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## **PRESS RELEASE**

3273rd Council meeting

### **Foreign Affairs**

Brussels, 18 and 19 November 2013

President

**Catherine Ashton**

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and  
Security Policy

# **P R E S S**

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### ***Main results of the Council***

*The Council took stock of preparations for the **Eastern Partnership** summit on 28/29 November in Vilnius. The summit could see the initialling of the Association Agreements with the Republic of Moldova and with Georgia as well as the signature of the Agreement with Ukraine. Ministers discussed Ukraine's progress in implementing the EU's benchmarks for the possible signature of the Association Agreement, as set out in the Council conclusions of December 2012.*

*After the meeting, the EU High Representative highlighted that the main outstanding case of selective justice needed to be addressed and that the Council continued to support the efforts of the European Parliament monitoring mission to this end.*

*During lunch, ministers debated migration issues in the **Mediterranean**, as a follow-up to the European Council of 24/25 October.*

*In addition, the Council discussed latest events in **Libya**. It expressed the EU's concern about the significant deterioration of both the political and security situation in Libya and condemned the violence in Tripoli on 15 November, which resulted in the tragic loss of life among civilians.*

*The Council debated the **Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)**, ahead of the December European Council.*

*To enable the EU to assume increased responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security through the CSDP, work has been on-going in three areas: increasing the effectiveness, visibility and impact of the CSDP; enhancing the development of defence capabilities; and strengthening Europe's defence industry.*

*EU leaders are set to take stock of progress in these three areas and provide further guidance during the European Council of 19/20 December.*

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- 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**

### **Eastern Partnership**

The Council took stock of preparations for the Eastern Partnership summit to be held on 28/29 November in Vilnius.

The summit could see the initialling of the Association Agreements with the Republic of Moldova and with Georgia as well as the signature of the Agreement with Ukraine. Ministers exchanged views on Ukraine's progress in fulfilling the conditions for the possible signing of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. Determined action and tangible progress is needed in three areas: the compliance of the 2012 parliamentary elections with international standards; addressing the issue of selective justice and preventing its recurrence; and implementation of the reforms jointly agreed in the Association Agenda.

After the meeting, the EU High Representative emphasised that the main outstanding case of selective justice needed to be addressed and that the Council continued to support the efforts of the European Parliament monitoring mission to this end.

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The Council took stock of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

After the discussion, the EU High Representative stressed the support ministers gave to the work of the Commission and the EU Special Representative with a view to moving forward on the Sejdić/Finci case. She highlighted that the future of BiH lay with the European Union. At the same time, she underlined that the key responsibility for progress lay with the political leaders of the country.

On 21 October, the Council expressed serious concern that the third meeting of the high-level dialogue on the accession process in October 2013 had not brought the expected results, and in particular at the ongoing failure of the Bosnia and Herzegovina political leaders to implement the European Court of Human Rights' ruling in the Sejdić/Finci case (see Council conclusions).

### **China**

The High Representative briefed ministers on the state of play of preparations for the 16<sup>th</sup> EU-China summit on 21 November.

### **Southern neighbourhood**

#### **- Egypt**

During lunch, ministers exchanged views on latest developments in Egypt.

- **Libya**

Ministers debated the situation in Libya. The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU is concerned by the significant deterioration of both the political and security situation in Libya and condemns the violence in Tripoli on 15 November which resulted in the tragic loss of life among civilians. The EU urges all parties to avoid further bloodshed and refrain from further violence. The EU underlines its commitment to support the Libyan authorities and emphasises the need for the Libyan government and General National Congress to work jointly, within an agreed institutional framework based on the Constitutional Declaration, to achieve a peaceful and democratic political transition in a united Libya. It calls on all relevant actors to avoid obstructing the country's economic development through unlawful actions and underlines the importance for all parties to respect fundamental values, such as the freedom of expression and the freedom of assembly.
2. Recalling its commitment to support Libya in the transition towards democracy, the EU looks forward to the upcoming elections for the Constitutional Drafting Assembly and to the start of the drafting process of a new and democratic Libyan constitution. The EU underlines the importance of an inclusive and credible electoral process where all Libyans, including minorities and women, work collectively for the fulfilment of the revolution's democratic aspirations. Welcoming existing initiatives, the EU believes that a single inclusive national dialogue would best help to conclude successfully the agreed transitional phase and lay the ground for reconciliation. The EU will also continue supporting the next steps in the reconstruction and strengthening of the Libyan state, based on strict adherence to the rule of law by all parties.
3. The EU urges the Libyan authorities to address reports of human rights violations, including against migrants, and to bring those responsible to justice. While recognising considerable progress on this issue, the EU calls on the Libyan government to complete the process of bringing all places of detention under its full control. It will also continue to support the necessary reform of the penitentiary sector. The EU encourages the Libyan authorities to continue cooperation with the International Criminal Court following the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1970 (2011) in which the UN Security Council referred the Libyan situation to the Court.
4. The security situation in Libya remains a serious challenge for the Libyan people and state institutions, which should be able to provide security for all its citizens throughout the country. In this regard, the EU encourages the Libyan authorities to continue pursuing efforts to ensure the progressive integration of members of the revolutionary brigades through the necessary programmes on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, including in civilian training and employment. The EU will continue, in coordination with the international community, to provide its assistance and expertise in this process.

5. The existing unsecured stockpiles of arms and ammunition from the Kadhafi era pose a significant threat to the stability and security of Libya, the Southern Neighbourhood and beyond. Convinced that a comprehensive international response would best address the nature of the threat, the EU supports the efforts of the Libyan government and the United Nations to secure all stockpiles of arms in line with UNSCR 2017 (2011) and emphasizes the need to continue with their destruction, as appropriate. The EU reaffirms its willingness, in coordination with the UN, to increase assistance to the Libyan government in this area.
6. Following the recent tragedies in the Mediterranean, the EU stresses its concern over the loss of lives and the destabilising impact of the irregular movement of people across Libya and through its borders. The EU also recognizes that tackling irregular migration requires a comprehensive approach with Libya playing an important role. The challenges highlighted by the tragedy of Lampedusa, including in relation with Libya, will be addressed in a comprehensive manner also in the framework of the Task Force Mediterranean under the chairmanship of the European Commission. Bearing in mind that establishing secure and stable borders is crucial to ensuring well-managed migration flows and to protect the fundamental rights of migrants, the EU is committed to enhance its cooperation with and assistance to the Libyan government to improve Libya's capacity to manage the security of all its borders and to combat human smuggling and trafficking, illicit smuggling of goods and weapons, and in the fight against terrorism. The EU will respond to these challenges with all appropriate instruments. One important element of EU's comprehensive answer towards the Libyan needs is the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM Libya) through which the EU will contribute to the capacity building of the Libyan border authorities. The EU believes that an increased cooperation with neighbouring countries is also essential and welcomes in that respect all efforts aiming at fostering regional cooperation, including the Rabat follow-up conference to the regional conference on borders held in Tripoli in March 2012.
7. With the intention to establish long-term and mutually beneficial relations, the EU is determined to strengthen its engagement with all sections of Libyan society, including through the European Neighbourhood Policy and the re-launch of negotiations of the EU-Libya Framework Agreement. The EU underlines the importance of Libyan civil society, including human rights defenders, youth, women, local authorities and media, for the future of Libya and will continue supporting it. The EU further proclaims its support of regional initiatives such as the Union for the Mediterranean, the 5+5 Western Mediterranean Forum and the Arab Maghreb Union. The EU encourages any further efforts on regional integration and cooperation across the Maghreb.
8. The EU stresses the need for a response based on close coordination with international partners and reiterates its support to the work and activities undertaken by the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). Finally, the EU reconfirms its determination in securing a peaceful, democratic and prosperous future for the Libyan people."

- **Syria**

Ministers discussed the situation in Syria. The Council adopted the following conclusions on the regional impact of the Syrian crisis:

- "1. The EU reiterates its grave concern for the humanitarian, social, economic, political and security impact of the Syrian crisis on the entire region, especially Lebanon and Jordan. The EU is mindful of the unprecedented effects the crisis has on the stability of the neighbouring countries as well as on their natural and economic resources, educational systems, health care and labour markets.
2. The EU is gravely concerned with the fact that 9.3 million Syrians within Syria are in dire need of external assistance. In particular, it reiterates its concern for the fate of 6.5 million of internally displaced Syrians and of more than 2 million refugees in neighbouring countries, all in need of external assistance. The EU is gravely concerned about the impact of the upcoming winter on the most vulnerable and the polio outbreak inside Syria and urges for timely vaccinations, which require that all parties to the conflict grant full access to health teams participating in the polio immunization campaign throughout the country.
3. The EU commends the authorities and population of, most notably, Lebanon and Jordan as well as Turkey and Iraq for their support and extraordinary generosity towards the people fleeing the conflict in Syria, and recalls the importance of them maintaining the open borders policy. The EU recognizes the destabilizing impact this influx of refugees has on the host communities, especially in Lebanon and Jordan. It also commends other countries hosting an increasing number of Syrian refugees for their generous support to them. The EU encourages all these countries to uphold their international obligations.
4. The EU reaffirms its commitment as the largest donor in the context of the Syrian crisis to support governments, host communities and beneficiaries in countries with most refugees. It welcomes plans for a pledging conference in the beginning of 2014 ("Kuwait II"). The EU will do its utmost to further increase its commitment and calls on international partners to increase humanitarian and economic support to those most affected in Syria and the neighbouring countries. For their part, all donor countries should in accordance with the principles of burden sharing ensure the fulfilment of pledges already made.
5. The EU commends those countries that keep their borders open in order to provide a safe haven and protection for people fleeing the violence in Syria, including Palestinians. In recognition of the immense burden placed upon the neighbouring countries, the EU underlines the importance of supporting local host communities through social and economic measures to mitigate the impact of refugees, and to help financially the host countries to respond to the growing humanitarian needs of refugees. All parties should facilitate the delivery of aid based on humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality.

6. The EU also recalls the need for increased humanitarian, development and macro financial assistance in the short and medium term across the region under a comprehensive response strategy to be based on a comprehensive joint analysis of needs from the UN and international financial institutions. The EU is committed to work closely with the national authorities, the United Nations, aid organisations, development actors and international financial institutions one of the main priorities being the reinforcement of local capacities in order to cope with the essential needs of both refugees and affected local populations.
7. The EU reiterates its grave concern about the restricted humanitarian access in Syria, which is also contributing to the outflow of Syrians, many of whom are also facing worsening food shortages, to the neighbouring countries. Therefore, the EU calls on all parties, and particularly the Syrian government, to immediately implement in full the UN Security Council's presidential statement of the 2nd of October in order to ensure the expansion of humanitarian relief operations, to lift bureaucratic impediments and other obstacles and to facilitate safe, unhindered and immediate humanitarian access to populations in need of assistance in the entirety of the Syrian territory, including across conflict lines and across borders from neighbouring countries. The EU calls on all sides of the conflict to allow for local ceasefires to facilitate humanitarian work and to respect all obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. All those violating these obligations must be held accountable.

The EU also calls on all parties, especially the Syrian government which holds the greatest responsibility for enabling humanitarian access, to commit themselves to fully opening up all besieged and encircled areas immediately and permitting civilians wishing to leave to do so.

The EU encourages the UN Security Council to explore the possibilities of a humanitarian resolution based on the UN Security Council's presidential statement of the 2nd of October 2013 in case the latter would not lead to improvement of the humanitarian situation on the ground.

8. The EU calls on all relevant parties to halt their support to all foreign fighters active in Syria who also have destabilizing effects on neighbouring countries.

The EU calls for a swift elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons arsenal. The EU will continue to support this endeavour, including to foster regional stability.

9. The EU underlines that the deteriorating spill-over effects of the Syrian conflict in the region make it all the more urgent to put an end to all violence in Syria and find a political solution that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. The EU reiterates the importance of quickly convening the Geneva II Conference to this end. Recalling the October 2013 Council conclusions on Syria, the EU welcomes the recent positive stance of the National Coalition of the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SOC) towards participation in the Conference as an encouraging step. Only a political solution that results in a united, inclusive and democratic Syria can end both the terrible bloodshed and the unprecedented threat to the regional stability."

## **Migration**

During lunch, ministers debated migration issues, covering migration flows over both the Mediterranean and EU land borders.

The European Council of 24 and 25 October expressed its deep sadness at the recent tragic events in the Mediterranean, in which hundreds of people lost their lives. It decided to step up Union action to prevent such tragedies from happening again, emphasising the need to address the root causes by enhancing cooperation with the countries of origin and transit. A task force for the Mediterranean, led by the European Commission and involving member states, is working to identify priority actions for more efficient short-term use of European policies and tools. The European Council of June 2014 will return to asylum and migration issues in a broader and longer-term policy perspective (see [European Council conclusions](#)).

## **Common Security and Defence Policy**

During a joint session of foreign and defence ministers, the Council exchanged views on the Common Security and Defence Policy.

The debate took place in the context of preparations for the December European Council, whose agenda will include security and defence issues. Preparatory work has been going on in three areas: increasing the effectiveness, visibility and impact of the CSDP; enhancing the development of defence capabilities; and strengthening Europe's defence industry.

In addition, defence ministers held their six-monthly meeting within the Council. They discussed preparations for the December European Council, focusing on action to support the European defence industry.

For more information on the December European Council, see the [webpage](#) dedicated to its security and defence aspects.

## **Operations**

The Council took stock of the EU's current military operations. It discussed the EU's anti-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia (Eunavfor Atalanta) and the EU training mission in Mali (EUTM Mali).

## **European Defence Agency - budget 2014**

The Council reached agreement on setting the 2014 budget of the European Defence Agency at € 30.5 million. Formal adoption of the EDA budget is to follow shortly.

## **OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

### **FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

#### **Relations with Jordan**

The Council approved the conclusion of a protocol to the Association Agreement with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the general principles for the participation of Jordan in EU programmes. This follows the signing of this protocol on 19 December 2012 and the consent of the European Parliament, given on 10 October 2013.

#### **Cooperation with the Council of Europe**

The Council adopted the EU priorities for cooperation with the Council of Europe in 2014-2015.

#### **Support to the World Health Organization**

The Council agreed to support the activities of the World Health Organisation in the area of biosafety and biosecurity, in the framework of the EU strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

A budget of € 1.727 million has been allocated for work contributing to the reinforcement and implementation of the Convention on the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons and on their destruction (BTWC).

#### **Relations with the Kyrgyz Republic**

The Council established the EU position for the twelfth meeting of the EU - Kyrgyz Republic Cooperation Council, to be held in Brussels on 21 November 2013.

**Tunisia**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union (EU) reiterates its support for the transition process in Tunisia. It encourages all stakeholders to pursue the national dialogue with a view to reaching an agreement paving the way for the swift adoption of the new democratic constitution and the holding, within a reasonable period, of new general, inclusive, transparent and credible elections which satisfy the legitimate, democratic aspirations of the Tunisian people, in the interests of the country as a whole.
2. The EU welcomes the efforts being made by all the parties concerned to ensure the success of this democratic transition process. In that context, it is worth noting the constructive role being played by civil society, and in particular by the mediators of the Quartet as initiators of the inclusive process being conducted as part of the national dialogue. In the interests of the country's democratic transition, it is also essential that this process be conducted with due regard for the rules of democratic functioning which have already been approved, and that all the parties undertake to pursue the objective of a national consensus.
3. In compliance with the spirit and principles of the new European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU confirms its commitment to supporting the democratic process in Tunisia with the objective of establishing a constitutional state which respects the fundamental rights of its citizens and complies with the principles of dignity, freedom and justice, which formed the basis of the 2011 revolution. The EU confirms its willingness to strengthen its support, in line with Tunisia's needs and with its progress in implementing its reform programme.
4. The EU also reiterates its commitment to supporting Tunisia's efforts to address the main socioeconomic challenges facing the country, specifically as regards action to combat unemployment (in particular amongst the young), or inequalities in regional development. Against a backdrop of economic vulnerability, the EU encourages the authorities to commence the structural reforms necessary to ensure sustainable and inclusive economic and social development. The EU reiterates its commitment to supporting the gradual integration of the Tunisian economy into the European market and to accompanying that process, as part of the reforms undertaken by Tunisia.

5. The EU condemns the recent terrorist attacks and expresses its solidarity with the victims and with the Tunisian people. Against a backdrop of regional instability, Tunisia is facing major security challenges in terms of combating terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime and transnational trafficking, as recent events have shown. The EU confirms its support for Tunisia's efforts to tackle all those challenges, and in particular to combat terrorism effectively in compliance with the law. It encourages the Tunisian authorities to strengthen the structures and mechanisms befitting a constitutional state, and to pursue their efforts to ensure the speedy conclusion of the investigations into the political assassinations and to guarantee fair and transparent trials. The rapid completion of the ongoing "peer review" of the security sector could enable the EU to work alongside Tunisia in bringing about true reform in that sector. The EU welcomes the way in which Tunisia is working with its neighbours to combat common threats, and in particular its cooperation in the field of border security, and would draw attention to the potential role of EUBAM Libya in that regard.
6. The EU and Tunisia have undertaken to strengthen their cooperation in the field of migration and asylum. Negotiations on the EU-Tunisia mobility partnership have been completed and internal procedures have been initiated with a view to its imminent signature. Moreover, the challenges presented by the Lampedusa tragedy will be dealt with globally, partly within the framework of the Task Force for the Mediterranean, chaired by the European Commission.
7. More generally, in the context of its privileged partnership with Tunisia, the EU remains willing to step up its dialogue with the Tunisian authorities in order to make best use of the European instruments which are available."

## **COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY**

### **Participation of partners in EU crisis management operations**

The Council decided to sign and conclude an agreement enabling the Republic of Chile to participate in EU crisis management operations. It also agreed to sign and conclude an agreement establishing a framework for the participation of Georgia in EU crisis management operations.

### **European Defence Agency report**

The Council noted the report by the Head of the European Defence Agency to the Council.

### **Development of EU military capabilities**

The Council took note of the single progress report on the development of EU military capabilities for the period from November 2012 to October 2013.

### **EU rapid response capabilities and EU battlegroups**

The Council endorsed a note on EU rapid-response capabilities and EU battlegroups, which sets out developments in EU rapid-response capabilities and EU battlegroups, with a view to enhancing the Union's abilities to respond to crises and increasing the usability of battlegroups.

In addition, the Council agreed a declaration extending until 31 December 2014 arrangements concerning the financing of incremental transport costs for land, sea and air deployment of battlegroups at short notice to the joint area of operations. Under certain conditions, these can be considered common costs and borne by the Athena financial mechanism.

### **EU crisis management exercise**

The Council approved the exercise specifications for the MILEX 14 crisis management exercise.

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