



Foreign Affairs Council

9 December 2019

The Foreign Affairs Council meeting, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, will start at 10.00 with a discussion on **current affairs**, allowing ministers to review the pressing issues on the international agenda.

Foreign ministers will then have an exchange of views on **EU-Africa relations**, with a view to the preparations for the forthcoming ministerial and summit-level meeting between the European Union and the African Union.

Next the Council will discuss the EU's work on **human rights**, particularly in view of Human Rights Day on 10 December. The discussion will focus on the instruments at the EU's disposal, its priorities for the work ahead and the ways the EU can enhance its engagement in an ambitious, visible and joined-up way.

Over an informal lunch ministers will exchange views on the work ahead, as well as on working methods, with the new High Representative.

Press opportunities:

+/- 8.45	Doorstep by High Representative Josep Borrell
After lunch (+/- 15.00)	Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council meeting

[Council meeting page](#)

[Press conferences and public events via video streaming](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the Council press office.

Current affairs

The Foreign Affairs Council will start with a discussion on current affairs, allowing ministers to review pressing issues on the international agenda.

In this context, ministers may cover foreign affairs issues which are likely to come up on the agenda of the **European Council** on 12-13 December.

The High Representative and foreign ministers are also expected to refer to the deteriorating situation in **Libya** and the developments surrounding the Turkey-Libya memorandum of understanding on delimitation of maritime jurisdiction and on security and military cooperation. The situation in **Iran** could also be touched on, following the recent meeting of the Joint Commission (**JCPOA**).

Recent developments in the political situation in **Bolivia** and the run up to future elections could also be mentioned.

[European Council webpage](#)

[Foreign Affairs Council statement on Libya](#) (press release, 13/05/2019)

[Iran: Council adopts conclusions](#)

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the situation in Bolivia](#), 15 November 2019

EU-Africa relations

Foreign ministers will have an exchange of views on EU-Africa relations, with a view to the preparations for the forthcoming ministerial and summit-level meetings between the European Union and the African Union (AU).

2020 will be a pivotal year in the relationship between Africa and the European Union: the next EU-AU summit due to take place before the end of 2020, and the conclusion of the post-Cotonou negotiations will be important milestones offering an opportunity to modernise and scale up the EU's partnership with Africa.

The discussion is due to feed into the wider debate on a new comprehensive strategy with Africa, launched by President von der Leyen in her political guidelines for the new European Commission ([A Union that strives for more – My agenda for Europe](#)).

The debate is due to address the political, economic, security, and migration aspects of the EU-Africa relations, as well as important cross-cutting issues such as climate change and digitalisation.

The [joint Africa-EU strategy](#) adopted at the Lisbon summit in 2007 constitutes the overarching long-term framework for Africa-EU relations.

The [fifth and most recent AU-EU summit](#) took place in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in November 2017, gathering EU and AU leaders to define the future direction for cooperation between the two continents. The theme of the summit was 'investing in youth for a sustainable future' and the outcome was a [joint declaration](#) setting out the leaders' commitment to investing in youth and accelerated inclusive growth and sustainable development. The declaration defined four main areas of cooperation:

- investing in people
- strengthening resilience, peace, security and governance
- migration and mobility
- mobilising investments for African structural sustainable transformation

[EU-African Union relations](#)

Promoting and protecting human rights in the world

Ministers will discuss the EU's work on human rights, particularly in view of Human Rights Day on 10 December. The discussion will focus on the instruments at the EU's disposal, its priorities for the work ahead and the ways the EU can enhance its engagement in an ambitious, visible and joined-up way.

This discussion will be an opportunity to reassert the EU leadership in the protection and promotion of human rights worldwide. Ministers may touch on the new Action plan for human rights and democracy (2020-2024), which will set the EU level of ambition and priorities for the next five years. The shrinking space for civil society and the crackdown against human rights defenders in many parts of the world may also be discussed. In this context, ministers will also reflect on how to improve the EU toolbox on human rights. They will also tackle gender equality and women's rights in view of Beijing +25.

Ministers could also touch on thematic and country-specific cases. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights was proclaimed by the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council in 2000 and sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms recognised by the European Union. The Council works on promoting human rights in relations with non-EU countries and international institutions, as well as in the negotiation of international agreements.

[Protection and promotion of human rights \(background information, Council website\)](#)

Informal lunch

Ministers will have an informal lunch to exchange views on the work ahead, as well as on working methods, with the new High Representative, Josep Borrell. The lunchtime discussion will provide ministers with an opportunity to discuss how the EU can work together more effectively to deliver operational outcomes.

Other items

The Council is expected to adopt a number of conclusions without debate.

Conclusions on the EU Arctic policy

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the EU Arctic policy, thereby acknowledging the importance and rapid pace of developments in the Arctic region.

The EU needs to ensure that its own policy approach takes account of relevant developments.

In light of the new challenges and opportunities across the Arctic and the growing international interest, the Council is likely to look forward to an update of the EU Arctic policy set out in the 2016 Joint Communication on the integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic. Furthermore, the Council is likely to recognise the work done by the FI Presidency of the EU on furthering EU-Arctic policy.

[EU Arctic policy](#)

[Council conclusions on the Arctic](#)

Conclusions on the DRC

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) which should take note of the political developments in the country following the December 2018 elections.

In its conclusions the Council is expected to offer its support to the DRC government in its commitment to reforming the country, which is still facing important challenges and to reaffirm its engagement and in key fields such as humanitarian aid, strengthening civil society, gender equality and inclusion of women, and the fight against climate change.

The Council should also note that the EU intends to keep coordinating with the UN and the African Union, as well as with other regional stakeholders, in order to consolidate peace and stability, as well as sustainable and inclusive development in the DRC.

[Delegation of the European Union to the DRC](#)

Conclusions on Sudan

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Sudan recognising the opportunity represented by Sudan's political transition. The conclusions will also reaffirm the EU's commitment to assisting the country as a key partner on its path of political, economic and social reform, in order to make the transition to democracy a success.

While acknowledging that substantial macro-economic reforms are needed to revitalise the Sudanese economy and set it on a course towards inclusive and sustainable growth, the Council is expected to note that the EU stands ready to support the transitional government's plans in this regard.

While welcoming the recent steps taken by the transitional government, the conclusions should state that the EU remains concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation, which has been aggravated by a high number of refugees and internally displaced persons. Consequently the conclusions should call upon the Sudanese authorities to remove the remaining bureaucratic obstacles to the work of humanitarian and development actors.

[Sudan: Foreign Affairs Council statement](#) (17 June 2019)

[EU delegation to Sudan](#)

Conclusions on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) compact

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions highlighting the significant contribution of civilian CSDP missions to international peace and stability and their essential role in the EU's integrated approach to external conflicts and crises.

Following the first annual review conference (ARC), held on 14 November 2019 in Brussels, the Council will welcome the strong commitment of all stakeholders at the ARC to fully delivering on the compact as soon as possible, and by early summer 2023 at the latest.

Moreover the Council is expected to endorse the waypoints identified at the ARC, which aim to contribute to the overall implementation of the compact, ensuring cross-connections between the different areas thereof, and which seek inter alia to increase the number of seconded experts in the missions and to promote more joined-up actions.

[Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy: EU strengthens its capacities to act](#) (19 November 2018)