Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

# Foreign Affairs Council: 22 July

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My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will attend the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) on 22 July in Brussels. The FAC will be chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Ashton of Upholland.

Introduction - Water Security

Baroness Ashton will update the FAC on the EU's work on water security in her introductory remarks. We do not expect a discussion. Conclusions that acknowledge the importance of water security and endorse the EU Water Diplomacy Strategy Paper are under negotiation.

Introduction - Western Balkans

Baroness Ashton will then briefly outline progress on the Serbia/Kosovo Dialogue. The UK remains a strong supporter of the EU-facilitated Dialogue. It is important that the momentum for normalising relations between Kosovo and Serbia is maintained. We expect Conclusions on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) that focus on support for the EU Special Representative and for early resolution of the Sejdic-Finci constitutional issue that is preventing BiH's Stabilisation and Association Agreement from coming into force. These Conclusions should mirror the strong messages Commissioner Füle and Baroness Ashton have been passing to BiH's leaders this month.

Human Rights

Ministers will discuss the EU's external human rights policy, one year on from the adoption of the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, and the appointment of Mr Stavros Lambrinidis as EU Special Representative for Human Rights. We expect Conclusions to be adopted that reaffirm the Council's determination to promote and protect human rights and democracy around the world.

Southern Neighbourhood

On Syria, we expect Baroness Ashton to update Ministers on progress made in preparing for the Geneva II talks. This will be an oral presentation. The UK will continue to encourage increased humanitarian assistance from EU Member States and institutions; to ensure the

EU continues to focus on a political solution to the Syria crisis; and to encourage the EU to engage in concrete planning for a post-Assad transition in Syria.

Following the intervention by the armed forces in Egypt, Ministers will discuss the situation in Egypt and consider the EU's response. The UK remains committed to supporting Egypt in its transition to democracy. We will press for Conclusions which make clear that the Egyptian authorities should make good their promises for a swift return to democratic processes; that political leaders and journalists who have been detained are charged with recognised crimes or released; and that a free media is guaranteed.

Africa

Ministers will discuss a number of issues under the Africa item on the agenda, such as the great Lakes Region, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan, and Mali.

On the Great Lakes Region, Ministers will discuss what an EU strategy in support of the Peace, Security and Co-operation Framework for the Great Lakes Region should contain. We expect to agree Conclusions that focus EU efforts on such work.

Ministers will discuss Somalia, looking ahead to the EU-Somalia Conference in Brussels on 16 September, and will agree Conclusions that take stock of recent progress and agree priority issues for the coming months. We expect the Conference to focus on bringing together Somali and international partners to agree a New Deal Compact; securing the required financing to implement the Government's priorities; and providing a platform for the Federal Government of Somalia to set out a clear political vision and process for building an appropriate federal system. The UK will push for ambitious Conclusions that set out the EU's long-term commitment to providing support and assistance to Somalia.

Ministers will also discuss the current setback in implementation of oil and security agreements between Sudan and South Sudan, as well as the conflicts in the Sudanese states of Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur and the South Sudanese state of Jonglei. The discussion will be an opportunity to agree priorities for EU activity in the coming months. Ministers are expected to agree Conclusions.

On Mali, Conclusions are being prepared that will record the latest developments in the run-up to presidential elections which begin on 28 July, and will take note of an EEAS Options Paper on possible Civilian CSDP activity in Mali in the future. We are urging further discussions with both the UN and the Malians in order to identify clearly how the EU might add value. We expect any discussion at the FAC to focus on these issues.

Eastern Partnership

Baroness Ashton will brief Ministers on her and Commissioner Füle's recent visits to Moldova, Armenia and Georgia. Ministers will then discuss the proposed outcomes for November's Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, ahead of a Ministerial meeting of the Eastern Partnership that will take place after the FAC. The Ministerial meeting will focus on progress made over the last year and expectations for the Summit. The UK supports the efforts of eastern partners in seeking a closer relationship with the EU through Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas on the basis of continued and irreversible political and economic reform.

Middle East Peace Process

The FAC will revert to the Middle East Peace Process as agreed at the June FAC. Ministers will take stock of recent developments, including ongoing US efforts, led by Secretary of State Kerry, to make progress toward the resumption of direct and substantial negotiations and further consider how the EU can support these efforts.

Lebanon

The evidence that Hizballah's Military Wing is a terrorist organisation and that they have engaged in terrorism on EU soil is compelling. That is why we believe that their formal listing by the EU as a terrorist organisation is fully justified. We are working closely with EU partners on this issue and want to reach a robust, collective EU position.

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