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THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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3236th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg, 22-23 April 2013

President

Ms Catherine Ashton

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and
Security Policy

P R E S S

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Main results of the Council

*The Council discussed the latest events in **Syria**. It also eased certain EU sanctions against Syria, including the oil embargo, so as to help the civilian population and support the opposition in that country. The EU remains the biggest humanitarian donor in the Syrian crisis.*

*The Council took stock of the situation in **Myanmar/Burma** and welcomed developments towards democracy, a strong parliament and freedom of expression. It congratulated the government of Myanmar/Burma on what has been achieved, but was conscious that there were still significant challenges to be addressed. In response to the changes, the Council decided to lift all sanctions with the exception of the arms embargo, which it extended for one year.*

*The Council also examined the situation in **Mali** and reiterated its determination to support current efforts to eradicate the terrorist threat in the Sahel and in Mali. It welcomed the Malian commitment to implementing the roadmap for the transition and organising free, credible and transparent elections in July. The Council was also prepared to envisage additional EU support for the judicial sector and domestic security in Mali.*

***Defence** ministers held their six-monthly meeting within the Foreign Affairs Council. They discussed security threats in Mali and the wider Sahel region, and reviewed the progress of EU military operations, in particular the EU training mission in Mali. They also continued preparations for the European Council on defence in December 2013, in particular on battlegroups and the defence industry.*

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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.

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Member
Member
Member
Vice-President

The Government of the Acceding State was represented as follows:

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Ms Višnja TAFRA

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and
European Affairs
Deputy Minister for Defence

ITEMS DEBATED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Southern neighbourhood

The Council debated developments in the EU's southern neighbourhood, focusing on Egypt, Lebanon and Syria.

Following the debate, the High Representative underlined the EU's continuing support for a political solution to the crisis and for the work of Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi towards that. She also renewed calls for greater respect of international humanitarian law.

The Council also eased EU sanctions against Syria, including the oil embargo, with a view to helping civilians and supporting the opposition in that country. For more details, see press release [8611/13](#).

Eastern Partnership

The Council took stock of preparations for the Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting, scheduled for July in Brussels. It also discussed the state of play ahead of the Eastern Partnership summit in November in Vilnius, in particular as regards Association Agreements with Eastern Partnership countries.

Myanmar/Burma

The Council took stock of developments in Myanmar/Burma and debated future EU relations with the country. In response to the remarkable process of reform, the Council lifted EU sanctions with the exception of the arms embargo, which it extended for one year.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union has watched and supported the remarkable process of reform in Myanmar/Burma. It welcomes the developments towards democracy, a strong Parliament, freedom of expression, and the government's efforts against corruption, as well as the efforts towards the release of remaining political prisoners.
2. The EU is willing to open a new chapter in its relations with Myanmar/Burma building a lasting partnership and to promote closer engagement with the country as a whole. In response to the changes that have taken place and in the expectation that they will continue, the Council has decided to lift all sanctions with the exception of the embargo on arms which will remain in place.

3. The EU congratulates the government of Myanmar/Burma on what has been achieved, but is conscious that there are still significant challenges to be addressed. It looks forward to working in partnership with the government, by establishing a regular political dialogue involving all concerned stakeholders:
- To achieve sustainable peace in Myanmar/Burma by addressing long-standing differences in an inclusive way, and in particular calling for an end of hostilities in Kachin State;
 - To consolidate the democratic achievements so far and to move further towards full transition; in this regard, the EU is ready to share with Myanmar/Burma the recent experience on political transition and democratisation in some of its Member States;
 - To strengthen human rights and the rule of law including through enhanced cooperation with the UN, in particular to ensure the protection of all minorities; to this end, the EU will explore ways to promote a regular human rights dialogue with Myanmar/Burma;
 - To establish Myanmar/Burma as an active and respected member of the international community, by adhering to international agreements, including in relation to human rights, land mines, non-proliferation and disarmament, particularly supporting President U Thein Sein commitments to comply with the relevant UNSC resolutions;
 - To encourage responsible trade and investment while promoting transparency and environmental protection. Furthermore, a swift reinstatement of the Generalized Scheme of Preferences to Myanmar/Burma will contribute to the EU's policy of supporting the economic reforms. As a next step, the EU will explore the feasibility of a bilateral investment agreement;
 - To promote inclusive and sustainable growth, as well as good governance to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in line with the government's plans. The task is now to ensure that reforms are translated to economic benefits for ordinary people. The EU will maintain increased levels of development assistance, in coordination with other donors.
4. The EU stands ready to cooperate with Myanmar/Burma with regard to the following complex challenges while underlining its concerns on:
- The need to unconditionally release the remaining political prisoners, while noting with satisfaction the creation of a review mechanism and looking forward to the early completion of its work;

- The need to deal with inter-communal violence. The EU welcomes President U Thein Sein promise that all perpetrators of violence will be prosecuted, and his commitment to a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-faith society which should include addressing the root causes of the violence. In this context, the EU is studying the possibility of assisting the reform of the police service in Myanmar/Burma, in partnership with all appropriate stakeholders, in particular with the country's Parliament;
 - The need for urgent action to deal with humanitarian risks for all displaced people in the Rakhine State. At the same time, the government should continue to pursue and implement durable solutions to the underlying causes of the tensions that include addressing the status of the Rohingya;
 - The need for unhindered and full access for humanitarian and development aid workers to all communities affected by conflict and sectarian violence.
5. Recognising that the period leading to general elections in 2015 is critical for the country's overall transition, the Council underlines the importance of coordination and coherence in the EU's response. Consequently, building on the elements above, as well as on its conclusions in April 2012, the Council invites the High Representative/Vice President to discuss and propose a comprehensive framework with priorities for the EU's policy and support to the ongoing reforms for the next three years. Furthermore, the Council encourages relevant authorities in Member States and EU institutions to proceed without delay to joint programming of development aid for Myanmar/Burma while respecting the existing harmonisation efforts.
6. The EU will use all means and mechanisms at its disposal to support Myanmar/Burma's political, economic and social transition and in this context welcomes the initiative of a Task Force to be launched later in the year, building on the Joint Statement agreed on 5 March 2013 during the visit of President U Thein Sein to Brussels."

Mali

The Council examined the situation in Mali and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union (EU) reiterates the importance it attaches to the stability, territorial integrity, democracy and sustainable development of Mali, and its determination to support current efforts to eradicate the terrorist threat in the Sahel and in Mali. The Council welcomes the holding on 15 May in Brussels of a high-level donor conference entitled "Renewing Mali together", whose aim will be to mobilise and coordinate the international community's support for Mali's development.

2. The EU welcomes the commitment of Malian stakeholders to implementing the roadmap for the transition and urges them to build determinedly on recent progress. The roadmap for transition and its credible implementation by Mali's authorities remain crucial for a complete return to constitutional order, for political reconstruction and for long-term stability in Mali. The EU is determined to support the transition through elections and reconciliation, while helping to ensure that the civilian authorities exercise lasting control over the armed forces. In that context, the EU hopes to see a rapid resumption of political dialogue with the Malian authorities under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement.
3. The EU welcomes the commitment of Mali's Government to organising free, credible, inclusive and transparent elections in July, as envisaged by the roadmap, and calls on all Mali's political parties to take part in them actively. This goal is now the political priority. The EU will be swift to provide financial and technical assistance with a view to the holding of elections and reiterates its willingness to consider deploying an election observation mission at the Malian Government's request. The EU calls on Mali's authorities to guarantee freedom of expression.
4. Dialogue, reconciliation and the restoration of trust between all the components of Malian society are essential. The establishment by the Government of a National Dialogue and Reconciliation Commission is an important step in this context. The EU welcomes the appointment of the members of the Commission, which should start its work as quickly as possible. The EU calls on all non-terrorist and non-criminal parties who are prepared to respect the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Mali to participate fully in this dialogue.
5. Mali's authorities have the primary responsibility for ensuring that the civilian population as a whole is protected and all human rights fully respected. The EU is concerned at the recurrent allegations of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, which can only reduce the political space for reconciliation. The EU is attentively following the decisions taken by the Government to inquire about those allegations and to commit itself firmly to combating impunity. All perpetrators of violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law must be brought to justice. The EU welcomes the ongoing deployment of human rights observers from the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and repeats that it is willing to provide them with support.
6. The EU reiterates the importance it attaches to the commitments declared in the United Nations Security Council's resolutions on women, peace and security, in particular as regards the full participation of women in the process of peace and reconstruction and in electoral processes. The protection of women as regards sexual violence in conflicts is also crucial.

7. The EU continues to monitor the humanitarian situation in Mali and stands ready to respond to the most urgent needs of the victims of the crisis in Mali and in neighbouring countries. The EU reaffirms the need for all parties concerned to respect humanitarian principles and space and to allow unimpeded access to all those who need emergency help at a time when increasing food insecurity is affecting the most vulnerable populations. The EU undertakes to work with the authorities and aid agencies to facilitate the free and voluntary return and resettlement of displaced and refugee populations.
8. The EU welcomes the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) alongside Operation Serval and the Malian forces. The EU has now made available support worth EUR 50 million to AFISMA, through the African Peace Facility. AFISMA's work has made it possible for an essential part of Mali's territory to be reconquered, the main towns of northern Mali to be liberated and the populations of those areas to be protected. The EU welcomes the planned conversion of AFISMA into a UN multidimensional integrated stabilisation mission under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.
9. The EU welcomes the launch of the EUTM Mali military mission at the beginning of April, supplementing its advisory work and its training activities for a first battalion of 650 Malian soldiers. However, the Council emphasises that for the Malian armed forces to be trained in optimum conditions, they must be provided with appropriate military equipment. It welcomes the mobilisation of the international community in the framework of the Addis Ababa conference and warmly urges all Mali's partners to contribute or to increase their contribution to give the African and Malian forces the resources to carry out their missions.
10. The EU welcomes the imminent launch of a first group of actions in support of Mali's stabilisation, worth almost EUR 300 million, in particular through a state consolidation support contract. The aid is intended to support the progress of the Malian authorities in implementing the goals set by the road map and the priorities to be defined by the Malian authorities in their "Plan for the sustainable recovery of Mali 2013-2014", which will be presented and discussed at the 15 May conference, by making it possible inter alia to strengthen the state and deliver basic services for the people throughout the territory of Mali. The Council is in favour of speeding up the preparations for the gradual resumption of the other development aid programmes, for infrastructure, security and justice, conflict prevention, reconciliation and resilience, among others.
11. The Council is prepared to envisage additional EU support for the judicial sector and domestic security, including reinforcement of Mali's capacity to fight terrorism and organised crime. This includes examining options under the CSDP and other relevant instruments. Restoring a public service capable of ensuring the security of persons and property in a credible and effective manner is a vital stage in the reconstruction of the country.

12. The EU reiterates its determination, in coordination with other actors including the AU, ECOWAS and the United Nations, to help countries in the region to cope with the risks resulting from the situation in Mali as regards regional and international security. The EU is willing to consider specific proposals in the context of the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel. It is essential that all stakeholders remain mobilised within the Support and Follow-Up Group on the situation in Mali; the EU welcomes the Group's meeting in Bamako on 19 April.
13. The Council welcomes the appointment of the EU Special Representative for the Sahel, Michel Reveyrand de Menthon, and urges him to work closely with all the stakeholders involved, first and foremost the governments of the Sahel states, as well as the African Union, ECOWAS and the United Nations and others."

SECURITY AND DEFENCE

CSDP Operations

During a working dinner, defence ministers took stock of the situation in Mali and the work of the EU training mission in Mali. At the beginning of April, the mission started to provide training to the Malian Armed Forces to restore their military capacity.

Ministers were also briefed on the state of play concerning the other EU military CSDP operations.

Battlegroups

As part of the preparations for the European Council on defence in December 2013, the Council discussed battlegroups and, in particular, ways to ensure that the requirements for battlegroups continue to be met by member states.

Defence industry taskforce

The Council was briefed on the work of the Commission's task force on defence industries and markets.

The objective of the Commission's task force is to complete the internal market in defence equipment as well as to improve the competitiveness of the European defence industry. It has identified three priority areas for action: the internal market, industrial policy, and research and innovation.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**FOREIGN AFFAIRS****Relations with Algeria**

The Council approved the EU position for the EU-Algeria Association Committee regarding the implementation of the provisions concerning industrial products set out in Articles 9 and 11 of the Association Agreement between the European Community and its member states and Algeria.

Guinea-Bissau - restrictive measures

The Council approved preparations for the annual review of EU restrictive measures against certain persons, entities and bodies threatening the peace, security or stability of Guinea-Bissau.

Libya - restrictive measures

The Council amended EU sanctions in view of the situation in Libya so as to take account of changes adopted at the UN. It permitted the supply of non-lethal military equipment and technical assistance intended solely for security or disarmament assistance to the Libyan government. It also allowed the supply of small arms, light weapons and related materiel, for the sole use of UN personnel and development workers.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The Council reinforced restrictive measures against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea so as to implement UN Security Council resolution 2094 (2013). For more details, see [factsheet European Union and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea](#).

Iraq

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Iraq:

- "1. The EU recalls its commitment to develop a solid, long-term and mutually beneficial partnership with Iraq. This requires Iraq to build a stable political, judicial and economic environment, which will allow it to emerge as a secure, democratic, unified and prosperous country where human rights and the constitutional principles are respected and rule of law is adhered to. The EU is determined to stand alongside and support Iraq in these challenging times, and stresses the importance of increasing high-level contacts, building on the framework created by the EU-Iraq Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), and assessing progress made, including in the field of human rights.

2. The EU is concerned about the increased tension and the recently deteriorating human rights situation in Iraq and calls on all parties to refrain from the use of violence. It also calls on the Government of Iraq and all Iraq's political forces to engage in an inclusive and genuine dialogue to address grievances and resolve political differences within the framework of the Constitution, in order to allow all communities equal access to the political process and power-sharing. It is only through such a dialogue, founded on tolerance and mutual respect, that durable stability can be built. These are values that the EU endeavours to promote, in full respect of the sovereignty of its partners. For Iraq, they represent a way to counter the continuing unacceptable violence, safeguard the long-term stability of the country, enhance the human rights situation, respond to the aspirations of the Iraqi people, regardless of creed or ethnicity, and ultimately improve their livelihood. The EU calls again on Iraq to cease carrying out executions and to introduce a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.
3. The EU reiterates its continuing commitment to support Iraq's transition towards a sustainable democratic system, including through targeted assistance advancing good governance and the rule of law. The EU affirms the utmost importance of the independence of justice and penitentiary sectors to avoid any political use of them, of adequate police training, good governance and tackling corruption in support for the rule of law in Iraq. In this context, the EU affirms its commitment to a smooth and effective handover of the activities of the European Union Integrated Rule of Law Mission for Iraq, EUJUST LEX-Iraq, to other EU and international actors and to Iraqi authorities, ensuring that follow-up activity builds on lessons learnt and achievements accomplished by the mission.
4. The EU welcomes the holding of provincial elections on 20 April in a large part of Iraq, and congratulates the Iraqi people for having successfully expressed their democratic will. The elections are an important step towards a consolidation of the democratic system in which the Provincial Councils play an essential role, and it is unfortunate that the elections did not take place on 20 April in a number of provinces, including Anbar and Ninewa. It is important that provincial elections also be held in the remaining provinces of Iraq, without undue delay.
5. The EU recalls that inclusive economic growth is central to improving Iraq's stability over the long term. It looks forward to the implementation of the EU-Iraq PCA and encourages the Government of Iraq to take action to improve the services provided to the Iraqi population and create a business environment in Iraq that would allow trade to prosper.
6. The EU welcomes the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the good offices of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General. The EU strongly supports the Mission's efforts to advise and assist the Government of Iraq on strengthening democratic institutions based on free, fair and inclusive elections, facilitate regional dialogue, improve Iraq's capacity to provide essential services for all its people and residents and also to promote the protection of human rights and judicial and legal reform.

7. The EU considers that Iraq is a key partner with which to address regional conflicts. Our common objective should be to ease regional tensions and to cooperate on the resolution of crises such as the one currently unfolding in Syria. In this context, the EU calls on the Government of Iraq to allow entry to civilians fleeing violence in Syria. It also calls on the Iraqi government to do whatever is necessary to prevent any supply or transfer of arms to the Assad regime and its supporters in Syria. The EU wishes to work with Iraq and with all other willing partners to advance the conditions for peace and prosperity in the Middle East."

EU guidelines on the death penalty

The Council adopted revised EU guidelines on the death penalty, outlining how the EU intends to continue its long-standing campaign against the death penalty.

Combating trafficking in small arms

The Council endorsed the fourteenth progress report on the implementation of the EU strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. The report covers activities during the second semester 2012.

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

European Security and Defence College

The Council amended the legal basis for the European Security and Defence College, which provides training in the field of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in order to promote a common understanding of the CSDP and to disseminate best practice. The Council also allocated funding from the EU budget to the European Security and Defence College, i.e. EUR 535 000 for the first 12 months. In addition, the Council approved an increase in seconded staff supporting the work of the college.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Interim economic partnership agreement with the Eastern and Southern African states

The Council adopted the EU position on the rules of procedure of the EPA committee, the customs cooperation committee and the joint development committee provided for by the interim economic partnership agreement (EPA) with the Eastern and Southern African states.