

# Press release – Brexit: MEPs want EU and UK to take care of citizens' rights first – Committee on Petitions – Committee on Employment and Social Affairs – Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

The EU and the UK government should negotiate a deal on the situation and rights of citizens as a matter of urgency and before starting the other Brexit talks, MEPs say.

In a joint hearing organised by the committees of Civil Liberties, Employment and Petitions, most MEPs underlined the “moral duty” to end the uncertainty created for both EU citizens living in the UK and UK nationals in the EU since the June referendum.

The EU should let go of the principle that “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” in negotiations, because a quick solution for citizens' rights is a matter of priority. “Let's do this first”, they concurred.

Parliament's Brexit coordinator, Guy Verhofstadt, said the House might adopt a resolution on this issue, probably after the summer recess.

In a [plenary resolution adopted on 5 April](#), Parliament stressed that citizens' interests must come first in the negotiations between the EU and the UK government with fair and equal treatment for EU citizens living in the UK and British citizens living in the EU.

## **Quotes**

Claude Moraes (S&D, UK), Chair of the Civil Liberties Committee, said: “Today's hearing shows that the European Parliament stands ready to fulfil its role in the negotiations by working hard with our constituents, our home governments and the EU institutions to ensure the voices of concerned citizens are being heard. Human beings come first, we are not commodities and what happens on citizens' rights sets the tone for the entire negotiation and relationship for a generation to come, so we must get it right”.

Renate Weber (ALDE, RO), Vice-Chair of the Employment Committee, added: “I strongly believe that when thinking about Brexit consequences, there is no greater concern than the fate of EU citizens who study, work and settle in the UK and also visitors, and of those British citizens who work or live in EU 27. Brexit will have a direct impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of workers and students, on millions of tourists, as citizens' mobility and rights are at the heart of the European project. We have worked hard to

guarantee citizens' uninterrupted access to all kind of benefits, and these rights should be safeguarded."

Cecilia Wikström (ALDE, SE), Chair of the Petitions Committee stated: "The Brexit decision has created uncertainty for three million citizens from other member states living in the UK, as well as for the 1.2 million British citizens currently living in the EU. These people are anxious and frightened about their future and their concerns must therefore be our top priority, and issues related to citizens' rights solved first of all. We shall never forget that this concerns real people, they are not just pawns in the negotiations. This is about basic human values and about common decency. Only by putting the citizens first can we achieve a fair result in the end".

You can catch up with the debate via [Video on Demand](#)

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## **Leaked manifesto reveals Labour won't give people final say on Brexit deal**

The leaked version of the Labour manifesto has confirmed Jeremy Corbyn's Labour won't give the people the final say on the Brexit deal.

This comes after Jeremy Corbyn made clear that Labour believes Britain must leave the EU whatever the agreement reached, in an interview with BBC Look North yesterday.

Former Liberal Democrat party president Simon Hughes said: "Jeremy Corbyn's Labour has waved the white flag and given Theresa May a blank cheque to pursue a divisive Brexit.

"Now this leaked manifesto confirms they are refusing to give the British people the final say over the Brexit deal, no matter how bad it is.

"A better future is available. The Liberal Democrats will stand up to Theresa May's cold, mean-spirited Britain and against a bad Brexit deal that will cost jobs and put up prices.

"We will give you the final say on Brexit – with the option to stay in if you don't like the deal on offer."

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# EU emergency trust fund for Africa

11/05/2017 – 18:06

Speech by Federica Mogherini at the opening session of the 2017 London Conference on Somalia

11/05/2017 – 15:50

EU emergency trust fund for Africa

11/05/2017 – 14:33

Joint Declaration on the occasion of the EU-Tunisia Association Council of 11 May 2017

11/05/2017 – 10:32

Visas: Council adopts regulation on visa liberalisation for Ukrainian citizens

10/05/2017 – 21:30

Rencontre de la Haute Représentante/Vice-présidente Federica Mogherini avec le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères de la République tunisienne, M. Khémaies Jhinaoui

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## Speech by Federica Mogherini at the opening session of the 2017 London Conference on Somalia

*Check against delivery!*

President Mohamed Hassan Mohamed, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Somalia still needs our support, at a critical moment in its history. The EU has always been and will continue to be the first supporter of Somalia across all fields – from security to humanitarian, in full partnership with the Somali Administration, our friends in the region, the AU and the UN. The Somali people face great difficulties, after decades of instability and years

of famine. And yet, hope has not abandoned this land.

With our support, I believe that there is a new opportunity for Somalia to consolidate peace, generate growth and set up a new relationship with its neighbours. It is not a distant dream, but a concrete opportunity for the very near future. The moment has arrived – in fact it begins tomorrow, the day after this conference – to find ways for the Somalis to provide for their own security. This is the precondition for peace and growth in Somalia to be sustainable in time.

It may not happen overnight, but it is in the interests of the Somali people, Somalia's neighbours and the entire international community that this happens soon. And if I look at the progress Somalia has made in recent years, particularly from Copenhagen in autumn 2014, it really shows that change is possible, and things are finally moving in the right direction.

State formation has advanced significantly, institutions are developing, and there is progress on the re-engagement with the international financial institutions. The successful indirect electoral process finalised earlier this year is an important step towards one-person one-vote elections in 2020. And the increase in female representation is a particularly encouraging sign.

There is still more work to be done to improve the rule of law and the respect of human rights, which are essential to the credibility of the institutions and the stability of any democracy. When Somalia will finalise the Constitutional review process, they will have the opportunity to consolidate the responsibilities at the federal level, and between the centre and the regions.

All this is possible also thanks to the sacrifice of so many African men and women who participated in AMISOM, together with the Somalis, to create the space for political dialogue in Somalia. The EU pays tribute to all our brothers and sisters that have paid with their life this commitment.

President Mohamad Hassan Mohamad and regional leaders have already agreed on the outlines of Somalia's federal security architecture – the National Security Architecture and the associated pact that we are endorsing today. The President's very public commitment to eliminating corruption is central to achieving success. When someone steals public Somali money, they don't only weaken Somalia's ability to be truly sovereign; they also make every Somali citizen less secure. And not only Somali citizens.

The President's visits to his neighbours in Kenya and Ethiopia were two important moments for the Horn of Africa and the broader region. Because Somalia is not an island. Its stability is a key to regional stability.

And as we talk about regional stability, we all know how important and delicate the issue of refugees is. Our public opinions and media tend to focus on the refugee crisis happening closest to us in Europe, and also elsewhere. But we must never forget that there are many refugee crises in the world. And the millions of Somalis who are displaced inside and outside their

country.

The Special Summit on Somali Refugees, organised by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development in March, was an important step for refugees and their host communities. The Agreed Action Plan sets out an ambitious regional commitment, towards new ways of addressing protracted displacements. We must now translate commitments into action and quickly achieve tangible results.

Our objectives are the same. We want a Somalia reconciled with itself and with its neighbours. Al Shabaab must cease to be a threat to Somalis and their neighbours. A Somali security capacity, enshrined in the constitution, must eventually rise to providing security for all Somalis. As this occurs, AMISOM, which so far has borne the main effort to maintain security in Somalia, can progressively hand over to Somali security and police – as envisaged by the African Union's Chairman Moussa Faki.

Today's security pact sets the critical target dates for this to happen. The European Union was at the foundation of AMISOM ten years ago. And has always been there. And we intend to be with the African Union as it moves to conclude successfully its mission in Somalia. The upcoming assessment mission of AMISOM by the United Nations and the African Union should shape this process.

The European Union is ready and willing to accompany this process. But I want to be very clear; before we can make decisions about our financial support, we need to see effective coordination and burden sharing in managing this transition towards a Somali owned security system, with full participation by regional countries. We are ready and willing to be fully engaged in this process – with the Somali government and our partners in the international community, starting with the African Union.

In the weeks ahead, we will continue to work with the President of Somalia and the UN Special Representative. Through our cooperation, we want to better understand what this structure is and how it plans to engage with us all, to meet the criteria and timelines for the transition to the Somali security structures. Again let me be very clear. Our ability to verify progress through our participation will shape our policy decisions.

In this year alone the European Union and its member states will have invested over €800 million in Somalia, which will bring our total support to €3,5 billion for the 2015-2020 period. This includes our support for AMISOM, salaries for police, development aid, and €462 million for humanitarian assistance alone, to tackle the devastating effects of the drought in Somalia. And this comes on top of our Member States' contributions channelled through the United Nations, and of our European missions and operations which have contributed and continue to contribute to making Somalia safer and stronger at sea and at land.

The European Union is by far the first donor for Somalia, in all sectors. And Today, I am glad to announce a commitment of a further €200 million for Somalia. We do this because we all share an interest in peace in the Horn of Africa. The future of Somalia matters not only to its citizens, but to a

region that is crucial for global stability.

But we also do this because we believe that the people of Somalia can and should shape the future of their country.

The “New Partnership for Somalia” we will endorse today, building on the experience of the Compact, sets the priorities and criteria for mutual accountability that should govern the relations between Somalia and the international community. It’s the beginning of a new period, when a stronger Somalia can finally stand on its feet again.

We want Somalia to rise again – and today we demonstrate it in very practical terms. But the money we pledge today cannot do any miracles, without strong leadership and determination from inside Somalia. It is time to turn the opportunity you now have into real change for the people of Somalia and for the sake of the entire region – count on the EU to be there, as we have always been, to accompany you.

Thank you.

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## **Joint Declaration on the occasion of the EU-Tunisia Association Council of 11 May 2017**

**Joint Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta, George Vella, on behalf of the EU High Representative and by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, Khemaies Jhinaoui, following the EU-Tunisia Association Council**

The thirteenth session of the Association Council of the European Union and Tunisia took place in Brussels on 11 May 2017. The session was co-chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta, George VELLA, whose country holds the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union, on behalf of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission, and by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia, Mr. Khemaies Jhinaoui. Mr. Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, also participated in the session.

The session provided an opportunity to review the development of relations between Tunisia and the EU within the framework of the Privileged Partnership. These relations have gained new momentum, as demonstrated by President Essebsi’s visit to Brussels on 1 December 2016, the first visit at the highest level by a Tunisian President to the European institutions.

In this regard, the two parties noted with satisfaction the progress achieved since the 12th session of the EU-Tunisia Association Council (Luxembourg, 18 April 2016) in terms of the implementation of the Privileged Partnership Action Plan for 2013-2017. They welcomed the positive momentum that characterises relations between Tunisia and the European Union, and stressed their commitment to reinforcing this partnership further and to opening up new opportunities, duly respecting the principle of a differentiated approach contained in the revised European Neighbourhood Policy.

The European side, which welcomed the unprecedented nature of the Tunisian democratic experience, renewed its resolute commitment to continue to support the process of reforms undertaken by the Tunisian authorities with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the Constitution and the socio-economic development of the country. The recent adoption of the Five-Year Development Plan 2016-2020 and the progress made in the reform process will make it possible, in particular, to anchor the interventions of the Tunisian public authorities and their international partners, including the EU, within a new targeted and coherent programming framework.

The Association Council was also an opportunity to have an exchange of views at high level on regional issues of common interest, in particular the situation in Libya. In this regard, the EU welcomed Tunisia's important role in seeking a resolution to the Libyan conflict, and in particular supported the initiative launched by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Tunisia for a comprehensive and inclusive political solution to the Libyan crisis.

The two sides noted with satisfaction the marked improvement in the security situation in Tunisia, in particular due to the perseverance of the national security forces. Stabilisation of the security situation will allow the gradual resumption of economic activity, especially in the tourism sector. In this regard, Tunisia noted with satisfaction the changes made by a number of European to their country's travel advice concerning Tunisia.

Aware of the challenges posed by the transnational threat of terrorism, the European Union and Tunisia emphasised the progress achieved in their bilateral cooperation in the field of security and the fight against terrorism. In this context, the 2nd session of the High-Level Dialogue on Security in Brussels on 19 January 2017 reflected and their shared will to intensify cooperation in this field while promoting full respect for the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The two partners stressed the importance of the forthcoming local elections in Tunisia, scheduled for 17 December 2017. The EU expressed its readiness to deploy an election observation mission, as it had done for the elections of 2011 and 2014. This proposal was welcomed by the Tunisian side, who stated that the preparation, supervision and monitoring of elections were the exclusive responsibility of the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE).

The European side reiterated the importance it attaches to its cooperation with Tunisia, its Privileged Partner. The Joint Communication of

the EU High Representative and the European Commission of 29 September 2016 'Strengthening EU support for Tunisia', as well as the Council Conclusions of 17 October 2016, confirm the commitment of the EU and its Member States to that effect.

The Tunisian side, which noted with satisfaction the effort made by the European side in elaborating this Communication, views this document as a good starting point for giving new impetus to EU-Tunisia cooperation and further strengthening bilateral relations. The European side highlighted the success and positive momentum of the 'Tunisia 2020 International Conference' of 29 and 30 November 2016.

Tunisia expressed its appreciation for the EU's decision to increase the bilateral financial aid envelope for 2017 under the European Neighbourhood Instrument to EUR 300 million, and to maintain an equivalent level of funding for the period 2018-2020. The two sides welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding and the loan agreement for the granting of a second Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) operation amounting to EUR 500 million to Tunisia on 27 April 2017. Once the conditions are met, this MFA will support Tunisia, in part, with its pressing external financing needs, in the consolidation of the internal reform process, and in strengthening the resilience of the national economy. In the same context, Tunisia and the EU stressed the need to consolidate European financial support to Tunisia and underlined the desirability for Tunisia to make the best use of the resources of the next European External Investment Plan, which aims to support private investment and strengthen employment opportunities.

The two sides held an exchange of views on the future framework of relations between Tunisia and the EU which will replace the Action Plan for a Privileged Partnership (2013-2017). In this respect Tunisia reiterated its determination to make significant progress in its relations with the European Union and to advance them in order to reinforce its anchoring in the European socio-economic space, as well as to reflect the Tunisian priorities defined in the five-year development plan 2016-2020. Tunisia believes that this is an opportune time to engage in a common broader and deeper reflection with the European side so as to define a new political horizon for Tunisian-European relations. There is a need today for this partnership to evolve in order to bring it into step with Tunisia's democratic consolidation and achievements.

The two sides agreed on the importance of making progress in identifying a new framework for the future EU-Tunisia Partnership to replace the current Action Plan, to define priorities that reflect the scale and the depth of our privileged relations, and to meet their ambitions for the future in respect of the principle a differentiated approach as provided for in the revised European Neighbourhood Policy.

Noting the opportunities and challenges posed by migration, the European Union and Tunisia reiterated their wish to define together a common vision for the proper management of migration flows within their Mobility Partnership. To this end, both sides welcome the opportunity posed by the week of dialogue on migration and mobility last October, which helped to deepen the dialogue on all issues related to migration and to launch the

negotiations for an agreement on visa facilitation and the negotiations for an agreement on readmission.

The 13th session of the Association Council provided an opportunity to identify concrete bilateral actions in the priority areas of youth and of economic development:

## **Youth Partnership**

As part of the implementation of the 'EU-Tunisia Youth Partnership' initiative launched on 1 December 2016, the two parties agreed on priority themes such as: youth employability; education in the wider sense; the participation of young people in public and political life and the strengthening of links between young Tunisians and Europeans. The activities that could be developed include EU support for the preparation and implementation of the Tunisian integrated youth strategy by 2030, greater dialogue between European and Tunisian youth, and the identification of new measures, also taking into account the multidimensional strategic vision recently elaborated by the Tunisian side. On the occasion of the launching of this partnership, the EU had already committed to making full use of the opportunities under the Erasmus + programme for Tunisia, in particular so as to ensure the mobility of 1,500 students, teachers and young people annually until 2020.

## **Partnership for Growth**

In an enhanced effort to promote trade and investment and with the aim of supporting the Tunisian government's efforts for its economic transition, the two sides discussed the main thrusts of the 'Partnership for Growth' announced in the Joint EU Communication on 'Strengthening EU support for Tunisia', exchanging views inter alia on:

- a high level EU economic mission to Tunisia;
- the organisation of business forums on priority issues for the Tunisian economy with the involvement of the European businesses community;
- a structured dialogue on the various sectors of economic activity, with the first session of this dialogue potentially concerning the textile and clothing sector.

The two sides also pledged to strengthen their economic and trade relations and reaffirmed their commitment to continuing negotiations on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). In this context, Tunisia requested that the EU implement the exceptional measures set out in the Joint Communication that are aimed at boosting Tunisian exports and guaranteeing better access to the European market.

The two sides also noted with satisfaction the strengthening of cooperation between Tunisia and the European Parliament and remain committed to further deepening this cooperation. This is also achieved by strengthening parliamentary relations. The two sides welcomed the important speech of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Tunisia in a formal sitting of

the European Parliament on 1 December 2016 and the organisation of the Tunisian parliamentary week from 2 to 4 May 2017. The variety of topics covered during the week clearly highlighted the depth of the partnership.

In the margins of the Association Council's work, the two parties signed:

- an agreement on Tunisia's participation in the European programme to support the cultural and creative sectors entitled 'Creative Europe'. This programme will enable Tunisia's cultural and audio-visual actors to network and cooperate with their counterparts on the other side of the Mediterranean. It will thus help to strengthen the role played by culture in socio-economic integration and will help bring our societies closer together;
- a financial Convention for the 'Integrated Local Development Pilot Initiative'. With a grant of EUR 60 million, this initiative aims to support the government's efforts in the decentralisation process aimed at reducing inequalities in regional development.