

Agenda of the European Commission

2 – 8 March 2015

**Background notes from the Spokespersons' service for journalists.
The European Commission reserves the right to make changes.**

Tuesday 3 March

- High-level international conference on Ebola
- The Commission presents European environment — state and outlook 2015

Wednesday 4 March

- The Commission holds an orientation debate on migration
- Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy

Thursday 5 March

High Level Conference – A new start for social dialogue

Tuesday 3 March:

High-level international conference on Ebola

The news

The European Union and key partners are organizing a high-level international conference on Ebola on 3 March to take stock of the fight against the outbreak, coordinate further action for the total eradication of the disease and discuss the recovery process in the most affected countries.

The event will be co-chaired by Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, as well as Togo as Ebola coordinator of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations and the African Union.

The European Union will be represented by Vice-President and High Representative Federica Mogherini; the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica; the Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis and the EU Ebola coordinator and Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides.

More than 80 delegations have been invited, including Ministers from all West African countries and EU Member States, other countries that are contributing to the fight against Ebola, and relevant partners, such as UN agencies, the IMF, the World Bank, NGOs, the private sector and research institutes.

The background:

West Africa is currently facing the largest and most complex Ebola epidemic on record. The outbreak primarily affects three countries: Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. So far, more than 22,500 cases have been confirmed and more than 9,000 victims have died.

The European Union has been monitoring the spread of Ebola and taken collective action at home and abroad. It has mobilised humanitarian, political, financial and scientific resources to help contain, control, treat and ultimately defeat the virus. The EU and its Member States have pledged over EUR 1.2 billion to fight the epidemic. The EU is contributing EUR 414 million to provide emergency measures and longer-term support as well as the development of vaccines and treatments.

The event:

- The one-day event will take place in the Egmont Palace in Brussels. A press conference is scheduled for 13:00 o'clock. Facilities for the press and interview opportunities will be available on the spot. EbS will cover the event.
- On Monday 2 March at 11:30, an off-the-record briefing on the conference will take place at the press room of the European Commission.

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Tuesday 3 March:

Commission presents European environment — state and outlook 2015

The news:

A major 5 year report, released by the European Environment Agency reveals the state of the environment. EU Commissioner for Environment, Karmenu Vella, will draw on the report's findings, presented by the Director of the European Environment Agency, Hans Bruyninckx, to outline Europe's vision and opportunities to advance environmental policy and significantly improve the standard of living of its citizens.

The background:

The European environment — state and outlook 2015 report, provides a comprehensive assessment of the European environment's state, trends and prospects, and places it in a global context. It informs European environmental policy implementation and analyses the opportunities to modify existing policies in order to achieve the EU's 2050 vision of living well within the limits of the planet's resources.

Short term trends are encouraging as European policies have reduced several environmental pressures; several of these have also been decoupled from economic growth. Yet looking to the long term prognosis there is a less positive picture.

Some examples:

- › Environmental policies have brought improvements in drinking water and bathing water quality.
- › Hazardous pollutants have been reduced though serious health impacts still prevail in urban areas.
- › Looking ahead, the less positive outlook reflects that (1) inside and outside Europe, climate change, depletion of natural resources, and biodiversity loss can have potentially wide ranging and long-term effects on our health and life quality; and (2) urbanisation and human vulnerabilities such as our ageing population can reduce the gains we have made through improved environmental awareness.

The event:

- Tuesday 03 March at 12:30: press conference with EU Commissioner Karmenu Vella and the Director of the European Environmental Agency, Hans Bruyninckx.
- Press release and background note available on the day.

The sources:

- The full report: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/the-european-environment-state-and>
- Information on EU Commissioner Karmenu Vella: http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/vella_en

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Wednesday 4 March:

Commission holds orientation debate on migration

The news:

In the coming weeks, the College of Commissioners will hold an orientation debate on migration. The outcome of the debate will feed directly into the preparation of the European Agenda on Migration, to be presented by the Commission in 2015 according to its Work Programme.

The background:

As indicated in the Commission work programme, the European Agenda of Migration will present a new approach on legal migration to make the EU an attractive destination for talents and skills, as well as to improve the management of migration by intensifying cooperation with third countries, fostering responsibility sharing and solidarity in assisting migrants in need of protection and fighting against irregular migration and smuggling. The agenda includes the review of the Blue Card Directive, the EUwide work permit for highly skilled workers.

On College orientation debates: they are initiated by the Commission President to prepare initiatives in strategic policy areas. Orientation debates can take place during the weekly College meetings, seminars or specific working meetings.

The event:

Wednesday 4 March: The College of Commissioners will hold an orientation debate on migration.

The sources:

- President Juncker's political guidelines: http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/docs/pg_en.pdf
- The Commission Work Programme 2015: http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/work-programme/index_en.htm
- Website of Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship: http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/avramopoulos_en

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Wednesday 4 March:

Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy

The news:

On 4 March, the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will launch a consultation on the future of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

The background:

President Juncker has indicated that the ENP will be reviewed within the first year of the new Commission's mandate. On 4 March, a joint Communication by the European Commission and the High Representative will be adopted. The purpose of this document is to frame a policy debate on the future direction of the ENP. The aim is to consult as widely as possible both with partners in the neighbouring countries and with stakeholders across the EU until the end of June. After this public consultation, a further Communication setting out proposals for the future direction of the ENP will follow in the autumn.

The ENP was last reviewed in 2011. Given the significant developments in the neighbourhood since then, it is now essential to undertake a fundamental review of the assumptions on which the policy is based as well as the scope and how instruments should be used.

The event:

- HR/VP Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Johannes Hahn will give a press conference on Wednesday 4 March at 11:15 in the Commission's press room. A press release, a background note as well as the Communication will be issued on the day.
- An 'off-the-record' technical briefing will also be organised in the press room on 3 March.

The sources:

Information on European Neighbourhood Policy:

<http://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement>

http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/index_en.htm

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Thursday 5 March:

High Level Conference – A new start for social dialogue

The news:

On 5 March, the Commission will host a high level conference to mark a new start for social dialogue. Leaders of European and national employers' and workers' organisations, will gather together in Brussels to discuss with the EU institutions concrete ways to strengthen social dialogue in line with EU priorities.

Discussions with social partners will revolve around the following questions:

- What economic and social direction should the EU be taking at this point in time?
- How could the involvement of European and national social partners in the European Semester of economic policy coordination be further strengthened?
- How to further support the functioning of industrial relations and social dialogue at EU level and in the Member States?

The background:

Social dialogue at all levels is a prerequisite for the functioning of Europe's social market economy and crucial to promote both competitiveness and fairness. 2015 marks the 30th anniversary of the launch of the cooperation with European social partners at Val Duchesse. Well-developed tripartite and bipartite structures have been put in place, which have produced tangible results. However, in recent years, the difficult socio-economic environment has made progress more difficult. The Commission is committed to work with social partners to improve the quality and effectiveness of social dialogue at all levels and to develop joint solutions for the main challenges we are facing in Europe.

The event:

- Journalists interested in attending the high-level conference are invited to contact Tove Ernst (tove.ernst@ec.europa.eu). On-site registration is also possible.
- A press conference with Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner Marianne Thyssen and the social partners will take place at 13:00 in the Charlemagne building.
- Press release and background note will be available. The high-level conference will be live streamed by EbS.
- Follow the discussion on Twitter using the hashtag #EUSocDia
- Available on EbS

The sources:

For more details about the event: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/socialdialogue2015>

For more information on Social Dialogue: <http://ec.europa.eu/socialdialogue>

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