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General Affairs

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President **Edgars Rinkēvičs**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Latvia

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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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ITEMS DEBATED

Follow-up to the April special European Council on migration

The Council was informed by the presidency and the Commission of ongoing and planned work as a follow-up to the statement adopted at the special meeting of the European Council on 23 April 2015.

The presentations encompassed the requested roadmap setting out work up to the June European Council, the discussions held at the Foreign Affairs Council on 18 May as well as a presentation of the European Agenda on Migration by the Commission.

At the special meeting of the European Council on 23 April leaders decided to mobilise all efforts at their disposal to prevent further loss of life at sea and to tackle the root causes of the human emergency, in cooperation with the countries of origin and transit. The European Council decided to do everything possible to save people from dying at sea, to strengthen the EU's presence at sea, to fight the traffickers, to prevent illegal migration flows and to reinforce internal solidarity and responsibility.

Preparation of the June European Council

The Council took note of the annotated draft agenda, drawn up by the President of the European Council in cooperation with the presidency and the Commission, for the European Council meeting to be held on 25 and 26 June 2015.

The European Council will focus on:

1. Security challenges
 - Review of the 2003 European Security Strategy
 - Defence
 - Relations with Russia and the situation in Ukraine
 - Follow-up to guidelines agreed at the special European Council on migration
 - Stock-taking of measures agreed at the informal European Council on terrorism

2. Economic issues

- Digital single market
- Conclusion of the 2015 European Semester and country-specific recommendations
- State of play on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)
- Four presidents' report on economic and monetary union (EMU)

The annotated draft agenda will serve as the basis for draft conclusions, to be prepared in the run-up to the meeting.

[Annotated draft agenda for the European Council meeting on 25-26 June](#)

Four presidents' report on EMU

The Council was updated on the state of play in the preparation of the four presidents' report on economic and monetary union (EMU) to be presented to the June European Council.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Youth employment initiative - Increase of pre-financing

The Council adopted a regulation increasing pre-financing under the youth employment initiative by almost €1 billion ([PE-CONS 19/15](#)). Instead of about €67 million, member states will receive around €1 billion as advance payments this year. The regulation removes the main bottleneck in the implementation of the youth employment initiative by releasing the financial burden on the member states' budgets and allowing them to roll out measures against youth employment quickly.

For details, see press release.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Syria - restrictive measures

The Council updated the information included in EU legal acts concerning four individuals and two entities that are currently subject to a travel ban and an asset freeze over their involvement in human rights violations and the violent repression of the civilian population in Syria. In addition, the Council made a specific entry for a further entity.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

ACP-EU Council of Ministers

The Council adopted the agenda for the 40th session of the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, to be held in Brussels from 28 to 29 May 2015. Migration, development and trade cooperation will be among the topics raised.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Purchasing power parities

The Council decided not to object to the adoption by the Commission of a regulation implementing regulation 1445/2007 as regards the list of basic headings used for purchasing power parities.

The regulation amends annex II to regulation 1445/2007, which established common rules for the provision of basic information on purchasing power parities and for their calculation and dissemination.

The regulation is an implementing act. In line with the procedure laid out in Article 5a(3) of Council decision 1999/468/EC, it can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Visa waiver agreements with Colombia and Peru

The Council adopted a decision authorising the opening of negotiations on short-stay visa waiver agreements between the European Union and Colombia and Peru.

Pursuant to [regulation 509/2014](#) the references to Colombia and Peru (and some other countries) have been transferred from Annex I (visa obligation) to Annex II (visa exemption) of Council Regulation 539/2001. The regulation says that this exemption will come into force only when bilateral agreements on visa waiver between the EU and the countries concerned have been concluded in order to ensure full reciprocity.

For Peru and Colombia, an additional step was required before opening negotiations on bilateral visa waiver agreements: a Commission assessment of the two countries with regard to the criteria set out in Article 1(1) of Regulation 509/2014. On 29 October 2014 the Commission adopted two reports concluding that both countries fulfilled the relevant criteria.

FISHERIES

General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean - Political agreement

The Council confirmed its political agreement with the European Parliament on an amendment to regulation 1343/2011 on certain provisions for fishing in the GFCM (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean) agreement area ([11841/14](#)).

The proposal aims to transpose into EU law a number of measures adopted by the GFCM at its annual sessions of 2011, 2012 and 2013. The EU, as well as Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Romania, Slovenia and Spain are contracting parties to the GFCM, a regional fisheries management organisation (RFMO) established under the FAO Constitution. The GFCM may, on the basis of scientific advice, adopt recommendations and resolutions designed to promote the development, conservation, rational management and best utilisation of stocks of living aquatic resources in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea at levels which are considered sustainable and low risk. Since recommendations adopted by the GFCM are binding on its contracting parties, they should be transposed into EU law.

The last transposition of GFCM decisions was done by means of regulation 1343/2011. The current proposal will insert the measures to be transposed into that legislative act by way of amendments to it.

The European Parliament approved the texts at the meeting of its Committee on Fisheries on 11 May 2015. Now, after confirmation of political agreement, if the Council approves the texts in first reading, after legal-linguistic revision, the European Parliament will prepare adoption of the same text in early second reading. The Council can expect to receive the revised text in the coming months.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Treaty on access to published works for blind and visually impaired people

The Council adopted a decision requesting the Commission to submit a legislative proposal with a view to amending the EU's legal framework so that it complies with the [Marrakesh Treaty](#) to facilitate access to published works for persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled.

Such a legislative proposal is necessary to ensure compliance of the European legal order with international obligations from the time of the conclusion of the Marrakesh Treaty, and its speedy implementation and application in EU member states. The Council is committed to the rapid entry into force of the Treaty.

The EU, which signed the Marrakesh Treaty on 30 April 2014, requires its legal framework to be amended to comply with it.

CUSTOMS UNION

Heavy oils - Suspension of duties

The Council exempted certain heavy oils from customs duties retroactively from 4 April 2013 to 30 June 2014.

The [decision](#) avoids a gap in the same tariff treatment granted to the same categories of products by reinstating the duty free treatment for certain heavy oils, which they had enjoyed since 1968.

It allows the repayment of duties on imports collected during the 15-month period.

Until April 2013, certain oils in which the weight of the aromatic constituents exceeds that of the non-aromatic constituents enjoyed duty free treatment in accordance with their classification in the Combined Nomenclature (CN).

However, following a change to classification rules, since 4 April 2013 those oils were classified under a different heading of the CN and subject to a duty rate of 1.7%. With effect from 1 July 2014, [regulation 1387/2013](#) granted them a temporary autonomous suspension of duties.

The favourable tariff treatment should have been applied without interruption as long as those products were intended to undergo specific processes and the end-use procedures were met.

ENVIRONMENT

Lima Declaration

The Council approved the signature on behalf of the EU of the Lima Declaration ([8704/15](#)).

The Lima Declaration is a political declaration not connected with any financial commitment. Its purpose is to enhance ongoing political collaboration with Ethiopia to advance international climate policy, especially through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations. It also expresses support for long-term cooperation in view of the implementation of Ethiopia's Climate-Resilient Green Economy Strategy.

In the past months, the partnership, attended by the EU as an observer pending signature of the Lima Declaration, has proved to become a strategic opportunity in the lead-up to this year's climate summit in Paris.

TRANSPORT

Aircraft registered in a third country

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending regulation 965/2012 as regards operations by EU air carriers of aircraft registered in a third country ([7257/15](#)).

The Commission regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt it, unless the European Parliament objects.

TRANSPARENCY

Access to Council documents - Annual report

The Council adopted its [2014 annual report](#) on the implementation of regulation 1049/2001 regarding public access to documents.

The report provides an overview of the Council's transparency policy and practice and gives information about the Council's public register of documents as well as statistics on public access to documents.

The report indicates that in 2014:

- The Council's public document register listed 317 154 original language documents, of which 67% were available in a downloadable format.
- 802 953 unique visitors logged on to the register, 13.5% more than in 2013.
- The Council received 2 445 initial requests for access from the public concerning a total of 10 839 documents and gave access (either entirely or in part) to 82.7.% of the requested documents.

In addition, the report highlights the key developments in the 13th year of implementation of the regulation and reviews complaints submitted to the European Ombudsman, as well as rulings given by the Courts of the European Union in 2014 in the field of regulation 1049/2001.
