

FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council

22 July 2014 in Brussels

The Council will start at 9.30, presided by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton.

*The Council will first exchange views on the situation in **Ukraine**. It will then debate latest events in **Iraq**.*

*Over lunch, ministers will discuss the latest developments in the **Middle East peace process**.*

*The **EU-Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting** will begin at 16.00, followed by a dinner for the foreign ministers in the premises of the European External Action Service (TV/photo opportunity at 16.00).*

*The **EU-ASEAN ministerial meeting** will bring together EU foreign ministers with their counterparts from ASEAN countries on 23 July, starting at 11am (TV/photo opportunity). A family photo will take place at 12.25. The meeting will be co-chaired by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and the Vietnam Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh.*

Press conferences:

Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council - 22 July at +/- 15.30

Doorstep statements by foreign ministers of Eastern Partnership countries - 22 July at +/- 19.00 (VIP entrance)

Press conference after the EU-ASEAN ministerial meeting - 23 July at +/- 17.00

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Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu>

Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4): <http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu>

Photographic library on www.consilium.europa.eu/photo for photos in high resolution.

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

Ukraine

The Council will take stock of developments in the Ukrainian crisis.

In a joint statement on yesterday's plane crash in Ukraine, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy and Commission President José Manuel Barroso expressed shock at the tragic loss of so many lives. They called for an immediate and thorough investigation into the causes of the crash and for the facts and responsibilities to be established as quickly as possible. They also conveyed their deepest condolences to the Prime Ministers of the Netherlands and Malaysia, to the governments of all other affected nations, and to the families of the victims. See [statement](#).

The High Representative has also expressed shock at the reports of the circumstances surrounding the tragic loss of the Malaysian Airlines flight, adding: *"This is another stark illustration of why it is so urgent to bring this conflict to an end."* She called for the circumstances of the crash to be clarified without delay. See [statement](#).

The Council will take stock of the follow up given on the agreement at the European Council of 16 July to expand the EU restrictive measures, as well as on further diplomatic steps as outlined by Heads of State and Government and discuss next steps.

In particular, the European Council stressed again the EU's support for a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Ukraine and urged agreement on a genuine and sustainable cease-fire to create the conditions for the implementation of President Poroshenko's peace plan. It regretted that the requested steps set out in the 27 June conclusions have not been adequately taken and agreed to expand the restrictive measures. It also requested the European Investment Bank to suspend the signature of new financing operations in the Russian Federation and invited the Commission to reassess EU-Russia cooperation programmes. (see European Council [conclusions](#)).

The Council also is set to formally establish an EU civilian mission under the Common Security and Defence Policy, which will advise on a revised strategy for the civilian security sector in Ukraine, including the police and national guard, and mentor the implementation of reforms.

The European Council of 26/27 June saw the signing of the remainder of the Association Agreement/DCFTA with Ukraine. EU leaders urged the Russian Federation to actively use its influence over illegally armed groups and to stop the flow of weapons and militants across the border, in order to achieve rapid and tangible results in de-escalation. In addition, the European Council set out its expectations on four steps towards de-escalation, underlining the EU's readiness to adopt further restrictive measures (see European Council [conclusions](#), paras 29-33).

A trilateral meeting between the EU, Ukraine and Russia was held on 11 July in Brussels in order to consult on the implementation of the recently signed Association Agreement/DCFTA and to explore its possible economic effects on Russia. The participants agreed to launch a consultation mechanism with primary focus on technical regulations, standards, customs administration, conformity assessment procedures and sanitary and phytosanitary measures arising from the implementation of the AA/DCFTA.

The EU strongly condemns the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation and refuses to recognise it. As part of the EU's non-recognition policy, imports of goods originating in Crimea or Sevastopol into the EU have been prohibited unless they have Ukrainian certificates.

In response to the crisis in Ukraine, several summit-level meetings involving Russia have been cancelled and negotiations on visa matters and a new agreement with Russia have been suspended. The EU has also targeted 72 persons responsible for actions that threaten or undermine the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine with an asset freeze and a travel ban. Two confiscated entities in Crimea are also subject to an asset freeze.

EU leaders have reiterated several times that further steps by Russia to destabilise the situation in Ukraine will lead to additional and far reaching consequences for relations between the EU (and its member states) and the Russian Federation in a broad range of economic areas.

The EU supports the Ukrainian economy as set out in the Commission's package of 5 March. Disbursements of the macro-financial assistance (up to € 1.6 bn) and of EU assistance under the state-building contract (up to € 355m) have started. At the same time, the Commission has made it clear that it stands ready to continue to act as a mediator between Ukraine and Russia and their respective energy companies on gas supplies, transit and prices.

For more details, see [factsheet](#) on EU-Ukraine relations.

Iraq

The Council will discuss the situation in Iraq.

The EU has welcomed the election of Speakers of the Iraqi Council of Representatives on 16 July. *"This is a positive step in the direction of a political solution in Iraq, which is essential to counter the terrorist threat and to overcome the present crisis"*, the High Representative's spokesperson said, recalling the EU's firm commitment to Iraq's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity (see [statement](#)).

Already at its June meeting, the Council has voiced deep concern about the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Iraq, strongly condemning the attacks perpetrated by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The Council reiterated the EU's support of the Iraqi authorities in the fight against terrorism and emphasised that the security response needs to be combined with a sustainable political solution by the Government of Iraq involving all Iraqi leaders and communities in a spirit of national unity. It also urged all political leaders and the judiciary to ensure that an inclusive government is formed as a matter of urgency, so that it can address the challenges which Iraq faces. See [Council conclusions](#).

The EU is seriously concerned about the unfolding humanitarian crisis and the massive displacement of civilians caused by the fighting. In response to the needs of internally displaced persons, the Commission has stepped up EU funding for humanitarian operations in Iraq, bringing it to €12 million for 2014.

Since October 2004, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant has been subject to the EU restrictive measures directed against Al-Qaida and associated entities. The sanctions consist in an arms embargo and an asset freeze.

The EU has been closely engaged in Iraq's recovery and reconstruction, contributing over € 1 billion – including humanitarian aid – since 2003. For the period 2014 - 2020, the EU has earmarked €75 million for strengthening human rights and the rule of law; improving primary and secondary education; and providing access to sustainable energy.

In May 2012, the EU and Iraq signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, as a framework for advancing dialogue and cooperation on subjects such as political and social issues, human rights, the rule of law, trade, energy and security. The first EU-Iraq Cooperation Council was held in January 2014.

Middle East peace process

The Council will discuss the latest developments in the Middle East and could adopt conclusions.

The European Council of 16 July voiced great concern about the continued violence in Israel and Gaza and called on both sides to de-escalate the situation, end the suffering of the civilian populations and return to calm. It welcomed on-going efforts by regional partners, in particular the Egyptian initiative, towards a cease-fire and called on Hamas to agree to such cease-fire. Leaders also recalled the urgent need for all parties to work towards a resumption of the diplomatic process and to pursue a two-state solution (see European Council [conclusions](#)).

Since the beginning of the latest escalation, the EU has expressed grave concern, strongly condemning the indiscriminate fire into Israel by militant groups in Gaza and deploring the growing number of civilian casualties caused by Israeli retaliatory fire. It also repeatedly called on all sides to exercise maximum restraint to avoid casualties and re-establish calm (see [statement of 9 July](#)).

Already in May, the Council expressed extreme concern at recent developments related to the peace process and recalled that a negotiated two-state solution remains the best way to resolve the conflict once and for all. It called on all sides to exercise maximum restraint and avoid any unilateral action which may further undermine peace efforts and the viability of a two-state solution, such as continued settlement expansion. It also reiterated that the EU supports intra-Palestinian reconciliation while it expects a unity government to uphold the principle of non-violence and to remain committed to a two-state solution and a negotiated peaceful settlement of the conflict (see [conclusions](#)).

Other items

The Council is due to adopt several other items without discussion ("A-items"), including:

Syria

The Council is set to reinforce EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime, given the gravity of the situation on the ground. The sanctions already include a number of asset freezes and visa bans, export and import bans, including an oil embargo, as well as restrictions on investments, financial activities and the transport sector. For more information on EU positions and restrictive measures, see [factsheet](#).

Central African Republic

The Council is likely to adopt conclusions on the Central African Republic (CAR). It is expected to voice the EU's continuing strong concern about the crisis in CAR, strongly condemning the recurrent relapse into violence in different parts of the country. It will reiterate its commitment to assist the stabilization of the country and welcome the adoption of a "development package" of € 119 million to support education and health, macro-economic stabilisation and the electoral process as well as the establishment of the first European Union trust fund for CAR. The trust fund was launched on 15 July in order to prepare the transition from the emergency response to the reconstruction by linking relief, rehabilitation and development.

Great Lakes

The Council will also adopt conclusion on the Great Lakes region, confirming its commitment to promoting stability and development in the Great Lakes region. It will welcome security progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) following the defeat of the M23. The Council will also urge for swift voluntary and unconditional disarmament of the FDLR in the DRC, and confirm its willingness to support the process. At the same time, it will remind that over 40 other armed groups remain active in DRC, especially in its eastern part, with dire humanitarian impact on the civilian population, hence the need to address the root causes of violence in the region. The national indicative programmes under the 11th European Development Fund, recently adopted, allocate more than €1.5 billion to Burundi, DRC and Rwanda. They are aligned to the Peace Security and Co-operation Framework Agreement and will be complemented by further support. The Council will also review ongoing political and electoral processes in Burundi, DRC and Rwanda.

EU strategy for citizen security in Central America and the Caribbean

The Council is expected to adopt an EU strategy for citizen security in Central America and the Caribbean. Given the strategic partnership between the EU and the region, citizen security is a common concern for both the EU and its partners in the region. The EU's strategy has three objectives: developing a shared citizen security agenda with the region, through intensified political dialogue; strengthening the ability of governments to deliver quality public services, including in the area of law enforcement, judicial and penitentiary authorities as well as fostering regional cooperation to fight insecurity in Central America and the Caribbean. The strategy will be followed by an action plan, the draft of which is to be presented by the end of the year. The next EU-CELAC summit in 2015 could be an opportunity for a political evaluation of this strategy.

EUCAP Nestor

The Council is set to extend the mandate of the EU mission on regional maritime capacity building in the Horn of Africa (EUCAP Nestor) until December 2016. The mission, part of the EU's comprehensive approach to fighting piracy in the Horn of Africa, works to reinforce the capacity of states in the Horn of Africa and the Western Indian Ocean to effectively govern their territorial waters so as to fight piracy more effectively.

EUCAP Sahel Niger

The Council is due to prolong the duration of EUCAP Sahel Niger, the EU CSDP mission in Niger, until 15 July 2016. EUCAP Sahel Niger provides advice and training to support the Nigerien authorities in strengthening their capacities for combating terrorism and organised crime. So far, around 3000 members of the country's internal security forces, army and judiciary have been trained.

Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting

The 5th annual Eastern Partnership (EaP) foreign ministers' meeting will be held in the afternoon of 22 July and chaired by the High Representative. In addition to EU member states' foreign ministers, the ministerial will be attended by the foreign ministers of the 6 partner countries, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The Eastern Partnership stakeholders (Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, Conference of Local and Regional Authorities, EaP Civil Society Forum), as well as the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development will also attend.

The discussion is expected to focus on the way ahead, leading to the next Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga May 2015 with a particular focus on the implementation of Association Agreements including their Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area and joint commitments, as well as the necessity for greater differentiation in bilateral relations. The ministerial will be followed by an informal dinner for member states' and partner country foreign ministers, hosted by the High Representative.

EU-ASEAN ministerial meeting

EU foreign ministers and their counterparts from members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will meet in Brussels on 23 July. In the context of growing relations between the EU and ASEAN, ministers will discuss the latest developments in both regions, review the ASEAN-EU enhanced partnership and exchange views on regional and international issues, including the East Asian regional architecture and maritime cooperation and security.

Ministers are expected to agree to step up cooperation to enhance transport connectivity between the two regions. The EU, including the European Investment Bank, and ASEAN are due to agree to explore financial support to the implementation of the master plan on ASEAN connectivity. In addition, ministers are due to welcome the EU commitment to more than double support for ASEAN's institution building and 2015 Community-building goals to € 170 million in the period from 2014 to 2020. Overall EU aid to South East Asia, including through bilateral assistance, will increase from €2.2 billion in the period from 2007 to 2013 to close to € 3 billion for the years 2014 to 2020.

Finally, the meeting is to agree to enhance cooperation on maritime security and safety issues, such as information sharing and capacity building, and to start work at senior official level towards the upgrading of the partnership to a strategic one.

For more information about EU-ASEAN relations, see [factsheet](#).
