Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

# Foreign Affairs & Development Foreign Affairs Councils: 27-28 May

2013-05-21

The Minister for Europe Mr David Lidington said:

My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will attend the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) on 27 May and my Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for International Development will attend the Development Foreign Affairs Council on 28 May. These meetings will be held in Brussels, and will be chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Ashton of Upholland.

Foreign Affairs Council

Syria

On Syria, Ministers will discuss the regional ramifications of the crisis and the prospects for the Geneva II talks. We will seek agreement to amend the arms embargo to allow EU countries the flexibility to provide greater support to the moderate opposition, including a broader range of military equipment.

Common Security and Defence Policy

Ministers will discuss preparations for the December European Council discussion on Defence, with a focus on the first of the three taskings agreed at the December 2012 European Council. These taskings were to increase the effectiveness of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP); enhance EU capabilities; and strengthen the European Defence Industrial Base. We will encourage the discussion on the first tasking to focus on practical measures that improve cost-effectiveness of the EU’s civilian and military missions and operations and deliver more effect on the ground, whilst continuing to ensure complementarity with NATO.

Middle East Peace Process

This is the first discussion of MEPP since the February FAC, at which EU Ministers addressed the deteriorating prospects for a two-state solution, and the importance of engaging the US. This discussion will be an opportunity to agree the focus of EU policy and

engagement on the MEPP for the coming months. The UK will focus on how the EU can contribute actively, alongside other regional and international partners, to efforts led by the United States to drive progress on the MEPP. This will include the incentives the EU could offer the parties to reach a negotiated solution. The UK will reiterate the importance of predictable, sufficient support for the PA and its institutions, as well as support for efforts to reinvigorate the Palestinian private sector.

Iran E3+3

Baroness Ashton is expected to update Ministers on the latest progress on E3+3 nuclear talks with Iran, including her meeting with the Iranian Chief Negotiator Jalili in Istanbul on 15 May. No discussion is expected.

Mali

Baroness Ashton is expected to update Ministers on the latest progress in Mali, including on the progress made at the donors' conference which took place in Brussels on 15 May. Discussion is expected to be limited.

Somalia

The Foreign Secretary will brief colleagues on the 7 May London Conference, and will look ahead to the September Brussels conference.

Development Foreign Affairs Council

Council Conclusions to be adopted by the Council

We expect Ministers to adopt Council Conclusions on the Annual Report 2013 to the European Council on EU Development Aid Targets, The EU approach to resilience: learning from food security crises, and Food and Nutrition Security in External Assistance. The Government welcomes these Conclusions.

Post 2015 Millennium Development Goals Framework and Rio +20 Follow-up

This will be the main item for discussion. Ministers will debate the EU approach to the post-2015 development agenda and Rio+20 follow up. Council Conclusions are expected to be adopted in June.

Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change

The Commission and European External Action Service will give an update on the implementation of this policy and anticipated process for delivery in the next programming period (2014-2020).

Information Points

There will be information points on Food and Nutrition Security, Member States' 2012 Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) figures, Policy Coherence for Development, the 11th European Development Fund and Local Authorities.

Further information

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