



Foreign Affairs Council 21 September 2020

The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) meeting, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep **Borrell**, will start at **9.30** with a discussion on **current affairs**. Under this item ministers will review the most pressing issues on the international agenda, including matters relating to **Lebanon, China, Turkey, Russia and Venezuela**.

The Council will then exchange views on the latest developments that have taken place in **Libya** since the announcements made on 21 August 2020 by the Libyan political leaders on the way forward out of the crisis. The High Representative will also debrief ministers on his visit to the country on 1 September 2020.

After that, ministers will discuss relations between the **EU** and the **African Union, in particular in preparation for the next EU-AU Foreign Ministers' meeting**. They will exchange views on both the joint EU-Africa priorities ahead, and possible outreach to African partners on the road to the next EU-AU Summit.

Ministers will also have an opportunity to be updated on the state of play in the **post-Cotonou negotiations**.

Finally, the Council will discuss the latest political developments in **Belarus** and potential EU support for national inclusive dialogue. Ministers will also be updated on EU financial support to the people of Belarus and on the initial findings of the review of EU-Belarus relations.

Over a working lunch, ministers will exchange views on the overall partnership with the **Southern Neighbourhood** and how it should be framed in the future.

Press conference: +/- 15.00 in a virtual format

[Foreign Affairs Council meeting page](#)

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

[Video coverage of the event 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, during which ministers will have the opportunity to be updated on a number of recent developments.

In this context, the High Representative (HR) is expected to speak about Lebanon, China, Turkey, and Russia.

As concerns **Lebanon**, ministers will discuss the situation following the devastating explosions in Beirut on 4 August.

The High Representative will then touch on **China**, reviewing the latest developments following the EU-China leaders' meeting via video conference of 14 September 2020.

As regards **Turkey**, ministers will briefly touch upon the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, with an update on the latest situation.

Russia will be touched on with regard to the human rights situation and the Navalny case.

Finally, the HR will inform ministers about the outcome of the meeting of the International Contact Group on **Venezuela**, held via videoconference on 17 September.

[Lebanon: Remarks by the High Representative Josep Borrell at the EP plenary](#)

[EU-China Leaders' Meeting: Upholding EU values and interests at the highest level](#)

[Declaration of the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the postponement of the Legislative Council elections in Hong Kong](#)

[Informal meeting of EU Foreign Ministers \(Gymnich\): Remarks by HR Josep Borrell at the press conference \(EEAS\)](#)

Libya

Ministers will discuss the latest developments in Libya following the announcements made on 21 August 2020 by the President of the Presidency Council, Fayez al-Serraj, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aguila Saleh, on the way forward out of the Libyan crisis.

The HR will also report to ministers on his first visit to Libya on 1 September 2020. On that occasion he encouraged the Libyan leadership to translate the agreed principles into concrete action, with immediate priority to be placed on a permanent ceasefire agreement, lifting the oil blockade and resuming the political process.

The ministerial discussion will likely focus on how the EU can use the new momentum to support the peace efforts proactively and translate positive commitments into concrete action on the ground. The EU is ready to do more to support further the political solution to this long-lasting crisis, including supporting UN efforts to reach an agreement on a sustainable ceasefire, on the basis of the UNSCR 2542 (2020) adopted on 15 September.

[Libya: High Representative held talks with President Serraj and President of the House of Representatives Saleh, 2 September 2020](#)

[Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell on behalf of European Union on the political announcements by the Libyan Presidency Council and the Libyan House of Representatives, 22 August 2020](#)

EU-African Union Relations

Ministers will discuss EU-AU relations, in particular in preparation for the next EU-African Union (AU) Foreign Ministers' meeting. The Council will have an opportunity to offer guidance as to the joint EU-Africa priorities ahead, and discuss further high-level outreach to African partners on the road to the next EU-AU Summit.

Finally, the Commission will update member states on the state of play in the post-Cotonou negotiations.

Since launching its proposal 'Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa' in March 2020, and the Council conclusions on Africa from June 2020, the EU has signalled its renewed strategic outlook towards the neighbouring continent.

In its conclusions on Africa, the Council set out the following priorities for the next phase of the EU partnership with Africa: 1. Multilateralism and the rules-based international order, 2. Democracy, good governance, the rule of law, human rights and gender equality, 3. Peace, security and stability, 4. Trade and investment, 5. Investing in people, 6. Green transition, 7. Digital, 8. Human dimension, 9. Migration and mobility.

[Africa - Council conclusions, 30 June 2020](#)

[Press Release: Council Conclusions on Joint Communication 'Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa', 30 June 2020](#)

[Joint Communication Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa, 9 March 2020](#)

[EU-Africa Relations](#)

Belarus

In light of the outcome of the Gymnich discussions of 27-28 August, and in view of the adoption of the new listings under the existing sanction regime, ministers will discuss the latest political developments in Belarus. They will exchange views on potential EU support for national inclusive dialogue, on EU financial support for the people of Belarus, and on the initial findings of the review of EU-Belarus relations.

The EU has been closely following the developments since the presidential elections in Belarus on 9 August. In its declaration of 11 August 2020 the EU considered that elections had been neither free nor fair, as credible reports of domestic observers had shown that the electoral process had not met the international standards expected of an OSCE participating state.

At the video conference of Foreign Affairs Ministers of 14 August 2020 there was political agreement among ministers on the need to sanction those responsible for violence, repression and the falsification of election results in Belarus.

Since then the EU has deplored the escalation of violence and the unlawful detention of thousands of civil society actors, including members of the Coordination Council, by Belarusian state authorities.

[Belarus: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the escalation of violence and intimidation against members of the Coordination Council, 11 September 2020](#)

[Remarks by HR/VP Josep Borrell at the Gymnich press conference, 28 August 2020](#)

[Outcome of the Video Conference of Foreign Ministers, 14 August 2020](#)

[Belarus: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the presidential elections, 11 August 2020](#)

Southern Neighbourhood (Working lunch)

Ministers will discuss the overall partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood and how it should be framed in the future.

[Southern Neighbourhood Factsheet](#)