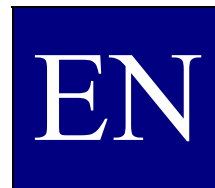




**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



16062/12

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PRESS RELEASE

3199th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 19 November 2012

President

Catherine Ashton

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and
Security Policy

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Main results of the Council

*The Council welcomed the formation of the National Coalition for **Syrian** Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and considered them legitimate representatives of the aspirations of the Syrian people. This agreement represents a major step towards the necessary unity of the Syrian opposition. At the same time, the Council reiterated its full support for the efforts of Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi in finding a political solution to the crisis.*

*The Council took stock of developments in the **Middle East Peace Process**. It expressed its grave concern about the situation in **Gaza** and Israel and deeply regretted the loss of civilian life on both sides. It called for an urgent de-escalation and cessation of hostilities.*

*In their six-monthly meeting within the Council, EU defence ministers discussed the state of play concerning the **Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)** and adopted conclusions on military capability development. The Council also established the 2013 budget for the European Defence Agency. As far as CSDP operations are concerned, the Council noted progress in the preparation of a military mission to support the reorganisation and training of the Malian armed forces.*

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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>).
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The governments of the member states and the European Commission were represented as follows:

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High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

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Mr Michel TILEMANS

Ambassador, Representative to the Political and Security Committee

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Mr Anyu ANGELOV

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Mr Alexandr VONDRA

Minister for Defence

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Mr Urmas REINSALU

Minister for Defence

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Mr Eamon GILMORE

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Mr Alan SHATTER

Minister for Justice and Equality, Defence

Greece:

Mr Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Panos PANAGIOTOPOULOS

Minister for Defence

Spain:

Mr Pedro MORÉNES EULATE

Minister for Defence

Mr Gonzalo DE BENITO SECADES

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

France:

Mr Laurent FABIUS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Jean-Yves LE DRIAN

Minister for Defence

Italy:

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Mr Giampaolo DI PAOLA

Minister for Defence

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Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Demetris ELIADES

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Mr Edgars RINKĒVIČS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Jānis SĀRTS

State Secretary, Ministry of Defence

Lithuania:

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Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Vytautas UMBRASAS

Deputy Minister for Defence

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Jean-Marie HALSDORF

Minister for Defence

Hungary:

Mr János MARTONYI
Mr Tamás VARGHA

Minister for Foreign Affairs
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Minister for Defence

Austria:

Mr Michael SPINDELEGGER

Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for European and
International Affairs
Minister for Defence

Mr Norbert DARABOS

Poland:

Mr Jerzy POMIANOWSKI
Mr Tomasz SIEMONIAK

Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Minister for Defence

Portugal:

Mr Paulo PORTAS
Mr José Pedro AGUIAR BRANCO

Ministro de Estado, Minister for Foreign Affairs
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Romania:

Mr George CIAMBA
Mr Sebastien HULUBAN

State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
State Secretary, Ministry of National Defence

Slovenia:

Mr Karl ERJAVEC
Mr Aleš HOJS

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs
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Slovakia:

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Mr Miloš KOTEREC

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Mr Erkki TUOMIOJA
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Mr Carl BILD
Ms Karin ENSTRÖM

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Defence

United Kingdom:

Mr William HAGUE

First Secretary of State, Secretary of State for Foreign and
Commonwealth Affairs
Minister for International Security Strategy

Mr Andrew MURRISON

Commission:

Mr Andris PIEBALGS
Mr Michel BARNIER
Mr Stefan FÜLE

Member
Member
Member

The Government of the Acceding State was represented as follows:

Croatia:

Mr Joško KLISOVIĆ
Ms Višnja TAFRA

Deputy Minister for Foreign and European Affairs
Deputy Minister for Defence

ITEMS DEBATED

SECURITY AND DEFENCE

European Defence Agency - Budget 2013

The Council set the 2013 budget for the European Defence Agency (EDA) at EUR 30.5 million. In so doing, it invited the EDA to examine with member states additional contributions through its specific programmes and projects.

Common Security Defence Policy Operations

The Council discussed the state of play concerning the EU's military CSDP operations and considered the way forward. These operations include Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EUNAVFOR Atalanta counter-piracy operation off the coast of Somalia, and the EU training mission for Somali forces.

Task Force Defence

The Council was briefed about the work of the Commission's taskforce on defence industry 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: internal market, industrial policy as well as research and innovation.

Discussions at the European Council in 2013

Over lunch, ministers held a policy debate in view of the substantial debate on defence matters that is set to take place at the European Council in December 2013.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Middle East Peace Process

The Council took stock of developments in the Middle East Peace Process. In addition, it discussed recent events in Gaza and adopted the following conclusions:

1. "The European Union expresses grave concern about the situation in Gaza and Israel and deeply regrets the loss of civilian life on both sides. All attacks must end immediately as they cause unjustifiable suffering of innocent civilians. It therefore calls for an urgent de-escalation and cessation of hostilities. It supports the efforts of Egypt and other actors to mediate for a rapid ceasefire and welcomes the mission of the United Nations Secretary General to the region.
2. The European Union strongly condemns the rocket attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip which Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza must cease immediately. There can be no justification for the deliberate targeting of innocent civilians. Israel has the right to protect its population from these kinds of attacks; in doing so it must act proportionately and ensure the protection of civilians at all times. The EU stresses the need for all sides to fully respect international humanitarian law.
3. An immediate cessation of hostilities is in everyone's interest, particularly at a time of instability in the region. The current situation underlines once more the urgent need to move towards a two-state solution allowing both sides to live side-by-side in peace and security. The European Union will continue working with all those with influence in the region to bring this about.
4. The European Union recalls its position on Gaza as stated in previous Council Conclusions, in particular those of 14 May 2012."

Mali

During a joint lunch, foreign and defence ministers discussed the situation in Mali and the draft crisis management concept for a possible CSDP operation to train the Malian army.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. "The European Union (EU) reiterates that the political and security crisis in Mali calls for a coherent and comprehensive approach in order to ensure a lasting solution whereby African ownership is paramount.
2. The EU welcomes the mobilisation of regional and international support for Mali, together with the planning efforts for an African operation within the framework of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions 2056 and 2071. In this context it reaffirms its commitment to supporting Mali and ECOWAS in response to their requests.
3. The EU reiterates its call to the Malian authorities to submit a credible and consensual roadmap as soon as possible for the restoration of constitutional and democratic order, including civilian control of the armed forces. It underlines that measures taken in the field of security must support the political objectives and complement the political process in Mali.
4. In this context, the EU recalls the need to organise free, transparent elections as soon as possible and recalls its readiness to provide support for this purpose, in the form of both funding and an EU election observation mission, as soon as the election dates have been announced.
5. In this regard, the EU will watch carefully to see that the authority of the Malian state is re-established throughout its territory in compliance with the rule of law and within the framework of a credible, lasting reconciliation process. It asks that a framework be set up as soon as possible for a national dialogue which is open to all Malians, including armed groups which are not involved in terrorist activities and acknowledge the integrity of Malian territory.
6. The EU welcomes the planning work conducted in the framework of ECOWAS and the African Union, which have led to the adoption of a strategic concept and a concept of operations. On this basis, the EU hopes that an African operation, whose planning will have been approved, can be authorised swiftly by the UNSC.

7. In this context, the EU stresses the importance of proper financial support for the African operation in Mali from the states and organisations in the region, as well as from the other key international partners. It reiterates its willingness to provide financial support, and in this connection the Council asks the Commission to provide for the mobilisation of the African Peace Facility.

In order to guarantee predictable and sustainable EU funding for African peace-keeping operations, including the mission in Mali, the Council asks the Commission to identify additional appropriations from the 10th EDF which could be mobilised.

8. The Council wishes to thank the High Representative for her presentation of the draft Crisis Management Concept for a CSDP military mission to support the reorganisation and training of the Malian armed forces. It welcomes the presentation of that document and calls on the relevant groups to examine it as a matter of urgency so that it may be approved by the Council in December. It also welcomes the announcement by the Member States concerning possible contributions to this mission.
9. The EU condemns all human rights violations. In particular it recalls the situation of children and women exposed to numerous human rights violations in the north of Mali and asks the Malian authorities to make a full investigation of all acts of violence perpetrated since the start of the crisis, in both the north and the south of Mali, in particular the incidents in Diabaly on 8 September and 24 October 2012.
10. The EU recalls the obligation to ensure that all humanitarian actors have free and unhindered access to the north of Mali.
11. The EU reiterates that it is desirous of gradually resuming cooperation once a credible roadmap has been adopted and depending on the latter's progress. It stresses its readiness to contribute to stabilisation and consolidation measures aimed at achieving a sustainable solution to the crisis. In this respect, the European development cooperation programme in Mali will be reviewed to take account of the needs of the Malian population.
12. Lastly, the EU supports the holding of regular meetings of the Support and Follow-Up Group on Mali, in order to ensure the ongoing coordination of Malian, regional and international efforts, in close cooperation with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations."

For more information, see [factsheet European Union and the Sahel](#).

Southern Neighbourhood

– *Syria*

The Council held an in-depth discussion on the latest events in Syria, in particular on the formation of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. It adopted the following conclusions:

1. "Recalling its previous Council conclusions, the EU is appalled by the deteriorating situation in Syria. The EU remains deeply concerned by the spill-over effects of the Syrian crisis in neighbouring countries in terms of security and stability. The EU remains committed to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria. The EU reiterates its full support to the efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the UN and the League of Arab States, Lakhdar Brahimi in finding a political solution to the crisis. The EU continues to call on all members of the UN Security Council to uphold their responsibilities.
2. The EU welcomes the agreement reached on 11 November in the meeting of the Syrian opposition groups gathered in Doha and in particular the formation of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. The EU considers them legitimate representatives of the aspirations of the Syrian people. This agreement represents a major step towards the necessary unity of the Syrian opposition. The EU looks forward to this new coalition continuing to work for full inclusiveness, subscribing to the principles of human rights and democracy and engaging with all opposition groups and all sections of Syrian civil society. The EU stands ready to support this new Coalition in these endeavours and its relations with the international community. The EU encourages the Coalition to engage with the UN/LAS Special Representative and to put forward its programme for a political transition with a view to creating a credible alternative to the current regime.
3. Bearing in mind the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the approaching winter, the EU is committed to further increase its humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of all affected population throughout Syria and refugees in neighbouring countries. The EU calls on all donors to do the same. The EU reiterates the necessity for all parties to abide by International Humanitarian Law and its demand for strict respect for the specific protection provided to medical personnel and facilities under International Humanitarian Law."

– *Egypt*

The Council briefly debated the follow-up to the taskforce meeting with Egypt that took place on 13/14 November in Cairo.

– *Libya*

The Council took stock of the situation in Libya following the appointment of the new government.

– *Lebanon*

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Lebanon:

1. "The EU strongly condemns the bomb attack on 19 October 2012 in Beirut, which killed Brigadier General Wissam al-Hassan, Head of Information Branch of the Interior Security Forces, and two other people, and injured many others. This act of violence, as well as other assassination attempts, must be fully investigated and the perpetrators must be brought to justice swiftly. Impunity and political violence cannot be tolerated in a democratic society.
2. The EU stresses the importance of preserving Lebanon's national unity and stability. The EU encourages all political forces to participate constructively in the dialogue efforts being led by President Michel Sleiman and to fully implement the Baabda Declaration agreed in the framework of the National Dialogue.
3. The EU condemns the repeated incursions by Syrian forces into the Lebanese territory and reaffirms its commitment to the unity, stability, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. The EU underlines the importance of Lebanon's efforts to avoid the spill-over of violence from neighbouring Syria. In this regard, it calls on all parties to fully implement the provisions of the Baabda Declaration on the necessity to disassociate from regional conflicts which can have negative repercussions for Lebanon.
4. The EU commends the Lebanese authorities and the Lebanese population for the support provided to the people fleeing violence in Syria. It reaffirms its readiness to step up its assistance, as the needs further increase.
5. The EU recalls the importance of strong, independent and democratic Lebanese public institutions. Their continued work is essential for preserving stability and unity in Lebanon, as stressed by the High Representative during her recent timely visit to Lebanon. The EU welcomes the efforts of the Lebanese security forces, including the Lebanese Armed Forces, to ensure security for all people living on Lebanese territory, with due respect for the rule of law and human rights. The EU recalls its commitment to support Lebanon's institutions and security forces in fulfilling this role.
6. The EU stresses the importance of Lebanon's continued commitment to the full implementation of all its international obligations, including UNSC resolutions 1559, 1680, 1701, 1757. Recalling all its previous Council conclusions, the EU reaffirms its full support for the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and calls on all parties to fully cooperate with it.

7. The EU encourages Lebanon to pursue its reform process, including in view of the 2013 parliamentary elections. In this context, the EU stresses the importance of its partnership with Lebanon in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy and looks forward to a reinforced cooperation with Lebanon as outlined in the new ENP Action Plan currently under adoption."

– *Yemen*

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Yemen:

1. "The European Union welcomes the progress achieved under the leadership of President Hadi during the first year of Yemen's transition. This process was set in motion on 23 November 2011, with the signature of the political Transition Agreement and Implementation Mechanism in accordance with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative. The EU reaffirms its full support for President Hadi and the Yemeni Government in their efforts to implement this agreement and manage a peaceful and orderly transition. It also reaffirms its strong commitment to the unity, sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Yemen. It stresses the need and urgency of progress in the political, economic, humanitarian and security sectors, in order to meet the high expectations of the Yemeni people by taking steps to improve respect for civil and political rights and their living conditions.
2. The EU emphasises the urgency of progress in initiating the National Dialogue Conference and underlines the importance of respecting the timelines as set out by the GCC initiative. It urges all Yemeni stakeholders to support and participate in this process in a constructive manner and without preconditions to ensure that it is fully-inclusive, balanced and transparent, adequately representing all strands of the Yemeni society and reflecting the important role of youth and women. The EU also encourages the Yemeni Government and all relevant parties to take measures aimed at improving the political climate ahead of the National Dialogue.
3. The EU welcomes the Yemeni Parliament's mandate to President Hadi to appoint a new Electoral Commission and encourages swift progress in order to take the necessary steps to hold a referendum on the Constitution in 2013 and orderly national elections in early 2014. The EU stands ready to provide electoral assistance as appropriate.
4. The EU strongly condemns all acts of terror. It is also seriously concerned by all actions aimed at undermining, obstructing or derailing the transition, thereby jeopardising further progress in institutional, social and economic reforms. It calls on all parties, in particular representatives of the former regime and the military, to work towards full realisation of Yemen's transition in accordance with the spirit of the Transition Agreement. The EU reiterates its readiness to explore all available options to ensure a successful transition, and recalls the United Nations Security Council resolutions 2014 and 2051.

5. The EU is deeply concerned with the constant deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen. Food insecurity and acute malnutrition remain major problems for a large part of the Yemeni population, notably children. In 2012, the EU has increased its efforts to address immediate humanitarian needs and remains fully committed to do so in the future, as needed and feasible.
6. The EU welcomes the successful results of the recent Donors' Conference and Friends of Yemen ministerial meeting, which reaffirmed international support to Yemen. It encourages the Government of Yemen to strengthen the capacity of its institutions and calls on all donors to provide the necessary assistance to do so, to ensure that these pledges be swiftly translated into concrete action to improve the situation of the people of Yemen."

Ukraine

The Council debated the situation in Ukraine following the parliamentary elections of 28 October and the perspectives for further progress towards the signing of the Association Agreement with Ukraine.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Council debated the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and adopted the following conclusions:

1. "The EU strongly condemns the resumption of hostilities by M23. It demands an immediate end to the military offensive in North Kivu. The EU expresses its grave concern about the urgent security and humanitarian crisis in the eastern DRC and the vast challenge it poses for the security and stability of the Great Lakes Region.
2. The EU reiterates its condemnation of the M23 rebel group and other armed groups in the area and demands the immediate cessation of violence, including sexual violence, human rights abuses and the recruitment of child soldiers. The EU strongly condemns the steps taken by the M23 to establish a parallel administration in the zones it controls.
3. Efforts to undermine the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the DRC cannot be tolerated. The EU takes note of the report of the UN Group of Experts to the Sanctions Committee 1533 and is deeply concerned at reports of continued external support to rebel groups in the eastern DRC. It calls on those concerned to cease all such support immediately and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the DRC. In coordination with other members of the International Community, the EU will consider appropriate follow-up steps to deliberations in the UN Security Council, as well as measures to encourage a constructive attitude of the regional actors.

4. It is also essential that the Government of the DRC promotes effective efforts to establish security, the rule of law and effective administration throughout the eastern DRC and takes measures to ensure the full protection of civilians. In that context, the EU calls upon the Government to speed up the vital process of comprehensive reform of the security sector which the EU supports through its two CSDP missions EUSEC and EUPOL.
5. The EU remains gravely concerned about the humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC where well over 650,000 people have been displaced since April 2012. The recent military offensive will increase the risks of an uncontrolled humanitarian crisis. The EU calls on all parties, including neighbouring countries, to fulfil their obligations in relation to access for humanitarian agencies responding to the needs of the affected civilian population.
6. All those responsible for violence against civilians, in particular women and children, including acts of sexual violence must be held accountable. The EU also encourages MONUSCO to play an active role in the crisis as per its mandate. Its role, in support of the Government of the DRC, is determinant as regards the protection of civilians and any effort to undermine MONUSCO's ability to implement its mandate is unacceptable.
7. The EU stresses that a military solution to the ongoing conflict is not sustainable. It welcomes efforts by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the African Union and the UN to find a lasting political solution to the current crisis in the eastern DRC. It calls on all stakeholders, including neighbouring countries, to exert all possible influence and take necessary steps to avoid further deterioration of the situation and to prevent the conflict extending to other factions and areas.
8. The EU supports the appointment of an AU special envoy and invites the UN Secretary-General to examine the possibility of appointing a special representative to facilitate regional dialogue to address both the immediate crisis and to find a sustainable political solution with the region addressing the root causes of the conflict. The EU will continue to support the ICGLR Extended Joint Verification Mechanism and encourages intensified cooperation on operational issues with MONUSCO.
9. With a view to promoting and supporting coordinated national, regional and international efforts, the Council invites the High Representative and Commission to bring forward proposals for a strategic EU approach to the multi-faceted security and development challenges facing the eastern DRC."

Cuba

The Council exchanged views on options for the future of EU-Cuba relations, following a request by the Foreign Affairs Council of 25 October 2010 to the High Representative to conduct discussions on that question.

MEETINGS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL**Association Council with Tunisia**

The ninth EU-Tunisia Association Council was held in the margins of the Council. For details, see press release [16435/12](#).

European Defence Agency Steering Board

The Steering Board of the European Defence Agency met in the margins of the Council.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY****Development of EU military capabilities**

The Council noted the Single Progress Report on the Development of the EU Military Capabilities from November 2011 to October 2012.

Report by the Head of the European Defence Agency to the Council

The Council noted the report by the Head of European Defence Agency on its efforts to improve the defence capabilities of participating member states.

Guidelines for the work of the European Defence Agency in 2013

The Council adopted guidelines for the European Defence Agency's work in 2013.

Military capability development

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the development of military capabilities:

1. "The Council reiterates its call to retain and further develop military capabilities for sustaining and enhancing CSDP. They underpin the EU's ability to act as a security provider, in the context of a wider comprehensive approach. The Council underlines the necessity to maximise the effectiveness of Europe's defence expenditure in times of financial austerity. To this end, the Council remains committed to enhance European cooperation including through the pooling and sharing of military capabilities. It also recalls the need for a strong and less fragmented European defence industry to sustain and enhance Europe's military capabilities and the EU's capacity for autonomous action. It stresses the wider impact of the defence sector in terms of contributing to innovation, technology, and growth, and the need for synergies with wider EU policies in these fields.
2. In this context, the Council looks forward to the European Council discussion in 2013 to provide strategic guidance on defence issues.

Review of shortfalls

3. The Council emphasises the need to focus military capability development on filling gaps and meeting new requirements of CSDP. It invites the EUMC to review in 2013 the military capability shortfalls and priorities, as input to the Capability Development Plan of the European Defence Agency (EDA) that aims at informing national decisions on defence investments for capability development.
4. The Council calls for more strategic and coherent reporting to the political level on military capability development, including on evolving needs and areas of progress or lack thereof, in order to facilitate the provision of ministerial guidance.

Pooling & Sharing

5. The Council supports the twin-track approach of developing collaborative projects while making European defence cooperation more systematic and sustainable in the long run.
6. In that regard, the Council welcomes the adoption by the EDA Steering Board of the voluntary "Code of Conduct on Pooling and Sharing" comprising concrete actions to mainstream cooperation in national decision-making processes, and encourages its effective implementation. Furthermore, the Council welcomes progress on other measures aimed at improving the conditions for cooperation, by pooling demand, addressing solutions for redundant or surplus equipment, and developing a European approach to the qualification and certification of military capabilities notably in airworthiness and ammunition.
7. The Council welcomes progress on the Pooling and Sharing projects supported by EDA, as well as the collaborative opportunities in the area of Education and Training identified by the EUMC. The Council recalls the need for an active participation of Member States to ensure the success of cooperation in Europe. The Council is encouraged by the significant steps taken during the course of 2012, notably in the areas of Air-to-Air Refuelling (signature of a Letter of Intent on the "Implementation a European Strategic Multi-Role Tanker Transport Initiative), Helicopter Training (signature of a Technical Arrangement about the Helicopter exercise programme), Counter Improvised Explosive Devices training, Medical Field Hospitals, Maritime Surveillance, Satellite Communications (Procurement Cell), and Diplomatic Clearance (signature of a Programme Arrangement concerning Diplomatic Clearances for participants' military transport aircraft in their respective national airspace or territory). In other areas – Pilot Training, European Naval Training, Smart Munitions and European Multimodal Transport hubs – the Council notes positive developments while calling on Member States to increase their commitment and support. Furthermore, the Council notes with interest the new Pooling and Sharing opportunities identified, including in the areas of Cyber Defence, Route Clearance Counter-Improvised Devices and NH90 helicopters.

8. Recognising the important contribution of bilateral/regional/multilateral cooperative initiatives to improving and sustaining European military capabilities, the Council calls for measures to contribute to improved coherence between these initiatives, with the support of EDA and the EUMC, in order to avoid major gaps or duplications.
9. The Council welcomes the continuation of productive staff-to-staff cooperation between the EU and NATO – notably on coordinating Smart Defence and Pooling and Sharing projects – in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and ensure coherence and mutual reinforcement.

Defence Industry and Market

10. The Council welcomes the preparatory work of the Commission Task Force on Defence Industry and Market and looks forward to it making an important contribution to the wider European effort to improve effectiveness and efficiency and enhance cooperation. It encourages the European Commission and the EDA to work closely with Member States towards a more competitive and transparent defence market in Europe and a stronger European defence industry, and to stimulate cooperation and synergies in dual use research and technology (including in areas such as Unmanned Aerial Systems, Cyber, Maritime Security, Space and Energy and Environment). The Council encourages more support to Small and Medium Enterprises, including in achieving cross-border market access, as well as to research institutes.
11. The Council calls for an intensification of efforts also to underwrite the technological base for future capabilities, to enhance Europe's security of supply and to maximise Research and Technology investments in Europe.

EU Battlegroups

12. The Council recalls that the EU Battlegroups provide the EU with a specific rapid reaction tool, enabling it to respond rapidly to emerging crises with military means. The Battlegroups contribute to increasing interoperability and political cohesion among Member States, and remain a vehicle for the transformation of the Member States' armed forces.
13. The Council reaffirms its commitment to the level of ambition of having at any time two EU Battlegroups on standby. It notes with satisfaction the new Battlegroup offers from Member States from 2016 onwards and calls for increased efforts to ensure that the envisaged gaps in the roster during the upcoming years will be avoided in the future.

14. In this context, the Council agrees that the EU Battlegroup Roster should be filled more systematically by planning contributions on the basis of regularly recurring, voluntary commitments. It calls for the development of the necessary modalities which would allow Member States willing and able to take the lead in forming a Battlegroup to identify their recurring commitments, allowing other Member States to join them on regional or partnership basis. This more systematic approach to filling the roster should take into account the provision of specialised capabilities in order to strengthen the process of generating Battlegroups, and with the aim to provide more scope for tailoring them to a specific operation, including through cooperation with or addition of civilian experts/capabilities, as appropriate.
15. The Council stresses the need to improve the usability of EU Battlegroups, in line with the Battlegroup Concept, for operations throughout the mission spectrum, including in support to an ongoing operation/mission or as a bridging operation, when so decided by the Council, without undermining normal force generation.
16. The Council underlines the need to continue efforts on improving the Battlegroups' cost effectiveness through pooling and sharing solutions, especially in logistics, and addressing the financial constraining factors related to EU Battlegroups.
17. The Council looks forward to a strategic discussion on the provision, usability, cost effectiveness and financial aspects of the EU Battlegroups during the next meeting of Defence Ministers in the Foreign Affairs Council."

European Defence Agency - Exchange of classified information

The Council approved a draft security arrangement between the European Space Agency Security Office and the European Defence Agency Security Office for the protection and safeguarding of classified information exchanged between the European Space Agency and the European Defence Agency (EDA). This is with a view to its conclusion by the EDA Steering Board.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EU support for arms export control in third countries

The Council allocated EUR 1.86 million from the EU budget to promote improved controls on arms exports by third countries and to support third countries' efforts to render conventional arms trade more responsible and transparent. Assistance will be provided through workshops and study visits as well as through a website with technical resources concerning arms export controls. States in south-eastern Europe, North African Mediterranean countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the EU's Eastern Partner countries can benefit.

Fight against illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons

The Council approved the thirteenth progress report on the implementation of the EU strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, covering activities during the first half of 2012.

Arms export control - annual report

The Council took note of the annual report on the control of military technology and equipment exports, in accordance with common position 2008/944/CFSP.

The report covers activities undertaken by the EU and its member states throughout 2011 and 2012. Concerning conventional arms exports, the report covers only 2011.

EU arms export control framework

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the review of Council common position 2008/944/CFSP:

"The Council reaffirms its determination to reinforce cooperation and to promote convergence among Member States in the field of exports of military technology and equipment within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy through the setting, upholding, and implementation of high common standards for the management of, and restraint in, transfers of military technology and equipment by all Member States. The Council renews its commitment to promote cooperation and convergence in Member States' policies to prevent arms exports that might be used for internal repression, international aggression, or contribute to regional instability. Such commitment becomes even more relevant in the wake of the recent developments, such as those in the Middle East and North African region.

To achieve these objectives, the Council adopted on 8 December 2008 Common Position 2008/944/CFSP defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment. In accordance with article 15 of the Common Position, the Council has conducted over the past months a review of this legal act three years after its adoption. Dialogue has also been maintained with relevant stakeholders, including the European Parliament, civil society, and defence industry representatives.

The Council has assessed both the provisions of the Common Position and its implementation by Member States with a view to determining its continued appropriateness to reinforce cooperation and to promote convergence in Member States' arms export policies in accordance with the principles and criteria enshrined in it. Based on the completion of this assessment, the Council concludes that the provisions of the Common Position, and the instruments it provides for, continue to properly serve the objectives set in 2008 and to provide a solid basis for the coordination of Member States' arms export policies.

The Council also recognizes that further progress is achievable in the implementation of the Common Position and in order to maximise convergence among Member States in the field of exports of conventional arms. To this end, the Council will continue to work in the months to come on ways to improve the implementation of the Common Position. It will focus its work on a number of areas, including the development of further guidance in the application and interpretation of the eight export criteria of the Common Position, the refinement of the information exchange mechanism on specific destinations, the improvement of the denial notification and consultation mechanism. The Council will also remain seized of progress with the Arms Trade Treaty negotiations at the United Nations, including the compatibility of a Treaty with the Common Position. The results of this second stage of the review process will be reflected, inter alia, in updates of the User's Guide accompanying the Common Position, and providing detailed guidance for its implementation.

The Council will adopt further conclusions upon completion of the review of the Common Position."

Chemical weapons convention

The Council approved the EU position for the third review conference of the convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and their destruction (CWC), scheduled to take place in April 2013.

The EU aims to strengthen the CWC, building on the progress achieved in destroying declared stockpiles of chemical weapons and the prevention of their re-emergence, through enhancing the convention's verification regime, improving national implementation as well as efforts towards achieving universality. The EU also aims to adapt the implementation of the convention in light of the changing security environment and developments in science and technology.

Republic of Moldova - action plan on visa liberalisation

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council reaffirms the EU's commitment to the shared objective of visa-free travel for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova in due course provided that the conditions for well-managed and secure mobility as set out in the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation are in place. In this context, the Council, recalling that such an Action Plan was presented to the authorities of the Republic of Moldova in January 2011 and that two reports on its implementation were presented by the Commission services in September 2011 and in February 2012, welcomes the Commission's third report of 22 June 2012 on the implementation by the Republic of Moldova of the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation. The Council also welcomes the Commission's report on possible migratory and security impacts on the European Union of future visa liberalisation for the Republic of Moldova, and underlines its importance as well as the need to address the identified potential impacts and measures in the process of implementing the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation, including as regards the integration of minorities, the tackling of illegal migration and the fight against trafficking in human beings.

Building on these reports, the Council shares the analysis that the Republic of Moldova has fulfilled all the benchmarks under the first phase of the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation, and decides to launch the assessment of the benchmarks set out under the second phase. In this connection, the Council stresses the need for full and effective implementation of all the benchmarks under the second phase.

The Council invites the Commission to continue supporting the Republic of Moldova in implementing the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation, as well as to continue reporting about the implementation thereof, including on the follow-up to the Commission's report on possible migratory and security impacts, with a view to deciding on the fulfilment of all the benchmarks of the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation."

Human Rights Dialogue with South Africa

The Council adopted conclusions establishing a human rights dialogue between the EU and South Africa. The dialogue will be held on an annual basis and will cover relevant human rights, democracy and rule of law issues. See the [full text of the conclusions](#).

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**European development fund: financial contributions to be paid by the member states**

The Council set the ceiling for member states' contributions for 2014, the annual amount of the contribution for 2013 and the amount of the first instalment of the contribution for 2013 to the European development fund ([15526/12](#)).

Joint Caribbean-EU partnership strategy

The Council adopted conclusions endorsing the joint Caribbean-EU partnership strategy. This strategy was elaborated jointly by the EU and CARIFORUM countries in order to intensify their cooperation in a number of core areas of mutual interest, namely regional integration, reconstruction of Haiti, climate change and natural disasters, crime and security and joint action in multilateral fora. For more information, see [16455/12](#).
