



Foreign Affairs Council 22 March 2021

The Foreign Affairs Council meeting will be chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep **Borrell**, starting at **09.30h**.

Under current affairs, the Council will take stock of the latest international developments. These should include: a review of the situation in **Russia, Venezuela, the Western Balkans, Georgia and Myanmar**.

The main agenda items will be strategic discussions on the **Southern Neighbourhood and Turkey**.

Ministers will also hold an informal exchange with **United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet**.

Press conference: +/- 16.15 in a virtual format

[Foreign Affairs Council meeting page](#)

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

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

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 an opportunity to receive updates and react to the latest developments regarding the issues on the agenda.

The High Representative will first briefly take stock of the latest developments in the EU's relations with **Russia** following the swift adoption of sanctions, under the **EU Global Human Rights sanctions regime**, against those responsible for the arrest, prosecution and sentencing of the Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny. Following the comprehensive discussion at the February Foreign Affairs Council and shared analysis of recent developments, the brief exchange will focus on the work undertaken by the EU to step up support to Russian civil society and enhance people-to-people contacts, to further strengthen relations with the EU's Eastern Partners and other neighbours, as well as to take more robust actions against hybrid threats emanating from Russia. The ministerial exchange of views will further inform the strategic debate on EU-Russia relations at the European Council on 25-26 March.

Next, High Representative Borrell will brief the Council on the situation in **Venezuela** following the declaration of its representative to the EU *persona-non-grata*. This was a direct response to the Venezuelan government's expulsion of the EU head of mission following EU sanctions on 22 February. Ministers' interventions are expected to focus on the need for the EU to remain engaged in favour of a political solution to the crisis.

The High Representative will then inform the Council about the EU's recent engagement with the **Western Balkans**, including in the context of Stabilisation and Association Councils and a recent visit to Kosovo* and Serbia, as well as Montenegro, by Miroslav Lajčák, the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkans regional issues.

The High Representative Borrell will update ministers on the latest developments on the situation in **Georgia** and the EU's mediation efforts, few days after the 6th Association Council meeting between the EU and Georgia took place in Brussels.

Finally, ministers will refer to the latest developments in **Myanmar**, where in the face of undeterred protests, the military junta has escalated use of violence. At the Foreign Affairs Council, ministers are also expected to adopt sanctions against those responsible for the military coup and actions against democracy and human rights.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

- [Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime: EU sanctions four people responsible for serious human rights violations in Russia \(press release\)](#)
- [Venezuela: 19 officials added to sanctions list \(press release\)](#)
- [EUSR Lajcak's visit to Kosovo and Serbia: Dialogue will continue](#)
- [Joint press release following the 6th Association council meeting between the European Union and Georgia](#)
- [EU-Georgia Association Council: Remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell at the joint press conference](#)
- [Council conclusions on Myanmar/Burma, 22 February 2021](#)

Southern Neighbourhood

Ministers will exchange views on the Southern Neighbourhood building on the European Council conclusions of 10-11 December 2020 and leaders' statement of 25-26 February 2021, as well as the Joint Communication on a Renewed Partnership for the Southern Neighbourhood of 9 February 2021.

Ministers will in particular touch on how to implement the joint communication and make it operational through enhancing the dialogue with Southern Neighbours and pooling resources, including through a Team Europe approach.

The ministerial discussion will be reflected in Council conclusions on this matter to be adopted at a next Foreign Affairs Council.

The Joint Communication on a Renewed Partnership for the Southern Neighbourhood proposes a number of economic initiatives intended to support an inclusive and sustainable economic recovery of the EU's Southern Neighbourhood but also to more broadly relaunch, reinforce and further develop the EU's strategic partnership with its southern neighbours.

To this end, the Commission proposes to dedicate up to €7 billion under the NDICI-Global Europe instrument (Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument), which would help mobilise private and public investment up to 30 billion euros, in an effort to support five key policy areas:

- Human development, good governance and rule of law
 - Resilience, prosperity and digital transition
 - Peace and security
 - Migration and mobility
 - Green transition: climate resilience, energy and environment
- [Statement of the members of the European Council, 25-26 February 2021](#)
 - [European Council conclusions 10-11 December 2020](#)
 - [Joint Communication on the Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood 9 February 2021](#)
 - [Towards a renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood \(factsheet\)](#)
 - [Economic and Investment Plan for the Southern Neighbours](#)

Turkey

In the run-up to the European Council of 25-26 March 2021, ministers will have a strategic discussion on the current state of play of EU-Turkey relations, and assess the relationship also in the broader context of recent developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and in other regional issues. The High Representative will inform the European Council about the outcome of the discussion.

At the December 2020 European Council, EU leaders invited the High Representative and the Commission to submit ahead of their March 2021 meeting a report on the state of play of EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations, and on instruments and options on how to proceed.

- [EU-Turkey leaders' meeting, 9 March 2020](#)
- [European Council conclusions 10-11 December 2020](#)
- [EU-Turkey relations \(timeline\)](#)

Informal video conference with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet

Ministers will have an opportunity to exchange views with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet.

The exchange is expected to focus on the state of human rights around the world and recent development in this regard, including an assessment of the ongoing 46th session of the Human Rights Council. This will also be the occasion to announce the launch of the Strategic Dialogue between the EU and the High Commissioner, which is a new initiative set out in the strategy on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism.
