow-up to the conclusions of the European Council of 28 June 2018. This allows the EU to impose sanctions on persons and entities involved in the development and use of chemical weapons anywhere, regardless of their nationality and location.

The restrictive measures target persons and entities who are directly responsible for the development and use of chemical weapons as well as those who provide financial, technical or material support, and those who assist, encourage or are associated with them.

This decision contributes to the EU's efforts to counter the proliferation and use of chemical weapons which poses a serious threat to international security. It supports the global prohibition of chemical weapons as laid down by the Chemical Weapons Convention, against a background of increasing chemical attacks in various parts of the world.

Sanctions against ISIL (Da'esh)/ Al Qaeda

The Council extended the restrictive measures against ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaeda for one year, until 31 October 2020. It also removed one deceased individual, Fabien Clain, from the list of persons subject to restrictive measures.

On 20 September 2016, the Council adopted an autonomous sanctions regime against ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaida and persons and entities associated or supporting them. This sanctions regime complements and reinforces the sanctions imposed by the United Nations.

[Council decision concerning restrictive measures against ISIL \(Da'esh\) and Al-Qaeda and persons, groups, undertakings and entities associated with them, 20/09/2016](#)
