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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	Council conclusions on Nicaragua - Council conclusions (14 October 2019)

Delegations will find in Annex the Council conclusions on Nicaragua, as adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council at its meeting on 14 October 2019.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON NICARAGUA**Foreign Affairs Council, 14 October 2019**

1. The European Union (EU) recalls its Council Conclusions of 21 January 2019, as well as various statements made since April 2018, in which it expressed its concern at the deteriorating political and social situation in Nicaragua and firmly condemned the repression by security forces and pro-government armed groups of political opponents, demonstrators, independent media and civil society organisations that has been ongoing since April 2018. It rejected the use of anti-terrorist laws to persecute and criminalise dissenting opinions. The EU also affirmed its determination to use all its instruments to support a peaceful and negotiated solution to the crisis and its intention to monitor the situation in the country closely to react to further deterioration of human rights and the rule of law.
2. Since the Council Conclusions of January 2019 the overall situation of human rights and democratic governance remains highly concerning. Institutional and legislative measures adopted with the stated purpose of reconciliation, such as the Amnesty Law adopted by the Nicaraguan National Assembly this June, were imposed without consultations and do not comply with relevant international principles. The report of the Group of Independent Experts on human rights violations committed since 18 April 2018 has not been followed up. Accountability is an important element for truth, justice and reconciliation. Positive steps in the release of a substantial number of political prisoners have not been accompanied by the implementation of the totality of the March 2019 agreements between the government and the Civic Alliance, notably on the reestablishment of civil and political rights. The continued refusal to resume the dialogue with the opposition conveys a negative signal on the willingness of the government to work towards a peaceful and democratic way out of the crisis.

3. As a consequence, and in addition to on-going political and diplomatic efforts to support justice and democracy, the Council has today decided to adopt a framework for targeted restrictive measures. The adopted framework allows for a gradual and flexible approach regarding restrictive individual designations for a travel ban and assets freeze as appropriate. Specific designations can thereafter be added in case of a continued stalemate and further deterioration of the human rights and rule of law or reversed in case of positive and decisive steps. The EU underlines that its restrictive measures are targeted and are designed not to harm the Nicaraguan population.
4. In this context, the EU recalls the three main areas in which tangible progress needs to be made in order to create the conditions for a peaceful and democratic exit to the crisis: 1) the implementation in full of the 29 March 2019 agreements to strengthen civil and political rights and guarantees, including the reestablishment of political freedoms and the legal status of banned civil society organisations, the voluntary and safe return of exiles and the release of the remaining political prisoners and charges dropped. This also means stopping the harassment and intimidation of released political prisoners and their families and guaranteeing their safety and physical integrity. 2) full cooperation with and the return of international human rights bodies to Nicaragua, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR); and 3) an agreement on electoral and institutional reforms between the government and the opposition, including the Civic Alliance aimed at guaranteeing fair and transparent elections.
5. The EU urgently calls upon the government of Nicaragua and all parties to constructively re-engage in a meaningful, results-oriented and comprehensive national dialogue, including on the adoption of electoral reforms according to international standards as an essential step to restore trust in public institutions. The EU stands ready to provide its support if so requested by the parties.
6. The EU reaffirms its commitment to continue to work towards a peaceful way out of the current crisis and to support the Nicaraguan people in fulfilling their pressing needs and aspirations.