European External Action Service (EEAS)

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini upon arrival at the Foreign Affairs Council

2016-04-18

Let me start by expressing our condolences for the many victims of the earthquake in Ecuador and also in Japan a few days ago. As you know, all our efforts are mobilised to give support to the Ecuadorian authorities in these hours.

Let me also say that today is a sad anniversary, because exactly one year ago more than 800 people died in a drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. The work that the European Union is doing on migration will be at the centre of our meeting today - obviously the external part of our work on migration.

I was on the flagship of our Operation Sophia [EUNAVFOR Med] just a few days ago. One year ago we were seeing people dying in that exact waters where today we are saving lives, arresting traffickers and neutralising vessels. So we have done a lot. Obviously there is a lot that we are still planning and doing.

We will hear the Dutch Foreign Minister [Bert Koenders] who just came back from three important missions he had on my behalf in Africa to build partnerships with the countries of origin and transit, and we will obviously dedicate part of our agenda to that.

We will also have a point on our strategy against Da'esh and the situation in Syria. I talked yesterday night with Staffan de Mistura [UN Special Envoy to Syria] as he is holding again, in these days, talks in Geneva. We will focus on that as well as on the situation in Libya. You know very well that tonight we have Foreign and Defence Ministers coming together.

I just spoke some minutes ago with Libyan Prime Minister [Fayez] al-Sarraj. We will have a conference call tonight with him, with all the Ministers, to exchange views with him on an assessment of the situation in Tripoli and most of all to start the concrete discussion on the European Union's support. We have prepared a package that is a very relevant one in economic terms. We now have to have our teams at work to identify concrete projects in different fields that are the priorities of the Libyan people and of the Libyan government, on the economic, on the political and on the security side; and this will also be a discussion point that for the ministers tonight.

We also have other agenda points. First of all, we will receive Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who will help us to work on the management of the

refugee flows. We will talk with him not only on the Syrian refugees, but also on the work we can do to support Africa and Asia in their own internal movements of people.

We also have an important point on the Eastern Partnership to prepare the Eastern Partnership Ministerial next month, exactly one year after the Riga Summit.

Finally, we will begin with a point on Colombia, because we keep the positive news on the agenda. We will talk with the envoy of President Santos to the peace talks. He will update us on the state of play and we will discuss with him the European support to the peace agreement - once it will be reached, hopefully soon.

It is a very rich agenda. We have a challenging day ahead of us. We will finish late tonight, but I think that we have on the agenda exactly the issues that are at the core of the European citizens' thoughts and I am sure that we will come out with a concrete political guidance on all of these issues.

You will excuse me if for this time I will not take questions. We will meet each other again during the course of the day several times, but we have our Tunisian friends waiting for us and I do not want to delay our meeting today.

Thank you.

Link to the video: http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I119906

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