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3346th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 17 and 18 November 2014

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

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

Ukraine was the main focus of the Foreign Affairs Council. The Council once more urged all parties to fully implement the Minsk documents. It called in particular for respect of the cease-fire, the withdrawal of all illegal forces and military equipment, as well as for securing the Ukrainian-Russian border.

The Ukrainian elections on 26 October were an important step in Ukraine's aspirations to consolidate its democratic development, the Council said. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini added: "We also made it clear that we ask the new government to commit to reforms internally as this is crucial to guarantee that EU support and assistance is there. I will pay a visit to Kiev as soon as the new government is formed."

Having assessed the situation on the ground, the Council called on the European External Action Service and the Commission to present a proposal on additional listings targeting separatists. A decision is due by the end of this month.

The Council also set 1 December as the launch date of the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine). The mission will advise on reforms in the civilian security sector in Ukraine and mentor the implementation of reforms. The High Representative and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin also signed the status of mission agreement for EUAM Ukraine.

EU defence ministers held their six-monthly meeting within the Council. They discussed the **security situation in the EU's broader neighbourhood** with NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg. In conclusions, the Council stressed that ongoing conflicts and instability in the neighbourhood remain a cause for great concern. It reiterated the urgent need to enable the EU and its member states to assume increased responsibilities as a security provider, internationally and in the EU's neighbourhood.

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Member
Member

ITEMS DEBATED

Ukraine

The Council held an in-depth discussion on the situation in Ukraine, including on prospects for a peace process, reforms following the recent elections and the EU's response to current events.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Recalling the Conclusions of the European Council of 24 October 2014 and of the FAC of 20 October 2014, the Council reiterates the EU's support for the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum, as a step towards a sustainable political solution of the crisis, which needs to be based on the respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Alarmed by the recent heavy shelling and by reports about convoys moving in the separatist held areas with substantial amounts of heavy weapons, tanks and troops without insignia from across the Russian border , it urges all parties to fully implement the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum swiftly and without further delay. It once again underlines the Russian Federation's responsibility in this context. The Council calls in particular for a halt to the continuous violations of the ceasefire, a withdrawal of all illegal and foreign forces, mercenaries and military equipment, as well as for securing the Ukrainian-Russian border with permanent monitoring by the OSCE.
2. The Council welcomes the holding of national parliamentary elections in Ukraine on 26 October, which marked an important step in Ukraine's aspirations to consolidate its democratic development in line with its international commitments. The Council looks forward to the urgent formation of a new Government. On the basis of the outcome of the elections a broad national consensus should be sought in view of intensifying much needed political and economic reforms in Ukraine, including constitutional reform, decentralisation, reform of the judiciary, law enforcement, fight against corruption and ensuring the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. A renewed inclusive, country-wide national dialogue on reforms will be important to consolidate Ukraine's unity and internal cohesion.
3. The European Union considers the holding of "presidential and parliamentary elections" in Donetsk and Luhansk "People's Republics" on 2 November as illegal and illegitimate and will not recognise them. These so-called "elections" are in breach of the letter and the spirit of the Minsk Protocol. It calls on Russia to assume its responsibility in this regard. All sides should work towards early local elections in these parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian law, as foreseen in the Minsk Protocol, as the only legal and legitimate means of renewing the democratic mandate of the local authorities.
4. Having assessed the situation on the ground, the Council calls on the EEAS and the Commission to present a proposal for decision by the end of this month on additional listings targeting separatists. The Council will continue to closely follow the situation on the ground and will act accordingly.

5. To ensure implementation of commitments undertaken by parties under the Minsk agreements, the Council underlines the need for intensification of talks in the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group, with the support of the representative of the OSCE Chairmanship in Office, and calls on all concerned participants to engage actively and constructively. The Council reiterates the important role of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in implementing the Minsk Protocol and the Minsk Memorandum and the need to provide the Mission with the resources needed to comply with the tasks. It reminds all parties concerned of their responsibility for a safe environment for the OSCE monitors and equipment, including Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. The EU and Member States stand ready to provide increased financial and in kind support to the OSCE SMM. The Council also reiterates its support for swift expansion and extension of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints. Full and effective control by Ukraine of its borders is essential and the Council calls on Russia to respect it .
6. The Council welcomes the recent OSCE-brokered access to the MH17 crash site which enabled the repatriation of victims' remains and personal belongings as well as the recovery of wreckage. The Council reiterates its call on all States and actors involved to ensure full, safe and unrestricted access to the site, to enable the completion of the repatriation, recovery and investigation work, and to provide full co-operation with the ongoing independent international investigations into the cause of the crash and the identity of those responsible. It is essential to safeguard the integrity of these international investigations. The Council underlines that those directly and indirectly responsible for the downing of MH17 will be held accountable and brought to justice.
7. The Council is following with great concern the humanitarian impact of the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the rising number of affected persons. The EU calls on all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and principles to protect civilian population and infrastructure from fighting and to facilitate the work of international humanitarian organisations. The humanitarian impact of the conflict on the civilian population should not be exploited for military or political ends. Assistance should be delivered through the appropriate channels in agreement with the Ukrainian authorities. The Council underlines the necessity to continue to mobilise EU and international assistance, including for short term humanitarian and recovery needs. It welcomes the Commission's and EEAS' role in facilitating and enhancing the coordination of EU's assistance. The Council welcomes the adoption of the law on Internally Displaced Persons by the Verkhovna Rada and expects the law to be signed and implemented as a matter of priority. The Council encourages the Ukrainian authorities to take decisive actions to adapt the legal and administrative framework with a view to easing the delivery of international assistance.

8. Welcoming the efforts by international missions to monitor the human rights situation, the Council reaffirms its great concern about the very worrying developments in eastern Ukraine and on the Crimean peninsula, particularly the continuing persecution and intimidation of the Crimean Tatar community. The Council reiterates its call on all parties to provide international human rights actors with full, free and unrestricted access to the whole territory of Ukraine, including Crimea and Sevastopol the illegal annexation of which the EU condemns and will not recognise. The Council reiterates its commitment to fully implement its policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, including through further action within the context of this policy.
9. The Council welcomes the launch of the provisional application of important parts of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement as of 1 November 2014 and recalls that a reinvigorated reform process, including the adequate preparation for the future implementation of Title IV of the Agreement, will be crucial in view of Ukraine's political association and economic integration with the EU. The Council calls on the Government of Ukraine to accelerate the implementation of reforms and reiterates that the EU stands ready, in coordination with other donors and international financial institutions, to support implementation of the comprehensive reform package as well as rebuilding of Ukraine's economy.
10. Underlining the importance of unhindered commercial contract-based energy supplies from Russia to Europe, the Council welcomes the agreement reached on 30 October on a winter package for the delivery of gas from Russia to Ukraine until the end of March 2015, following several months of negotiations in trilateral format. The implementation of this agreement should increase the security of gas supply for Ukraine and its citizens as well as ensuring stable, sufficient and uninterrupted transit of gas to Europe this winter. In this context interconnections and gas reverse flows provided from Member States have considerably contributed to the energy security of Ukraine. Ukraine will still need to fully implement an energy sector reform, including energy efficiency and other measures identified to reduce energy demand in the short term. The Council also reiterates its encouragement to the Government of Ukraine to further advance on the restructuring of the natural gas sector.
11. The Council welcomes the signature of the Agreement on the status of the European Union Advisory Mission as a sign of continued willingness of the Ukrainian Government to urgently and effectively address Civilian Security Sector Reform. Close collaboration with the respective Ukrainian authorities will be essential for taking full advantage of the EU support to Ukraine in implementing critical reforms. The Council reiterates the importance of coordination and coherence between all EU efforts, with the OSCE, and with other international actors."

Middle East Peace Process

Over lunch, ministers exchanged views on latest developments in the Middle East peace process, following the visit of the High Representative to the region.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU is gravely concerned at the growing tension and increasing violence on the ground. It condemns all recent terrorist attacks and expresses its condolences for the loss of life. It urges all parties to refrain from any action that would worsen the situation by way of incitement, provocation, excessive use of force or retaliation. The EU calls on political leaders from all sides to work together through visible actions to de-escalate the situation. In this regard, the EU is particularly concerned at worrying developments and recurrent violent clashes at the Haram al- Sharif / Temple Mount. The EU appeals for full respect of the Holy Sites. Any change of the status quo would have deeply destabilizing effects. The EU fully acknowledges the role of Jordan as Custodian to the Muslim Holy Shrines in Jerusalem and welcomes the tripartite meeting in Amman on 13 November between King Abdullah, Secretary of State John Kerry and Prime Minister Netanyahu where concrete steps towards a calming down of the situation were agreed upon. The EU looks forward to a swift and effective implementation of such measures.
2. Actions which call into question stated commitments to a negotiated solution must be avoided. The EU deeply deplores and strongly opposes the recent expropriation of land near Bethlehem, recent announcements of plans for new settlement construction, in particular in Givat Hamatos, Ramat Shlomo, Har Homa and Ramot, as well as plans to displace Bedouins in the West Bank and the continued demolitions, including of EU and Member States funded projects. It urges Israel to reverse these decisions which run counter to international law and directly threaten the two state solution. Recent settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both states. Recalling that settlements are illegal under international law, the EU and its Member States remain committed to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products. The EU closely monitors the situation and its broader implications and remains ready to take further action in order to protect the viability of the two state solution.
3. The EU underlines its concern at the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, which still remains to be adequately addressed, by urgently restoring basic infrastructures and services. It welcomes the international community pledges towards the reconstruction of Gaza. In light of the urgent needs of the people in Gaza, all these pledges should be swiftly honoured. The EU urges the parties to fully implement the temporary mechanism for monitoring and verification of reconstruction materials negotiated by the United Nations, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, as an important step towards the necessary urgent opening of all crossing points. Whilst taking positive note of the recent one-off transfers of agricultural products and fish from Gaza to the West Bank, the EU stressed the importance of a change of the Israeli policy allowing Gaza to trade normally and on a permanent basis.

4. The EU calls for a fundamental change of the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure. The parties should urgently make progress towards a durable ceasefire, based on their agreement in Cairo on 26 August, to reach an agreement that ends the Gaza closure and addresses Israel's legitimate security concerns. A return to the status quo prior to the latest conflict is not an option. The EU stands ready to play a key role in international efforts to support a durable ceasefire, including through the rapid reactivation and possible extension in scope and mandate of its EUBAM Rafah and EUPOL COPPS missions. The EU urges all the relevant parties to create the conditions to allow it to play such a role.
5. The EU supports the efforts of the Palestinian national consensus government and President Abbas and strongly encourages the Palestinian Authority to progressively assume its government function in the Gaza Strip, including in the field of security, civil administration and through its presence at the Gaza crossing points. The EU welcomes the convening of the first cabinet meeting in Gaza as a positive step and urges all Palestinian factions to end internal divisions. The EU is concerned by the recent bomb attacks against leading Fatah figures in Gaza.
6. The unsustainable situation in Gaza, the recent increase of violence in Jerusalem, and the deteriorating regional context underline the need for a comprehensive peace, ending all claims and fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of both parties, including those of Israelis for security and those of Palestinians for statehood. The EU welcomes Secretary of State Kerry's renewed efforts to help the parties return to the table and calls on the parties and on all major stakeholders, including the Quartet, the League of Arab States and the UNSC, to take the necessary steps to that end. In this regard, the EU reaffirms its strategic interest to see an end to the conflict and is willing to play a major role and actively contribute to a negotiated solution of all final status issues; it recalls parameters agreed in July 2014 Council conclusions. The EU welcomes the early visit to the region of the High Representative/Vice President of the Commission Federica Mogherini, underlining her engagement and that of the EU on this priority issue.

The EU recalls that the future development of the relations with both the Israeli and Palestinian partners will also depend on their engagement towards a lasting peace based on a two state solution."

Ebola

The Council was briefed by EU Ebola coordinator Christos Stylianides on his priorities and on the findings of his mission together with Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis to the affected countries in West Africa.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union (EU) remains deeply concerned about the spread of the Ebola virus that is continuing to take lives in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, and having profound effects across the West Africa region and beyond. It also expresses its concern about the new confirmed cases in Mali. It acknowledges the unprecedented comprehensive national, regional and international effort aimed at fighting the disease and reaffirms its strong commitment to step up even further its response in containing, combatting and eventually controlling the epidemic.
2. The EU recognises the heroic efforts of both national and international health responders, pays tribute to those who have sacrificed their lives in the effort to stem the disease and underlines the importance of avoiding stigmatisation of returning health personnel. The Council stresses that health responders have to be supported at all levels, by public institutions, societies and private entities, to make sure they can operate effectively in the affected countries and upon their return.
3. The Council continues to recognise that a united, coordinated and increased effort is needed in order to contain the outbreak and provide the necessary and appropriate assistance to the countries affected and the neighbouring countries.
4. The European Union fully supports the Governments of the countries concerned, as well as the overall co-ordinating role of the United Nations (UN) with regard to international assistance in response to the Ebola crisis, including the role of France, the United Kingdom and the United States for the three countries most affected. It also welcomes the growing mobilisation of African countries and organisations. The EU welcomes the endorsement by Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) Regional Integrated Operational Plan for Response to the Ebola Virus Disease during the Extraordinary Summit held in Accra on 6 November. The EU looks forward to its early implementation and stands ready to support an enhanced role of the region in the fight against the epidemic by reinforcing its coordination with ECOWAS and its member states, under the wider UN led effort. It also welcomes the renewed efforts by the African Union to deal with the crisis. In this respect, the EU welcomes the G20 Brisbane Statement on Ebola.

5. The Council recalls its conclusions and the European Council conclusions of August and October 2014, and in light of the continued deterioration of the Ebola epidemic, the October European Council appointed Commissioner Stylianides as EU Ebola Coordinator, pledged to provide 1 billion euro for short and medium term efforts, and to increase the number of international health responders assisting the countries of the region in tackling the virus. In this respect, the Council takes note of progress achieved in response to these commitments and the implementation of the Comprehensive Response Framework.
6. The Council welcomes in particular the rapid increase in the total pledges for funding from the European Union and its Member States and the swift attainment of the 1 billion euro target set by the European Council, now collectively placing the European Union as the prime donor amongst the international community. The Council welcomes the offers of key capabilities and in-kind donations, including the ongoing joint effort of the EU and Member States to secure delivery of support by maritime means. It recalls the need to continue providing such support to the Ebola response, including strategic airlift capacities, and encourages Member States to use existing mechanisms in this regard.
7. The Council applauds the increasing number of European health workers arriving in the field. It reaffirms the importance of additional and rapid deployment of appropriately qualified, trained and experienced medical and support staff to the region. It also underlines the need for coordinating approaches regarding the mobilisation of volunteers on the basis of best practices. It invites Member States, in direct cooperation with the EU Ebola Coordinator, and with the support of services concerned, to take all appropriate steps in securing the rapid deployment of such staff on a voluntary basis and to use the Emergency Response Coordination Centre as the clearing house.
8. The Council invites the Commission, together with Member States, to further explore the establishment of a reserve pool of health experts from Member States on a voluntary basis for rapid and targeted deployment taking into account the experience of the current crisis and taking note of efforts by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Detailed work should start once the acute phase of the crisis has been overcome.
9. Recalling its conclusions from October, the Council stresses the need to fully implement the guarantee of appropriate care for international health responders, within available resources in order to ensure their treatment on the most appropriate basis. It recalls the importance of further enhancing the existing capabilities for medical evacuation of international health responders at the European Union and, on a case by case basis, at the Member States' level. The Council welcomes the first commitments announced by Member States in this regard.

10. The Council further welcomes the reinforcement of preparedness in the EU, and the improvement of internal EU coordination in the formulation of medical evacuation related procedures. It also welcomes the additional support being provided by the Commission and Member States to develop new vaccines and treatments, including the 280 million euro investment announced on 6 November for a joint EU-pharmaceutical industry initiative to boost research into Ebola and protocols for hospital infection control.
11. The Council agrees to strengthen coordination and information sharing on regional preparedness gaps via existing platforms to prioritise key risks, in close coordination with WHO and other international actors.
12. The Council takes note of the work undertaken by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission in identifying and filling gaps in our response and in assessing the wider political, security and economic implications of Ebola. In this respect, it underlines the importance of urgent support in rebuilding the health systems of these countries.
13. Furthermore, the Council stresses the importance to address longer term issues regarding resilience, poverty reduction, social impact, capacity in the education sector, the broader peace building agenda, as well as the need to implement the International Health Regulations (IHR).
14. The Council welcomes the determination shown by the EU Ebola Coordinator, to strengthen the European Union's collective response and coordination and facilitate the close cooperation with the United Nations, regional organisations and other key partners. It takes note of his priorities, as presented to the Council, and the findings and recommendations of the situation on the ground following the mission of the EU Ebola Coordinator Stylianides and of the Health Commissioner Andriukaitis to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, from 12 to 16 November, notably the urgent need to deploy additional medical and epidemiological personnel, to adapt the response flexibly to the changing dynamic of the epidemic in some parts of the region, and to ensure efficient operational coordination among key actors at country level. It also takes note of the Coordinator's willingness to take forward preparatory work for a high-level international meeting, involving the UN, prepared together by the concerned Commission and EEAS services as well as Member States.
15. The Council invites the EU Ebola Coordinator to report back and to present further recommendations at its next meeting, in preparation for the discussion at the December European Council."

Western Balkans / Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Council took stock of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) after the elections on 12 October. Ministers discussed ways and means to encourage reforms in BiH and the European perspective for the country, including on the basis of member state initiatives.

After the debate, the High Representative said that there might be a chance to open a process on a new basis without touching the conditionality of the enlargement process. She added that there was an agreement to proceed in this direction in the coming days.

Libya

Ministers touched upon the latest developments in Libya.

The EU fully backs the efforts of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Bernardino León. It remains committed to assisting the Libyan people in finding political ways to resolve the crisis and to ensure unity, governability and institution building for a future of peace and stability for all Libyans.

European Defence Agency - budget 2015

The Council agreed on setting the 2015 budget of the European Defence Agency at €30.5 million. Formal adoption of the EDA budget will follow.

EU military operations

The Council took stock of the state of play concerning EU military operations, in the presence of NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

Security situation in the EU's broader neighbourhood

Defence ministers debated the security situation in the EU's broader neighbourhood with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. The exchange covered the crises in Ukraine and in Iraq and Syria.

Outlook for the Common Security and Defence Policy

Over lunch, defence ministers discussed the outlook for the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), in preparation for the June 2015 European Council.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Europe's security environment is evolving significantly, rapidly and dramatically. Ongoing conflicts and instability in our immediate and wider neighbourhood, such as in Iraq, Libya, the Sahel, Syria and Ukraine, remain a particular cause for great concern. Together with long standing and newly emerging security challenges, these developments may have longer term effects on European security and international peace and stability. They demonstrate also the close links between internal and external security dimensions.

Therefore, in line with the December 2013 European Council Conclusions, the Council reiterates the invitation to the High Representative, in close cooperation with the Commission, to assess the impact of changes in the global environment, and to report to the Council in the course of 2015 on the challenges and opportunities arising for the Union, following consultations with the Member States.

2. The Council furthermore reiterates the urgent need of enabling the EU and its Member States to assume increased responsibilities to act as a security provider, at the international level and in particular in the neighbourhood, thereby also enhancing their own security and their global strategic role by responding to these challenges together. The EU and its Member States, through the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and other policies and instruments, have a strong role to play through its unique comprehensive approach to preventing and managing conflicts and their causes. Moreover, the Council stresses that protecting and promoting European interests and values will increasingly require the EU and its Member States combining their efforts, underpinned by the necessary means and sufficient budgetary resources.

The Council reaffirms its commitment to strengthen CSDP, in line with the Conclusions from the European Council of December 2013 and its own Conclusions of November 2013.

3. The Council emphasises the importance of working with its partners, in particular the UN, NATO, OSCE, and African Union, as well as strategic partners and other partner countries, within its neighbourhood and more globally, with due respect to the institutional framework and decision-making autonomy of the EU. It notes that priority should be given to cooperation with partners who share with the EU common values and principles and are able and willing to support EU crisis management efforts.

The Council welcomes relevant outcomes of NATO's Wales Summit in September 2014. It also reaffirms its support to the further implementation of the EU plan of Action for CSDP support to UN peacekeeping and of the Declaration of the EU-Africa Summit of 2014.

4. In line with the European Council Conclusions of December 2013 on security and defence, the Council reiterates the need to enhance the effectiveness of CSDP and the development and maintenance of Member States' capabilities, supported by a more integrated, sustainable, innovative and competitive European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB), which also contributes to jobs, growth and innovation across the EU and can enhance Europe's strategic autonomy, strengthening its ability to act with partners. This requires systematic cooperation and coordination within the EU and among its Member States, underlining the importance of addressing the need to sustain sufficient expenditures related to security and defence, and coherent and effective use of EU instruments and policies.
5. Emphasising the contribution of the CSDP missions and operations to international peace and stability, the Council welcomes the deployment, in 2014, of the CSDP military bridging operation in the Central African Republic (EUFOR RCA), the civilian CSDP mission in Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine), which today the Council has decided to launch, and the progress made towards launching a civilian mission in Mali (EUCAP SAHEL Mali). The Council welcomes as well the ongoing action by the other nine civilian CSDP missions and four military CSDP operations across three continents.¹ The Council notes with satisfaction that throughout these missions and operations particular attention was given to supporting human rights, as well as to implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325, thus promoting core values of the EU.

The Council recognises the need for common approaches with the UN in the Central African Republic in the reform of the security forces, including the armed forces, in order to stabilise the situation in support of the political process. In this regard, it acknowledges the added value of a potential further EU role in the reform of the security sector, in support of UN efforts, while ensuring local buy-in, and calls in this context for the development of a crisis management concept.

6. Today, the Council:
 - agreed on next steps regarding the initiative to support capacity building of partner countries and regional organisations in order to enable them to increasingly prevent and manage crises by themselves, inviting the High Representative and the Commission to present, in view of the European Council in June 2015, a joint proposal for a policy approach for concrete implementation. This policy should take into account the role and competence of Member States and propose suitable coordination and funding mechanisms, on the basis of shared needs assessments and risk analyses. Stressing the flexible geographical scope of the initiative, it notes that the development of this policy should draw on the identified pilot cases on Mali and Somalia, which should be developed by early 2015, as well as the follow up on the Conclusions of the European Council of March 2014 regarding the need to strengthen the African Peace and Security Architecture;

¹ EUBAM Libya; EUBAM Rafah; EUCAP Nestor; EUCAP SAHEL Niger; EUFOR Althea; EULEX Kosovo; EUMM Georgia; EUNAVFOR Atalanta; EUPOL Afghanistan; EUPOL COPPS; EUSEC RD Congo; EUTM Somalia and EUTM Mali.

- adopted the EU Cyber Defence Policy Framework, which focuses on: supporting the development of Member States cyber defence capabilities related to CSDP; enhancing the protection of CSDP communication networks used by EU entities; promoting civil-military cooperation and synergies with wider EU cyber policies, relevant EU institutions and agencies as well as with the private sector; improving training, education and exercises opportunities; and enhancing cooperation with relevant international partners;
 - adopted a Policy Framework for Systematic and Long-Term Defence Cooperation. In view of deepening cooperation in Europe, this Policy Framework will guide the cooperative approaches of Member States, through their national decision making processes, when developing defence capabilities. In line with the European Council Conclusions, it has been put forward in full coherence with existing NATO planning processes;
 - agreed the Progress Catalogue 2014, which provides an assessment of the critical military shortfalls resulting from the Headline Goal process and their impact on CSDP; these shortfalls are integrated into the revised Capability Development Plan agreed by the Steering Board of the European Defence Agency, which should support and orientate national capability planning, identify the capabilities required and seize collaborative opportunities.
7. Furthermore, the Council welcomes further progress made in implementing the Conclusions of the European Council, as reported in the High Representative report of July and the Commission roadmap of June, and encourages further work on all outstanding issues in view of the preparation of the European Council in June 2015. In this context, the Council highlights in particular:
- the implementation of EU's Comprehensive Approach, as set out in the Council conclusions of May 2014, including through the development of an Action Plan before the end of the first quarter of 2015;
 - the adoption of the cross sectorial EU Maritime Security Strategy by the Council in June 2014 and its ongoing translation into concrete actions, mainstreaming maritime security into EU policies and strategies, and, inter alia, promoting enhanced common situational awareness and better sharing of information for the EU and its Member States, through an Action Plan to be agreed by the end of 2014;
 - the ongoing work on training, rapid response, interoperability and the security and protection of deployed personnel;
 - the development of CSDP concrete support to border management in the Sahel-Saharan region as part of the Action Plan implementing the EU Sahel Strategy;

- strengthening the links between external and internal security, notably through a more structured approach to cooperation between the CSDP missions and operations and Freedom/Security/Justice actors, notably the EU Agencies (EUROPOL, FRONTEX and CEPOL) and with INTERPOL as well as strengthening links with the European Gendarmerie Force. This will, inter alia, help to address important horizontal issues such as illegal migration, organised crime, terrorism, foreign fighters and cyber security;
 - the importance of revisiting the priority areas identified at Feira European Council and fully implementing the Civilian Capability Development Plan and further developing tools to help address identified gaps, including by finalising the Goalkeeper project and establishing a list of generic civilian CSDP tasks;
 - the ongoing deliberations looking into the full potential of the use of Article 44 TEU;
 - the added value provided by the activated EU Operations Centre, in line with its mandate as revisited, as well as the renewed mandates of the EU Satellite Centre and the European Security and Defence College;
 - the need to urgently take work forward on establishing a Shared Services Centre, in order to realise greater efficiencies and rationalise the provision of mission support functions to civilian CSDP missions and improve their early deployment and effective conduct.
8. The Council welcomes the results achieved by the European Defence Agency (EDA) in 2014, in particular its contribution to fulfilling the taskings from Council in November and the European Council in December 2013.
9. The Council welcomes the progress achieved by Member States with the support of EDA in Pooling & Sharing projects and programmes, notably in the four key projects endorsed by the European Council in December 2013: Air-to-Air Refuelling, Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, Governmental Satellite Communications, and Cyber Defence. The Council encourages the Agency to continue to identify opportunities for cooperation on defence capabilities on the basis of the recently revised Capability Development Plan; and to support cooperative projects through enablers and incentives. In this context, it notes the progressing work on non-market distorting fiscal measures and pooled procurement, in close coordination with Member States, ahead of the June 2015 European Council. The Council encourages synergies where possible with EU policies and instruments in support of programmes and incentives.

10. The Council encourages the Agency to continue supporting the engagement of Member States with the Commission on relevant issues. The Council welcomes the Commission's work on the Preparatory Action on CSDP-related research, bringing together Member States, EDA and EEAS, which could lead to a wider research programme in support of CSDP, and calls for further progress. The Council welcomes the Agency's role in supporting participating Member States in addressing the possible implications for defence of other EU policies, including potentially acting as the military interface for the implementation of the Single European Sky (SES) and the Single European Sky Air Traffic Management Research (SESAR) for the military domain, and the European Space Policy. The Council reiterates the need to maximise dual-use synergies in Research & Technology, in line with the December 2013 European Council conclusions.
11. Underlining the importance of the EDTIB, the Council welcomes the EDA's and Commission's actions to: (i) improve security of supply, notably through the development by the Commission, working with the Member States and in cooperation with the High Representative and the EDA, of a roadmap for a comprehensive EU-wide security of supply regime; (ii) support Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in the security and defence sector including access to EU funding programmes and cross border markets, including through the establishment of an advisory group; and (iii) improve cost-effectiveness and efficiency in the European security and defence market; and (iv) support the European technological and industrial base, including to enhance its competitiveness in the global market. The Council recalls that these efforts should be inclusive with opportunities for defence industry in the EU, balanced and in full compliance with EU law.
12. The Council underlines that its conclusions concerning the enhancement of military capability development and strengthening defence industry addressed to the EDA constitute the Council guidelines for EDA for its work in 2015, within the context of the Council decision defining the statute, seat and operating rules of EDA (Council Decision 2011/411/CFSP of 12 July 2011).

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13. In May 2015, the Council will adopt conclusions on CSDP in view of enabling the European Council to take stock of progress and provide further guidance in June 2015. To this end, it invites the Commission, the High Representative and the EDA to report on progress and provide their detailed input by April 2015."

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Georgia - Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation for Georgia:

- "1. The Council reaffirms the EU's commitment to the shared objective of visa-free travel for the citizens of Georgia provided that all the conditions for well-managed and secure mobility as set out in the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation are in place.
2. In this context, it welcomes the Commission's second progress report of 29 October 2014 on the implementation of the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation by Georgia. The Council also welcomes the Commission's assessment on possible migratory and security impacts on the European Union of future visa liberalisation for Georgia, and underlines its importance in the process of implementing the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation.
3. The Council shares the analysis that Georgia 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 under the second phase. In this regard the Council stresses the need for full and effective implementation of all benchmarks under the second phase and will pay particular attention to it.
4. The Council invites the Commission to continue supporting Georgia in implementing the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation, as well as to continue reporting about the implementation thereof, including updating the possible migratory and security impact, with a view to deciding on the fulfilment of all the benchmarks of the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation."

EU-Georgia Association Council

The Council approved the EU position for the first meeting of the EU-Georgia Association Council following the signature of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and the start of its provisional application.

Relations with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova

The Council adopted the EU's position within the Association Councils with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. This position concerns the adoption of the Rules of Procedure of the Association Councils, of the Association Committees and of Sub-Committees, the establishment of two Sub-Committees and the delegation of certain powers by the Association Councils to the Association Committees in the trade configuration.

Ukraine - restrictive measures

The Council updated information concerning a person targeted by EU restrictive measures in connection with action against Ukraine's territorial integrity.

EU - Kyrgyz Republic Cooperation Council

The Council adopted the EU position for the thirteenth meeting of the EU - Kyrgyz Republic Cooperation Council on 18 November.

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

EU advisory mission Ukraine

The Council decided to launch the EU advisory mission for civilian security sector reform Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) on 1 December 2014. At the same time, it allocated a budget of € 13.1m for the first 12 months of the mission's two-year mandate. For more details, see [press release](#).

EU military capabilities

The Council noted the single progress report on the development of EU military capabilities in the period from November 2013 to October 2014.

Report by the Head of the European Defence Agency

The Council noted the report by the Head of the European Defence Agency to the Council. The agency reports on its activities in the areas of developing defence capabilities, stimulating related research, strengthening the European industrial base for defence, as well as partnerships.

EU Defence Cyber Policy Framework

The Council adopted an EU cyber defence policy framework. It focuses on actions to support development of member states' cyber defence capabilities that can be made available for CSDP missions and operations. The framework also sets out steps to improve the protection of CSDP communication networks managed by the EU institutions. It will confirm actions to reinforce research (in cooperation with the private sector and academia), pool and share cyber defence training and strengthen cooperation with NATO.

Policy Framework for Systematic and Long-Term Defence Cooperation

The Council adopted a policy framework for systematic and long-term defence cooperation. In the framework, member states express their commitment to deepening defence cooperation, from defining requirements and priority-setting through in-service support to disposal. Cooperative approaches will be guided inter alia by increased information sharing, joint identification of shortfalls and priority-setting as well as mainstreaming cooperation into national defence planning.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

42nd meeting of the EEA Council

The Council established the European Union's common position for the 42nd meeting of the European Economic Area Council, to take place in Brussels on 19 November 2014.
