

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

16 January 2017

The Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will start at 9.30. Ministers will have an exchange of views on the **outlook for the first part of 2017**.

The Council will examine developments in **Syria**, following the discussion at its last meeting on 12 December 2016 and the exchange by EU leaders at the European Council of 15 December. Ministers are expected to discuss the EU role in supporting a full ceasefire and genuine political transition in Syria, under the UN auspices, as well as to ensure full humanitarian access and protection throughout the country. The High Representative will inform ministers on the most recent efforts conducted in the framework of the EU's regional initiative on the future of Syria as well as on the conference on Syria and the region to be held in spring in Brussels.

Over lunch, ministers will discuss the **Middle East Peace Process**, following the adoption of UN Security Council 2334 (2016) and the Paris conference, which takes place on 15 January 2017. Ministers will discuss ways forward to achieve a comprehensive peace deal, preserve viability of the two-state solution and reverse on-going negative trends on the ground.

The Council is expected to adopt without debate conclusions on Lebanon on the presidential elections and the formation of a new government.

Press opportunities:

- +/- 08.30 tbc Doorstep statement by High Representative Federica Mogherini
- +/- 15.30 Press conference - 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.

Syria

The Council will examine developments in Syria, following the discussion at its last meeting on 12 December 2016 and the exchange by EU leaders at the European Council of 15 December. Since then, an agreement for cessation of hostilities in Syria was announced. The UN Security Council adopted resolution 2336 on 31 December 2016, welcoming and supporting the efforts by Russia and Turkey to end violence in Syria and the start of a political process in Astana, as an important step ahead of the resumption of negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva on 8 February 2017.

Ministers are expected to discuss the EU role in supporting a full ceasefire and genuine political transition in Syria, under UN auspices, as well as in ensuring full humanitarian access and protection throughout the country. The High Representative will inform ministers on the most recent dialogues with key regional players conducted in the framework of the EU's regional initiative on the future of Syria. This initiative aims to find common ground on the post conflict arrangements for Syria as well as reconciliation and reconstruction once a credible political transition is firmly underway, in full coordination and support of the UN efforts and the intra-Syrian talks that will be held by the UN Special Envoy de Mistura in Geneva in February 2017.

Ministers will also discuss possible elements to feed into the forthcoming joint communication by the High Representative and the European Commission on the EU's strategy for Syria, planned to be presented to EU ministers in April 2017.

The EU and the member states have so far mobilised more than € 9 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.

Following-up on the London conference, the EU will host a conference on Syria and the region in Brussels in spring 2017.

[Press release - second round of meetings in the framework of the EU regional initiative on the future of Syria - 10 January 2017](#)

[Statement by the High Representative Federica Mogherini the announcement of a cessation of hostilities in Syria - 30 December 2016](#)

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

[Memo: the EU and the crisis in Syria](#)

[Council conclusions on the EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat](#)

Middle East Peace Process

Over lunch, ministers will discuss the Middle East peace process, following the adoption of UN Security Council 2334 (2016) and the Paris conference, which takes place on 15 January 2017. Ministers will discuss ways to achieve a comprehensive peace deal, preserve viability of the two-state solution and reverse on-going negative trends on the ground.

In its conclusions of 18 January 2016, the Council expressed its concern over the continuing cycle of violence in Israel and the Palestinian territory and condemned the terror attacks and violence from all sides and in any circumstances. The Council called on political leaders to work together to contribute to calm and address the underlying causes of the tensions. In June 2016, the EU welcomed through Council Conclusions the Joint Communiqué on the Middle East peace initiative adopted in Paris on 3 June 2016 and called on both parties to the conflict to demonstrate, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to meaningful negotiations aiming at ending the occupation that began in 1967, and resolving all permanent status issues.

The resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative (2002), relevant UNSC resolutions since 1947, as well as agreements already reached between the parties, is a fundamental interest of the EU. A common objective is a two-state solution with an independent, democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours. The EU has striven to keep the Middle East peace process on the international agenda and supported initiatives encouraging both Israeli and Palestinian governments' political will and concrete steps towards a two-state solution.

[Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process, 20 June 2016](#)

[Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process, 18 January 2016](#)

[Middle East Peace process \(EEAS website\)](#)

[UN Security Council resolution 2334 \(2016\)](#)

[Report of the Middle East Quartet, 1 July 2016](#)

Other items

Lebanon

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions without debate reaffirming its support to the democratic process in Lebanon and welcoming the recent election of President Michel Aoun and the formation of a new government led by Prime Minister Saad Hariri. It is expected to call on the country to hold timely legislative elections in 2017 and ensure a smooth and transparent process.

The Council is also expected to reiterate the importance of Lebanon's ongoing commitment to a policy of dissociation from all regional conflicts, as well as to commend the country's extraordinary efforts in hosting more than 1.1 million Syrian refugees.

[EU and Lebanon adopt partnership priorities and compact, press release of 15 November 2016](#)

[Council conclusions on Lebanon of 22 June 2015](#)

[Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon](#)
