



2023/2876

19.12.2023

COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2023/2876

of 18 December 2023

amending Decision 2013/255/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union, and in particular Article 29 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,

Whereas:

- (1) On 31 May 2013, the Council adopted Decision 2013/255/CFSP ⁽¹⁾.
- (2) The Council remains deeply concerned about the situation in Syria. After more than a decade, the conflict in Syria is far from over and remains a source of suffering and instability. The tragic earthquake of 6 February 2023 exacerbated the already dire conditions in the country and increased the suffering of the Syrian population.
- (3) In its conclusions of 9 February 2023, the European Council reaffirmed the Union's readiness to provide further assistance to alleviate the suffering in all affected regions. It called on all parties to the conflict to ensure humanitarian access to the victims of the earthquake in Syria irrespective of where they are located and called on the humanitarian community, under the auspices of the United Nations, to ensure the speedy delivery of aid.
- (4) In its conclusions of 20 May 2021 on the 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles', the Council reaffirmed its commitment to avoid and where unavoidable, mitigate to the maximum extent any potential unintended negative impacts of Union restrictive measures on principled humanitarian action. The Council reiterated that the Union restrictive measures comply with all obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law. It underlined the importance of fully adhering to humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law in the Union's sanctions policy, including through the consistent inclusion of humanitarian exceptions in restrictive measures regimes where relevant, and by ensuring that an effective framework is in place for the use of such exceptions by humanitarian organisations.
- (5) The Council recalls that the Union's restrictive measures, including those adopted in view of the situation in Syria, are not meant to stand in the way of, or impede the supply of, humanitarian aid, including medical assistance. Trade in the majority of sectors between the Union and Syria, including in food and medicines, is not restricted by the restrictive measures adopted in view of the situation in Syria. Moreover, as regards individual measures, exceptions are in place to allow for funds and economic resources to be made available to designated persons and entities, where such funds or economic resources are necessary solely for the purpose of providing humanitarian relief in Syria or assistance to the civilian population in Syria. In certain cases, prior authorisation from the relevant national competent authority is necessary.
- (6) On 23 February 2023, the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2023/408 ⁽²⁾, which introduced an exemption to the freezing of the assets of, and to the restrictions on making funds and economic resources available to, designated natural or legal persons and entities, for the benefit of international organisations and certain defined categories of actors involved in humanitarian activities for an initial period of six months until 24 August 2023. On 14 July 2023, the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2023/1467 ⁽³⁾, which prolonged this exemption until 24 February 2024.

⁽¹⁾ Council Decision 2013/255/CFSP of 31 May 2013 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria (OJ L 147, 1.6.2013, p. 14).

⁽²⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/408 of 23 February 2023 amending Decision 2013/255/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria (OJ L 561, 23.2.2023, p. 4).

⁽³⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/1467 of 14 July 2023 amending Decision 2013/255/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria (OJ L 180, 17.7.2023, p. 41).

- (7) In order to respond to the continuing urgency of the humanitarian crisis in Syria, which has been exacerbated by the earthquake, and with a view to facilitating the rapid delivery of aid and providing predictability and legal certainty for certain defined categories of actors involved in humanitarian activities in Syria benefiting from the aforementioned exemption, it is appropriate to prolong the exemption adopted in Decision (CFSP) 2023/408 until 1 June 2024, in line with the current end date of the application of Decision 2013/255/CFSP.
- (8) Further action by the Union is necessary to implement certain measures.
- (9) Decision 2013/255/CFSP should therefore be amended accordingly,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

In Article 28a(1) of Decision 2013/255/CFSP, the date '24 February 2024' is replaced by the date '1 June 2024'.

Article 2

This Decision shall enter into force on the day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Done at Brussels, 18 December 2023.

For the Council
The President
T. RIBERA RODRÍGUEZ