



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Minister for Europe
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

22 August 2014

Rt Hon Sir Richard Ottaway MP
Chairman
Foreign Affairs Committee
Committee Office
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Richard,

Extraordinary Foreign Affairs Council: 15 August 2014

I am writing to inform you about the Foreign Affairs Council on 15 August which my Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs attended. The Foreign Affairs Council was chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Ashton of Upholland. Commissioner Georgieva (Humanitarian Aid) and Commissioner Barnier (Internal Market) were also in attendance.

A provisional report of the meeting and Conclusions adopted can be found at:
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/144316.pdf

Iraq

Nikolai Mladenov, UN Special Representative to the Secretary General on Iraq, briefed Ministers on the worsening crisis in Iraq. As well as addressing the immediate humanitarian crisis, the international community needed to support the Iraqi political process. Discussion focussed on the humanitarian, political and security situation. There was broad agreement on the need for EU unity and to step up its humanitarian support across the country and political support for Al-Abadi. The Foreign Secretary set out the UK's deep concern at the humanitarian situation in Iraq and highlighted the security challenges facing Iraq, the region and the EU. The Foreign Secretary also stressed the need to ensure that Al-Abadi formed an inclusive government as quickly as possible. Conclusions were agreed that reiterated the EU's commitment to Iraq's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, welcomed the commitment of additional European aid, and the decision by individual Member States to respond positively to urgent requests from the Kurdish regional authorities to provide military material.

Ukraine

Baroness Ashton updated Ministers on President Barroso's discussions with President Putin and President Poroshenko on 11 August. Ministers then discussed the situation in Ukraine and the impact that Russian sanctions were having on Member States. The Foreign Secretary highlighted the need for the EU to stand together and work on the humanitarian situation, reiterating the importance of international humanitarian standards being upheld. Conclusions were agreed that urged the Russian Federation to put an immediate stop to any form of border hostilities, and to withdraw its forces from the border. The need to find a political, sustainable solution to the crisis had become a matter of urgency, and the Council underlined the importance of the implementation of President Poroshenko's peace plan. The Council agreed that the restrictive measures taken by the EU against the Russian Federation remained valid and the Council was ready to consider further steps, in light of the evolution of the situation on the ground.

Gaza

Ministers also discussed the latest situation in Gaza. Conclusions were agreed on the Middle East (Gaza) in which the EU strongly welcomed the ceasefire, and commended the considerable efforts of Egypt to broker this and other deals. The EU also called for increased efforts to facilitate immediate and unimpeded access into the Gaza Strip, and for the mobilisation of humanitarian aid for the population of Gaza. The Conclusions highlight the need for a durable ceasefire to address Israeli security concerns and Palestinian requirements regarding the lifting of restrictions on Gaza. They noted the readiness of the EU to contribute to a sustainable solution, including by supporting a possible international mechanism endorsed by the UN Security Council, and through the reactivation and possible extension in scope and mandate of its EUBAM Rafah and EUPOL COPPS missions on the ground.

Libya

Baroness Ashton briefed Ministers on Bernardino Leon's appointment as UN Special Representative for the UN Secretary General on Libya and highlighted the strength of EU engagement on Libya and the need for a continued EU role. In Conclusions, the EU condemned the increasing violence in Libya and its devastating effect on the civilian population. The EU was strongly concerned by the threats the violence represented for regional security and for the EU.

Ebola crisis

Ministers, at the request of Spain, also briefly discussed the Ebola crisis in West Africa. Spain and the Commission briefed Member States on the severity of the epidemic, and on the potential political and security implications of the Ebola crisis.

I am writing in similar terms to Sir William Cash MP, Chairman of the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee and Lord Boswell of Aynho, Chairman of the European Union Select Committee, copying to the Clerks of the respective Committees, Les Saunders at the Cabinet Office, Jonathan Worgan and Magdalena

Williams, Departmental Scrutiny Co-ordinators, and Victoria Butt, FCO Select Committee Liaison Officer. I am placing a copy of this letter in the library of the House.

I will continue to update Parliament on Foreign Affairs Councils as and when future meetings are held.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Lidington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and "L".

RT HON DAVID LIDINGTON MP