High Representative chairs the Foreign Affairs Council on Monday

Ministers will hold an in-depth political discussion on 20 February evening on Egypt and political developments in the region, ahead of the High Representative’s visit to Cairo on 22 February. The High Representative will also brief ministers on her recent trip to the region (Tunisia, Israel, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon and Jordan). At the formal session on 21 February, the Council will discuss developments in the Mashreq/Maghreb, looking more specifically at EU support for Egypt and Tunisia.

Ministers will discuss the Middle East Peace Process during their working lunch, with a report from the High Representative on the recent Quartet meeting and on the follow-up to the package of possible measures for Gaza. Over lunch, ministers will also discuss the EU’s next steps concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU’s reinforced presence on the ground and the EU’s toolbox. Other subjects are likely to include Iran and human rights issues, the forthcoming strategies on the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, freedom of religion and belief, and EU participation in the work of the UN General Assembly.

Réunion informelle des ministres de la Défense de l’UE les 24 et 25 février

La prochaine réunion informelle des ministres de la Défense de l'Union européenne se tiendra sous la présidence de la Haute Représentante Catherine Ashton à Gödöllő, en Hongrie, les 24 et 25 février prochains. Cette réunion s’inscrit dans la continuité de la réunion informelle de Gand en septembre 2010.

Le dîner de travail du 24 février permettra de discuter, en présence de leurs Commandants respectifs, des opérations militaires en cours (EUNAVFOR-Atalanta et EUTM Somalie, EUFOR Althea). Puis l’informelle défense se poursuivra le 25 février par deux sessions de travail consacrées respectivement aux capacités de gestion de crise de la Politique de sécurité et de défense commune (notamment “l’initiative Weimar”, la mutualisation des moyens et la coopération dans le domaine capacitaires, notamment avec le travail en cours de l’Agence européenne de défense, les synergies civilo-militaires, les groupements tactiques) et aux partenariats de l’UE avec les Nations unies et l’OTAN.

Pour un rappel des conclusions du Conseil de l’UE sur la PSDK le 31 janvier dernier

31 January Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of CSDP

Informal meeting of the EU Defence Ministers

Journée internationale contre l’utilisation d’enfants soldats : déclaration commune de l’Union africaine et de l’Union européenne

Le 12 février, journée internationale contre l’utilisation d’enfants soldats, l’Union africaine et l’Union européenne ont lancé un appel conjoint en faveur de la promotion de la paix, de la sécurité et de la stabilité en Afrique et en Europe, soulignant la nécessité de redoubler d’efforts à tous les niveaux pour prévenir les conflits et protéger les enfants des effets des conflits armés, notamment lorsqu’ils sont enrôlés de force comme combattants, esclaves sexuels ou domestiques.

L’UA et l’UE soutiennent la campagne qui a été lancée en mai 2010 par le Bureau du Représentant spécial du Secrétariat général des Nations unies pour les enfants et les conflits armés, en coopération avec d’autres partenaires, en vue de parvenir, d’ici à 2012, à la ratification universelle du Protocole facultatif concernant l’implication d’enfants dans les conflits armés, et appellent tous les pays à ratifier ce protocole.

Coordination between EUNAVFOR - Atalanta and the Chinese Navy

EUNAVFOR Force Commander, Rear-Admiral Juan Rodriguez met on 15 February Rear Admiral Zhang Huachen, Commander of the Chinese Force deployed in the Gulf of Aden.

The meeting took place on board the Spanish Flagship Canarias, sailing in the Gulf of Aden. During the coming months, Chinese ships will remain in the Indian Ocean with the main aim to escort merchant vessels transiting between Red Sea and Horn of Africa, thereby contributing to the safety of those mariners transiting the area.

This was a good opportunity for EUNAVFOR to exchange information and maintain mutual understanding and knowledge with one of its partners in the fight against piracy.

Coordination between the different actors operating in the Horn of Africa is of paramount importance in order to optimize their action and facilitate information sharing. This is especially important given the size of the operational area and the coordination of a large number of ships from many different countries.

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EULEX - KFOR operation in northern Kosovo to tackle organised crime

In the early hours of 15 February, EULEX police teams together with the support of units from KFOR carried out an operation to tackle organised crime in the Zubin Potok area of northern Kosovo. Four private residences and one business were searched. The operation relates to an on-going investigation into a number of criminal offences including: smuggling of goods, tax evasion, fraudulent evasion of import duty and excise tax and organised crime. The investigation is being supervised by the Kosovo Special Prosecution Office. The searches and arrests were duly authorised by a pre-trial judge.

EUPOL Afghanistan: “Coordination between Police and Prosecutors in the Afghan regions is of vital importance”

Ten specially selected Afghan trainers officially qualified as “Coordination of police and prosecutor - “CoPP” - trainers after an intensive five-week course run jointly by EUPOL's rule of law and police training units.

The CoPP project will run over the course of two years and target some 500 regional and district participants. All training will be in Dari or Pashto and conducted by the ten CoPP trainers, who passed a rigorous recruitment process before being selected to attend the five-week “train-the-trainers” course from which they now graduated. The CoPP trainers will be assisted by EUPOL mentors. > Read the EUPOL Afghanistan newsletter

EUPOL COPPS supports security and discipline department

EUPOL COPPS keeps supporting the Palestinian Civil Police (PCP) in building a disciplinary unit within its police security and discipline department. Last month, the Head of the PCP's security and discipline department started the official distribution of a brochure containing the first PCP’s code of conduct. This project was promoted and funded by EUPOL COPPS.

EUNAVFOR - Atalanta assists released fishing vessel

On 10 February, the Finnish EUNAVFOR warship Fns Pohjanmaa secured and assisted the fishing vessel Golden wave after a request to assist from the South Korean government. The vessel was attacked on 9 October 2010 and had been in the hands of pirates for 123 days.

The ship was in poor condition after its long captivity so the Finnish crew provided technical support to the ship. After this work was complete, the Golden wave was reported seaworthy and able to sail its next destination.

Upcoming activities

21 February - HR Ashton chairs the Foreign Affairs Council, Brussels; 21 - 22 February - HR Ashton travels to Egypt
23 February - HR meets the Foreign Affairs Minister of Cuba
24 February - HR/VP participates in the College meeting with the Russian government; HR participates in the Informal meeting of EU Defence Ministers, Hungary (24-25 February)

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