

FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council

22 June 2015 in Luxembourg

The Council, starting at 9.00, will be chaired by Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The Council will have an exchange of views on **energy diplomacy**, exploring ways for EU foreign policy to support the energy union. This will be followed by a strategic debate on **Asia**.

Over lunch, ministers will be joined by **UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon** for a discussion on the upcoming UN conferences, preparations for the UN General Assembly as well as on EU-UN cooperation as regards joint efforts to address current crises.

After lunch, the Council will debate the political situation in the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**. Under any other business, the High Representative will brief ministers on her recent visit to the Middle East.

The Council is expected to extend **EU economic restrictions** over Russia's role in destabilising Eastern Ukraine, as announced by the March European Council. It is also expected to possibly launch **EUNAVFOR Med**, the EU naval operation to disrupt the business model of human smugglers in the Mediterranean.

An Accession Conference with **Montenegro** will take place at 17.20 (TV/photo opportunity), chaired by Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs. It will be followed by the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Council at 18.00 (TV/photo opportunity), chaired by Igor Lukšić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro. Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs will lead the EU delegation.

Press conferences:

If EUNAVFOR Med is launched, a press briefing on the operation will be held in Luxembourg after the adoption of the A-items. This briefing will be retransmitted live to the Council press centre in Brussels (accreditation to the Euro summit will be required for access to the press centre).

16.00 Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council

20.10 Press conference after the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Council

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

Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery on: www.eucouncil.tv

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

Energy diplomacy

The Council will discuss how EU foreign policy can support the realisation of the EU's energy union. The energy union sets out to increase the EU's energy security while reducing the EU's carbon footprint and making the EU a leader in renewable energy.

Foreign policy plays a significant role in meeting these objectives, given that energy and geopolitics are closely linked, e.g. when it comes to diversifying external energy supplies or promoting an ambitious climate change agreement at the global climate conference in Paris (COP 21).

The Council is set to have a first discussion on an action plan with concrete EU foreign policy measures to support the implementation of the energy union.

Asia

The Council will hold an in-depth debate on strengthening EU relations with Asia.

The Asia-Pacific region includes four EU strategic partners, i.e. China, India, Japan and Korea. It is a key region as a driver of global growth and a major market for European companies. The Asian population buys almost a quarter of EU exports, and close to a third of EU imports come from Asia. The EU has concluded free trade agreements with South Korea and Singapore whereas negotiations are ongoing with Japan, Malaysia, India, Vietnam and Thailand. In addition, a joint study is being conducted on a possible free trade agreement with ASEAN.

Asia also matters politically. Tackling global challenges such as climate change, maritime piracy, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism requires strong commitment from influential partners in the region. The EU has also important stakes in Asia's security.

Three particular aspects will be discussed, namely:

- how to step up engagement with multilateral Asia, in particular ASEAN
- how to leverage the EU strategic partnership with China
- how to best tap into the potential of connectivity

ASEAN

The EU supports South East Asia regional integration and is committed to strengthening its relations with ASEAN across a wide range of issues. In conclusions on EU-ASEAN relations, the Council is set to welcome priority areas for engagement with ASEAN, as outlined in a recent joint communication.

In particular, the EU is interested in further cooperating with ASEAN on security, including on maritime security and "non-traditional" security challenges. Ministers will discuss the way forward in this regard, including how to contribute more substantially to policy and security related fora led by ASEAN.

The EU is also looking forward to promoting closer trade and investment links, stepping up the cooperation on connectivity, cooperating more closely on transport and civil aviation and strengthening collaboration on climate change.

[The EU - ASEAN relationship in facts and figures](#)

[Joint Communication: The EU and ASEAN - a partnership with strategic purpose](#)

China

Ahead of the EU-China summit on 29 June, ministers will discuss current priorities in EU-China relations and how to adjust the EU strategic partnership with China to new challenges.

The EU is China's biggest trading partner, while China is the EU's largest source of imports. The EU has a fundamental stake in the success of China's economic and governance reforms, in

strengthening the framework of economic exchanges and cooperation and promoting human rights.

China is asserting itself on the global stage and is an increasingly influential partner in many areas. The EU has a genuine interest in fostering convergence of views on global challenges (climate change, post-2015 development agenda) and on regional crisis response (Libya, Middle East, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Ukraine).

Ministers will discuss the EU-China relationship in response to China's growing global profile. They will also look at how to promote a more cohesive and effective EU approach.

Connectivity

Asian countries have recently made efforts to increase regional connectivity. The EU is supportive of efforts to upgrade transport infrastructure, to remove hindrances to the mobility of people and to facilitate regional cooperation. The Council is expected to reaffirm the EU's support to EU-ASEAN cooperation on connectivity. For this, the EU is ready to provide financial support through the European Investment Bank, the Asia Investment Facility and bilateral programmes by member states.

Ministers will also discuss how to ensure best possible synergies between European objectives and Asia connectivity plans, which could upgrade trade routes from China to Europe.

Myanmar/Burma

The Council is due to adopt conclusions on the forthcoming elections in Myanmar/Burma, reiterating its strong commitment and continued support for its democratic and economic transition. The Council will note that elections in 2015 will be an important milestone in the democratic transition and an opportunity to confirm that reforms are irreversible.

EU strategy for Central Asia

The Council will endorse conclusions reviewing the EU strategy for Central Asia, adopted in 2007. It will welcome the substantial progress achieved in developing the EU's bilateral relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as well as with the region since 2007. While the main objectives and priority areas of the strategy remain pertinent, the Council will highlight the significant mutual interest in increased political and economic cooperation. At the same time, it will emphasise the fundamental importance of democratisation, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and socio-economic development, essential elements of the strategy.

EU-UN cooperation

Over lunch, EU foreign ministers will be joined by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, to discuss current preparations of key UN summits and EU-UN cooperation in tackling current crises.

The commitment to effective multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, is a central element of the EU's external policy. Over the years, the EU has established a strong relationship with the UN. Co-operation takes place on a broad range of areas: coordinating development and humanitarian assistance, addressing climate change, promoting and protecting human rights, peace building in conflict ridden countries, fighting corruption and crime, and addressing global health concerns, labour issues and culture.

2015 is an important year for the UN and for global sustainable development. Through the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda which will succeed the Millennium Development Goals, the international community will respond to challenges facing the world today: eradicating poverty, achieving inclusive and sustainable development for present and future generations and ensuring the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental values as the basis for peaceful and prosperous societies.

Key UN conferences will take place in Addis Ababa (Financing for Development in July), New York (post-2015 summit in September) and Paris (Climate Change COP 21 in December).

The EU and its member states play an important role within the UN. The 28 EU countries command more than one eighth of the votes of the UN General Assembly and vote unanimously on nearly all resolutions put to the UN General Assembly. Among the 15 members of the UN Security Council, there are currently four EU states: permanent and veto-wielding members France and United Kingdom as well as Lithuania and Spain.

The EU and its member states collectively are the single largest financial contributor to the UN system. In 2013, the sum of the contributions of the 28 EU member states amounted to 35% of the UN regular budget and 36.8% of the UN budget for peacekeeping activities. The EU and its member states also provide about half of all UN members' voluntary contributions to UN funds and programmes.

The Foreign Affairs Council is also expected to adopt the EU's priorities for the next UN General Assembly.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Council will discuss the political situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In April 2015, the Council voiced "grave concern regarding the deteriorating situation in the country, in particular in the area of rule of law, fundamental rights and freedom of media". It urged all sides to assume their responsibilities and take immediate measures towards a sustainable solution, constructively engage to restart political dialogue and restore trust in the institutions.

Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, has visited Skopje on 2 June and met with the leaders of main political parties aimed at finding a solution for the ongoing political crisis in the country. Agreement was reached on a number of issues, including on commitment to reform. The talks continued in Brussels on 10 June, but a final agreement was not yet reached. The EU continues to urge all the parties – in the interest of their country and its citizens – to find a lasting political compromise without delay and come forward with concrete proposals to this end, building on the 2 June agreement. The Commission remains ready to facilitate discussions.

[Statement following the meeting with political leaders of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 10 June 2015](#)

[Council conclusions on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 21 April 2015](#)

EUNAVFOR Med

The Council is expected to possibly launch EUNAVFOR Med, the EU naval operation to disrupt the business model of human smugglers in the Mediterranean.

On 18 May, the Council established EUNAVFOR Med as one element of the comprehensive EU response to the migration challenge. The Operation Commander – Rear Admiral Enrico Credendino - will oversee activities from the Operation Headquarters located in Rome.

At a special European Council in April, EU leaders agreed to four priority actions to prevent further loss of life in the Mediterranean and tackle the root causes of migration pressures: strengthening EU's presence at sea, fighting traffickers in accordance with international law, preventing illegal migration flows and reinforcing internal solidarity and responsibility. External action plays an important role in the EU's comprehensive strategy, building on already very solid EU engagement in the areas of crisis response, development cooperation and political dialogue with the countries of origin and transit.

[Statement by the Special European Council, 23 April 2015](#)

[Finding solutions to migratory pressures](#)

Other items

The Council is expected to take a number of decisions without discussion ("A-items"):

Economic sanctions over Russia's destabilising role in Eastern Ukraine

The Council is likely to extend the EU economic sanctions against Russia until 31 January 2016. This follows an agreement at the European Council in March to link the duration of the restrictions to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements, which is foreseen by 31 December 2015. The sanctions concern access to European financial markets for certain Russian banks and companies, trade in arms and dual use goods for military end use as well as the export of certain energy-related technology to Russia.

[European Council conclusions, 19/20 March 2015](#)

[More details about EU economic sanctions against Russia](#)

Lebanon

The Council is due to adopt conclusions on Lebanon. It is set to strongly reiterate its call on the Lebanese political forces to take decisive action to elect a new President and put Lebanon's stability and national interest ahead of partisan politics. It will also reiterate the EU's support for the efforts of Prime Minister Salam to govern under difficult circumstances, calling on all parties to enable the government to function properly.

[Declaration by the High Representative marking the passage of one year since former President Michel Sleiman of Lebanon left office, 25 May 2015](#)

Burundi

The Council is due to adopt conclusions on Burundi. The EU supports a consensual political solution as way towards ensuring security and democracy for all citizens of Burundi. It has backed the African Union and the East African Community in calling for the dialogue among all political actors to restart as soon as possible. Depending on future developments, the EU could consider further steps to ensure respect for relevant commitments.

[Déclaration du Porte-Parole sur le Burundi](#)

In the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council

EU-Montenegro

The Accession Conference with Montenegro is expected to open two new negotiations chapters: chapter 9 on financial services and chapter 21 on trans-European networks. This would bring the total number of chapters opened to 20, two of which have already been provisionally closed.

The EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Council will review progress in EU-Montenegro relations and take stock of the accession process, following the publication of the Commission's latest progress report in October 2014. The EU is expected to encourage Montenegro in particular to focus on the fundamentals of the accession process: rule of law, economic governance and public administration reform.
