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3309th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg, 14 and 15 April 2014

President

Catherine Ashton

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and
Security Policy

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Main results of the Council

Meeting of Foreign Ministers

Ukraine

The Council condemned actions undertaken by armed individuals in cities of Eastern Ukraine. These attempts at destabilising Ukraine must come to an end. The Council also decided to expand the list of those subject to asset freeze and visa ban.

The Council reiterated its strong support for Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and called upon Russia to do likewise. It demanded Russia to call back its troops from the Ukrainian border and immediately withdraw the mandate of the Federation Council to use force on Ukrainian soil.

Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said: "Any further action aimed at destabilising Ukraine must stop. It is crucial that Russia and Ukraine engage in a meaningful dialogue to find a political solution. I will meet the Foreign Ministers of the United States, Russia and Ukraine this Thursday in Geneva. The purpose of this meeting is to start a dialogue on how to deescalate the situation in Ukraine and to ensure that peace and stability returns to the whole of Ukraine."

The Council also signalled that the EU is ready to assist Ukraine in the field of civilian security sector reform. All options will be examined, including a possible mission under the Common Security and Defence Policy, and a decision will be taken at the next Foreign Affairs Council.

In addition, the Council approved macro-financial assistance to Ukraine to support the country's economic stabilisation and reforms. € 1 billion can be made available to contribute to covering Ukraine's urgent balance-of-payments needs as identified in the government's economic programme supported by the IMF. This brings the total amount to € 1.6 billion.

The Council also adopted temporary tariff cuts on Ukrainian goods, ahead of the application of the Association Agreement. The reduction of customs duties is expected to enter into force on 23 April.

The Council moreover strengthened EU sanctions against persons responsible for misappropriating Ukrainian state funds. It targeted four additional persons in Ukraine with an asset freeze.

Meeting of Defence Ministers

Mali

The Council established a civilian mission under the Common Security and Defence Policy to support the internal security forces in Mali. It will support the Malian state to ensure democratic order and the conditions for lasting peace through strategic advice and training for the three internal security forces in Mali, i.e. the police, Gendarmerie and Garde nationale.

The EU High Representative said: "EUCAP Sahel Mali is a further demonstration of the EU's commitment to supporting reform in Mali. By assisting the Malian internal security forces with EU expertise, EUCAP will help build a lasting solution to Mali's security challenges."

The Council also extended the complementary EU training mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) by two years, i.e. until 18 May 2016. The mission supports the training and reorganisation of the Malian Armed Forces so as to help improve the military capacity of the Malian Armed Forces. The extension of the mandate will allow military training of four additional battalions as well as the implementation of additional tasks.

Ukraine

Over lunch, EU defence ministers discussed the effects of the Ukrainian crisis on the common security and defence policy, in the presence of NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

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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

Syria

Over lunch, ministers exchanged views on the latest developments in the Syrian crisis. The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU reiterates that there can only be a political solution to the conflict in Syria that has now lasted for more than three years and underscores the importance of reinvigorating the Geneva process. The regime's constant obstruction of the talks, its decision to list members of the opposition negotiating team as terrorists, and its rejection of the Geneva Communiqué led to the failure of the two first rounds of the negotiations. The EU urges those with influence on the Syrian regime to put pressure on it to engage much more constructively in the talks. The EU commends the attitude of the opposition delegation led by the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SOC) throughout the negotiations and welcomes their continued commitment to the political process.

The EU reiterates its support to the UN and the Joint Special Representative Brahimi and calls on the Syrian regime to show a clear commitment to the negotiation agenda and the method of work, in particular treating in parallel the issues of terrorism and transition, as outlined in Brahimi's report to the UNSC and the UNGA on 13 and 14 March. The EU calls upon the Syrian regime to respect all elements of the Geneva Communiqué, which was enshrined in the UNSC resolutions 2118 and 2139.

The EU reiterates the position that any elections in Syria should only take place within the framework of the Geneva Communiqué and through a genuine political process where also women and civil society should have an active and a meaningful role. Any elections, presidential or other, organised by the regime outside this framework, conducted in the midst of conflict, only in regime-controlled areas and with millions of Syrians displaced from their homes would be a parody of democracy, have no credibility whatsoever, and undermine efforts to reach a political solution. The EU calls on other countries and organisations, particularly those which had taken part in the Montreux conference, to adopt the same position.

2. The EU notes with great concern the attempts of the regime to circumvent EU restrictive measures in order to secure new resources and continue financing its policy of violence. The EU will act swiftly against persons and entities which are facilitating the circumvention of EU sanctions and will take appropriate steps to keep existing sanctions effective. The EU will continue its sanctions policy targeting the regime as long as repression continues and will explore what more can be done to address those responsible for human rights violations or international humanitarian law violations.

3. The EU welcomes the 7th report of the independent international Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic published on 5 March and its recommendations. The EU strongly condemns the war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by government forces, pro-government militias, terrorist and other non-state armed groups, and notes that the report makes clear that the Syrian regime and its affiliates are responsible for a large number of violations and abuses. In that context, the EU is outraged by the continued barrel bombings of civilian areas by the regime and its use of starvation sieges as a tactic of war. The EU recalls that all responsible for such acts must be held accountable and that there can be no impunity for any such violations and abuses. The EU calls on the Security Council to urgently address the prevailing culture of impunity and refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

4. The EU deplores the grave abuses committed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other terrorist groups with links to al-Qaeda such as the Al-Nusra Front. The EU condemns the regime's decision to enlist the military support of foreign groups, including the military wing of Hezbollah, al-Quds Force and Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas. The EU welcomes the SOC's rejection of terrorism and their consistent condemnation of terrorist acts and notes that the Syrian opposition is leading the fight against ISIL. The EU calls on all relevant parties to halt their support to these groups and is determined to engage with third countries to deal effectively with terrorism and the financing of the flows of foreign fighters.

5. The EU deplores the lack of progress on the implementation of the UNSC resolution 2139 as reported in the first 30-day review presented to the UNSC by the UNSG on 28 March. The EU strongly condemns the continuing artillery shelling and aerial bombardment by the regime, including the use of barrel bombs. It calls on all parties to immediately and without further delay comply with the resolution, especially on the issue of humanitarian access, which should be unfettered rather than granted occasionally on a case by case basis. All parties have, in particular, an obligation to protect schools and hospitals and respect their civilian character, as well as to ensure safe passage for medical personnel, hospitals and ambulances. In this respect, the EU recognises the primary responsibility of the regime for maintaining excessive administrative and other obstacles to effective aid delivery, especially to non-regime held areas. Continued withholding of consent to basic relief operations, across borders and across the lines of conflict, is arbitrary and unjustified. The EU urges UN agencies and humanitarian organisations to be allowed to bring humanitarian assistance to those who need it most in all areas of the country, including hard-to-reach and besieged areas, in line with the humanitarian imperative. To facilitate this the UN and their implementing partners should be allowed to deliver relief items through the most direct routes and most efficient means across conflict lines and across all relevant border crossing points. The EU calls for future reports by the UNSG to contain robust and specific demands for access in response to blockages identified on the ground, and calls upon the UNSC to take further measures if non-compliance continues.

The EU supports the work of the High Level Group on humanitarian challenges and the overall humanitarian aid coordination by OCHA.

6. The EU is concerned with cases of forced surrender, labelled as local ceasefires, imposed by the regime through starvation sieges. The EU calls on the regime to allow effective third-party monitoring of ceasefires to sustain them, to allow safe and unhindered evacuations of civilians on a voluntary basis and the passage of humanitarian convoys and personnel.
7. The EU is increasingly concerned about the worsening plight of all vulnerable groups, and ethnic and religious minorities, noting that Christians are increasingly targeted by extremist groups.

The EU calls on all parties, in particular the Syrian regime, to ensure the protection of the civilian population and calls on all parties to the conflict to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

The EU welcomes the strong commitment of the SOC to a democratic and pluralist Syria, where all minorities and vulnerable groups have a place.

8. The EU continues to commend those neighbouring countries, notably Lebanon and Jordan, which continue to keep their borders open and provide safe haven for refugees from Syria, including Palestinians. The EU pledges to continue its support to the governments and host communities of Syria's neighbours so they can deal effectively with the increasing flow of refugees and build up their resilience. The EU is supporting comprehensive integrated response plans to preserve stability in these countries. Further to the Kuwait 2 conference in January 2014 the EU continues to mobilise humanitarian and development aid in response to the crisis and encourages partners to provide sustained financing for Syrian refugees and host communities.

The EU notes the UN appeals for Syria remain seriously underfunded and calls for the international community to consider what more it can do to meet the remaining funding gap. With increasing needs and limited resources, effective donor coordination is ever more important to ensure maximum impact of assistance. In this context, the Commission will continue to convene and strengthen the international core donor group on coordination of the response to the Syrian crisis. The EU welcomes the continuing efforts and preparations for early recovery activities of the working group on economic recovery and development of the Friends of the Syrian people. Where feasible the EU is committed to increase its support to areas that are not under regime's control by all possible channels on the basis of a coordinated approach.

9. The Council reiterates its call for a swift completion of chemical weapons transfers, which have suffered delays, and reiterates the call to the Syrian regime to fulfil its obligations stemming from the UNSC Resolution 2118 and further OPCW decisions to have its chemical weapons arsenal, including the production facilities, destroyed by the end of June 2014. All outstanding questions surrounding Syria's declaration must be addressed. The chemical weapons program must be completely eliminated and Syria must demonstrate to the international community that it is complying with all its obligations, both under UNSC resolution 2118 and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The EU stresses once again that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Rif Damascus on August 21, 2013 must be held accountable."

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Over lunch, ministers held an in-depth debate on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council reaffirms its unequivocal commitment to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country. The Council also reiterates its unequivocal commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective. In this regard, it condemns as unacceptable secessionist and divisive rhetoric and ideas.
2. In line with its conclusions of December 2013, the Council recalls its serious concern that the EU integration process in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has stalled due to the lack of political will on the part of the BiH politicians and the continued use of divisive rhetoric. As other countries of the region make progress, Bosnia and Herzegovina is lagging behind.
3. The Council heard the public protests and calls by BiH citizens to improve the social and economic situation in the country. All BiH citizens, including the younger generation, need to be given new opportunities. It strongly urges the BiH institutions and elected leaders to reach out to the people, engage with civil society and provide responsible and immediate answers to their legitimate concerns. The Council emphasizes that it is the collective responsibility of all BiH political leaders. Ahead of the general elections in October 2014, more needs to be done, not less.

4. The Council welcomes the visits of the HR/VP to Bosnia and Herzegovina on 12 March 2014 and of Commissioner Füle on 17 of February 2014 and supports the continuous EU high level engagement in BiH. In line with previous Council conclusions, it reaffirms that the key requirements and criteria for BiH progress towards the EU need to be fully met. The Council supports the broadening of the EU agenda and engagement towards the country. In the short term, the Council urges the BiH institutions and leadership to focus as a matter of immediate priority on the following areas: to reach out actively to civil society and youth and take into account the needs of the citizens; to focus on socio-economic issues, in particular to tackle the very high unemployment, improve the co-ordination on economic and fiscal policies, and create a better environment for business; and to translate the legitimate concerns of the BiH people into legislative and fully implemented initiatives, including strengthening the rule of law, anticorruption and financial accountability measures, and protecting human rights.

5. The Council underlines the EU's readiness to support these immediate efforts now. It welcomes Commission initiatives to improve economic governance and strengthen competitiveness as well as stimulate economic growth. As an immediate action, it supports the launch on the ground of a "Compact for Growth", aimed at assisting the BiH institutions in identifying concrete socio-economic structural reforms in order to reinvigorate the economy and spur the creation of jobs in the short to mid-term. It welcomes and supports the central role of the EUSR/HoD in assisting BiH in these efforts, which need to be conducted in close coordination with our key international partners, in particular international financial institutions to ensure complementarity, efficient allocation of resources and building synergies. The Council also supports broadening the Structured Dialogue on Justice to other rule of law issues, and in particular to anticorruption issues. It also underlines the need to accelerate the implementation of previously agreed EU-funded projects through IPA 2007-2013 and welcomes the establishment of a joint EU-BiH working group to that effect. The establishment of an efficient coordination mechanism on EU matters is crucial both for IPA and implementation of the Interim Agreement. The Council regrets that the inability of the Bosnian authorities to meet this EU requirement has already led to a loss of IPA funds. The Council expresses its concern that the last five subcommittees under this agreement could not take place so far due to BiH internal disagreements and urges the BiH Council of Ministers to agree on a way forward. The Council calls on BiH to constructively engage on the adaptation of the Interim Agreement/Stabilisation and Association Agreement, on the basis of traditional trade. The Council expects the BiH authorities to engage constructively in these initiatives.

6. Beyond these areas of immediate attention, the Council calls on the BiH leadership to engage as soon as possible after the October elections on a broader set of issues in order to address the challenges the country continues to face as it progresses towards the EU. In particular, it remains crucial that the BiH leaders undertake reforms aimed at improving the efficiency and functionality of BiH institutions at all levels. Implementation of the Sejdic-Finci judgment of the European Court of Human Rights also remains to be addressed. The Council reaffirms its determination to actively and intensively engage in support of this process, in close coordination and cooperation with its main international partners."

Ukraine

The Council took stock of latest events in Ukraine. After discussion, it adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union condemns actions undertaken by armed individuals in cities of Eastern Ukraine. These attempts at destabilising Ukraine must come to an end. The Council calls on all parties to engage in a dialogue in view of a peaceful solution. The Council decides on expanding the list of those subject to assets freeze and visa ban.

The Council reiterates its strong support for Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and calls upon Russia to do likewise and to repudiate the latest lawless acts in Eastern Ukraine and to contribute to stabilize the situation. It demands Russia to call back its troops from the Ukrainian border and immediately withdraw the mandate of the Federation Council to use force on Ukrainian soil. Any threat or use of force against Ukraine or any other countries is not acceptable and must stop immediately. The EU calls on all parties to keep utmost restraint and commends the Ukrainian authorities for pursuing their law and order operations in a measured manner and encourages the government in Kyiv to contribute further to reducing tensions.

2. The EU reiterates its strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and will not recognise it. The EU welcomes the adoption of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly No. 68/262. The Council looks forward to the Commission's evaluation of the legal consequences of the annexation of Crimea and to the related proposals for economic, trade and financial restrictions regarding Crimea.
3. The EU reiterates the importance of Russia's and Ukraine's engagement in a meaningful dialogue, including through the establishment of a multilateral mechanism, with a view to finding a political solution, based on full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including the right of Ukraine to decide on its own constitution and political future. The European Union is ready to participate in such an international mechanism. In this context, the Council welcomes the forthcoming meeting with the participation of the High Representative and Foreign Ministers of Ukraine, Russia and the US, as a possible start of a substantial de-escalation process. The Council expresses the view that possible options in order to stabilise the economic situation in Ukraine could also be discussed at this upcoming meeting. The Council calls on the Russian Federation to demonstrate with supportive measures its readiness to participate in stabilising the Ukrainian economy.

4. The Council supports the work already undertaken by the OSCE Monitoring Mission, which is of utmost importance in monitoring developments in Ukraine and will continue to provide its support to this mission. The Council shares the concerns expressed by representatives of the OSCE and the Council of Europe about current restrictions on their ability to observe the situation in the area of human rights, including of persons belonging to national minorities, in Crimea.
5. The Council is ready to assist Ukraine in the field of civilian security sector reform, support of police and rule of law. In this regard the Council tasks the EEAS to deploy an expert mission to prepare for appropriate assistance complementary with other on-going efforts and elaborate a Political Framework for Crisis Approach (PFCA), examining all options, including through a possible CSDP mission, with a view to a decision on further EU action at its next meeting.
6. The Council recalls that any further steps by the Russian Federation to destabilise the situation in Ukraine would lead to additional and far reaching consequences for relations in a broad range of economic areas between the European Union and its Member States, on the one hand, and the Russian Federation, on the other hand. In this respect, the Council notes that the preparatory work by the Commission and Member States is underway on possible targeted measures, as requested by the European Council in March so that further steps can be taken should events require.
7. The Council encourages Ukraine to continue to move ahead with its course of political reforms, as planned and announced by the Ukrainian Government, including notably the constitutional reform. The EU welcomes the will of the Ukrainian government to implement its commitments to ensure the representative nature and inclusiveness of governmental structures, reflecting regional diversity, to ensure the full protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, to investigate all human rights violations and acts of violence and to fight extremism. In this context, the Council welcomes the inauguration of the International Advisory Panel of the Council of Europe on 9 April.

The Council welcomes the recent parliamentary resolution calling for the immediate disarmament of all illegal self-defence forces and looks forward to its implementation. The Council strongly supports the holding of free and fair Presidential elections on 25 May. The EU Member States will actively participate in the OSCE observation mission. The EU and its Member States stand ready to assist the Ukrainian government in building trust across the country.

8. The Council reiterates the EU's commitment to sign the remaining provisions of the Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, as soon as possible after the presidential elections on 25 May. The Council adopted today the Regulation on the reduction or elimination of customs duties on goods originating in Ukraine, which will represent a meaningful support measure to Ukraine until 1 November 2014, pending signature and provisional application of the DCFTA.

9. The Council reiterates its commitment to stand by Ukraine and to provide strong financial support to its economic and financial stabilisation, recalling the critical importance of IMF support and welcoming the staff level agreement reached between the IMF and the Ukrainian authorities on 27 March. The Council looks forward to the decision of the IMF Executive Board on a new Stand-By Arrangement. The Council adopted today the Decision on the macro-financial assistance for Ukraine establishing clear conditions for its future disbursement. This will bring the total amount to EUR 1.6 billion.

10. The Council welcomes the creation of the Support Group for Ukraine which will work on the implementation of the "European Agenda for reform". At the same time, the Council recalls the importance for Ukraine to swiftly implement an ambitious set of structural reforms, including the fight against corruption, public finance management and budget transparency. The EU calls on all interested parties to contribute to the further stabilisation and development of Ukraine.

11. The Council confirms the EU's readiness to explore ways to assist Ukraine in securing its energy supply through further diversification, including through the rapid enhancement of reverse flow capacities, enhanced energy efficiency, and effective interconnections with and within the European Union. Such assistance must be combined with Ukraine's efforts to reform and modernise its energy sector, in line with Ukraine's commitments in the Energy Community Treaty.

The Council takes note of the letter of President Putin of 10 April to several EU Member States. The Council asks the European Commission to reply, on the basis of consultations with Member States, to the President of the Russian Federation on behalf of EU and its Member States, in order to agree on consultations with Russia and Ukraine with a view to ensuring security of supply and transit.

The Council expresses deep concern regarding the unilateral increase of gas prices applied to Ukraine and expresses a firm conviction that all differences of views on the price and conditions of gas supplies should be solved through negotiations and available legal mechanisms, with a view to stabilising the economic situation in Ukraine. Energy relations must be based on reciprocity, transparency, fairness, non-discrimination, openness to competition and continued cooperation to ensure a level playing field for the safe and secure supply of energy.

Georgia and the Republic of Moldova

12. Acknowledging the efforts and achievements of the Republic of Moldova in that respect, the Council welcomes the Regulation 259/2014 of 3 April 2014 on the visa-free travel for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova holding biometric passports starting from 28 April 2014.
13. The European Union reaffirms its support for political association and economic integration with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova and looks forward to early signature of the Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas no later than June 2014. It recalls that such association and integration is compatible with enhanced relations of Georgia and the Republic of Moldova with all their partners. The European Union is confident that further deepening of EU-Georgia and EU-Republic of Moldova relations will have a positive impact on stability and socio-economic development, for the benefit of all the citizens of the two countries. The EU encourages Georgia and the Republic of Moldova to continue implementing reforms as part of their commitment to further strengthen the political association and economic integration with the EU."

In addition, the Council approved additional macro-financial assistance of up to € 1 billion for Ukraine, adopted EU trade preference for Ukrainian products and reinforced EU restrictive measures targeting persons responsible for the misappropriation of Ukrainian state funds, see below.

SECURITY AND DEFENCE

Maritime security

The Council was briefed about the joint communication "For an open and secure global maritime domain: elements for an EU maritime security strategy" ([7537/14](#)).

The communication identifies five areas where a coordinated approach based on already existing tools could have an added value: external action; maritime awareness, surveillance and information sharing; capability development and capacity building; risk management, protection of critical maritime infrastructure and crisis response; and maritime security research and innovation, education and training.

Work is ongoing to define the EU maritime security strategy, which is due to be approved as part of an overall EU maritime strategy by the European Council of 26/27 June.

EU military operation in the Central African Republic

The Council was briefed on the state of play concerning the EU military operation in the Central African Republic (EUFOR RCA), in the presence of the EU Operation Commander, Major-General Philippe Pontières.

On 1 April, the Council gave the green light for the launch of operation EUFOR RCA. It provides temporary support in achieving a safe environment in the Bangui area, with a view to handing over to a UN peacekeepers or to African partners. The force thereby contributes both to international efforts to protect the populations most at risk and to the creation of the conditions for providing humanitarian aid. For more information, see [website](#).

Ukraine

Over lunch, ministers discussed the implications of the crisis in Ukraine on EU defence and security policy, in the presence of NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Restrictive measures - Ukraine

The Council reinforced EU restrictive measures targeting persons responsible for the misappropriation of Ukrainian state funds. For more details, see [press release](#).

Ukraine – Macro-financial assistance – Trade measures

The Council approved two key measures amongst a package of proposals aimed at providing economic and financial support to Ukraine.

It adopted a decision providing up to €1bn in macro-financial assistance to Ukraine to support its economic stabilisation and its structural reform agenda, supplementing resources made available under a financial arrangement with the IMF ([8346/14](#)).

It also adopted a regulation granting unilateral trade preferences to Ukraine, providing for the temporary reduction or elimination of customs duties in accordance with a schedule of concessions set out in an annex to the EU-Ukraine association agreement ([73/14](#)).

The support package was announced by the Commission on 5 March in response to the unprecedented developments in Ukraine, and is intended to assist with the country's political transition and encourage political and economic reforms. The package was endorsed by the European Council on 6 March.

For details, see [8870/14](#).

Central African Republic

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the Central African Republic:

- "1. The security and humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR) remains a matter of deep concern to the European Union (EU). It reaffirms the undertaking given in the Council conclusions of 17 March 2014 to maintain its efforts to settle the crisis in the CAR within the framework of an overall approach. The Council welcomes the special meeting on the CAR held on the sidelines of the EU-Africa summit in Brussels on 2 April 2014, which was attended by the transitional president, Ms Catherine Samba-Panza, in the context of the need to mobilise the whole of the international community to assist the CAR and to support the transitional authorities' efforts to stabilise the security situation and return the country to constitutional order. It reiterates its concern at the risk that the Central African conflict might affect neighbouring countries and calls for the territorial integrity of the country to be respected.
2. The Council welcomes the launch of the CSDP military operation EUFOR RCA and calls for efforts to be continued and increased in order to finalise the force generation process and attain full operational capability quickly. The Council notes that the Commander of the EUFOR RCA operation has been authorised to carry out this transitional military operation and requests him to deploy it soon, in close cooperation with MISCA (the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic) and the French Sangaris operation. By providing temporary support for a maximum period of six months, this operation should contribute to providing a secure environment in the Bangui area, with a view to handing over to MISCA, the African Union operation, or to a UN peacekeeping mission.
3. The EU notes that the Republic of Chad has decided to withdraw its military contingent from MISCA and urges the African Union (AU) to maintain MISCA's operational capability at the requisite level, with due regard for agreed troop numbers. It reaffirms its commitment to MISCA and repeats its call for the urgent mobilisation of the financial resources announced at the donors' conference to support MISCA, organised by the African Union on 1 February 2014. In this connection, the EU is in the process of making a further EUR 75 million available for MISCA through the African Peace Facility.
4. The EU welcomes the unanimous adoption on 10 April 2014 of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2149 setting up MINUSCA. It supports the rapid deployment of MINUSCA, whose military and police component should take over from MISCA on 15 September 2014, and stresses the importance of close coordination between the partners, in particular the Central African authorities, the UN, the AU, the EU and France, in order to ease the way for transition. The EU endorses the Resolution's calls for those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious human rights violations in the CAR to be brought to justice. In this connection, bearing in mind the ongoing action, the EU invites all parties to cooperate with the International Criminal Court.

5. The EU calls on the Central African transitional authorities to continue the transition process, promoting political dialogue and national reconciliation, until the elections scheduled to take place by February 2015, and points out that it has given an undertaking to help prepare for those elections.
6. The EU reaffirms its commitment to the re-establishment of the rule of law, the protection of human rights, international humanitarian law and the civilian population, national reconciliation and interfaith dialogue in the CAR, in particular re-activation of the criminal justice system in order to combat impunity, security sector reform (SSR) and support for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). In this context the EU welcomes the signing of the final communiqué of the Inter-religious Conference for Peace and Reconciliation on 8 April 2014 in Bangui. This represents an important step towards peace and stability. The EU takes note of the preliminary inquiry at the United Nations to establish responsibility for the incidents in Bangui on 29 March which caused several deaths and injuries among the civilian population.
7. Given the humanitarian crisis, the EU reaffirms its commitment to provide emergency aid for those affected in the CAR. It appeals to the whole of the international community to confirm and increase its funding for these people, both inside the CAR and in neighbouring countries. It reiterates its concern at the conditions facing civilians at risk, who depend for their survival on the protection and assistance they are given. It points out that all the parties must ensure immediate, unfettered and safe access for humanitarian aid workers in the CAR, with due regard for international humanitarian law and principles.
8. The EU reiterates that it will provide financial and technical support for the transitional authorities in order to contribute to the reconstruction of the Central African state, relaunch the country's economy and support its people. "

Relations with Tunisia

The Council adopted the EU position for the 10th Association Council with Tunisia, to take place on 14 April in Luxembourg.

Restrictive measures - Republic of Guinea

The Council amended EU restrictive measures against the Republic of Guinea. It lifted the arms embargo and the prohibition on the supply of equipment which might be used for internal repression. Travel bans and asset freezes against five persons identified by the International Commission of Inquiry as responsible for the 28 September 2009 events in Guinea will remain in force.

Restrictive measures - Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The Council amended the restrictive measures against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea so as to take account of changes agreed at the United Nations.

Restrictive measures - Myanmar / Burma

The Council extended the EU's restrictive measures against Myanmar/Burma by one year, i.e. until 30 April 2015. The sanctions consist in an arms embargo and an embargo on equipment that may be used for internal repression.

Participation of Azerbaijan in EU programmes

The Council adopted decisions on the signing, provisional application and conclusion of a protocol to the EU-Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement concerning a Framework Agreement between the EU and Azerbaijan on general principles for the participation of Azerbaijan in Union programmes.

Comprehensive partnership and cooperation agreement with Indonesia

The Council approved, on behalf of the EU, the conclusion of the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Partnership and Cooperation between the EU and its member states and the Republic of Indonesia. This follows the consent given by the European Parliament on 26 February 2014.

Association Agreement with Chile

The Council adopted the position that the EU will take within the EU-Chile Association Committee regarding an amendment of annex XII to the EU-Chile Association Agreement; this refers to the list of Chilean public entities under the commitments on government procurement.

Political dialogue and cooperation agreement with Latin American countries

The Council approved the political dialogue and cooperation agreement between the European Community and its member states, of the one part, and the Republics of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, of the other part. This follows the consent of the European Parliament on 26 February 2014 and the provisional application, since 2013, of parts of the Association Agreement between the Union and its member states and these countries.

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

EU exercise policy

The Council took note of the revised exercise policy of the European Union under the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

EU training mission in Mali

The Council extended the EU training mission in Mali for two years and refocused its activities. For more details, see [press release](#).

The Council also approved an agreement on the participation of the Swiss Confederation in the European EU training mission in Mali (EUTM Mali).

EUCAP Sahel Mali

The Council established a civilian mission under the Common Security and Defence Policy to assist the internal security forces in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali) to ensure law and order as well as fight against terrorists, organised crime and cross-border trafficking. For more information, see [press release](#).

The Council also authorised the opening of negotiations with the Republic of Mali for an agreement on the status of the EU CSDP mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali), which is to contribute to the training of Mali's internal security forces.

EU military operation in the Central African Republic

The Council approved the signing and conclusion of an agreement between the EU and the Central African Republic concerning the detailed arrangements for the transfer to the Central African Republic of persons detained by the EU military operation (EUFOR RCA) in the course of carrying out its mandate, and concerning the guarantees applicable to such persons.

The Council also authorised the opening of negotiations with the Republic of Cameroon for an agreement on the status of the European Union forces from EUFOR RCA in transit within the territory of Cameroon.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

European Year of Development 2015

The Council adopted the legislative act establishing the European Year of Development 2015. It defines the objective of the European Year as informing EU citizens about the development cooperation of the EU and its member states, fostering their active interest and direct involvement and raising awareness of the benefits of EU development cooperation. It also sets out the tools used to achieve these goals and related financial arrangements.

EU development assistance to Central Asia

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' special report on EU development assistance to Central Asia:

- "1. The Council welcomes the Special report on EU Development Assistance to Central Asia by the European Court of Auditors.
2. The Council underlines the importance of cooperation with Central Asia as a strategic region for the European Union.
3. The Council notes that the report confirms the overall pertinence and quality of the programming orientations for EU assistance to Central Asia at regional and bilateral levels.
4. The Court recognises the role played by the EU-Central Asia Strategy adopted by the Council in 2007 in planning and guiding EU assistance to the region as well as the efforts by the Commission and the EEAS to implement this assistance despite particularly challenging circumstances.
5. While the scope of EU assistance covers a large number of areas, the Court recognises that the actions and programmes initiated by the Commission and the EEAS respected the EU-CA Strategy framework and addressed the region's needs.
6. The Council takes note of the conclusions of the European Court of Auditors and emphasizes the need to increase focus of the EU's efforts; the need to adopt a genuine regional approach; the need to place anti-corruption measures centre stage if budget support is considered as an aid modality and the need to report on results rather than activities. The Council calls upon the Commission to take the Court's conclusions to heart when planning and programming funds for Central Asia under the current Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-2020).

7. The Council supports the Court's recommendations that the Commission and the EEAS, in coordination with other development partners, including the Member States, should:
 - design future regional programmes so that they are likely to achieve a genuine regional dimension;
 - continue to concentrate EU assistance on a small number of sectors;
 - further define and apply robust and objectively verifiable conditions for budget support programmes, and give sufficient attention to support for anti-corruption mechanisms;
 - improve programme design and delivery in the light of lessons learnt and changing circumstances and report on results and impact in a way that allows comparison with plans and objectives.
8. The Council reiterates, with regard to Central Asia, its support for the principles outlined in the 'Agenda for Change', and in particular the importance of concentrating EU bilateral and regional development cooperation on a limited number of focal sectors.
9. The Council reiterates that EU action should help good-neighbourly relations in Central Asia including by promoting regional cooperation in areas which cannot be addressed by countries individually and/or can be more effectively addressed at regional level through synergies and economies of scale. In particular, the Council strongly supports the policy dialogue facilitated by the EU in priority areas such as the rule of law, water/environment, education, energy, border management and the fight against drugs. While the degree of political commitment to regional programmes varies from one Central Asian country to another and from programme to programme, the Council recalls the necessity for the EU to ensure that the regional cooperation activities are defined and aligned with the needs expressed by the beneficiaries in Central Asia and receive the full support of the latter prior to their implementation.
10. The Council underlines long-term perspective and continuity in development cooperation with Central Asia as critical factors for effective institution –building and the promotion of reforms, including through sharing of the EU experience and transfer of best practices.
11. The Council considers that the existing Activity-Based Budgeting (ABB) system, which determines costs on the basis of support activities, already contains useful information about administrative costs.

12. The Council recognises that sustainable development, including poverty reduction, can only be achieved with strong and accountable State institutions and therefore supports the efforts by the EEAS and the Commission to engage with the countries on more effective anti-corruption measures and good governance. It underlines that particular attention should be paid to public financial management reform and transparency in the focal sectors of EU cooperation.
13. The Council recalls the conclusions of Third Progress Report of the EU- Central Asia Strategy on the necessary involvement of Member States in the implementation of EU assistance.
14. The Council underlines the importance to ensure an appropriate policy dialogue and sustained monitoring of sector reforms and programmes measuring performance and the sustainability of the results. The Council recognises that an incentive-based approach informed by country-specific indicators and benchmarks can stimulate progress and results.
15. Looking ahead, the Council recalls that the engagement of the EU to promote peace, democracy and economic prosperity in Central Asia remains a priority of EU cooperation and a long-term commitment. The Council thanks the Court for its most valuable analysis and invites the Commission and the EEAS to implement the Court's recommendations as appropriate. "

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

European Investment Bank - External lending

The Council approved a renewal of the EU's guarantee for the European Investment Bank's external operations for the 2014-2020 period ([PE-CONS 3/14](#)).

The decision renews the EU budget guarantee for EIB lending to projects that support the EU's external policy objectives. The guarantee covers sovereign and political risks in connection with loan and loan guarantee operations, thus preventing those risks from affecting the EIB's credit standing and enabling the bank to maintain attractive lending rates.

For details, see press release [8755/14](#).

Market abuse

The Council adopted strengthened EU rules aimed at clamping down on insider dealing and market manipulation on securities markets ([8260/14](#) + [PE-CONS 78/13](#) + [8261/14](#) + [PE-CONS 8/14](#)).

The new rules comprise a regulation aimed at enhancing the protection of investors, amending and replacing directive 2003/6/EC, and a directive establishing a framework for criminal sanctions.

For details, see press release [8756/14](#).

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Multiannual Financial Framework regarding Home Affairs

The Council adopted four regulations establishing the new financing programmes in the area of home affairs within the framework of the Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2014-2020.

The total financial envelope for the implementation of these programme 2014-2020 is set at EUR 6 901 million in current prices.

For more information see press release ([8916/14](#)).

ENLARGEMENT

Association with Serbia

The Council adopted decisions to adapt the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and Serbia in order to take account of the accession of Croatia to the European Union.