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Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 12 May 2014

President

Catherine Ashton

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and
Security Policy

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Main results of the Council

Ukraine

The Council held an in-depth discussion on the situation in Ukraine. It expressed its alarm at the continued efforts to destabilise Eastern and Southern Ukraine.

The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, said: "The European Union will not recognise any illegitimate and illegal "referenda". We believe it's very important that all parties concentrate on implementing the Geneva Statement, of which dialogue and the end of violence and provocation are essential elements."

The Council also strongly supported the holding of free and fair presidential elections in Ukraine. It took note of recent related declarations from the Russian President and expects support for the holding of these elections on 25 May.

The Council held an exchange of views on the situation in Ukraine and on the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission with Didier Burkhalter, OSCE Chairperson in Office, and welcomed the presentation of his proposals for Ukraine.

In light of the recent developments and in the absence of any steps towards de-escalation, the Council agreed to broaden EU sanctions: It expanded the criteria allowing to impose visa bans and asset freezes on individuals and entities and targeted 13 further persons and two entities with these measures.

The EU remains ready to assist Ukraine in the field of civilian security sector reform, including police and rule of law. The Council tasked the European External Action Service to work on elements for a possible civilian CSDP mission in this area with a view to a decision on further steps at its next meeting.

Abductions in Nigeria

The Council strongly condemned the indiscriminate killing of hundreds of civilians and the abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls in Borno State, Nigeria. High Representative Ashton said: "We call for their immediate and unconditional release and for those responsible to be brought to justice." The EU and its member states also offered their support to Nigeria in the resolution of this despicable crime and ongoing efforts to protect its citizens: 10 million euros can be made available to assist Nigeria in its anti-terrorism efforts.

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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Mr William HAGUE

First Secretary of State, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

.....

Commission:

Mr Štefan FÜLE

Member

ITEMS DEBATED

Ukraine

Ministers held an exchange of views with Didier Burkhalter, OSCE Chairperson in Office, on the situation in Ukraine and on the work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission. The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union stands firm in upholding Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and calls upon Russia to do likewise. The EU is alarmed by the continued efforts by pro-Russian separatists to destabilise Eastern and Southern Ukraine. Continued seizure of public buildings, kidnappings, killings and violation of media freedom by illegal armed groups is unacceptable and must stop. The EU will not recognise yesterday's nor any future illegitimate and illegal "referenda".

The tragic events in Odessa of 2 May with many dead and injured must be thoroughly investigated and all those responsible brought to justice. The Council encourages the coverage of this investigation by the Council of Europe's International Advisory Panel as a way to ensure its independence and transparency.

2. The EU strongly supports the holding of free and fair Ukrainian Presidential elections on 25 May, and calls on all parties to do so, in order to overcome the crisis and allow the Ukrainian people to choose their own future. The Council takes note of the recent declarations from the President of the Russian Federation regarding the Presidential elections in Ukraine and expects support for the holding of these elections on 25 May 2014. Ukrainian officials and voters should be unimpeded in preparing for the elections, and all presidential candidates should be ensured safe and secure conditions to campaign freely across the whole country. To this end, the Council encourages the presidential candidates to agree on a compact on electoral conduct. The Council welcomes the deployment of the OSCE/ODIHR observation mission in which the EU Member States will actively participate.

The Council encourages continuation of efforts by the Ukrainian authorities to reach out to all regions of Ukraine within the framework of the envisaged national dialogue proposed by the Ukrainian government, including the Government's steps towards inclusive all-Ukrainian dialogue on the constitutional reform process. The rights of persons belonging to national minorities need to be fully ensured in line with the relevant standards of the Council of Europe.

3. The EU reconfirms its full commitment to the Geneva Joint Statement of 17 April on initial concrete steps to de-escalate tensions and restore security for all citizens, and calls on all parties involved in the Geneva meeting of 17 April to fully implement it. The Council welcomes the efforts taken so far by the Ukrainian authorities to this end, including by working towards constitutional reform and decentralization in a broad national dialogue and proposing an amnesty law for those who will peacefully leave the buildings they have seized in Eastern Ukraine. The Council encourages further work to this end. The Council also calls on the Russian Federation to take effective steps with regard to fulfilling the commitments taken in Geneva. The Council lends its support to a swift convening of a next meeting at ministerial level in the Geneva format in order to ensure full implementation of the Statement with the assistance of the OSCE.
4. In this context, the Council held today a fruitful exchange of views with the Chairman in Office of the OSCE, Didier Burkhalter. The Council welcomes the presentation of the proposals by the OSCE Chairmanship for Ukraine as well as of the Chairman's explanations regarding its implementation. As part of the EU's efforts in the crisis, the Council welcomes today's visit of President Van Rompuy to Kyiv. Furthermore, the High Representative and Member States will continue undertaking the necessary contacts with all stakeholders involved in order to bring forward a political solution to the crisis.
5. The European Union reiterates its demand to Russia to call back its troops from the Ukrainian border and to immediately withdraw the mandate of the Federation Council to use force on Ukrainian soil. It also condemns declarations and visits of high officials engaged in supporting illegal attempts at separatism and thus contributing to heightening tensions in Ukraine and other States in the region. The Council condemns any attempt to circumvent the sanctions regime. The EU calls upon all sides for restraint and for an end to violence and provocations. The EU encourages the Ukrainian authorities to maintain their measured approach in pursuing law and order operations and calls on all sides to the conflict to contribute further to reducing tensions.
6. The EU commends the work already undertaken by the OSCE and its Special Monitoring Mission, and encourages it to ensure effective operations throughout Ukraine, including assistance in the implementation of the Geneva Joint Statement. The Council takes note of the OSCE roadmap and fully supports the efforts undertaken by the OSCE and its CiO to contribute to de-escalating and stabilising the situation through concrete steps including the establishment of round tables while ensuring Ukrainian ownership. The EU and its Member States will continue to provide support to the Special Monitoring Mission and call on all other OSCE participating States to do the same. The Council welcomes the rapid expansion of the Mission to the maximum number of monitors allowed under its mandate, calls for its rapid deployment, and looks forward to the Memorandum of Understanding rapidly coming into force. It encourages the OSCE to continue its support to the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities to develop a national dialogue. The Council reiterates the concerns expressed by representatives of the OSCE and the Council of Europe about current restrictions on their ability to observe the situation in the area of human rights, including of persons belonging to national minorities, in Crimea. The Council also encourages Ukraine to immediately develop a national disarmament programme together with OSCE specialists targeting all illegally armed groups throughout the country and to end all illegal occupation of public buildings and squares.

7. The EU welcomes the release of the eight unarmed international military observers under the OSCE Vienna Document, as well as of the Ukrainian military personnel accompanying them, who had altogether been held hostage in Slovyansk for more than a week, and expresses its gratitude to all those who have contributed to this positive development. This should now be followed by the release of all other hostages still being held by illegal armed groups in Eastern Ukraine.
8. The Council recalls its readiness to assist Ukraine in the field of civilian security sector reform, including police and rule of law. In this regard, it welcomes the Political Framework for Crisis Approach in Ukraine, submitted by the High Representative in response to its conclusions of 14 April. As a next step, the Council tasks the EEAS to prepare a Crisis Management Concept for a possible civilian CSDP mission in this field with a view to a decision on further steps at its next meeting. The Council underlines the importance of coordination and complementarity with OSCE and other international actors.
9. In light of the recent developments and in the absence of any steps towards de-escalation the Council has agreed to expand the criteria allowing individuals and entities to be subject to visa ban and asset freeze. This will notably allow for the possible listing of natural persons responsible for actively supporting or implementing actions or policies which undermine the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, or stability or security in Ukraine, or which obstruct the work of international organisations in Ukraine, and natural or legal persons, entities or bodies associated with them, or legal persons, entities or bodies in Crimea or Sevastopol whose ownership has been transferred contrary to Ukrainian law, or legal persons, entities or bodies which have benefited from such a transfer. The Council has decided to add a new group of individuals and entities to the list of persons, entities and bodies subject to restrictive measures.

The Council notes that the preparatory work by the Commission and Member States is underway on possible targeted measures, as requested by the European Council in March, so that further steps can be taken should events require.

The European Union will pay particular attention to all parties' attitude and behaviour towards the holding of free and fair Presidential elections when deciding about possible future measures.

10. The EU reiterates its strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation and will not recognise it. The EU notes with regret the presence of President Putin at the military parade in Sevastopol on 9 May. The Council welcomes the Commission's evaluation of the legal consequences of the annexation of Crimea and looks forward to the Council and the Commission continuing their work with a view to the swift implementation of proposals contained therein. These consequences could include but not be limited to economic, trade, and financial measures. The Council calls on UN member states to consider similar measures in line with UNGA Resolution 68/262.

The Council expresses its utmost concern about the deteriorating situation of the human rights situation in Crimea, including the refusal of the right of the leader of the Crimean Tatars Mustafa Dzhemilev to enter Crimea, as well as the warning issued by the de facto prosecutor of Crimea that the national representation of Crimean Tatars Mejlis may be declared illegal for "extremist actions".

11. The Council reiterates the EU's commitment to sign the remaining provisions of the Association Agreement with Ukraine, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, as soon as possible after the presidential elections on 25 May. The Council reiterates the importance of the Autonomous Trade Preferences which entered into force in April, as a temporary measure of support to Ukraine and a step leading towards the signing, provisional application and implementation of the provisions on the DCFTA.
12. The Council welcomes the trilateral energy talks between Russia, Ukraine and the EU, launched in Warsaw on 2 May, aimed at safeguarding the security of supply and transit of natural gas to and through Ukraine on the basis of a transparent regime. Both sides, despite differences between them, expressed their desire to discuss all open issues with the aim of finding a solution by the end of this month. The Council encourages Ukraine and Russia to find a comprehensive negotiated agreement ensuring energy supply to Ukraine on the basis of a fair and transparent market price. In this context, the Council underlines the importance of continuing energy sector reforms in Ukraine.

The Council also welcomes the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding and Framework Interconnection Agreement between Eustream and Ukrtransgaz enabling gas flows from Slovakia to Ukraine, which complements the already existing Hungarian and Polish reverse flow capacities, and which shows the EU's strong commitment in support of Ukraine's energy security sector. This is an important first step to diversify Ukraine's sources of gas supply and to contribute to greater energy security in Eastern Europe and effective interconnections with and within the European Union as a whole. The Council recalls the Conclusions by the European Council on 20-21 March 2014 calling on the Commission to conduct an in-depth study of EU energy security.

13. The European Union welcomes the IMF Executive Board decision to approve a two-year Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) for Ukraine of USD 17.1 billion. The authorities' economic programme supported by the Fund aims to restore macroeconomic stability, strengthen economic governance and transparency, and launch sound and sustainable economic growth, while protecting the most vulnerable. The approval of the SBA with fulfilment of the prior actions, enables the immediate release of USD 3.19 billion, with about USD 2 billion being allocated to budget support. While reiterating its strong support to Ukraine's economic and financial stabilisation, the Council also welcomes the signing by the European Commission of the Memorandum of Understanding on the new EUR 1 billion Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) loan programme to Ukraine. The Council looks forward to the release of the first tranche of the two MFA loan programmes worth EUR 600 million, when all remaining steps will be taken by the Ukrainian Government and the European Commission. The Council reiterates that the Ukrainian Government must implement the reforms it has signed up to, including the fight against corruption. The Council welcomes the adoption of a new State Building Contract of EUR 355 million, accompanied by a EUR 10 million Civil Society Support Programme, and looks forward to the signature of the Financing Agreement at the occasion of the Ukrainian Government visit to the European Commission on 13 May. "

Middle East peace process

The Council discussed the state of play in the Middle East peace process and adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU is extremely concerned at recent developments related to the peace process. The EU has fully supported and praises US peace efforts deployed by Secretary of State Kerry and his team. The extensive efforts deployed in recent months must not go to waste.
2. A negotiated two-state solution remains the best way to resolve the conflict once and for all. The EU regrets that despite US efforts, greater progress has not been made by the parties to date in the talks. The EU urges the parties to use the coming weeks to find the common ground and political strength needed to resume this process and to make the necessary bold decisions. The EU remains determined to do all it can to support that goal, including through the offer of a Special Privileged Partnership, which will ensure unprecedented economic, political and security support for both parties in the event of a final status agreement.
3. The European Union recalls previous Council conclusions which have laid down its vision for a two-state solution resulting in an agreement on all final status issues, ending all claims, and fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of both parties. A one state reality would not be compatible with such aspirations.
4. The EU calls on all sides to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid any unilateral action which may further undermine peace efforts and the viability of a two-state-solution, such as continued settlement expansion. The European Union will continue to closely monitor the situation and its broader implications, and will act accordingly.
5. The EU has consistently supported intra-Palestinian reconciliation on clear and certain terms. The EU looks forward to continuing its support, including through direct financial assistance, for a possible new Palestinian government composed of independent figures that commits to the principles set out in President Abbas' speech in Cairo on 4 May 2011. Such a government should uphold the principle of non-violence, and remain committed to achieving a two-state solution and to a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict accepting previous agreements and obligations, including Israel's legitimate right to exist. The EU's engagement with a new Palestinian government will be based on its adherence to these policies and commitments. Reconciliation on these terms is an important element for the unity of a future Palestinian state and for reaching a two-state solution and a lasting peace. The EU welcomes the prospect of genuine democratic elections for all Palestinians.
6. The EU underlines that Mahmoud Abbas, as President of the PLO, remains fully in charge of the negotiation process and is mandated to negotiate in the name of all Palestinians and that the peace negotiations can and must be resumed."

Abductions in Nigeria

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The European Union is deeply concerned about the recent terrorist attacks in northern Nigeria and appalled by the suffering caused to the population.

The Council strongly condemns the indiscriminate killing of hundreds of civilians and the abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls in Borno State. These acts represent an attack against human rights and dignity. The European Union calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the school girls and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

The European Union and its Member States offer their support to Nigeria in the resolution of this despicable crime and its ongoing efforts to protect its citizens and defeat terrorism in all its forms, in full respect of human rights. The EU will work to end the culture of impunity for the use of sexual violence both as a tool and a side effect of conflict worldwide. The EU supports the intention of the UN Security Council to consider appropriate measures against Boko Haram."

European neighbourhood policy

During lunch, ministers discussed the future of the European neighbourhood policy, with neighbouring countries in both the south and the east.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Human rights dialogue with Myanmar/Burma

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the establishment of a human rights dialogue with Myanmar/Burma:

- "1. The Council recalls the adoption in 2001 of the European Guidelines on human rights dialogues, revised in 2008.
2. The Council recognizes the importance of further strengthening the relationship between the European Union and Myanmar/Burma by establishing an EU-Myanmar/Burma Human Rights dialogue, as foreseen in the Council Conclusions on the Comprehensive Framework for the European Union's policy and support to Myanmar/Burma of 22 July 2013 and agreed during the EU-Myanmar/Burma Task Force held on 13-15 November 2013.
3. The Council endorses the establishment of a human rights dialogue with Myanmar/Burma along the mutually agreed modalities, which are annexed to these conclusions."

For full details, click [here](#).

EU policy towards the Arctic region

The Council adopted the following conclusions on an EU policy towards the Arctic region:

- "1. The Council welcomes the Joint Communication of the Commission and the High Representative of June 2012 on Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region, which sets out the path for the EU's increased engagement in the Arctic. The Council also takes note of the important considerations of the European Parliament in its resolution of 12 March 2014 on the EU strategy for the Arctic. The Arctic is a region of growing strategic importance and the Council agrees that the EU should now further enhance its contribution to Arctic cooperation. Rapid climate change, a major concern and cause of fundamental changes in the Arctic, combined with increased prospects for economic development in the Arctic region call for the EU to engage actively with Arctic partners to assist in addressing the challenge of sustainable development in a prudent and responsible manner.
2. Recalling the Conclusions of 8 December 2009, the Council welcomes the significant range of activities the EU is already undertaking in the region across the EU policy spectrum, in particular a valuable contribution to Arctic cooperation through research (€20 million/year, 2007-13), regional and cross-border investment (€1.14 billion, 2007-13) and cooperation with our partners in the fields of environment, transport, energy, and maritime safety. The Council supports the view that the EU action should now be strengthened by: supporting research and channelling knowledge to address the challenges of environmental and climate changes in the Arctic; acting with responsibility to contribute to ensuring economic development in the Arctic based on sustainable use of resources and environmental expertise; intensifying the EU's constructive engagement with Arctic States, indigenous peoples and other partners to find common solutions to challenges that require an international response. The EU should seek to strengthen its support for the the protection of the Arctic environment through its policies regarding for example climate change, air pollutants including black carbon, biodiversity and fisheries.
3. The Council confirms that the EU should enhance its contribution to Arctic cooperation, in conformity with international instruments, notably the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
4. The Council supports the intention of the Commission and the High Representative to intensify dialogue on Arctic matters with all the EU's Arctic partners.

5. The Council recognises the Arctic Council as the primary body for circumpolar regional cooperation. The Council re-affirms its agreement to and its strong support for the observer status of the EU in the Arctic Council, and notes that the EU is committed to work actively as an observer of the Arctic Council and contribute to its activities. The Council urges Canada to use the current positive momentum in EU-Canada relations to help resolve the remaining issue so as to allow for the full implementation of the Kiruna decision regarding the EU's observer status as soon as possible before the next EU/Canada summit. The Council agrees that this would facilitate an even more effective EU contribution to Arctic cooperation. The Council also stresses the important role played by EU Member States in the Arctic Council as members and observers in promoting cooperation in the Arctic in accordance with their respective status.
6. The Council recognises the efforts of the Arctic states to develop joint approaches and best practice to address the potential environmental impact and safety concerns related to increasing activities in the region. In this context, the collaboration of the EU and its agencies with Arctic Council bodies in addressing common Arctic challenges should be strengthened.
7. The Council supports EU's efforts for increased dialogue with indigenous peoples of the Arctic region, and welcomes the annual EU Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue meetings. The EU should also explore appropriate ways of ensuring that the representatives of Arctic indigenous peoples are informed and consulted on EU policies that may affect them.
8. A better understanding of the developments underway in the Arctic is vital to ensure a sustainable future for the region and its peoples. The Council therefore supports an enhanced contribution by the EU to Arctic research, including monitoring and observation efforts, and to the sharing and dissemination of information about the Arctic. The Council looks forward to the results of the preparatory action to conduct a Strategic Assessment of development in the Arctic co-ordinated by the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland with a network of European research institutions of Arctic expertise. The Council requests the Commission to consider the options proposed by this project to establish an EU Arctic Information Centre to promote efficient access to Arctic information, to facilitate dialogues and to communicate on Arctic issues. The Council stresses the importance of the alignment of Arctic research programmes in the EU in dialogue with other partners active in Arctic research. The Galway statement on Atlantic and Arctic Ocean research cooperation between the EU, the United States and Canada of 24 May 2013 is a further step in this direction.

9. The Council encourages the Commission and Member States to continue their efforts aiming at the swift agreement within the International Maritime Organisation on a mandatory "Polar Code". Such a code would set out a range of measures and requirements to improve and strengthen maritime cooperation and safety and prevent pollution, including as regards cruise passenger ships. The Council takes note of the Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic and Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic agreements signed by the Member States of the Arctic Council. The Council also invites the Member States and the Commission, with the technical and scientific assistance of the European Maritime Safety Agency, to support the work of the Arctic Council on emergency preparedness, prevention and response measures, as well as on following up on the recommendations on maritime safety from the 2009 Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment.
10. With respect to the gradual opening, in the years to come, of trans-oceanic Arctic routes for shipping and navigation, the Council reiterates, the importance of respecting international law principles, including the freedom of navigation and the right of innocent passage.
11. The Council notes the resource policy developments in the Arctic states including in the Barents Region. The EU should pursue long-term partnerships and policy dialogues contributing to securing access to, and promoting safe and sustainable management of raw materials and renewable natural resources.
12. The Council confirms its support for the further development of the Northern Dimension partnerships' work in the European Arctic, in particular as regards environmental activities as well as the development of the transport connections in the region, including new maritime routes. The Council values the practical work of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in this regard.
13. The Council supports strengthening the partnership between the European Union on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other which aims at promoting the sustainable development of Greenland and the diversification of the economy. The partnership also encourages an enhanced dialogue and cooperation on global and Arctic issues.
14. The Council invites the Commission to ensure that Arctic-relevant programmes financed by the EU under the 2014-2020 multi-annual financial framework, meet the development needs of local populations and offer better opportunities for circumpolar cooperation and research as well as Arctic economic development.
15. The Council requests the Commission and the High Representative to keep it regularly informed on the progress in implementing the Communication of June 2012. The Council furthermore requests the Commission and the High Representative to present proposals for the further development of an integrated and coherent Arctic Policy by December 2015. As part of this exercise, the Council encourages the Commission to ensure effective synergies between the various EU funding instruments in the Arctic region."

EU comprehensive approach

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the EU comprehensive approach:

- "1. The European Union and its Member States can bring to the international stage the unique ability to combine, in a coherent and consistent manner, policies and tools ranging from diplomacy, security and defence to finance, trade, development and human rights, as well as justice and migration. This contributes greatly to the Union's ability to play a positive and transformative role in its external relations and as a global actor. In December 2013, the European Council called for further steps to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the EU's comprehensive approach. The Council welcomes the presentation of the Joint Communication by the High Representative and the European Commission on "The EU's Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict and Crises"¹ as an important step in this process. In this context, the Council recalls the Council Conclusions of November 2007 on Security and Development², the Council Conclusions of December 2011³ and of November 2013⁴ on CSDP and the Conclusions from the European Council of December 2013.⁵
2. The Council stresses that the comprehensive approach is both a general working method and a set of concrete measures and processes to improve how the EU, based on a common strategic vision and drawing on its wide array of existing tools and instruments, collectively can develop, embed and deliver more coherent and more effective policies, working practices, actions and results. Its fundamental principles are relevant for the broad spectrum of EU external action. The need for such a comprehensive approach is most acute in crisis and conflict situations and in fragile states, enabling a rapid and effective EU response , including through conflict prevention.
3. The Council notes that the operationalization of the principles and proposals of the Joint Communication and these Council Conclusions is a joint undertaking, and a shared responsibility for EU institutions and services as well as for Member States, in capitals and on the ground. In this context, the Council also recalls the provisions in the EU Treaty on consistency in external action and with other policies, and the responsibility of the Council and the European Commission to cooperate to that effect. In this context, the Council stresses the role of the High Representative, who is also one of the Vice Presidents of the European Commission.

¹ JOIN(2013) 30 final

² Doc 15097/07

³ Doc 17991/11

⁴ Doc 15992/13

⁵ Doc EUCO 217/13

4. The Council notes that the starting point for the EU's comprehensive approach must be early, coordinated and shared analysis of each country and/or regional specific context, the conflict dynamics and the root causes of a crisis situation. This early joined-up analysis should in particular build on existing mechanisms and processes and systematically bring together all relevant domains of EU external action, including diplomacy, security, development and, as appropriate, humanitarian assistance, justice and migration, at headquarters and on the ground. EU Delegations, Member States' representations and EU Special Representatives all have a central role in contributing to this joint analysis and making recommendations for EU action, including in the field of conflict prevention. EU Delegations, in particular, have a key role to play, drawing on their expertise on a range of issues, including on security and defence issues where appropriate, and also engaging Member States' representations.

5. The EU's policies and priorities should follow from common strategic objectives and a clear common vision of what the EU collectively wants to achieve in its external relations or in a particular conflict or crisis situation. The Council notes that the regional strategies developed for the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and most recently the Gulf of Guinea have been valuable in framing the EU's engagements across many policy areas. In a similar vein, thematic work on cyber and maritime security is also being taken forward. The Council would welcome the continued proactive preparation of such regional and thematic strategies to frame the EU's comprehensive response to new political developments and challenges, notably concerning the EU's neighbourhood. Similarly, the work on Joint Framework Documents (JFDs), outlining the broad range of EU interests and priorities in specific countries or regions, should be taken forward as soon as possible, including in fragile and conflict-affected states.

6. The Council stresses the key importance of early warning and conflict prevention to reduce the risk of outbreak or recurrence of violent conflict and human suffering, also recalling the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts and the 2011 Council Conclusions on Conflict Prevention. The Council welcomes the progress achieved so far to better integrate the EU's early warning capacities, inter alia through the development of an Early Warning System. It looks forward to a global roll-out of this process before the end of 2014 and encourages the use of the early warning system reporting across the institutions. The step from early warning to early action is pivotal in mitigating the risks of outbreak and recurrence of conflicts, and therefore must be fast and decisive. The Council also recalls the 2009 "Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities" and welcomes the work undertaken by the institutions and Member States in the area of mediation as well as other recent initiatives to strengthen capacity or take forward the EU's engagement in these areas. In addition, the Council takes positive note of the establishment of the European Institute of Peace (EIP) as an additional independent organisation in the field of conflict mediation. The resources offered by the EIP in a flexible manner should further enhance the capacities available to the EU in this field. The Council also encourages closer cooperation and coordination of the various situation and emergency management centres of the Union and Member States.

7. The Council underscores the need for the EU to better, earlier and more systematically link up its political engagement, its CSDP missions and operations, its development cooperation and assistance, and other relevant domains of EU action, in particular in countries or conflict situations where the EU deploys multiple actors, instruments and interventions. The Council stresses that the strategically coherent use of the EU's instruments and policies – simultaneously or in sequence – is necessary to effectively address the root causes of a conflict or crisis. In the context of crisis management, the Council reiterates the important role of CSDP, including through its civilian and military expertise and civilian-military synergies, as an essential element in the EU's comprehensive approach. The Council stresses the need to utilise the full potential of the Political Framework for Crisis Approach (PFCA) in line with the existing Suggestions for Crisis Management Procedures.

A comprehensive approach should also enable rapid EU action as required. The Council also underscores the need to continue to strengthen the ties between CSDP and the areas of Freedom, Security and Justice (FSJ) and more effectively develop synergies between CSDP actions with FSJ actions as well as actions carried out in other EU domains.

8. The Council notes that the impact of CSDP missions and operations is enhanced when part of a broader EU strategy. Information about and analysis of the conflict and crisis context, including on the ongoing overall EU engagement, should feed into the planning, preparation, implementation and review phases of CSDP missions and operations. The Council also stresses the need for earlier and more coordinated planning for a smooth transition from one form of EU engagement to another, in particular regarding transition from short- or medium-term activity to longer-term development cooperation, and from CSDP missions and operations to other forms of EU engagement, to ensure that the achievements of EU action can be sustained. The ongoing work on transition strategies should therefore be taken forward as a matter of priority. In this context, the Council also stresses the key principle of local ownership and the need for sustainable results. Finally, the Council also underlines the importance to make use of lessons learned from previous operations, missions and programmes.
9. The Council underlines that the comprehensive approach applies to all phases of the conflict cycle, including prevention, early warning, crisis management, stabilisation and longer-term peace-building and development cooperation. Its results are often only reached and sustained in the long term. The Council recalls the 2007 Council Conclusions on Security and Development and the importance of peace and security for development, and vice versa. It also notes that fragility and conflict hamper sustainable development and poverty reduction, create or aggravate humanitarian crises, and can provide a fertile breeding ground for instability and may trigger migratory flows.

10. The Council notes that the objectives of EU development cooperation remain those set out in the Lisbon Treaty, the European Consensus on Development and the Agenda for Change. It welcomes the progress made in the context of the EU's programming process for the period 2014-20 to further reinforce synergies between development programming and the EU's overall policies and notes that in fragile or conflict-affected states, programming and joint programming must be conducted in accordance with, inter alia, the principles of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, also building on relevant fragility assessments. It notes the need to further enhance the effectiveness and results of EU development policies and programmes, also in line with the principles of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. The Council also notes the ongoing discussions in the OECD/DAC and in the context of the post-2015 framework on development financing, including on ODA.
11. The Council recalls the Conclusions from the European Council of December 2013 as regards the importance of ensuring the greatest possible coherence between the Union's and Member States' actions to support partner countries and regional organisations, including in the context of security sector reform, through providing training, advice, equipment and resources where appropriate, so that they can increasingly prevent or manage crises by themselves.
12. The Council also reaffirms that humanitarian aid must be provided in accordance with the humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law, solely on the basis of needs of affected populations, in line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.
13. The point of departure for EU policy and action must always be the country or regional context, taking into account country and region-led processes, and the political realities and needs on the ground. This is where we face and deal with security threats, crisis situations and development challenges. EU Delegations together with EU Member States Representations have a key role to play in supporting a coherent, coordinated, comprehensive and effective EU approach, in particular on issues relating to joint analysis, coordinated programme implementation, and the preparation and sharing of political reporting. Co-location of EU actors in the field should also be considered wherever feasible. The progress made in taking forward joint programming in the EU's development cooperation provides a good model for how to link up the efforts of EU institutions and Member States in a comprehensive approach at the country-level.
14. The Council notes that the EU should reinforce its cooperation with others and coordinate its comprehensive approach with the efforts and engagement by key international partners such as the UN, NATO, OSCE, AU, other regional organizations and bilateral partners engaged in a given conflict or crisis situation, with a view to increase operational effectiveness, with due respect to the institutional framework and decision-making autonomy of the EU. The Council stresses the importance of local ownership and local partners. The Council also highlights the value of the knowledge and contributions of civil society, such as NGOs, think tanks and academia, as well as the private sector.

15. For the comprehensive approach to work, these policies and this common strategic vision need to be translated into concrete action, improved working practices across the EU institutions, services and Member States, and tangible results. In the context of the EU's comprehensive approach, the Council therefore commits itself to reinforce its efforts on relevant existing processes and initiatives, including by implementing key actions outlined in the Joint Communication and these Council Conclusions, and calls on the Commission and the EEAS to do likewise.
16. In particular, the Council stresses the need to implement the Resilience Action Plan, address financing gaps between emergency aid and long-term development resources, particularly in protracted crises, conflicts and post-conflict situations, continue to deliver on EU joint programming policy commitments, take forward the initiative to support third states and regional organizations in crisis situations to enable them to increasingly prevent or manage crises by themselves, address challenges relating to the smooth transitioning of CSDP missions and operations, take forward commitments to Policy Coherence for Development (PCD). The Council also calls to further enhance a rights-based approach, encompassing all human rights, reinforce the work on issues relating to the protection of civilians, to women and children in armed conflict and to the fight against sexual violence in armed conflicts, remain engaged in the work towards an ambitious post-2015 framework with an important place for peace and security issues, and build on its Conclusions of December 2013 on the recent EEAS review to continue to improve the way we work, use our resources and deliver together.
17. In this context, the Council also invites the High Representative and the Commission to immediately commence work to present an action plan to Member States before the end of the first quarter of 2015. This action plan should outline how key actions set out in the Joint Communication and these Council Conclusions, in close cooperation with EU Member States, and based on concrete country and regional cases, will be taken forward, implemented and reported, with identified lead structures. This action plan will be regularly reviewed and progress will be assessed with a view to regular progress reports, the first one to be delivered in 2015."

Relations with Albania

The Council adopted the European Union's position for the sixth meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Council with Albania, to take place on 12 May 2012 in Brussels.

The Council also adopted decisions to adapt the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and Albania in order to take account of the accession of Croatia to the European Union.

Relations with Georgia

The Council agreed to the conclusion of a protocol to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Georgia on a Framework Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the general principles for the participation of Georgia in Union programmes.

Relations with Algeria

The Council adopted the EU position for the 8th meeting of the EU-Algeria Association Council, to be held in Brussels on 13 May 2014.

Guidelines on freedom of expression online and offline

The Council adopted EU human rights guidelines on freedom of expression online and offline. For more information, see [press release](#) and [guidelines](#).

Restrictive measures - Somalia

The Council made technical changes to the EU restrictive measures against Somalia so as to take account of UN Security Council resolution 2142 (2014).

Restrictive measures - Côte d'Ivoire

The Council approved the annual review of EU restrictive measures against Côte d'Ivoire. It updated information in relation to two persons on the list and agreed that there were no more grounds for keeping one person on the list.

Framework Agreement with the Republic of Korea

The Council approved, on behalf of the European Union, the conclusion of the Framework Agreement between the European Union and its member states and the Republic of Korea. This follows the consent given by the European Parliament on 16 April 2014.

Union for the Mediterranean - Environment and climate change ministerial meeting

The Council adopted the position of EU and its member states on the draft declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean ministerial meeting on environment and climate change. The meeting will take place on 13 May 2014 in Athens.

For more information on the meeting, click [here](#).

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

41st meeting of the EEA Council

The Council established the European Union's common position for the 41st meeting of the European Economic Area Council, to take place in Brussels on 13 May 2014.
