

European Union members agree on tougher sanctions on Myanmar

European Union (EU) member states agreed Wednesday to impose new sanctions on the government of Myanmar while looking for ways to boost humanitarian aid to the country's population.

At a meeting of the ambassadors of the EU's 27 member states in Brussels, representatives 'agreed to toughen EU sanctions against the regime in Burma' and 'requested the European Commission to explore ways to increase humanitarian assistance,' a statement announced.

They also called for further diplomatic action on all levels, including in the UN, the statement from the Portuguese government, which currently holds the presidency of the EU, said.

And they called for diplomats to engage 'key players, especially in the region,' in an apparent reference to regional superpower China, whose input is seen as crucial to any efforts to defuse the explosive situation in the troubled country.

Experts will now work on the details of the targeted sanctions, which are meant to punish members of Myanmar's ruling junta and their closest allies without harming the population, in time for a meeting of EU ministers in Luxembourg on October 15.

Current EU sanctions include an arms embargo, a ban on loans to companies and persons linked with the government, and an entry ban on 405 members of the regime, the military and their families.

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