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3535th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 15 May 2017

President **Federica Mogherini**
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy

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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.

ITEMS DEBATED

Horn of Africa

Foreign ministers discussed the situation in the Horn of Africa, a region facing destabilisation in particular in Somalia and South Sudan. The discussion focused on the political and security challenges, including the implications of the situation in the wider region.

Ministers underlined the strategic importance of EU engagement through a strong political presence and a continued contribution to peace and security, including through the existing CSDP missions and operation. This engagement is in addition to the significant development and humanitarian aid provided by the EU and its member states which continues to be much needed given that 13 million are facing serious hunger and 650 000 are internally displaced in the region.

Ministers of development will further discuss the humanitarian situation at their Council meeting on Friday (19 May).

Africa-EU relations

The Council held a more general debate on Africa-EU relations. Foreign ministers welcomed the 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 in November, which will focus on youth.

In this context, ministers highlighted the importance of job creation including by ensuring a favourable climate for trade and private investment and of promoting social and political inclusion of youth in Africa. They agreed on the importance on strengthen dialogue with youth, including in the preparations of the Summit. The EU and member states will join efforts in the run-up to the Summit to ensure its success.

[EU-Africa relations \(background information\)](#)

[Joint communication for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership](#)

Informal lunch with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission

Over lunch, the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and EU Foreign Ministers met the Chairperson of the Africa Union Commission (AUC) Moussa Faki Mahamat for an exchange of views on the state of the Africa-EU partnership in view of the AU-EU Summit in Abidjan on 29-30 November.

In an evolving global context, the relationship between the two continents remains vibrant and essential.

The meeting was an opportunity to welcome AUC Chairperson Moussa Faki to the EU institutions two months after taking office on 14 March.

Both sides valued the strategic importance of the Africa-EU partnership for both continents and agreed to seize the opportunity offered by the upcoming AU-EU Summit for a real alliance in a rapidly evolving global context.

They highlighted that the central theme for the Summit "Investing in Youth," which is in line with the AU's theme of the year "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth." It provides for a positive narrative embracing all strands of the relationship: peace, security, conflict prevention, governance and human rights, economic opportunity, development and job creation, empowerment, access to education, climate change, migration and mobility for the benefit of both African and European youth.

They agreed to work closely together in the months leading up to the Summit, drawing up concrete initiatives that will make a difference in the lives of young people, building on shared values and common interests, with ownership and contributions from all sides.

Eastern Partnership

The Council exchanged 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.

Ministers reiterated the crucial importance of the Eastern Partnership for the European Union. They highlighted their unity in supporting the region and each of the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) in a tailored way. They also stressed their determination to deliver concrete results for the benefits of citizens, both in the EU and in the Eastern Partnership countries. In this context, they welcomed progress on visa liberalisation for Georgia and Ukraine and underlined the importance of the implementation of Association Agreements / Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/DCFTAs) and of reforms.

[Eastern Partnership](#) (background information)

Security and defence

Foreign ministers had a discussion on the implementation of the EU Global Strategy in the area of security and defence. They took stock of progress, in particular in view of the discussion at the Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) on 18 May, which is expected to adopt conclusions on progress in implementing the Global Strategy in the area of security and defence.

[EU cooperation on security and defence](#)

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**FOREIGN AFFAIRS****Venezuela**

In light of the recent worrying developments in the country, the Council adopted the following conclusions on Venezuela:

- "1. The European Union recalls its Council Conclusions of 18 July 2016 fully supporting the efforts in Venezuela to facilitate an urgent, constructive and effective dialogue between the Government and the parliamentary majority, creating the conditions for peaceful solutions to the multidimensional challenges the country faces.
2. In the 10 months that have elapsed, mediation efforts have not yielded the desired results and the process is stagnant. Since then political polarisation has increased, the economic and social situation has further deteriorated and violence has escalated causing multiple deaths and injuries. All incidents of violence must be investigated.
3. Violence and the use of force will not resolve the crisis in the country. The fundamental rights of the Venezuelan people must be respected, including the right to peacefully demonstrate. It is crucial that all parties refrain from violent acts. In this light, the announcement to expand and further strengthen armed civilian groups is worrying as it can fuel further violence and does not contribute to a solution. The EU also recalls that the use of military courts to try civilians goes against international law.
4. The European Union expects all Venezuelan political actors and institutions to work in a constructive manner towards a solution to the crisis in the country, in full respect of the rule of law and human rights, the democratic institutions and the separation of powers, allowing the establishment of an electoral calendar so that the people of Venezuela can express their will in a democratic way. The release of jailed political opponents and the respect of the constitutional rights of all political actors to vote and to participate in elections are also crucial steps to building trust and helping the country to regain political stability.

5. The European Union strongly encourages the facilitation of external cooperation to address the most urgent needs of the population. The European Union is fully committed to helping Venezuela find peaceful and democratic solutions and is ready to use all its possible instruments to support regional and international efforts to that end.

6. Venezuela is a country with more than 600,000 European citizens adversely affected by the present situation and whose security and well-being is a matter of concern for the EU. In this respect, the EU reiterates its readiness to cooperate with the Venezuelan authorities to ensure assistance, protection and security of all European citizens in Venezuela."

Indigenous peoples

The Council adopted the following conclusions on indigenous peoples:

- "1. The European Union 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. Furthermore, the prohibition of discrimination on any grounds and the respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity are fundamental principles under the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union. The EU is committed to promote the respect of human rights of all, everywhere in the world. The Council recalls its conclusions on Indigenous Peoples of November 2002 (GAERC 2463) setting out a wide range of external policies in this regard.
2. The Council recalls the EU's support for adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) at the UN General Assembly in 2007 and its contributions to, and its support for the Outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples held in 2014 as a High level Plenary of the UN General Assembly. It invites the High Representative, the Commission and EU Member States to engage proactively at national and regional levels and at the United Nations in the commemoration of the 10-year Anniversary of UNDRIP in 2017.
3. The Joint Staff Working Document "Implementing EU External Policy on Indigenous Peoples" (SWD (2016) 340 Final) by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission was published on 17 October 2016. The document aims to respond to the undertakings in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2015–2019) to further develop EU policy in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Outcome document of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

These Council conclusions reaffirm these undertakings in its external action.

4. Through its human rights policies, its development policy and financing instruments, the EU has contributed to the international advancement and recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples as set out in the UNDRIP. In this regard, the EU recognises the important contributions of the UN mechanisms working on indigenous issues and reaffirms its support hereto.
5. The Council notes, as the Staff Working Document (SWD) indicates, that there is room within the existing EU policy framework to enhance the EU's impact and make the EU's action more effective and more evenly applied in EU relations with its partner countries and in multilateral cooperation. In this regard, the Council underlines the importance of giving priority to:
 - the discrimination and inequalities based on indigenous origin or identity in relation to ensuring the economic, social and cultural rights as well as the civil and political rights, and
 - the actions taken to address the threats to and violence against indigenous peoples and individuals as well as to Human Rights defenders, in the context of land and natural resources in the protection of the environment, biodiversity and the climate.

The Council recognizes that situations vary across the world and that the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical and cultural backgrounds calls for flexible approaches.

6. In this regard, the Council would in particular note that the EU's rights-based approach to development, encompassing all human rights, should be the main vehicle in external action for integrating the support to indigenous peoples in the EU's implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specific attention should be given to women, children and youth and persons with disabilities as well as to those in situations of forced displacement or in violent/armed conflict. Their contribution in the context of conflict prevention and peacebuilding should also be taken into account.
7. The Council recalls its conclusions on Business and Human rights ([10254/16](#)) of June 2016, including its commitments to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and notes their relevance in this context.

8. The Council underscores the crucial importance of further enhancing opportunities for dialogue and consultation with indigenous peoples at all levels of EU cooperation, including in EU funded programmes and projects under all aid modalities to secure their full participation and their free, prior and informed consent in a meaningful and systematic way, and to inform and underpin EU external action policy and its implementation worldwide. Further dialogues are important for ensuring that the EU's commitments to the UNDRIP as well as the Outcome document of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples are taken into account also in evolving EU policy commitments and their implementation such as in the framework of the New European Consensus for Development and of a renewed partnership with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries."

CSDP action in the Sahel

The Council approved a concept of operations on regionalisation of CSDP action in the Sahel.

The EU's comprehensive approach to security and development in the Sahel includes three CSDP missions: EUCAP Sahel Niger launched in 2012, EUCAP Sahel Mali launched in 2015 and the EU training mission in Mali (EUTM) launched in 2013.

[Sahel region \(EEAS page\)](#)

European Union Satellite Centre (SATCEN)

The Council approved the staff rules of the EU Satellite Centre (SATCEN). The SATCEN supports EU decision-making and action in the context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and provides decision-makers with early warning of potential crises. This enables them to take diplomatic, economic and humanitarian measures in good time, including generic planning for intervention.

SATCEN operates under the direction of the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the supervision of the Political and Security Committee. SATCEN's director reports to a governing board chaired by the EU's High Representative or her representative. The board comprises one representative of each EU member states and one Commission delegate.

[SATCEN website](#)

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

EUFOR ALTHEA

The Council approved the High Representative's Report on the Operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This report is conducted every six months.

The military operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was launched on 2 December 2004 and has contributed to the maintenance of the safe and secure environment in BiH ever since.

[EUFOR ALTHEA](#)

BUDGETS

Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Finland

The Council adopted a decision mobilising €2.64 million under the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) to provide support to 945 dismissed workers made redundant in four Finnish enterprises operating in the manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products sector. The redundancies are the result of the continued structural changes in world trade patterns due to globalisation.

The EGF helps workers to find new jobs and develop new skills when they have lost their jobs as a result of changing global trade patterns, e.g. when a large company shuts down or a factory is moved outside the EU, or as a result of the global financial and economic crisis. The help of the EGF consists in co-financing measures such as job-search assistance, careers advice, tailor-made training and re-training, mentoring and promoting entrepreneurship. It also provides one-off, time-limited individual support, such as job-search allowances, mobility allowances and allowances for participating in lifelong learning and training activities.
