

## **FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL**

### **3 April 2017 (Luxembourg)**

The Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will start with a discussion on **Syria**. The discussion will take place on the eve of the **Brussels Conference on Supporting the future of Syria and the region** (4-5 April 2017), which will be co-chaired by the EU together with Germany, Kuwait, Norway, Qatar, the United Kingdom and the United Nations. Ministers will discuss the **EU strategy for Syria**, on the basis of the joint communication by the European Commission and the High Representative of 14 March 2017. The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Syria.

The Council will also discuss the **situation in Libya**, following the last discussion at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting in February. The High Representative will debrief ministers on the Quartet meeting on Libya, in which she participated together with the UN, the African Union and the League of Arab States on 18 March 2017.

The Council will discuss the **situation in Yemen** and is expected to adopt conclusions. Ministers will address the humanitarian situation in the country, which continues to deteriorate.

Over lunch, EU ministers will have an exchange of views with the **Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Ahmed Aboul-Gheit**, touching on cooperation between the EU and the League of Arab States and on key regional issues.

Following the conclusion of the electoral process and the formation of the new government, the Council is expected to adopt without debate conclusions on Somalia, which will also feed into the London Somalia Conference to be held on 11 May 2017. The Council is also expected to adopt conclusions on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

#### Press opportunities:

- +/- 9.45 tbc      Doorstep statement by High Representative Federica Mogherini
- +/- 14.00        Welcome by the High Representative Federica Mogherini of Secretary General of the Arab League Ahmed Aboul-Gheit (doorstep)
- +/- 16.00        Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council

[Press conferences and public events by video streaming](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

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<sup>1</sup> This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

## Syria

The Council will discuss Syria and is expected to adopt conclusions . The discussion will take place on the eve of the Brussels conference on Supporting the future of Syria and the region (4-5 April 2017), which will be co-chaired by the EU together with Germany, Kuwait, Norway, Qatar, the United Kingdom and the United Nations. Ministers will discuss the EU strategy for Syria, on the basis of the joint communication of the European Commission and the High Representative of 14 March 2017.

The joint communication proposes ways in which the EU can play a greater role in contributing to a lasting political solution in Syria under the existing UN-agreed framework. It also looks at how the EU can continue its assistance to over 13 million people in need in Syria, help build resilience and stability in the country, and support post-agreement reconstruction and the voluntary, dignified and safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons once a credible political transition is underway.

The Council is expected to confirm EU's commitment to reconfirm its support to Syria's neighbouring countries, in particular Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, as well as Iraq and Egypt, which have demonstrated their commitment and resilience in hosting millions of Syrian refugees over the past few years. The Council will give policy guidelines for the EU approach at the Brussels conference on Supporting the future of Syria and the region. The conference, hosted by the EU, will assess where the international community stands collectively in fulfilling commitments made at the London Conference and agree on additional efforts needed to meet the needs of those affected by the crisis.

13.5 million Syrians are now in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria, including 6.3 million internally displaced persons. 1.5 million are living under siege conditions, and a further 4.9 million Syrian refugees are being hosted by Syria's neighbours and the wider region. The EU and the member states have so far mobilised more than € 9.4 billion in humanitarian aid and in support of stabilisation in response to the crisis in Syria. In February 2016, at the London conference on Syria, they pledged more than €3 billion for 2016-2017.

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

[Press release on the joint communication 'Elements for an EU Strategy for Syria'](#)

[Supporting the future of Syria and the region - Brussels conference, 04-05/04/2017](#)

## Libya

The Council will discuss the situation in Libya, following the last discussion at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting in February. In its conclusions of 6 February, the Council reaffirmed the importance of Libya regaining its stability through an inclusive political settlement under the framework of the Libyan political agreement. It underlined the important role that regional actors and organisations could play in this regard.

The High Representative subsequently participated in the first Quartet meeting on Libya on 18 March 2017 in Cairo. The Quartet was created when the United Nations, the African Union and the League of Arab States invited the EU to join their common work to accompany the process of the political transition in Libya in respect of full Libyan ownership.

Ministers may also touch upon the state of play of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia, the EU naval operation to disrupt the business model of human smugglers and traffickers in the Southern Central Mediterranean. As part of its supporting tasks, the EU operation has trained 93 Libyan coastguards under a first training package and so far another 32 under a second training package, in an effort to help the Libyan coast guards to perform their duties.

In line with the Malta declaration, the EU is currently implementing a package of support measures for Libya as part of the overall effort to address irregular migration along the Central Mediterranean Route. For this effort the EU announced additional funding to the amount of €200 million. In parallel, the EU is implementing programmes worth €120 million, for projects covering the health sector, governance, security, civil society, protection of people, youth and education.

[1st meeting of the Libya Quartet, in Cairo](#)  
[EU-Libya relations \(Factsheet\)](#)  
[Council conclusions on Libya, 6 February 2017](#)  
[EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA](#)

## Yemen

The Council will discuss the situation in Yemen and adopt conclusions.

The conflict in Yemen has entered in its second year. It has led to the deaths of over 10 000 civilians, forced millions to leave their homes and severely aggravated an already dire humanitarian situation. 17 million Yemenis are depending on external aid for their survival, and 7.3 million are at serious risk of famine. It is estimated that over 2.2 million children are acutely malnourished. More than 600 health facilities and 1 600 schools have been damaged during the conflict.

The Council is expected to reaffirm its serious concern over the situation in the country. Continuing escalations in the conflict and the absence of dialogue among the parties, as well as the further deteriorating humanitarian situation and the significant obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance are worrying developments.

In the discussion, ministers may touch upon the different aspects of the crisis:

- the consequences of the war in Yemen for the **region's stability**, as the war has created conditions in which criminal and **terrorist organisations** such as al-Qaeda, Da'esh and others can thrive;
- the importance of **a political solution** and a negotiation process involving all the parties concerned, as there can be no military solution to the conflict. The EU has repeatedly called on all parties to endorse efforts by the UN Special Envoy to restart the negotiations, and insists on the importance of an extended cessation of hostilities to create the conditions for talks to resume;
- the **humanitarian aspects**, including observance of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, the imperative of removing obstacles and bureaucratic hurdles preventing the delivery of life-saving assistance and the importance of guaranteeing the safety of relief workers and humanitarian personnel.

The Council is expected to express its readiness to increase its efforts to support the United Nations actions in the search for a political settlement of this crisis and to step up humanitarian assistance to the population across the country according to the rising needs.

## League of Arab States

Over lunch, EU ministers will discuss key issues for the region with the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, Ahmed Aboul-Gheit. They will discuss key issues for the region including the situation in Syria and Libya and the Middle East peace process.

## Other items

The Council is expected to adopt without debate a number of conclusions and decisions.

### Somalia

The Council is due to adopt conclusions on Somalia welcoming the recent conclusion of the electoral process, the election of President Mohamed Abdullahi Mahamed Farmaajo and the formation of the new government, as well as the many new members of Parliament and increased representation of women. The Council is set to recognise the crucial challenges facing the new leadership, notably the unfolding humanitarian crisis, and to restate the EU's long-term commitment to the country. A new partnership agreement between Somalia and the international community is essential in bringing together security, political and development objectives for the next four years. The new partnership agreement is expected to be adopted at the London Somalia Conference on 11 May 2017. The Council conclusions will serve as policy guidelines for the EU at this conference.

[EU relations with Somalia](#)

[London Somalia Conference of 11 May 2017](#)

### Children's rights

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. These conclusions follow the '**Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child (2017) – Leave No Child Behind**' adopted by the Council on 6 March 2017. With these guidelines, the EU reaffirmed its commitment to comprehensively protect and promote the rights of the child in its external human rights policy.

In line with the guidelines, the conclusions focus on promoting gender equality, ensuring the empowerment of girls, mainstreaming the rights of the child in all sectors and in all programming, and encouraging partner countries to adopt a national strategy on the rights of the child. The Council is due to reaffirm the EU's support for the work of relevant international and regional actors in the field of children's rights, in particular within the United Nations framework. The Council will also reaffirm the EU's active engagement in the processes protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all refugee and migrant children.

[Protection and promotion of human rights](#)

[Revision of the EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child](#)

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