



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 23 July 2020
(OR. en)

9649/20
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LIMITE
PV CONS 18
RELEX 544

DRAFT MINUTES
COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
(Foreign Affairs)
13 July 2020

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Non-legislative activities

3. **Current Affairs**

Ministers briefly discussed Libya, the Middle East Peace Process, the EU-India Summit, Africa, the post-Cotonou negotiations, Hong Kong, Venezuela, Iran/JCPOA, and the EU-Facilitated Belgrade – Pristina Dialogue under Current Affairs.

The High Representative also referred to the latest developments in Venezuela and proposed to convene a ministerial meeting of the International Contact Group and meeting other key actors.

4. **Any other business**

Commission Vice-President Jourova presented the **Joint Communication Tackling COVID-19 disinformation - Getting the facts right**.

5. **Latin America and the Caribbean (COVID-19)**

Exchange of views

Ministers discussed relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean, in light of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, including on how the EU could support long-term recovery of the region and explore ways to reengage. Ministers broadly welcomed the "Team Europe" programme approach.

6. Turkey



The Council held a debate on Turkey. There was broad support to task the High Representative to explore paths that could contribute to lowering tensions and reaching common understandings with Turkey. The High Representative should also prepare options on further appropriate measures that could be taken in response to Turkish actions. In the meantime, work should continue on additional listings within the existing sanctions framework as requested by Cyprus.



Restricted item

Statements to the non-legislative "A" items set out in 9468/20

Ad "A" item 9: **Conclusions on EU priorities for cooperation with the Council of Europe 2020-2022**
Approval

STATEMENT BY BULGARIA

"Bulgaria reiterates its national position on the notion "gender identity" in the context of the Council of Europe's *Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)* as follows:

Bulgaria attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of human rights, including protection against violence and discrimination. The country has developed a strong national legislation on combatting violence against women and domestic violence. It also continues its efforts on adopting measures and policies to resolve existing challenges.

In 2018, the Bulgarian Constitutional Court adopted a decision stating that the Council of Europe's *Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)* promotes legal concepts that are incompatible with main principles of the Bulgarian Constitution. Therefore, Bulgaria cannot accept the term "gender identity" according to the said decision of the Bulgarian Constitutional Court.

Bulgaria does not tolerate and combats discrimination on the grounds, enumerated in the internationally established and widely adopted conventions on human rights in the UN and Council of Europe fora as well as those enshrined in the EU legislation. However, the leading documents such as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Non-discrimination in External Action do not include a legally binding reference to "gender identity". The above represents the position of Bulgaria on all issues related to the ratification of the *Istanbul Convention* by the country and the use of the notion "gender identity" in this context."

STATEMENT BY HUNGARY

"In view of the incoming chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2021, Hungary welcomes the agreement on the Conclusions on EU priorities for cooperation with the Council of Europe 2020-2022. This document sets out the path in which the two organizations can work together, while striving to avoid unnecessary overlaps.

Hungary remains dedicated to its human rights commitments, including the specific areas touched upon in the document and to combat all forms of violence against women and domestic violence. However, we must underline that the Hungarian National Assembly decided not to include in the Hungarian national legal system either the concept of gender or the gender-based approach of the Istanbul Convention.

Therefore, in line with the relevant declaration of the Hungarian National Assembly, we reserve the right not to recognize the binding force of the Istanbul Convention and we reaffirm that Hungary will not support or promote the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the European Union."
