European External Action Service (EEAS)

Remarks by the HR/VP Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council

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Check against delivery!

I will be very short this time otherwise I will miss my flight to Mexico where we go to launch important negotiations. Today we had a very good, intense, meeting with the EU Foreign Ministers.

Before that we had the Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting with our Eastern partners. It was an extremely positive meeting with the six of them [Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine], reconfirming our commitment and our unity as European Union in our partnership with them.

At the Foreign Affairs Council today, we had three main points on the agenda.

First of all, the EU strategy to defeat Da'esh and our work in Syria and Iraq. Let me take this opportunity to say that what we have seen also today in terms of killing of civilians is completely unacceptable and makes our determination to make the cessation of hostilities work even stronger; our determination to work for the humanitarian access to all besieged areas even stronger. Even more: today with the ministers, we have together decided to increase our political engagement in support of the negotiations run by Staffan de Mistura [UN Special Envoy to Syria] under the auspices of the United Nations. The European Union will play even a greater role in trying to facilitate the start of the political transition and the political talks in Geneva.

We also had an exchange on the European Union Global Strategy that I intend to present at the European Council in the end of June. And we had a discussion on migration.

On migration, we adopted important conclusions unanimously which will feed in the work that I am doing on the external aspects of our migration policy. Together with Vice-President Frans Timmermans, we will present a joint communication on 7 June that will be then discussed with the Heads of State and Government in the European Council at the end of June.

And today we worked, with the Ministers, on all the different aspects of our external migration policy. This was done in a very positive and constructive way, not only taking stock but also

exchanging thoughts on the next moves both on the Central Mediterranean route and the Eastern one. Together we took decisions on short-term but also long-term initiatives that we need to put in place.

One of the specific Council conclusions we adopted and one specific element of our discussion today was the development of Operation Sophia [EUNAVFOR Med]. We agreed to extend the mandate of the Operation by one year and to retain its focus - which is to dismantle the business model of the smugglers. We agreed to add two further tasks to the mandate of the operation, namely capacity building and training of the Libyan coastguards - and here we received a letter by the Prime Minister of Lybia [Fayez] al-Sarraj inviting us to contribute to the training of the Libyan coastguards -, so we will follow up this request very quickly. And we have agreed today to proceed with operational planning so that we can proceed with decisions as fast as possible.

We agreed also to add another task on contributing to the implementation of the UN arms embargo on the high seas off the coast of Libya. But this will require an additional UN Security Council resolution. This means anyway that our presence at sea has not only been useful so far but could be even more upgraded in the future weeks, as we were already planning to do and as we discussed with Prime Minister al-Sarraj and the Ministers of the Government of the National Accord.

Link to the video (remarks): http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I121268

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