

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

12 December 2016

The Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will start at 10.30 with a discussion on **Africa**. The discussion is intended to guide the forthcoming joint communication on Africa which is due to be presented in spring 2017. The discussion will also feed into the preparations of the next Africa-EU Summit which will be held in autumn 2017.

Ministers will also discuss the **Democratic Republic of Congo**. They will take stock of the latest developments in the country.

Ahead of the European Council on 15 December, the Council will discuss **migration**, focusing on the implementation of the Valletta commitments. It will also look at progress made in the partnership framework approach and country-specific compacts.

The Council will be preceded by the signature of the **EU-Cuba** Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement, at 9.30.

After the Council meeting, ministers will have an informal discussion with President Santos of Colombia. This will be followed by the signature of the constitutive agreement of the **EU Trust Fund for Colombia**.

Press opportunities:

- +/- 07.45 tbc Doorstep statement by High Representative Federica Mogherini
- +/- 10.05 Press conference - EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement
- +/- 16.30 Press conference - Foreign Affairs Council
- +/- 18.05 Press conference - EU-Colombia relations

[Press conferences and public events by video streaming](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

EU-Africa relations

The Council will start with a debate on **EU-Africa relations**. The discussion is intended to guide the forthcoming joint communication on the EU's strategic objectives and priorities in its relations with Africa which is due to be presented in April 2017. The discussion will also feed into the preparations of the next Africa-EU Summit which is due to take place in autumn 2017.

The Council will discuss the priorities in the EU relations with Africa in line with the Global Strategy on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy and the proposed new European consensus on development. Ministers will discuss how to make relations evolve in light of **emerging challenges** such as economic downturn, demographic evolution, increasing state fragility, irregular migration and its root causes, violent radicalisation, terrorism and severe humanitarian crises.

Engagement in and with Africa remains key in preventing conflict, promoting human security, addressing the root causes of instability, managing migration flows, and supporting job creation through trade, development cooperation and investment.

The Council is expected to look at how the **political and societal transformation** taking place in the continent may change the conditions for EU engagement. In some countries, political participation, freedom and stability is increasing; African regional organisations have gradually taken an active role in promoting good governance. Nevertheless, governance remains fragile and tenuous and the possibility of many reversals lurks. Ministers are expected to discuss how to make EU's efforts to strengthen political stability and democratic resilience more effective.

Ministers will also discuss how to support structural transformation of African economies to generate **inclusive growth**. Despite overall progress in Africa's economic performance, its growth rates have not generated sufficient jobs and have not been inclusive enough to significantly curb poverty. Ministers will look at the role of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) and the proposed European External Investment Plan (EIP) in boosting investment and economic integration. The Council will also have a discussion on how to support innovation to further drive Africa's energy transformation and climate change adaptation.

The Council is also expected to assess how to respond to Africa's current **security challenges**.

The Council may also take stock of the state of play of the implementation of the EU-Africa roadmap 2014-2017, adopted at the last EU-Africa Summit on 2-3 April 2014.

[4th EU-Africa summit declaration, 2- 3 April 2014](#)

[EU-Africa roadmap 2014-2017, 2-3 April 2014](#)

[EU-Africa relations](#)

Democratic Republic of Congo

The Council will discuss recent developments in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The EU has expressed its concern over the deteriorating political and security situation. As the date marking the constitutional end of the President Kabila's mandate is approaching, ministers are expected to reiterate the EU call for the commitment of all stakeholders to respect the Constitution.

In its conclusions of 17 October 2016, the Council condemned the acts of extreme violence that had taken place on 19 and 20 September 2016 in the DRC, in particular in Kinshasa. Ministers remarked that those acts have further exacerbated the deadlock in the DRC due to the failure to call the presidential election within the constitutional deadline. The Council reaffirmed the primary responsibility of the DRC authorities for the timely holding of the elections.

The Council conclusions had clearly indicated that the EU will use all the means at its disposal, including individual restrictive measures. These measures would target those responsible for serious human rights violations, those who promote violence and those who would try to obstruct a consensual and peaceful solution to the crisis.

The Council is expected to decide on the possibility of adopting restrictive measures in accordance with these criteria.

[Council conclusions on the Democratic Republic of Congo of 17 October 2016](#)

[The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the EU](#)

Syria

Over lunch, ministers will discuss the recent developments in Syria. Ministers will take stock of the latest developments on the ground, in particular in Aleppo. They will exchange views on how to support the UN efforts to get the parties in the conflict back to the negotiating table of the political process in Geneva.

Ministers will follow up on developments in Syria since their last discussion at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 14 November 2016. In its conclusions of 20 October 2016, the European Council invited the High Representative to continue, together with the Commission, pursuing the EU humanitarian initiative and medical evacuations in cooperation with the UN. In parallel to the humanitarian work, the High Representative conducted intensified outreach to key actors in the region focusing on post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction once a political transition is in place.

The EU and the member states have so far mobilised more than € 8.9 billion in humanitarian aid and stabilisation in response to the crisis in Syria. In February 2016, they pledged more than € 3 billion for 2016-2017.

[High Representative's remarks at the panel on the future of Syria with the UN Special Envoy Staffan De Mistura - 3 December 2016](#)

[Syria: Council response to the crisis](#)

Migration

The Council will discuss migration, following up on the discussion at the Foreign Affairs Council on 17 October and the Foreign Affairs Council (Development) of 28 November. The Council will take stock of the progress made in the **partnership framework approach** and country specific compacts with the five priority countries, namely Mali, Niger, Senegal, Nigeria and Ethiopia. Minister will also take stock of the implementation of the **Valletta commitments** in view of the senior officials meeting that will take place next February in Malta under the auspices of the rotating Presidency.

Foreign affairs ministers will also take stock on the ongoing work on the proposed External investment plan, including the **European Fund for Sustainable Development**. On 1 December 2016, the Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) agreed on the Council's negotiating position on the regulation on the EFSD. The fund will contribute to tackling the root causes of migration, by creating job opportunities, encouraging investments and facilitating sustainable development in partner countries. The Council's position is expected to be adopted by the Council (General Affairs) on 13 December.

The discussion will feed into the preparation of **the European Council of 15 December** which will take stock of the latest developments concerning the EU's comprehensive migration policy, with a particular focus on the external dimension. The High Representative and the Commission are expected to present a second progress report and first deliverables on 13 December.

The European Council conclusions of 20 October 2016 recalled the importance of continuing to work towards the implementation of the partnership framework, with an initial focus on Africa, in order to prevent illegal migration along the Central Mediterranean route.

The EU integrated migration as a permanent component of its foreign policy. It consequently stepped up its engagement and strengthened its cooperation with third countries on migration, at both bilateral and multilateral levels.

[European Council conclusions on migration, 20 October 2016](#)

[European fund for sustainable development: Council agrees negotiating position](#)

[Responding to migratory pressures](#)

[Valletta summit, 11-12 November 2015 - action plan](#)

Other items

The Council is due to take a number of decisions without discussion, including:

South Sudan

The Council is due to adopt conclusions on South Sudan, in light of the profoundly disturbing developments in the country. The Council is expected to call on all parties to lay down their arms and to take decisive steps to end violence, as a last chance for political and military leaders to avoid the resumption of war, to spare their people further suffering and to find a just and inclusive political settlement of their differences.

The Council is expected to call upon the transitional government to uphold its responsibility for the protection of civilians and on all parties to put an end to violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law.

[Council conclusions on South Sudan of 18 July 2016](#)

[Delegation of the European Union to South Sudan](#)

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK - North Korea), strongly condemning the nuclear tests and multiple ballistic missile launches conducted by the DPRK in 2016. These represent a serious threat to international peace and security and undermine the global non-proliferation regime of which the EU has been a steadfast instrumental supporter for decades.

The Council is expected to underline that these irresponsible and illegal actions aggravate tensions on the Korean Peninsula to the detriment of all. The Council may call again on the DPRK to re-engage in a credible and meaningful dialogue with the international community.

[North Korea page of the EEAS website](#)

In the margins of the Council

Cuba

The Council will be preceded by the signature of the **EU-Cuba** political dialogue and cooperation agreement. This first ever agreement between the EU and Cuba will constitute the new legal framework for EU-Cuba relations. It foresees an enhanced political dialogue, improved bilateral cooperation and the development of joint action in multilateral fora.

Upon signature of the agreement, in line with the Council decision of 6 December, the EU 1996 Common Position on Cuba will be repealed.

The PDCA creates an enabling framework for enhanced political dialogue, for improved bilateral cooperation as well as for developing joint action in multilateral fora. It defines general principles and objectives for the relationship between the EU and Cuba. It includes three main chapters:

- **Political dialogue**, addressing issues such as human rights, small arms and disarmament, migration, drugs, fight against terrorism, sustainable development, among other issues
- **Cooperation and sector policy dialogue**, including inter alia areas such as human rights, governance, civil society, social and economic development, environment as well as regional cooperation
- **Trade and trade cooperation**, dealing with principles of international trade and covers cooperation on customs, trade facilitation, technical norms and standards, sustainable trade and investment.

The agreement reflects the expansion and strengthening of EU-Cuba relations, building on the important progress made since the relaunch of political dialogue and cooperation in 2008.

Negotiations of the agreement had started in April 2014 and were completed after seven rounds in March 2016. On 11 March 2016, the High Representative visited Cuba for the seventh formal EU-Cuba political dialogue meeting, during which the agreement was formally initialed.

The agreement will be signed and concluded as a "mixed" agreement. This means that on the EU side, it must be signed by both the EU and the member states, and ratified by all relevant national and regional parliaments. The agreement will be applied on a provisional basis, pending ratification by all of the member states. Provisional application will concern the provisions of EU competence.

[EU-Cuba: Council opens new chapter in relations - press release of 6 December 2016](#)

[EU-Cuba relations](#)

[Delegation of the European Union to Cuba](#)

Colombia

After the Council meeting, ministers will have an informal discussion with **President Santos** of Colombia. This will be followed by the signature of the constitutive agreement of the **EU Trust Fund for Colombia**.

The European Commission adopted a decision authorising the establishment of the trust fund on 23 March, with the overall objective of supporting the implementation of the final peace agreement. The EU Trust Fund is set to have close to **€95 million** at its disposal, from the EU budget and from contributions of 19 EU member states. The general focus of the trust fund will be on rural development.

The EU Trust Fund for Colombia is part of an overall package of almost EUR 600 million to support Colombia's post conflict and peace building efforts. Apart from the trust fund, EU support to Colombia consists of short and medium term measures in the form of loans, technical assistance and grants. It includes cooperation funds from the Development Cooperation Instrument (EUR 67 million for the period 2014-2017) and from the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (EUR 28 million) in support of the Colombian government's rapid response plan, as well as loans offered by the European Investment Bank (EUR 400 million).

The signature of the constitutive agreement of the **EU Trust Fund for Colombia** will take place at 17.30 on Monday 12 December, in presence of the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and President of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos. It will be signed by the European Commission and by the 19 participating member states: Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Slovakia, Slovenia.

It will be followed by a family photo and a press conference. A specific accreditation is needed to participate to photo opportunities and to attend the press conference, see media advisory.

[Media advisory - Visit of the President of Colombia in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council](#)

