

FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council
- including security and defence issues -
18 May 2015 in Brussels

EU defence ministers will first discuss cooperation on military capabilities during the European Defence Agency Steering Board (9.30).

As of 11.00, defence ministers will meet in the Foreign Affairs Council to take stock of the EU's **military operations** under the Common Security and Defence Policy. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg will attend this session.

A joint lunch of both foreign and defence ministers will be devoted to a discussion on **security challenges in the EU's neighbourhood**. The NATO Secretary General will join the discussions over lunch.

A formal joint session of foreign and defence ministers, starting at 13.15, will be focused on preparations for the security and defence aspect of the **European Council of 25/26 June**. It will also take stock of **action to counter illegal migration** taken in the follow-up to the special European Council of 23 April. In addition, ongoing work on the **strategic review** will be debated.

Foreign ministers will discuss the **Middle East peace process** as of 17.00.

The **EU-Turkey Association Council** will start at 8.00 (TV/photo opportunity). The Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, will chair the meeting while Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs will lead the EU delegation.

The **EU-Uzbekistan Cooperation Council** will take place after the Council (TV/photo opportunity), presided by Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Komilov. Edgars Rinkēvičs, Foreign Minister of Latvia, will lead the EU delegation.

Press conferences: 9.05 After the EU-Turkey Association Council
17.00 Following the Foreign Affairs Council

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Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu>
Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery on: www.eucouncil.tv

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

European Defence Agency Steering Board

Ministers of Defence will meet for the European Defence Agency (EDA) Steering Board, under the chairmanship of Federica Mogherini as the Head of the Agency. All member states except Denmark participate.

Ministers of Defence are expected to formalise their contribution in view of the European Council on 25-26 June when Heads of State and Government will revert to security and defence issues. This will complement the contributions from the High Representative / Head of Agency Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Bieńkowska.

In their contribution, Ministers of Defence are likely to endorse the future priorities of the EDA including three core activities to further strengthen defence cooperation: support the development of capabilities and military cooperation; stimulate defence R&T to prepare the capabilities of tomorrow and support the European defence and technological industrial base; and ensure that the interests and specificities of defence are taken into account in wider EU policies.

Ministers of Defence are expected to welcome progress achieved in, and encourage EDA to continue to support, the implementation of the 2013 European Council conclusions.

EU military operations

The Council will take stock of EU military operations, in the presence of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

- EUTM Mali

Since February 2013, the EU training mission for the Malian armed forces, EUTM Mali, has been helping to improve the military capacity of the Malian Armed Forces so as to enable them to restore the country's territorial integrity. The team led by Operation Commander Brigadier General Alfonso García-Vaquero Pradal (Spain) provides advice and military training, but is not involved in combat operations.

Currently the mission's mandate runs until March 2016. For more details, see [fact sheet](#).

- EUMAM Central African Republic

In March 2015, the Council launched the EU's military advisory mission in the Central African Republic, EUMAM RCA. This mission follows the EU military operation in the CAR (EUFOR RCA), which contributed to security in the capital Bangui until then. EUMAM RCA supports the Central African authorities in preparing a reform of the security sector. A team of 60 staff led by Brigadier General Dominique Laugel (France) is currently being put together to advise the authorities on how to manage the military forces of the Central African Republic.

EUMAM RCA, located in the country's capital Bangui, is set to last 12 months from the moment of reaching Full Operational Capability.

- EUTM Somalia

The EU military training mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia) works to strengthen the Somali National Armed Forces. Since 2010, the mission has contributed to the training of approximately 4,000 Somali soldiers.

EUTM Somalia delivers support and advice on security sector development. The operation will gradually shift its training activities towards mentoring Somali trainers, enabling the Somali National Army to progressively take over their own training.

Mission Commander Brigadier General Antonio Maggi (Italy) heads a team of 125 staff. The mandate of EUTM Somalia currently runs until December 2016. For more details, see [fact sheet](#).

- EUNAVFOR ATALANTA

Operation Atalanta, launched in 2008, sets out to improve maritime security by preventing piracy off the Somali coast and in the Indian Ocean. It is part of the EU's comprehensive approach focusing on securing a peaceful, stable and democratic Somalia. Since its launch, EU NAVFOR has had a 100% success rate in the protection of World Food Programme vessels destined for Somalia.

On November 2014, the Council extended the Mandate of Operation ATALANTA until December 2016. It is led by Major General Martin Smith MBE (UK). More about the operation in the [fact sheet](#).

- EUFOR ALTHEA

Since 2004, EUFOR ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has provided capacity-building and training support to the BiH armed forces and supports efforts to maintain a safe and secure environment in BiH. The operation remains an important part of the EU's comprehensive efforts to support a political process aimed at enabling BiH to move forward in the EU integration process.

EUFOR numbers some 600 troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina and is led by Operation Commander General Sir Adrian John Bradshaw (UK). UN Security Council resolution 2183 (2014) renewed the executive mandate of the mission for a further 12 months, until November 2015. For more information, see [fact sheet](#).

Security challenges in the EU's neighbourhood

EU foreign and defence ministers will exchange views on security challenges in the EU's neighbourhood, in the presence of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

Since December 2013, the security situation in the EU's direct neighbourhood has deteriorated significantly: the intensity, frequency and complexity of conflicts around the EU have increased.

To the east, Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and its subsequent actions in Ukraine constitute a violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and a fundamental breach of basic principles underpinning Europe's security order.

To the south, conflict has become a common feature of much of the region affecting in particular Syria and Libya. Conflict and instability led to increased migratory pressures and to the exploitation of refugees by traffickers. The rise of Da'esh/ISIL has further destabilised the region. In addition, terrorist and other attacks in several member states have impacted on the internal security situation.

Demands for the EU to act as a security provider are therefore likely to keep increasing.

Preparations for the June European Council

Foreign and defence ministers will exchange views so as to prepare the item on security and defence at the European Council of 25/26 June. EU leaders will take stock of work undertaken since the December 2013 European Council, which set guidelines in three areas: increasing the effectiveness and impact of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP); enhancing the development of defence capabilities; and strengthening Europe's defence industry. In preparation for the June European Council, the Foreign Affairs Council is expected to adopt conclusions on CSDP.

The Council is likely to endorse efforts for more efficient EU capacity building in support of security and development so as to enable partners to prevent and manage crises themselves. This responds to a gap in the EU comprehensive approach where training is provided by CSDP missions, but its effectiveness hampered by a lack of basic military equipment in the partner country. In a recent joint communication, the Commission and the High Representative commit to enhancing coherence and coordination between EU security and development actions to fill that gap. In addition, proposals for funding instruments will be explored.

The Council is also due to welcome work on a preparatory action to support CSDP-related research from the EU budget. The Council is set to request that the preparatory action paves the way for a fully-fledged research programme under the next multi-annual financial framework. Such a programme could take CSDP and defence requirements into account right from the start of project development, thus better underpinning the development of capabilities necessary for the security of the EU. A detailed proposal for the preparatory action is due to be presented for budgetary approval in early 2016. The preparatory action could then be launched in early 2017.

In light of the increasing use of hybrid tactics in the EU neighbourhood, the Council is expected to invite the High Representative and the Commission, in cooperation with the EDA, to present a joint policy for countering hybrid threats to the EU, its member states and partners.

[Joint communication on capacity building in support of security and development, 28 April 2015](#)

[European Council conclusions, December 2013](#)

Migration - follow-up to the Special European Council of 23 April

Foreign and defence ministers will exchange views on the follow-up to the Special European Council of 23 April, dedicated to migration issues. In this context, they will be invited to take note of the Commission communication "A European Agenda on Migration" due on 13 May.

On 23 April, EU leaders committed to undertake systematic efforts to identify, capture and destroy vessels of human traffickers and smugglers before they are used. A crisis management concept for a possible CSDP operation to this effect will be submitted to ministers for their approval.

In addition, EU leaders agreed to four priority actions to prevent further loss of life in the Mediterranean and tackle the root causes of migration pressures: strengthening EU's presence at sea, fighting traffickers in accordance with international law, preventing illegal migration flows and reinforcing internal solidarity and responsibility. External action plays an important role in the EU's comprehensive strategy, building on already very solid EU engagement in the areas of crisis response, political dialogue, and development cooperation.

Leaders also agreed to increase EU support to key transit countries to monitor and control their land border and routes, reinforce political cooperation with African partners to tackle the causes of illegal migration and combat the smuggling, and step up cooperation with Turkey in view of the situation in Syria and Iraq.

The EU has already started to put into practice the agreed actions, in cooperation with the countries of origin and transit. For instance, a review of the EUCAP Sahel Niger mission is currently under discussion, with a view to offering the Niger authorities comprehensive support in fighting illegal traffickers. A presence for the mission in the town Agadez, a hub on the trafficking route from Western Africa into Libya, is also being considered.

[Statement by the Special European Council, 23 April 2015](#)

[Factsheet on EUCAP Sahel Niger, September 2014](#)

Strategic review

During a joint session of foreign and defence ministers, the Council will also discuss ongoing work on the EU strategic review. The strategic review assesses changes in the global security environment and the challenges and opportunities arising for the EU. A report by the High Representative/Vice President to the European Council on 25/26 June is currently being prepared, as mandated by EU leaders in December 2013.

Middle East peace process

The Council (foreign ministers) will discuss the situation in the Middle East and prospects for the peace process, following the formation of the new Israeli government.

The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, has congratulated Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his new government on their appointment. The European Union will continue to work with Israel on a mutually beneficial relationship as well as on issues of joint interest.

The EU supports a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that should lead to an independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace and security. A comprehensive peace should fulfil the legitimate aspirations of both parties, including those of Israelis for security and those of Palestinians for statehood.

The EU has a strategic interest in ensuring an end to the conflict and is willing to actively contribute to a negotiated solution of all final status issues. The EU High Representative has declared her readiness to personally engage in order to facilitate further progress. In addition, the Council appointed Fernando Gentilini as EU Special Representative for the Middle East peace process on 15 April 2015.

The EU recognises Israel in its 1967 borders and has not ceased to repeat that settlements in the occupied territories are illegal under international law. The EU's concern about the fact that settlement activity increasingly threatens the very possibility of a two-state solution to the conflict has grown in the last years. At the same time, the Council has underlined the EU's commitment to ensure full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlements.

The EU is the largest aid contributor to the Palestinians, with substantial support for the benefit of the Gaza population: in the last ten years the EU has spent more than €1.3 billion in the Gaza Strip. At the donors' conference for Gaza in October 2014, the EU and its member states pledged more than €450 million for its reconstruction.

[Statement by High Representative Mogherini on the formation of a new Israeli government, 7 May 2015](#)

[Council conclusions on the Middle East peace process, 17 November 2014](#)

Other items

Burundi

The Council will adopt conclusions on the situation in Burundi, expressing its profound preoccupation about the situation in the country. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that since the eruption of pre-election violence in mid-April, more than 50,000 Burundians have fled to neighbouring Rwanda, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Meetings in the margin of the Foreign Affairs Council

EU-Turkey Association Council

The EU-Turkey Association Council will review progress in EU-Turkey relations and take stock of the accession process, following the publication of the Commission's latest progress report in October 2014.

The EU is set to reaffirm the importance it attaches to relations with Turkey, a candidate country and key partner. The political criteria for EU accession will be discussed, including relations with Cyprus, judicial reforms and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, including the freedom of religion. The EU will commend the considerable efforts made by Turkey in hosting around 2 million refugees fleeing the violence in Syria and Iraq. It will keep supporting Turkey so it can deal effectively with the increasing flow of refugees.

In addition, the EU will propose closer cooperation with Turkey against ISIL/Da'esh, its funding networks and the flow of foreign fighters. The EU will also reiterate its commitment to stepping up the cooperation with Turkey on preventing illegal migration flows, as confirmed by the European Council statement of 23 April 2015.

The meeting will also take stock of the state of relations between the EU and Turkey under the Association Agreement and the customs union.

EU-Uzbekistan Cooperation Council

The EU-Uzbekistan Cooperation Council will take stock of and consolidate EU relations with the Central Asian state in the wake of the recent elections, which saw the fourth re-election of President Karimov.

The Cooperation Council will welcome the intensification of political dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Uzbekistan, after the lifting of EU sanctions against Uzbekistan in 2009. At the same time, the EU will recall that the respect for human rights and the development of democracy are important dimensions of the EU-Uzbekistan relationship. In this respect, the EU will welcome Uzbek efforts to prepare a national action plan and urge progress in the fields of freedom of association and of the media so as to create an enabling environment for the work of human rights defenders and NGOs.

The Cooperation Council will also discuss trade and economic issues, including the creation of a joint Business and Investment Forum. The EU supports and promotes regional cooperation through its projects, for instance on security, energy, environment and water issues in Central Asia.

As agreed with the Uzbek government, the EU has set aside a budget of €168 million for bilateral cooperation for the years 2014 to 2020. It focusses on sustainable rural development, providing comprehensive support to sectors such as agro-food processing, water supply/small irrigation schemes, and development of small and medium sized farms so as to enable income generation.