



FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

15 May 2017

The Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will start at 9.30. It will first take stock of the implementation of the **EU Global Strategy in the area of security and defence**.

The Council will discuss the situation in the **Horn of Africa**, a region facing destabilisation, in particular in Somalia and South Sudan. The discussion is expected to focus on the political and security challenges including the implications of the situation in the wider region, across the Red Sea.

The Council will then have an orientation debate on **Africa-EU relations** on the basis of a joint communication by the High Representative and the Commission for a **renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership**. The discussion will feed into the preparation of the EU-Africa Summit to take place in November.

Foreign Affairs ministers will have a lunch discussion with Chairperson of the **African Union Commission** Moussa Faki Mahamat, who took office on 14 March 2017.

Foreign ministers will review the **Eastern Partnership** ahead of the Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting to take place on 19 June in Luxembourg and the Eastern Partnership Summit foreseen on 24 November in Brussels.

Press opportunities:

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| +/- 9.15 | Doorstep statement by High Representative Federica Mogherini |
| +/- 13.00 | Welcome by the High Representative Federica Mogherini of
Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat (doorstep) |
| +/- 17.30 | Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council |

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

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

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

Implementation of the EU Global Strategy in the area of security and defence

Ministers will have a discussion on the implementation of the EU Global Strategy in the area of security and defence. Foreign ministers will take stock of the progress made, in particular in view of the discussion and adoption of Council Conclusions on security and defence in the context of the EU Global Strategy at the Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) of 18 May.

Further to the European Council conclusions of 9 March, the Council is expected to provide political guidance on concrete proposals to take forward cooperation in the area of security and defence, including:

- the next steps needed for the establishment of the **military planning and conduct capability (MPCC)**, within the EU military staff (part of the EEAS) assuming command of non-executive military CSDP missions (at present: EUTM Somalia, EUTM RCA, EUTM Mali), as agreed on 6 March 2017.
- the possibility of permanent structured cooperation (**PESCO**). The Lisbon Treaty introduced the possibility for EU member states to strengthen their cooperation in military matters by establishing permanent structured cooperation (Articles 42(6) and 46 TEU). The idea is to make full use of this possibility by setting up an inclusive permanent structured cooperation, through which those member states who are willing and are able to join could collaborate further in the area of security and defence.
- the possibility of a member state-driven coordinated annual review on defence (**CARD**), which would establish a process to obtain a better overview at EU level of, for instance, defence spending and national investments and defence research efforts, with a view to better address European capability shortfalls, deepen defence cooperation and ensure optimal use and coherence of defence spending plans.
- strengthening the EU's rapid response toolbox, including the **EU battlegroups**, with a view to develop further their modularity in a pragmatic way.
- adopting a more strategic approach to Common and Security Defence Policy **partnerships**, as in view of enhancing cooperation with partner countries that share EU values and are able and willing to contribute to CSDP missions and operations.

The Council may also take note of progress in the implementation of the common set of proposals for **EU-NATO cooperation** and of the Commission's **European defence action plan (EDAP)**.

On 14 November 2016, the Council adopted conclusions on implementing the EU global strategy in the area of security and defence. These conclusions set out the level of ambition, meaning the main goals the EU and its member states will aim to achieve in the area of security and defence. The Council set out three strategic priorities: responding to external conflicts and crises, building the capacities of partners, and protecting the European Union and its citizens. Progress was noted and further guidance provided through Council conclusions on 6 March 2017.

Security and defence is one of the priority areas for work on the implementation of the EU Global Strategy, which also includes building resilience and an integrated approach to conflicts and crises, strengthening the nexus between internal and external policies, updating existing or preparing new regional and thematic strategies and stepping up public diplomacy efforts.

[EU cooperation on security and defence](#)

[Council conclusions of 6 March 2017 on progress in implementing the EU Global Strategy in the area of security and defence \(press release\)](#)

[EU global strategy on foreign and security policy \(website\)](#)

Horn of Africa

The Council will discuss the situation in the Horn of Africa, a region facing destabilisation, in particular in Somalia and South Sudan. The discussion is expected to focus on the political and security challenges, including the implications of the situation in the wider region, across the Red Sea. Ministers are expected to provide guidance on the potential for an expanded EU role in the region.

The Horn of Africa region is facing a worrying situation, with stability being challenged both within countries and between countries. Recently, regional stability has been further challenged by the severe drought and climate change conditions in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. Conflict and drought in South Sudan has forced 1.9 million people to move away from their communities and 1.8 million to cross the border. In Somalia, half of the population is life-threatened. A humanitarian crisis meeting on the alarming levels of food insecurity in the Horn of Africa was held in Brussels on 5 April 2017. An international conference on Somalia was held in London on 11 May, that the High Representative Federica Mogherini attended.

The Council is expected to focus on how the EU can strengthen its engagement on important political issues for the stability in the region. These include relations in the Blue Nile basin; Somalia's work with its neighbours to ensure security within the country and in the region; and remaining borders conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Ministers might also touch upon the importance of the stability of the Horn of Africa for the wider Red Sea region which, in particular, is key for guaranteeing the security of international maritime trading routes.

Ministers may also look at how the EU can contribute to furthering cooperation and border management in the region, building on the Khartoum process, the EU-Horn of Africa dialogue on migration launched in 2014, which has fostered a positive regional dynamic.

[Joint staff working paper on the first implementation year of the 2015-2020 Horn of Africa Action Plan](#)

[London Somalia Conference 2017](#)

[Humanitarian crisis meeting on the Horn of Africa, 5 April 2017](#)

[EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta](#)

Africa-EU relations

The Council will have a debate on Africa-EU relations, on the basis of the joint communication by the High Representative and the Commission for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU partnership.

The joint communication identifies three objectives for EU-Africa relations: strong mutual engagement and increased cooperation, security (on land and on sea) and the fight against transnational threats and sustainable and inclusive economic development in Africa. It proposes concrete actions to make states and societies more resilient and to create more jobs, especially for the youth.

The discussion will feed into the preparation of the EU-Africa Summit to take place in November. The proposed theme of the summit is "Investing in youth", which has become a key priority for Europe as well as for Africa, in a context of African demographic trends creating major challenges in terms of economic development and job creation, security, political participation and migration. Ministers are expected to highlight this dimension in their discussion.

Ministers had a debate on relations with Africa at the Foreign Affairs Council of 12 December. Ministers had then emphasised that engagement in and with Africa remains key to preventing conflict, promoting human security, addressing the root causes of instability and managing migration flows. While development cooperation is an important aspect of EU engagement in Africa, they also underlined the importance of economic relations and investment opportunities in Africa and the need to help create jobs.

Ministers highlighted the need to continue working on governance, democracy, human rights, and related aspects of participation - in particular by civil society and by women - in decision-making. They noted the importance of reaching out to African youth in view of the Summit.

[Joint communication for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU partnership](#) (including links to the document and press material: press release, factsheets, Q&A)

[EU-Africa relations](#)

Eastern partnership

The Council will exchange views on the Eastern Partnership (EaP) ahead of the EaP ministerial meeting to take place on 19 June in Luxembourg and the EaP Summit foreseen on 24 November in Brussels.

Building on their last discussion at the Foreign Affairs Council of 14 November and the Council conclusions adopted then, foreign ministers will provide further guidance on the approach to take and the key elements to put forward at the forthcoming EaP Summit.

The Summit will be the opportunity to take stock of ongoing cooperation in support of the six Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The Summit should also provide further guidance for strengthening cooperation in the four priority areas of engagement agreed at the last Summit (Riga, 21-22 May 2015): the strengthening of institutions and good governance; mobility and people-to-people contacts; taking advantage of market opportunities; and enhancing interconnections, notably in the areas of transport and energy. The joint staff working document by the High Representative and the European Commission "Eastern Partnership - Focusing on key priorities and deliverables" identify 20 deliverables for 2020 in these four areas.

The Riga Summit reconfirmed the strategic importance the EU attaches to the partnership and demonstrated strong engagement and a firm determination to pursue closer, tailor-made relations with the six partner countries. The EU has continued consolidating its differentiated and tailor-made relations with each of the EaP partners, as also provided for by the European Neighbourhood Policy review, which has a particular focus on stability.

Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova signed association agreements with the EU, including deep and comprehensive free trade areas (DCFTAs) in 2014. Provisional application of these agreements began in the autumn of 2014, except for the DCFTA part of the association agreement with Ukraine, which is provisionally applied as of 1 January 2016. The association agreement with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova entered into force on 1 July 2016.

Following the example of the Republic of Moldova, visa liberalisation has been granted to Georgia (27 February 2017) and Ukraine (11 May 2017).

The EU and Armenia have finalised negotiations on a comprehensive and enhanced partnership agreement for deepening bilateral relations. Negotiations on a new comprehensive agreement with Azerbaijan have started. While tangible steps by Belarus to respect democracy and human rights continue to be necessary for the shaping of the EU's future policy towards this country, the EU-Belarus coordination group provides for a more comprehensive approach to bilateral relations.

The EaP was launched in 2009. It sets out to promote political association and economic integration with the EU, as well as multilateral dialogue and cooperation among the EaP countries. It is based on the common values of democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights and freedoms, and commitment to market economy principles.

[Council conclusions on review of the European Neighbourhood Policy \(14 November 2016\)](#)

[Joint staff working document: Eastern Partnership - Focusing on key priorities and deliverables](#)

[The Eastern Partnership summit \(background information\)](#)

African Union Commission

Over lunch, EU ministers will discuss cooperation with the African Union with Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. He took office on 14 March 2017, replacing Dr. Dlamini Zuma.

[African Union website](#)

Other items

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

Venezuela

In the light of the recent worrying developments, the Council is due to adopt conclusions on Venezuela. Since the last Council conclusions on Venezuela in July 2016, the economic and social situation in the country has deteriorated and the political polarisation and violence have increased causing multiple deaths and injured persons. The Council is expected to underline that violence will not resolve the crisis in the country, and that the fundamental rights of the Venezuelan people must be respected, including the right to peacefully demonstrate. The Council is expected to call on all Venezuelan political actors and institutions to work in a constructive manner towards a peaceful solution to the crisis.

[Council conclusions on Venezuela on 18 July 2017](#)

[Statement by the Spokesperson on the violence in Venezuela](#)

[EU delegation to Venezuela](#)

Indigenous peoples

The Council is due to adopt conclusions on indigenous people, recalling that the EU is founded on values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

These conclusions follow the joint staff working document "Implementing EU external policy on indigenous peoples" published by the High Representative and the European Commission in October 2016. The joint staff working document identified ways for the EU to strengthen its support to indigenous peoples through existing external policies and financing.

The Council is expected to underline the importance of addressing discrimination and inequalities based on indigenous origin or identity as well as the importance of actions taken to address the threats to and violence against indigenous peoples. The Council is also due to highlight the crucial importance of further enhancing opportunities for dialogue with indigenous peoples at all levels of EU cooperation.

[EU's human rights and democracy policy](#)

[Joint Staff Working Document - Implementing EU External Policy on Indigenous Peoples](#)