



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

Minister of State

October 2019

Tom Tugendhat MP  
Chair  
Foreign Affairs Committee  
House of Commons

*Dear Tom,*

**14<sup>th</sup> October Foreign Affairs Council**

The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) will take place in Luxembourg on 14<sup>th</sup> October. Due to Parliament's prorogation from Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October to Monday 14<sup>th</sup>, it has not been possible to lay a Written Ministerial Statement before Parliament ahead of the Council as is usual. I am therefore writing to you with information about the agenda and the United Kingdom's position on the discussions. I am writing in similar terms to the Rt Hon. Baroness Anelay of St Johns DBE, International Relations Committee chair, and I am depositing a copy of this letter in both libraries.

The High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP), Federica Mogherini, will chair the FAC. It will discuss Libya, Venezuela Iraq and Iran under Current Affairs, followed by substantive discussions on Turkey and Cyprus hydrocarbons dispute, Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine. There will also be an informal lunch with the Ukrainian Foreign Minister, Vadym Prystaiko.

We expect HRVP Mogherini to provide an update on the ongoing conflict in Libya, ahead of a leader-level conference which Chancellor Merkel is preparing to host in Berlin later this year. The United Kingdom supports this, as well as complementary efforts driven by UN Special Representative Ghassan Salamé towards de-escalation, a ceasefire and a return to UN-led political talks.

HRVP Mogherini will also raise Iran, and how to respond to its reduced compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) and escalatory attacks in the region. The United Kingdom will underline its commitment to the JCPoA and the need for Iran to return to full compliance. The United Kingdom will stress the need for Iran to engage on negotiations for a long-term framework for its nuclear programme as well as preventing its destabilising activity around the region.

The HRVP will provide an update on the current situation in Venezuela and on the joint International Contact Group/Lima Group meeting held during the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). She will also brief on the International Solidarity Conference on the Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant Crisis due to take place in Brussels at the end of October.



The HVRP will touch on the current situation in Iraq and the security forces' use of force towards protestors. The EU's External Action Service issued a statement last week which noted the need for restraint and to protect the right to protest. We will emphasise the need for the Government of Iraq to investigate reports of human rights abuses and the use of live fire, and to take urgent action to address the legitimate demands of the protestors.

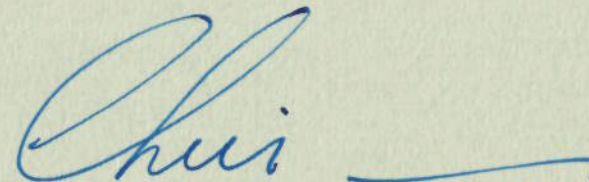
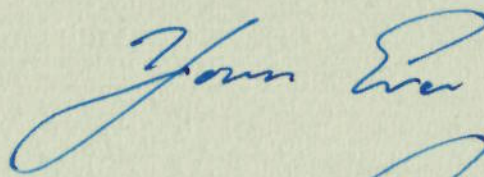
In response to the escalation of Turkish drilling activities in the waters around Cyprus, we expect the Republic of Cyprus' Foreign Minister, Nikos Christodoulides, to push for additional EU measures, including possible sanctions, against Turkey. The United Kingdom will reiterate its opposition to Turkish drilling, encourage dialogue and de-escalation, and underline the importance of all parties engaging to allow progress towards a Cyprus Settlement.

Ministers will discuss the political situation in Afghanistan following the recent presidential elections and review prospects for peace. The United Kingdom will highlight the importance of completing the electoral process in an impartial, efficient and transparent manner, and reiterate the need for progress on peace efforts.

UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, will brief Ministers on Syria. Ministers will discuss the UN-led political process following the Secretary General's recent announcement of the formation of the Constitutional Committee, which the United Kingdom and the EU have both welcomed. The discussion will also focus on Turkey's military incursion into Northeast Syria. I attach a statement the Foreign Secretary issued about this on 9<sup>th</sup> October.

The Ukrainian Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko will join EU Ministers to discuss the latest developments in Ukraine, including efforts to resolve the Donbas conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the reform agenda. The United Kingdom will reaffirm its support for Ukraine and welcome President Zelenskyy's commitment to domestic reforms and to finding a diplomatic solution to the conflict.

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Nicaragua, Thailand, CFSP priorities and EU support for Democracy.



**RT HON CHRISTOPHER PINCHER MP**