

# 23 EU Countries Sign Defense Pact on Permanent Structured Cooperation

BRUSSELS - Defense ministers of 23 EU member states Monday signed a pact to on joint defense cooperation and handed it over to EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini.

According to a statement released by Mogherini's foreign affairs council, the pact on the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) foresees the possibility of a number of EU member states working more closely together in the area of security and defense.

The PESCO is expected to bring more binding commitments to strengthen cooperation in defense.

This permanent framework will allow EU member states



to jointly develop defense capabilities, invest in shared projects, or enhance the operational readiness and contribution of their armed forces. Apart from Britain, Denmark, Portugal, Ireland and Malta have yet to decide whether to join the pact.

"Today, after so many years, the provision of the Lisbon Treaty establishing the possibility for the EU member states to have a Permanent Structured Cooperation on defense is going to be initiated," Mogherini told reporters upon her arrival for the council. "So, today we will launch a new page for the European Defense," said Mogherini. (Xinhua)

## China Calls on Parties to Promote Peace, Stability in Asia-Pacific Region

BEIJING - A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman here on Monday called on relevant parties to contribute to the peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang made the comment when responding to a reporter's question on developments or reports on the "Indo-Pacific" strategy put forward by Japan and the United States.

Geng said that it is the

common responsibility for all countries in the Asia-Pacific region to promote regional stability and prosperity. "We hope that the policies made and steps taken by relevant parties conform to the trend of the times which is characterized by peace, cooperation, friendship and development, and help to safeguard and promote peace, stability and prosperity in the region," said Geng. (Xinhua)

## May Meets EU Business Leaders as Brexit Tensions Grow

LONDON - Prime Minister Theresa May will meet EU business leaders worried about Britain's departure on Monday as a secret letter emerged from two cabinet ministers instructing her how to run Brexit.

The leaked memo from Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and Environment Secretary Michael Gove, two top Brexit advocates, told May to ensure other ministers back the process by "clarifying their minds".

"We are profoundly worried that in some

parts of government the current preparations are not proceeding with anything like sufficient energy," they wrote, according to the Mail on Sunday newspaper.

The letter titled "EU Exit - Next Steps" said failure to prepare for a no-deal outcome to Brexit negotiations "would leave us over a barrel in 2021" -- at the end of a possible transition period.

The tensions drove down the pound on currency markets, with the currency losing 1.0 percent against the euro and the



dollar on Monday, falling to 89.13 pence and \$1.3071 respectively, at around 0925 GMT. The Sunday Times also reported that 40 MPs from May's Conservative party have agreed to sign a letter of no confidence in the prime minister, just eight short of the number needed to trigger a leadership contest. (AFP)

## Erdogan Says those Who See No Military Solution in Syria Should Pull Troops out



ANKARA - Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday

that those who do not believe in a military solution in Syria should pull their

troops out, after Russia and the United States said no military solution was

possible in Syria. "I am having trouble understanding these comments. If a military solution is out of the question, then those who say this should pull their troops out," Erdogan told reporters before flying to Russia.

He said he would discuss the issue with Russian President Vladimir Putin, as well as a political solution in Syria, joint steps with Russia in Syria's Afrin region, and details of an S-400 air defense missile system deal. (Reuters)

## Erdogan will Discuss Syrian Dialogue Congress with Putin



ANKARA - Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday he would discuss a planned Moscow-backed Syrian congress with Russian President Vladimir Putin during an official visit to Russia's Sochi.

Speaking to reporters before departing for visits to Russia, Kuwait and Qatar, Erdogan also said he would ask Putin to remove obstacles to visa-free travel with Russia. The Russian-sponsored Syrian Congress on National Dialogue, scheduled for Nov. 18, has been postponed and the main Syrian Kurdish group will not be invited if it is held later after objections by Turkey, an Erdogan spokesman said last week. (Reuters)

## France Raises Prospect of New Sanctions on Iran over Ballistic Program

PARIS - France's foreign ministry suggested on Monday that new sanctions could be imposed on Iran if needed over its ballistic missile program.

Iran rejected on Sunday a call by French President Emmanuel Macron for talks on Tehran's ballistic missiles, saying they were defensive and unrelated to a nuclear agreement with world powers.

"As you know, the European Union has already placed sanctions on Iranian entities involved in the ballistic program," foreign ministry spokeswoman Agnes Romatet-Espagne said. She was responding when asked to clarify comments made by Macron during a trip to the United Arab Emirates last week about the prospects of possible sanctions with regard to those activities. "If needed, new sanctions could be taken," she said. The United States accused Iran on Tuesday of supplying Yemen's Houthi rebels with a missile that was fired into Saudi Arabia in July and called for the United Nations to hold Tehran accountable for violating two U.N. Security Council resolutions. Saudi Arabia and its allies accuse Iran of supplying missiles and other weapons to the Houthis, saying the arms were not present in Yemen before conflict broke out there in 2015. Iran denies the charges and blames the conflict on Riyadh.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian will be in the Saudi capital later this week and intends to travel to Iran before the end of the month.

"The political dialogue between France and Iran is active and makes it possible to address all topics, including strategic and regional issues," Romatet-Espagne said. "Mr Le Drian will have a firm dialogue when he goes to Iran." (Reuters)

## Human Rights Skirted at Asia Summit as Trump Rounds off Tour

MANILA - Leaders of Asian nations meeting in Manila on Monday skirted around the mass exodus of Rohingya Muslims triggered by Myanmar's military crackdown, disappointing human rights groups who were hoping for a tough stand on the humanitarian crisis.

There was no pressure either from U.S. President Donald Trump over the Philippines' bloody war on drugs during a meeting on the sidelines of the summit with President Rodrigo Duterte. Trump told reporters that he had a "great relationship" with Philip-



pines leader, who, a year ago, had branded then-President Barack Obama "a son of a bitch" for questioning his ruthless campaign.

"They really hit it off," Duterte's Communications Secretary Martin Andanan told reporters after the meeting with

Trump. A draft of the statement to be issued after a meeting of Southeast Asian leaders made no mention of the flight of Rohingya from military operations in Myanmar's Rakhine state that the United Nations has described as ethnic cleansing. (Reuters)

## 31st ASEAN Summit, Related Meetings Kick Off in Philippines

MANILA - The 31st Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and related meetings opened here Monday, with leaders of 10 ASEAN member countries and dialogue partners convening to discuss security, cooperation and regional integration.

The Philippines, ASEAN's rotating chair for 2017, set the theme of "Partnering for Change, Engaging the World," putting security and regional integrity high on the agenda. At the opening ceremony, Philippine President Rod-

rigo Duterte said that the next two days will present excellent opportunities for ASEAN leaders and their dialogue partners to engage in meaningful discussions on matters of regional and international importance. "Terrorism and violent extremism endanger the peace, stability and security of our region because these threats know no boundaries," he said, adding that piracy and armed robbery on the seas also put a dent on growth and disrupt the stability of both regional and global commerce. (Xinhua)

## Neighbor News

### Chinese VP Calls for Sense of Mission in Poverty Reduction

BEIJING - Chinese Vice Premier (VP) Wang Yang Monday underlined the importance of applying a sense of mission in poverty reduction to meet the target.

Presiding over a meeting of the State Council leading group on poverty relief, Wang, also head of the group, urged authorities to implement the central leadership's instructions through enhancing a sense of mission and crisis awareness, and targeting problems to fulfill the Party's promise to the Chinese people and the international community.

Training of local authorities in charge of poverty reduction should be stepped up, Wang said, stressing the importance of carrying out research and investigation, and averting formalism.

China has set 2020 as the target to complete the building of a "moderately prosperous society," which requires the eradication of poverty.

To achieve that target, China needs to lift more than 10 million people out of poverty every year, meaning nearly one million people per month or 20 people per minute. (Xinhua)

### Pakistan to Work with Global Community to Boost Green Growth Initiatives

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan will work with global community to boost green growth initiatives to achieve sustainable development goals by exploiting natural resources in a sustainable manner.

The natural resources have been rapidly depleting over last several decades because of insane and unsustainable industrialisation in developed countries, an official of the Pakistan's Climate Change ministry said while taking to APP. "Not only our lives but also those of our future generations are at risk of falling into quagmire of unending hunger, poverty, diseases, food insecurity, pollution, water scarcity, and disasters, if we continue to devour into natural resources greedily and callously, particularly water, land and forest, he warned.

He asked the world to

jointly adopt a sane path for achieving economic growth fuelled by natural resources utilised in a sustainable manner, so that ability of the natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services for future generations is not compromised.

He pointed out that many countries have already become more efficient in using natural resources and the services provided by the environment, producing more sustainable economic output per unit of carbon emitted and of energy or raw materials consumed. Nevertheless, progress is too sluggish. Besides, if emissions embodied in international trade are included, advances in overall environmental productivity of these countries - most of them developed countries - are more modest. (Monitoring Desk)

### Germany, UK, France Agree Iran Nuclear Deal Should Be Preserved

TEHRAN - The fate of the nuclear agreement between Tehran, Brussels and the P5+1 group comprised of the United States, Russia, China, France and the United Kingdom as well as Germany has been in limbo after US President Donald Trump announced a new strategy toward Tehran in October.

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said on Monday that he agreed with the foreign ministers of France, the United Kingdom as well as with top EU diplomat Federica Mogherini that the nuclear deal reached in 2015 should be main-

tained.

"We are united in that we want to maintain an agreement on Iran's nuclear program, otherwise we risk that the state will create nuclear weapons," Gabriel said after the meeting. The minister's speech was broadcast live on the website of the European Commission. Last week, after consultations in Washington, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said that the European Union insists that all countries comply with the implementation of the nuclear deal with Iran, including the United States. (Sputnik)

### Turkmenistan, EU Mull Co-Op Prospects

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan and the EU discussed prospects for cooperation in political, economic and trade spheres, the Turkmen Foreign Ministry said in a message Monday.

According to the message, Turkmen Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov has recently met with High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The meeting was held on the sidelines of the conference "Central Asia: One Past and a Common Future, Cooperation for

Sustainable Development and Mutual Prosperity" held under the auspices of the United Nations and 'European Union - Central Asia' Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Talks on the supplies of Turkmen gas to Europe have been conducted since 2011. The Southern Gas Corridor, which includes the Trans-Caspian project, remains a priority for the EU.

In May 2015, Ashgabat declaration on energy was signed by energy ministers of Azerbaijan, Turkey and Turkmenistan and European Commission Vice-President for Energy Union Maros Sefcovic. (Trend)