

# Press Release: Combatting human trafficking in South and South-East Asia: fresh priorities needed, say EU Auditors

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## Communiqué de presse: Les auditeurs de l'UE considèrent qu'il faut définir de nouvelles priorités dans la lutte contre la traite des êtres humains en Asie du Sud et du Sud-Est

The Council agreed its stance on part of a package of proposals aimed at reducing risk in the banking industry. The Council closed excessive deficit procedures for Croatia and Portugal, confirming their deficits have dropped below the EU's 3% of GDP reference value.

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## Remarks by HR/VP Federica Mogherini at the press conference foll

*Check against delivery!*

Je vais commencer en Français pour revenir sur un point que j'ai soulevé ce matin lorsque j'ai dit que notre travail aujourd'hui était concentré aussi sur l'Afrique et le Sahel. Cela se passe quelques heures après l'attaque terroriste à Bamako, à propos de laquelle j'avais dit ce matin qu'il y avait la possibilité d'avoir des victimes européennes. Malheureusement, je peux confirmer qu'il y a 2 victimes parmi nos collègues de l'Union européenne: une victime portugaise (un soldat) qui faisait partie de la mission de formation de l'Union européenne [EUTM Mali] à Bamako, que j'avais visitée il y a deux semaines au Mali, et une collègue malienne qui travaillait pour la délégation de l'Union européenne.

Cela démontre la force de la solidarité entre l'Union européenne et le Mali, ainsi que le Sahel; une solidarité qui n'est pas seulement politique mais aussi dans les faits. Nous travaillons ensemble sur le terrain, chaque jour, dans un endroit compliqué, difficile, dangereux aussi. Je voudrais adresser non seulement mes condoléances mais aussi le respect et l'admiration de toute l'Union européenne et aussi de nos collègues du Mali et du Sahel, pour le travail que nos collègues font dans la région et en particulier à Bamako – un travail précieux.

J'étais en contact toute la matinée avec le Ministre des affaires étrangères du Mali [Abdoulaye Diop] qui m'a exprimée ses condoléances pour la perte que nous avons eu mais aussi toute son appréciation et l'appréciation du peuple du Mali pour le soutien que l'Union européenne est en train de donner à la lutte contre le terrorisme. Nous avons plus ou moins 500 personnes de l'Union européennes; 22 Etats Membres et 5 Etats qui ne sont pas membres de l'UE participent à notre mission militaire de formation EUTM Mali à Bamako, aux côtés du travail de la délégation de l'Union européenne et de celui de la mission civile [EUCAP Mali], toujours à Bamako. C'est un des prix à payer – l'unité de l'Union européenne, du Mali et du Sahel, comme je le disais, est forte et nous allons continuer à travailler ensemble chaque jour pour éviter que les terroristes l'emportent et nous sommes ensemble, unis dans la douleur et aussi dans la réaction et dans notre travail.

I will switch to English to say that, with the Ministers, we focused also today on counter-terrorism. We adopted Council conclusions, so common decisions of the EU Member States, stressing the need to continue expanding our network of counter-terrorist experts in our delegations, focusing on some geographical priorities namely Middle East, North Africa, Western Balkans and Turkey but also Sahel, Horn of Africa and Gulf. This is a work that we will continue to do together with the Member States.

I have updated Member States on the implementation of the Global Strategy [of the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy], on the counterterrorism, as well as well as our work on security and defence, on migration – other elements of work are part of the Global Strategy implementation. We have presented a report: one year of action following a common shared vision on our global role. In one year, we have seen that the world needs the European Union much more than we even imagined one year ago and this gives us a big responsibility, a big opportunity. We have started to translate our common vision into common action, namely on security and defence, strengthening the European defence pillar, also in partnership with NATO – we discussed this today with the Deputy Secretary General of NATO Rose Gottemoeller on behalf of the Secretary General of NATO Jens Stoltenberg. We presented together a report on the 42 actions that the European Union and NATO undertook in these last months namely on hybrid threats, but also on strategic communication, on maritime operations' coordination between Operation Sophia and See Guardian in the Mediterranean in particular, on cyber-defence and on the work we are doing to train our partners.

So, never as now, EU and NATO have been cooperating as a matter of norm and not exception. This is also part of the implementation of our Global Strategy as well as it is the work that we have been doing – as I said – on counter-

terrorism or on migration. I have shared with the Ministers the 4th report on our partnership frameworks, the [Migration] Compacts, we have developed with countries of origin and transit in Africa. It is going to be a work that will continue to require a joint effort by all Member States, by all EU institutions, but that is presenting the first results in terms of common management of a phenomenon that is particularly complex. I shared with the Ministers a couple of numbers that I will share also with you, just to give you a sense of direction of the trends.

Last year, in May 2016, there were 70 000 migrants crossing Niger and then moving into Libya and then probably towards the Mediterranean. This year, in May, we are at 5 000. So, we went down from 70 000 to 5 000 migrants crossing Niger thanks to an excellent cooperation and partnership with the authorities of Niger and the strong work we have done especially in Agadez to offer economic alternatives but also to support the joint Sahel efforts to control the territory.

Another number of which I am particularly pleased about: in Libya, we have moved from 2 000 assisted voluntary returns from Libya to countries of origin that were done in the whole year of 2016 to 4 500 in the first months of this year, so more than the double. Here we are talking about people that were saved, offered an alternative by the IOM and the UNHCR with the logistical and financial support of the European Union and that chose to return to their home countries.

And to add one other number, the Libyan coastguards saved and rescued more than 16 000 migrants in the recent months following our training and the delivery of vessels.

This is not to say that the situation is solved – far from that. We still have enormous work to do. We see too many people dying in the desert and at sea, and we are seeing too many people still in the hands of the smugglers. But the action that Member States, EU institutions have put in place in the last year, together and in partnership with the countries of origin and transit, is starting to give important results. I will report on that also to the European Council at the end of the week. And I expect that all Member States will continue to invest in solidarity and in cooperation because only together we can hope to face this challenge, together with our friends in Africa and elsewhere in the world in a constructive, respective and fruitful manner.

Today we had a very intense agenda, we tackled 3 other issues. One is the work we do on climate change. You will find decisions, conclusions that ministers have adopted today, among many other things on climate change. The European Union believes this is part of our work on security – as I repeated many times in these recent weeks. And we are committed all together to not only implement the Paris Agreement, but also to network with our partners around the world, with our friends around the world to make sure that there are global alliances of states and non-state actors – to make sure that climate action continues as strongly as before if not even more. The last two points: we have taken decisions on Iraq to increase our work in support of the Iraqi authorities – especially in a critical moment for the fight against

Da'esh in Iraq. I would stress one point on which I have understood there is quite some attention from media which is the decision we have taken to examine the deployment of a European Union security sector reform advice and assist team. To assist – as the name says – in the reform work of the Iraqi authorities, in cooperation and in coherence with other international partners. And that happens in response to the request by the Iraqi authorities to deploy this advisory and assistance team to accompany their work on security sector reform. Obviously there is the humanitarian, the development side of our engagement that will also increase and there is a coordinated approach especially to work on the stabilisation of the liberated areas from Da'esh in Iraq that will see the European Union stepping up its work in coordination and under request of the Iraqi authorities.

Last but not least at all, we have discussed with the Ministers the crisis that has erupted in the Gulf and especially among the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] Member States. I can share with you that all 28 Ministers were fully backing the approach we have taken in the last couple of weeks, that of expressing a strong European Union interest in the stability, in the unity of the Gulf. First of all, as key interlocutors and partners in the fight against terrorism, in finding a way out of some of the conflicts of the region, starting from Syria, but also being relevant interlocutors or actors when it comes to the situation in Libya that we want to preserve from being exposed to further tensions. And partners in the fight against terrorism means also in the work to prevent financing of terrorism. All together, we encourage de-escalation and most of all we encourage all Gulf countries to engage in political dialogue without preconditions accepting the mediation role of Kuwait. We are ready to help, assist and accompany these mediation efforts in all ways that might be requested. We believe though that the region, the Gulf, has in itself the possible strengths and wisdom to find a political way out of this crisis. The European Union has the firm intention to keep strong relationships and ties with all the Gulf countries and we hope that they will manage to restore good working relations among them.

I will stop here – sorry it was already very long and again we will try to keep it brief because we continue the day with a very important ministerial meeting with our Eastern partners.

<https://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I140280>

## **Q&A**

**Q. Given the fact that you have contacts with all parties in the region, do you see the end of this crisis very soon or as some Ministers said this morning, given the fact that there are a lot of problems for many years between some States of the region, that the crisis is going to be long?**

You know me; I know I am an optimist. I have to say that this time I see the depth of the crisis more worrying than any time before. I also think though that there is an interest from all the actors around the Gulf to find a way to solve these tensions through dialogue and find a form of cooperation. If you look at the security ties, if you look at the family ties, if you look at the double citizenships, if you look at the economic relations, if you look

at the ways in which the region is interconnected on a daily basis – from energy to security, I repeat myself – you realise that there is no real alternative than cooperation in the Gulf. This is true inside the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council]. In the European Union we believe this is true even beyond the GCC, but this is definitely not for today – apparently. So, indeed, it does not seem to be a crisis that is ready to be solved tomorrow. But if you look at it rationally, all parties – seen from our point of view – all parties would have a strong interest in defining a quick and political solution to these tensions, together around a negotiating table – as I said, without preconditions and counting on the excellent mediating efforts of the Emir of Kuwait [Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah] that has our full support. I discussed this with the Foreign minister of Kuwait [Sabah Al-Khalid al-Sabah] in these recent days and I am personally in contact with the Foreign Ministers of the region, from Saudi Arabia to Qatar, to the [United Arab] Emirates and further beyond.

Let me add that we are extremely worried about the possible spill-over effect that these tensions could have both in the Horn of Africa, in Africa at large, some parts of Asia, in the Middle East, obviously in Libya. Our strong plea is – to our friends in the Gulf – to make reason prevail and find a way to solve any dispute or differences – that we understand and in some cases we share – to find a solution out of these tensions.

**Q. On Iraq, was there appetite in the Council today for a stabilisation mission and what would be the next steps if so?**

As I said the decision we took today is to explore, to examine the deployment of an EU Security Sector Reform Advice and Assist Team. So this is the decision we have taken, to explore this possibility of deployment rapidly in these coming months; to have an assist and advice team to accompany the Iraqi authorities on their security sector reform. This is the next step we are going to take. As I said, this is happening in response to a request by the Iraqi government and authorities and this is going to be done in cooperation with the other international partners. I could not elaborate on further steps, but this is the next step we are going to take and I hope this can be put in place rapidly enough – hopefully in the coming months – so that we can, also in the security sector reform, provide all our advice and assistance to the Iraqi authorities that are facing a complicated time. As I said, the European Union is already doing a lot both on the humanitarian, on the development, on the demining, on the recovery of the liberated areas. We are ready to do more also on the security sector reform.

**Q. Il semblerait qu'il y aurait une discussion au Conseil européen jeudi sur les sanctions économiques contre la Russie avec une présentation de l'évaluation de la situation sur le terrain par la France et l'Allemagne et une recommandation. Pourriez-vous donner un peu de détails sur comment cela va se passer et le renouvellement, si vous pensez que cela est dans les tuyaux?**

Ce n'était pas un point que les Ministres ont débattu aujourd'hui. Comme vous le savez, la procédure mais aussi le contenu de nos décisions par rapport aux sanctions liées à la situation en Ukraine n'ont pas changé, c'est-à-dire que

normalement les Etats Membres prennent la décision qui est liée à la mise en œuvre des accords de Minsk, qui sont pour nous la façon de résoudre le conflit. L'Allemagne et la France, d'une certaine façon, représentent l'Union européenne en lien direct avec nous dans le format Normandie. A deux ou trois reprises, lors du Conseil européen, les chefs d'Etat et de gouvernement de la France et de l'Allemagne, ensemble avec moi, ont donné leur opinion sur l'état de mise en œuvre des accords [de Minsk] et après le Conseil a adopté formellement la décision. Je dois constater qu'il n'y a pas de réelle avancée sur la mise en œuvre des accords et donc j'imagine que la décision va être prise dans le sens d'une continuation de l'état actuel des sanctions. Mais bien sûr, cela sera débattu par les Etats Membres j'imagine après le Conseil européen de la fin de semaine; nous avons le temps jusqu'à la fin juillet pour la reconduction des sanctions.

**Q. I have got a question on Syria because today there was a downing of a plane – a Syrian plane – by the coalition and then the Russian Foreign Ministry, Russian Defence Ministry suspended the de-conflicting mechanism with the United States. Do you have any reaction on that? Do you think it will have an impact on the Syrian talks?**

I just talked to Staffan de Mistura [United Nations Special Envoy for Syria] a couple of days ago about the perspective of the talks. To me, even the recent developments today are the clear demonstration of the fact that there is no alternative to a political solution that has to be negotiated in Geneva under the UN leadership. As you know very well, the European Union is not a military player in Syria and is proud not to be, because we are not the ones that are fighting in Syria, we are the ones that are delivering humanitarian aid, we are bringing the children to school, we are trying to have access to all areas of the country. And this is the work that the European Union is ready to continue in support of a political agreement to be defined by the parties under UN leadership in Geneva. We are extremely engaged with different Syrian interlocutors – in Geneva itself – including on the ways in which we can support not only from the humanitarian point of view but also from a reconciliation perspective, locally, and in the future, on reconstruction. We believe that it is extremely urgent that the parties in Geneva find a political agreement that can put an end to this war.

**Q. Since what has happened in Mali over the weekend and also the ongoing work with Iraq, do you see as part of the Global Strategy any role for the private security sector as a player in the Global Strategy in terms of providing aid for missions abroad, in terms of security advice? And a quick question on Russia. Where do you stand on the sanctions against Russia because of the crisis in Ukraine? Should these sanctions be extended? The decision is coming up I guess.**

On the second part of the question, I guess I already replied in French so maybe you can simply translate for the sake of time.

On security – if I understood correctly your question – you asked me if there is a new role for the private security sector? No. No, we count on 28 Member States that have security forces, both in the military and in the civilian field, that have competences, dedication, commitment, professionalism. They

are amazing – all of them. All 28 have enormous resources in this field. The loss of lives we have experienced yesterday in Mali is a tragic, but also maybe useful reminder for all Europeans of the fact that our men and women in uniform are already serving for peace and security and against terrorism in many different parts of the world – in Africa, but also elsewhere. We have to be grateful for the service they are paying and also proud for the quality of the contributions they are bringing to the security of difficult places. That is not only a gesture of solidarity with our friends – in this case brothers and sisters of Mali – but it is also an investment in our own security. This to say the European Union is increasing its work on security and defence, including our military and civilian missions and operations around the world – we have fifteen of them. We have now a unified command in Brussels that in these hours has been following and coordinating actions in Mali. So, we are increasing the EU profile on security and defence – always keeping in mind the European way to security which is never a purely military approach. You take the example of Mali. We are there with a military mission to advise the Malian security forces. By the way if you compare the reaction of the Malian security forces on the attack yesterday and the previous attack that happened in an Hotel in Bamako you would see that the security forces of Mali today are much more prepared and are taking the responsibility of their security in their hands directly – which is also an effect of our training work with them. So we are stepping up our work on security and defence. We are doing that with a mix of military, non-military, humanitarian, development, economic investments, climate change action in all places where we are present. And we are doing it, counting on our own forces that – I can tell you – today at 28, tomorrow at 27, are more than sufficient to make the European Union a security provider worldwide.

**Q. Sur la crise du Golfe: nous avons entendu que vous soutenez les efforts du Koweït mais nous aimerions bien savoir votre réaction à propos du blocus imposé contre un peuple et pas uniquement un Etat?**

Il est clair pour nous – comme je l’ai dit – que les différences et même les éléments de friction, de tension, de désaccord entre différents Etats doivent être résolus par des moyens politiques, le dialogue, l’engagement et pas avec des mesures prises unilatéralement. Nous sommes particulièrement préoccupés par les effets que ces mesures peuvent avoir sur la région surtout sur les citoyens qui ont la double nationalité, les familles mais aussi sur les liens économiques, de sécurité qui existent dans le Golfe qui lient les Etats du CCG de façon très forte et solide. En tant qu’Union européenne, nous avons intérêt à voir cette crise résolue de façon la plus rapide possible par des moyens de dialogue et d’engagement politique et surtout sans escalade des tensions et sans effets supplémentaires sur les régions voisines ou sur des crises qui sont en cours et sur lesquelles il faut, au contraire, plus de coopération entre les Etats de la région et de la part des Etats de la région avec la communauté internationale.

Link to the video:

<https://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I140281>

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## Statement by the Spokesperson on Yemen

The bombing of a market in Yemen's Northern province of Saada last Saturday resulted in the death of more than 20 civilians and several injured.

The EU expresses its condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to all those injured. The bombing is a stark reminder that Yemeni civilians are the ones bearing the brunt of a war that has devastated their country, threatening to undermine regional stability.

The EU is increasingly worried by the humanitarian situation in the country, on the verge of widespread famine and most recently hit by a cholera outbreak.

The EU expects all parties to re-engage constructively, under the auspices of the UN, to find a peaceful and negotiated political solution to the conflict so as to bring an end to the current unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

As stated by its Foreign Affairs Ministers in April, the EU will continue to work with the UN and all Yemeni and regional actors in the search of a political solution to the crisis while remaining committed to provide humanitarian assistance to the Yemeni population according to their rising needs.

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## Speech by Michel Barnier, the European Commission's Chief Negotiator, following the first round of Article 50 negotiations with the UK

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Je suis heureux de vous retrouver, aux côtés de David Davis, pour cette première conférence de presse commune.

Cette première session était importante. Je peux dire aujourd'hui qu'elle a été utile.

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Ladies and gentlemen,



This first session was useful to start off on the right foot.

And it was useful for me to sit down with my counterpart, David Davis. I look forward to working closely with you during this negotiation.

Today, we agreed on dates.

We agreed on organisation.

We agreed on priorities for the negotiation.

In a first step, we will deal with the most pressing issues. We must lift the uncertainty caused by Brexit. We want to make sure that the withdrawal of the UK happens in an orderly manner.

Then, in a second step, we will scope our future relationship.

We also agreed on how we will structure our talks. Our aim is to have one week of negotiations every month. And use the time in between to work on proposals and exchange them.

In the first phase, the negotiation rounds will be broken down into three groups: citizens' rights, the single financial settlement, and other separation issues.

These groups will report back to their respective principals during each negotiating week.

David Davis and I, as Chief EU Negotiator, will discuss the issues together, tackle difficulties, lift obstacles.

We agreed that our closest collaborators will start a dialogue on Ireland. The protection of the Good Friday agreement and the maintenance of the Common Travel Area are the most urgent issues to discuss.

We also agreed on the importance of timing for this first phase.

Our objective is to agree on the main principles of the key challenges for the UK's withdrawal as soon as possible. This includes citizens' rights, the single financial settlement, and the question of the borders, in particular in Ireland.

The European Council can then decide on whether we can show sufficient progress, or not. And if we can move to scoping the future relationship on trade and other matters.

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Mesdames et Messieurs,

Aujourd'hui, nous avons donc commencé à discuter de ces trois sujets clé dans le mandat que m'ont donné les 27.

Nous devons nous engager mutuellement à garantir aux citoyens des deux côtés

du *channel* qu'ils pourront continuer à vivre comme avant.

Nous devons solder les comptes et honorer nos engagements financiers mutuels.

Nous devons trouver des solutions pour préserver tous les engagements du Good Friday Agreement.

C'est en levant les incertitudes sur ces sujets que nous poserons les bases de la confiance nécessaire pour bâtir un nouveau partenariat entre nous.

En quittant l'Union comme il a choisi de le faire, le Royaume-Uni n'aura plus les mêmes droits et bénéfices que les Etats membres de l'Union. Je suis cependant convaincu qu'il est dans notre intérêt commun d'établir un nouveau partenariat entre les 27 et le Royaume-Uni et que ce partenariat peut contribuer à la stabilité durable de notre continent.

Nous sommes à 27, avec les institutions, unis pour cette négociation et dans cette perspective. Mais, les 27 sont également unis pour, en toutes hypothèses, continuer à réformer, progresser, avancer ensemble.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

For both the EU and the UK, a fair deal is possible and far better than no deal. That is what I said to David today. That is why we will work all the time with the UK, and never against the UK.

There will be no hostility on my side. I will display a constructive attitude, firmly based on the interest and support of the 27.

And I will all the time seek the continued support of the European Parliament.

Permettez-moi de terminer en citant Jean Monnet qui, quand on lui demandait s'il était optimiste ou pessimiste, répondait : ni l'un, ni l'autre, je suis déterminé. Voilà mon état d'esprit.