

Remarks by Federica Mogherini upon arrival at the Foreign Affairs Council

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Good morning. We will have the first Council with Foreign Ministers of this year that will start with an outlook at priorities we will be facing in these first months.

We will focus today especially on Syria. I will update the Ministers on the work we are doing, on the EU's initiative with the regional powers and the discussions I have had in Geneva last week, especially with the new Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres and [the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria] Staffan de Mistura but also with the Turkish Minister.

We will also have a discussion on the Middle East Peace Process, more of a brainstorming on the EU's role, especially in relation with the Quartet and our Arab friends.

But let me also say before I leave you and start meetings that today we mark the first anniversary of the beginning of the implementation of the Iran nuclear deal, a deal that exactly one year after has delivered both on the nuclear-related commitments Iran took and on the firm determination of the international community, starting with the European Union, to fully implement also its part of the deal. One year later we have seen, for what concerns EU-Iran relations for instance, an increase in trade and economic relations that is really significant.

So, this to say that we start the first Council of the year with the proof that diplomacy works and delivers and that the European Union will continue to work for the respect and the implementation of this extremely important deal, most of all for our security.

Q. On the Middle Peace and the decisions that the new US administration could take.

A. I will not elaborate on this at this stage, maybe this afternoon if we have discussions on that, but, as I said, what we are going to discuss today is the EU's work and the EU's position and the EU's diplomatic continuous work for the resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and especially trying to lay down the conditions for the parties to do their part and re-start serious talks.

Q. On Libya – is it a point of the agenda and what is the EU doing with the Libyan coastguards?

A. Libya is not as such part of the agenda, I will propose to the Ministers to have this as a full point in February, at the Foreign Affairs Council just three weeks from now. But we will have an outlook of the priorities of this first part of the year and for sure, in that part, Libya will come up as one of the priorities, at least I will mention this as one of the priorities we will have to face.

As you know, Operation Sophia has started the training of the Libyan coastguards at the request of the Libyan authorities. This is now going on since a few months, going on well. And the reason is because we want to respond to the request of the Libyan authorities, to their demands, to their needs to secure the territorial waters, to secure their coasts – not only for security reasons, not only for migration related issues, but also for economic reasons.

One of the reasons why [Prime Minister of Libya Fayez Mustafa al-] Sarraj always mentions to me the need to train the coastguards is that if the waters around Libya are secure, the fishermen can go out and fish and this is one of the first sources of revenue for the Libyan population. It is because of economic development, it is because of security and it is also because of our intention to jointly manage the migratory flows together with the Libyan authorities, together with the UNHCR and the IOM, in full respect of human rights and to save people.

Q. On the Cyprus talks.

A. As you know, I was together with President Juncker last week in Geneva, we have been supporting the parties in Cyprus, we have been supporting the process led by the UN and the work of the three guarantors. We will continue to do so and our teams are still working in these days, hours and in the coming weeks to accompany this process, hoping for a positive result. The region, the world would need such positive news and I think the benefit for all in Cyprus and around would be really immense.

Thank you, I will see you later.