



Brussels, 20 June 2014

**BACKGROUND<sup>1</sup>**  
**FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL**  
**Monday 23 June 2014 in Luxembourg**

*The Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, will start at 10.00.*

*The newly-appointed Foreign Minister of **Ukraine**, Pavlo Klimkin, will be invited to discuss with the ministers the developments in his country. The Council will then have an internal debate to take stock of developments in Ukraine, on which it is expected to adopt conclusions.*

*The Council will exchange views on events in **Libya** and also discuss the latest developments in Iraq and **Syria**.*

*Over lunch, ministers will debate the latest developments in **Iraq** as well as related aspects of the Syrian crisis, in the presence of Nikolay Mladenov, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Iraq and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq.*

*The **EU-Turkey Association Council** will take place at 8.00. The EU delegation will be led, on behalf of the High Representative, by the Greek Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Evangelos Venizelos (TV/photo opportunity at 8.45).*

**Press conferences:**

- following the EU-Turkey Association Council (+/- 10.00)
- after the Foreign Affairs Council (+/- 16.00)

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*Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu/>*

*Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4): <http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu>*

*Photographic library on [www.consilium.europa.eu/photo](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/photo) for photos in high resolution.*

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<sup>1</sup> This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office

**P R E S S**

## Ukraine

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin is invited to address EU foreign ministers at the start of the session. The Council will then assess developments in the Ukrainian crisis following the presidential elections of 25 May and is expected to adopt conclusions.

The Council is due to adopt the legal acts enabling the signature of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement on 27 June in the margins of the European Council. These also offer provisional application of the agreement to Ukraine ahead of the ratification by all EU member states. The political chapters of the agreement have already been signed on 21 March. In addition, temporary EU trade preferences for Ukrainian goods apply since 23 April.

The Council is also set to decide on EU assistance to Ukraine in the field of civilian security sector reform. Ministers will be invited to approve a crisis management concept for a possible EU civilian mission under the Common Security and Defence Policy, which would advise on a revised strategy for the civilian security sector in Ukraine, including the police and national guard, and mentor the implementation of reforms.

Following the recent downing of a Ukrainian aircraft, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy expressed his condolences and added: *"There is equally no doubt that the armed fighters that are terrorising and disrupting the lives of citizens in Ukraine, are enjoying external support, including arms supply and reinforcement through foreign fighters. As a neighbouring State Russia bears a primary responsibility in ensuring that any such traffic and external support through its borders is immediately stopped."* (see [statement](#)).

President Van Rompuy has congratulated the newly elected Ukrainian president: *"President Poroshenko has received a strong mandate to advance in the path of reforms and turn Ukraine into the modern and democratic country its citizens call for. A united and decentralised country where all will find their place and different identities and minorities will be acknowledged and respected"*, he said on the occasion of the inauguration of the Ukrainian president (see [statement](#)).

President Barroso has welcomed Ukrainian President Poroshenko's peace initiative and direct talks with Russia. In a phone conversation with President Poroshenko, President Barroso welcomed the direct talks between the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia as a positive step. (see [statement](#))

The EU strongly condemns the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and refuses to recognise it. As part of the EU's non-recognition policy, the Council will prohibit the import of goods originating in Crimea or Sevastopol into the European Union.

In response to the crisis in Ukraine, several summit-level meetings involving Russia were cancelled and negotiations on visa matters and a new agreement with Russia have been suspended. The EU has also targeted 61 persons responsible for actions that threaten or undermine the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine with an asset freeze and a travel ban. Two confiscated entities in Crimea are in addition subject to an asset freeze.

EU leaders have reiterated several times that further steps by Russia to destabilise the situation in Ukraine will lead to additional and far reaching consequences for relations between the EU (and its member states) and the Russian Federation in a broad range of economic areas.

The EU supports the Ukrainian economy as set out in the Commission's package of 5 March. Disbursements of the macro-financial assistance (up to € 1.6 bn) and of EU assistance under the state-building contract (up to € 355m) have started. At the same time, the Commission has made it clear that it stands ready to continue acting as a mediator between Ukraine and Russia and their respective energy companies on gas supplies, transit and prices.

For more details, see [factsheet](#) on EU-Ukraine relations.

## Libya

The Council will exchange views on the political and security situation in Libya, in view of the parliamentary elections on 25 June. The Council will adopt conclusions.

The EU has time and again emphasised the importance of an inclusive Libyan political dialogue and voiced deep concern over the repeated acts of violence, calling to refrain from the use of force and to address differences by political means. On 24 May, the EU warned that Libya was "*at a critical stage in its transition which it can successfully face through a constructive political engagement based on nationally agreed principles.*" "*Otherwise it could face the threat of chaos, fragmentation, violence and terrorism,*" the High Representative declared on behalf of the EU (see [declaration](#)). In view of the parliamentary elections on 25 June, the EU will send a small team of election experts.

The EU integrated border assistance mission (EUBAM) in Libya, established in May 2013, supports the Libyan authorities in developing border management and security at the country's land, sea and air borders. For more details, see [factsheet](#).

## Syria

The Council will discuss the situation in the Syrian conflict after the presidential elections as well as humanitarian aspects and the state of play in diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the crisis, following the departure of Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi.

The EU has criticised the presidential elections of 3 June as not genuinely democratic: "*The EU considers that these elections are illegitimate and undermine the political efforts to find a solution to this horrific conflict,*" High Representative Catherine Ashton said, calling on the regime to re-engage in genuine political negotiations that will produce conditions that allow for a real expressing of the will of the Syrian people (see [statement](#)).

The Council is also due to reinforce EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime. The sanctions currently include a number of export and import bans, including an oil embargo, as well as restrictions on investments, financial activity and the transport sector. 179 persons associated with the violent repression in Syria are targeted with an asset freeze and a travel ban at the moment while 53 entities linked to the repressive policies, including the Central Bank of Syria, have their assets frozen within the EU.

The EU continues to believe that there can only be a political solution to the conflict, based on the full implementation of the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012, involving the establishment of a transitional governing body, and a genuine Syrian-led inclusive political process to establish a democratic and pluralistic Syria. It has also insisted on unfettered humanitarian access.

The EU and its member states are the largest humanitarian donor for the Syrian crisis. The total response from EU and member states to the crisis now stands at €2.8 billion.

For more details on EU positions, see [factsheet European Union and Syria](#).

## Iraq

Over lunch, ministers will discuss the situation in Iraq, in the presence of Nikolay Mladenov, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Iraq and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, with which the EU develops good cooperation. The Council will also adopt conclusions.

At their recent ministerial meeting, both the EU and the League of Arab States expressed their deep concern about the deteriorating security situation in Iraq and condemned in the strongest terms the wave of terrorist attacks. They called on all Iraqi democratic forces to work together on the basis of the constitution. In addition, they reiterated their firm commitment to Iraq's unity and territorial integrity. For more details, see [joint statement](#).

The EU has strongly condemned the raid on the Turkish Consulate General in Mosul, as well as the taking hostage of 31 Turkish citizens and supported Turkey's efforts to win the safe release of its citizens. (see [statement](#)).

In response to the needs of the persons internally displaced through the conflict, the Commission has stepped up its funding for humanitarian operations in Iraq, bringing it to €12 million for 2014.

Since October 2004, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant has been subject to the EU restrictive measures directed against Al-Qaida and associated entities. The sanctions consist in an arms embargo and an asset freeze.

The EU has been closely engaged in Iraq's recovery and reconstruction, contributing over € 1 billion – including humanitarian aid - since 2003. For the period from 2014 to 2020, the EU has earmarked €75 million for strengthening human rights and the rule of law; improving primary and secondary education; and providing access to sustainable energy.

In May 2012, the EU and Iraq signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, as a framework for advancing dialogue and cooperation on subjects such as political and social issues, human rights, the rule of law, trade, energy and security. The first EU-Iraq Cooperation Council was held in January 2014.

## **Other items**

The Council is set to adopt several other items without discussion, including:

### **- Thailand**

The Council will adopt conclusions on Thailand. It is set to express its extreme concern on recent developments in Thailand and to call on the military leadership to restore the legitimate democratic process and constitution, through credible and inclusive elections. It will also demand respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Against this background, the EU is forced to reconsider its engagement.

### **- Afghanistan**

The Council is expected to adopt an EU strategy for Afghanistan until the end of 2016. The EU's overall aim will be the development of Afghanistan's institutions to provide the resilience needed to safeguard progress to date and provide a platform for a more effective and ultimately sustainable Afghan state. To achieve that, the EU will work towards four objectives: promoting peace, security and regional stability; reinforcing democracy; encouraging economic and human development, as well as fostering the rule of law and respect for human rights. The Council will also adopt an implementation plan outlining concrete EU and member state initiatives in support of these four objectives, including continued funding totalling more than €1 billion a year.

In the related Council conclusions, the Council will take stock of the second round of presidential elections held on 14 June. The Council is also expected to take a decision in principle to extend the EU police mission (EUPOL Afghanistan) until the end of 2016. This is set to be the final mandate of the mission, which contributes to reforms towards effective civilian policing and rule of law arrangements through training, mentoring and advice. For more details, see [factsheet](#).

### **- Responsible sourcing of minerals**

The Council is set to adopt conclusions on the responsible sourcing of minerals. The conclusions come in response to a related communication setting out initiatives intended to break the link between conflict and minerals extraction so as to stop profits from the trade of minerals being used to fund armed conflict ([7704/14](#)). The Council will support the importance of reducing the opportunities for armed actors to resort to trade in minerals in conflict-affected areas, promoting the practice of due diligence by EU operators and creating the conditions for companies to source responsibly from conflict-affected areas.

### **- Role of the private sector in development**

The Council is due to adopt conclusions on the role of the private sector in development, in response to a related Commission communication ([9802/14](#)). The Council is to welcome the Commission's proposed strategic framework for supporting the role of the private sector in partner countries and boosting the development impact of its activities. It will stress that commercial activities with partner countries should respect labour and children's rights as well as promote decent work and sustainable development.

### **- Kidnap for ransom**

The Council is likely to adopt conclusions on kidnap for ransom, strongly condemning the use of kidnapping for ransom by terrorist groups and unequivocally rejecting the payment of ransoms and political concessions to terrorists. The Council will welcome a related UN Security Council resolution, which requires all UN members to prevent terrorists from benefitting from the payment of ransoms.

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