

19.05.2017

Maltese Presidency adopts conclusions on EU priorities in the fight against serious and organised crime

"The principle of solidarity is enshrined in the Treaties of the EU and it is imperative and of crucial importance that what has agreed upon in past Council meetings, is implemented."

EU Home Affairs Ministers adopted conclusions on setting the EU's priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime during the 2018-2021 policy cycle. These conclusions identify ten crime priorities - namely cybercrime, drugs, facilitating illegal immigration, organised property crime, trafficking in human beings, excise and missing trader intra community fraud, firearms, environmental crime, criminal finances and money laundering, and document fraud.

The adoption took place on Thursday, 18th May 2017, during a Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council meeting in Brussels chaired by Minister for Home Affairs and National Security, on behalf of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU Carmelo Abela.

Another important issue on the table was the Common European asylum system reform. "The situation of migratory flows in the Central Mediterranean requires decisive actions by EU Member States if lives are to be saved, people's smuggling routes eliminated, and the integrity of the European Union preserved," said Minister Abela in a joint press conference held at the end of the ministerial session with European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs, and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos. "The principle of solidarity is enshrined in the Treaties of the EU and it is imperative and of crucial importance that what has agreed upon in past Council meetings, is implemented."

Minister Abela stressed that the Dublin system does not cater for scenarios of exceptional circumstances, and that the Common European Asylum System cannot rely on ad-hoc measures.

He emphasised the importance that a balance is struck between the responsibilities of Member States at the first point of entry and other Member States.

On the same day, Minister Abela participated in a Council meeting for Ministers of Defence, chaired by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini. The Council adopted conclusions on security and defence in the context of the EU Global Strategy. The conclusions take note of progress in strengthening cooperation in the area of security and defence, and provide guidance for further work.

19.05.2017

The Ministers agreed that cooperation with Common Security and Defence Policy partners should be broadened to reflect new challenges, including those on border security, cyber, as well as security threats. Such cooperation should be enhanced with partners who share similar values, as well as those which contribute to the EU's security.

The Defence Ministers took stock of the progress made in the implementation of the common proposals for EU-NATO Cooperation which emanate from the EU-NATO Joint Declaration agreed last year in Warsaw. A joint EU-NATO report on the implementation of these proposals will be presented to the European Council and the North Atlantic Council respectively in June 2017. Minister Abela stated that Malta recognises the importance of cooperation between the two organisations in areas where they have common interests, while respecting the principles of inclusiveness, reciprocity, and decision making autonomy.

On the initiative of the Maltese Presidency, a joint working lunch for EU Home Affairs and Defence Ministers and a joint working dinner for Home Affairs and Development Ministers, both co-chaired by High Representative Mogherini and Minister Abela, were held on the margins of the JHA Affairs Council.

The joint Home Affairs-Defence lunch discussed how synergies can be created between the military and law enforcement agencies to combat the ever-evolving terrorist threat, and the timely sharing of information to prevent terror acts, while the Home Affairs-Development dinner provided the Ministers with an opportunity to jointly discuss the external aspects of migration. In the latter meeting, Malta was represented by Minister for Foreign Affairs George Vella.

"We have had two very interesting joint meetings today with Defence and Development Ministers," Minister Abela remarked. "The dialogue between various Council formations has highlighted the need for more coordination and coherence among different policies and will hopefully enhance the effectiveness of the EU's work in relation to migration and in the fight against terrorism."



19.05.2017



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/eu2017mt/34365627760/in/album-72157675458927640/>
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/eu2017mt/34365627720/in/album-72157675458927640/>