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Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 15 and 16 November 2021

President **Josep Borrell Fontelles**
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security
Policy

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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

Foreign Affairs Council with Foreign Affairs Ministers

Current affairs

Ministers had a discussion on the situation in Belarus and the issue of migrants being pushed towards the EU's borders in an orchestrated attempt to have them enter the EU illegally.

The Council stood united against the ongoing hybrid aggression against the EU.

Ministers agreed to expand the scope of the sanctions regime on Belarus and to adopt the fifth package of sanctions, which will be finalised in the coming days.

The High Representative then informed ministers about his outreach activities to try to convince Minsk to stop using migration for political objectives.

The High Representative underlined the full responsibility of Belarus for artificially creating the flow of migrants and explained that the EU would work with international organisations such as the United Nations to ensure that humanitarian assistance is provided to those in need.

Dialogue will be re-established when the Lukashenko regime stops committing violations and starts to respect the human rights of its own people in Belarus.

[Belarus: EU broadens scope for sanctions to tackle hybrid attacks and instrumentalisation of migrants \(press release, 15 November 2021\)](#)

Ministers were informed about Turkey's unilateral moves to change the status quo in Varosha, in breach of UN Security Council resolutions. The Council expressed its strong solidarity with Cyprus and the will to transform this solidarity into concrete proposals on how to address the situation. An option paper will soon be presented to EU ambassadors sitting in COREPER, with a view to preparing the ground for a discussion at the December Foreign Affairs Council.

Ethiopia was also discussed, with a focus on the situation in Tigray that, one year after the beginning of the conflict, has worsened further, creating a devastating humanitarian crisis. The High Representative restated that there is no military solution to the conflict and that everything must be done to spare Ethiopian citizens from the chaos of a fully-fledged civil war. The EU stands fully behind the efforts of the region and the African Union in offering a table for talks.

The Council then touched on Sudan. An immediate return to the path of civilian-led transition to democracy remains the only road to freedom, peace and justice for all Sudanese. The High Representative stressed the need for a dialogue between all parties, welcomed all mediations efforts, and called on the military to respect human rights and international humanitarian law.

Western Balkans

Foreign Affairs Ministers had a discussion on concrete ways to strengthen the EU's engagement with the Western Balkans beyond enlargement. They focused in particular on how to involve the Western Balkans partners in the EU's foreign policy discussions, and on ways to enhance cooperation on cyber security, hybrid threats and other areas such as the use of space data.

The Council also had a discussion on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The High Representative stressed the EU's commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's European perspective as a single, united and sovereign country, and the need for Bosnian leaders to resume dialogue, return to state institutions in full capacity and restart work on key reforms.

On the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, ministers reiterated their expectation that Kosovo and Serbia fully respect and implement all previous agreements, and constructively engage to make rapid progress on the comprehensive normalisation of their relations.

The Sahel

Ministers agreed that the EU must keep delivering on the implementation of the Sahel Strategy and the Sahel Coalition roadmap, to address the difficult situation in the region.

The Council also discussed the deteriorating situation in Mali, where the elections scheduled in February were unlawfully postponed by the leaders of the transition. They agreed to establish a dedicated framework for restrictive measures in view of the situation in Mali, supporting the decision taken by ECOWAS. The possible involvement of the Wagner group and the possibility of further restrictive measures was also touched on.

Specific proposals to designate individuals and entities under existing EU sanctions regimes are being assessed in the relevant working groups, and will be considered for possible adoption in view of the December Foreign Affairs Council.

Council conclusions

The Council approved conclusions on:

- [the 6th Review Conference of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the use of Certain Conventional Weapons](#)
- [the 10th Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](#)

Foreign Affairs Council with Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers

Strategic Compass

EU foreign affairs and defence ministers sitting in a joint session exchanged views on the first draft of the EU Strategic Compass, which is intended to provide clear political-strategic guidance on the EU approach to security and defence in the next 5 to 10 years, and to step up the EU's role as global security provider.

Building on a comprehensive threat analysis, the Strategic Compass sets out concrete measures and related timelines for action, covering a wide spectrum of areas ranging from the Common Security and Defence Policy to cyber and hybrid threats, disinformation, capability development and partnerships.

There was broad support for the document. Ministers expressed their willingness to work on this with a view to adoption of the final Compass in March 2022.

The High Representative stressed that member states had supported the approach on defence capabilities, addressing hybrid challenges and engaging with partners. Ministers underlined that the EU approach had to be complementary to and beneficial to NATO, avoiding duplication and ensuring coherence.

Foreign Affairs Council with Defence Ministers

Current affairs

EU defence ministers were briefed by the High Representative, Josep Borrell, about current affairs, reviewing a number of recent developments.

First the Council was updated about operation EUFOR Althea, following the recent mandate renewal by the UN Security Council. The Council has recently adopted a measure under the European Peace Facility through which the EU will deliver 68 medical and transport vehicles and 150 metal detectors to help Bosnia and Herzegovina be fully mine-free by 2027.

Ministers were also informed about the steps that will be taken to use the Coordinated Maritime Presences concept beyond the Gulf of Guinea. A new specific maritime area of interest could be established in the Indo-Pacific as early as next year.

The Council then touched on progress made in the area of Military Mobility, where there have been concrete steps on regulatory issues and infrastructures, and turned to a discussion of Belarus. On the latter, the High Representative stressed that this was not a migration crisis and that the EU would respond with all the tools at its disposal.

EU Training Missions

The Council exchanged views on the four EU Training Missions in Mali, Somalia, the Central African Republic and Mozambique, and possible ways to improve their effectiveness.

PESCO

The Council adopted a decision updating the list of projects to be undertaken under the EU permanent structured cooperation (PESCO). As a result, 14 new projects will be added to the list of the 46 existing ones that have been developed under PESCO since December 2017.

[EU defence cooperation: Council launches the 4th wave of new PESCO projects \(press release, 16 November 2021\)](#)

[Permanent Structured Cooperation \(PESCO\)'s projects - Overview](#)

NATO

Over an informal working lunch, ministers exchanged views with the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on new areas for EU-NATO cooperation, such as resilience, climate and defence, and emerging and disruptive technologies. It was agreed to work on a new Joint Declaration on EU-NATO cooperation in the coming months.

European Defence Agency Steering Board

The European Defence Agency's (EDA) ministerial steering board met before the Council meeting to approve the Agency's 2022 general budget of € 38 million, to discuss the agency's mandate to negotiate an administrative arrangement with the US Department of Defence, and to discuss how to reinforce the EDA's role in fostering defence innovation.

[Outcome of the EDA steering board, 16 November 2021 \(EDA\)](#)

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**FOREIGN AFFAIRS****Inspection Mechanism in Yemen (UNVIM)**

The Council adopted an amended decision regarding deployment of the Inspection Mechanism in Yemen (UNVIM) in the ports of Hodeidah, Saleef and Ras Issa and in other locations in countries bordering Yemen. Furthermore, the Council approved the financial reference amount associated with the reinforcement of UNVIM to respond to the needs of the Yemeni population as part of a broader humanitarian strategy, which will be € 2 059 838 for the period from 1 October 2020 until 28 February 2022, and € 2 200 000 for the period from 1 March 2022 until 30 September 2022.

Council statement for the minutes of the International Seabed Authority meetings

The Council approved the statement to be entered in the minutes of meetings of the International Seabed Authority, stating that the required qualified majority cannot be reached for adoption of the proposed Council Decision on the position to be adopted on behalf of the European Union at the meetings of the International Seabed Authority Council and Assembly.

Single Progress Report on the Development of EU Military Capabilities 2021

The Council noted the Single Progress Report on the Development of EU Military Capabilities 2021. The report focuses on the EU headline goal process, EU defence initiatives related to EU capability development, cooperation with NATO, and the Strategic Compass, with conclusions and a recommendation.

Council guidelines for the European Defence Agency's work in 2022

The Council approved the guidelines for the European Defence Agency's (EDA) work in 2022. The Council invited the agency to continue working on the Strategic Compass and providing support to member states on capabilities development, strengthening capability planning, and development and implementation of projects and activities on the prior request of member states. The Council invited the EDA to assist member states in focusing on opportunities in the domain of emerging and disruptive technologies, welcomed the association and contribution of the EDA to the Commission Action Plan and invited the agency to be involved in the revision of the Cyber Defence Policy Framework.

More binding PESCO commitments

The Council adopted a recommendation concerning the fulfilment of the more binding commitments undertaken in the framework of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO). The aim for the second initial phase until 2025 is to fulfil the more binding commitments that member states made to one another, including working towards a coherent full spectrum force package that contributes to the fulfilment of the EU's Level of Ambition.

Assessment by participating member states of PESCO's progress

The Council adopted a recommendation assessing the progress made by the participating member states to fulfil commitments undertaken in the framework of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO). The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy provided the annual report, detailing the objective and scope, findings and assessment, national implementation plans, PESCO projects and describing the way forward.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Council implementing decision extending a special measure of Croatia in derogation from the VAT Directive

The Council adopted its implementing decision extending a special measure of Croatia in derogation from Article 26(1), point (a), and Article 168 of the VAT Directive, as finalised by the legal/linguistic experts and set out in document 13075/21 ([13128/21](#); [13075/21](#)).

Council Implementing Decision authorising Estonia to apply a measure derogating from the VAT Directive

The Council adopted its implementing decision authorising Estonia to apply a measure derogating from Article 26(1), point (a), and Articles 168 and 168a of the VAT Directive, as finalised by the legal/linguistic experts and set out in document 13108/21 ([13108/21](#); [13174/21](#)).
