



Foreign Affairs Council **10 May 2021**

The Foreign Affairs Council meeting will be chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, **Josep Borrell**, and will start at **9.30**.

Under **current affairs**, the Council will take stock of the latest international developments. These should include the High Representative's visit to the **Sahel**, **global health and preparedness** for pandemics in anticipation of the upcoming G20 Global Health Summit, **Afghanistan** following the US announcement of troop withdrawal, **Russia**, the state of **JCPOA negotiations** in Vienna, the recently postponed **Palestinian elections**, the worrying situation in **Lebanon**, and **Belarus** in the light of continued repression in the country.

The main discussion items will be the **Western Balkans** and **transatlantic relations**.

In the afternoon the United States Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, **John Kerry**, is expected to join the meeting by video conference for an exchange of views focusing on **climate diplomacy**.

Press conference: +/- 16.30 in virtual format

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[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](#)

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

Current affairs

The Foreign Affairs Council meeting will start with discussions on current affairs, during which ministers will be able to exchange views on the most recent events and fast-moving developments in external relations.

The High Representative (HR) will brief ministers about the evolving situation in the **Sahel** and his recent visit to Mauritania, Chad and Mali.

Next, ministers will have an opportunity to discuss the latest developments regarding **global health and preparedness** for global pandemics, with a particular focus on global vaccine action, ahead of the **G20 Global Health Summit** on 21 May 2021. The event will be co-hosted by the European Commission and Italy, as chair of the G20, and will focus on the need for multilateral action on global vaccinations, and the role of the EU and the G20 in this context.

The HR will then brief the Council about **Afghanistan** in the light of his recent meeting with the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, and of the recent US announcement of a complete troop withdrawal by 11 September 2021 at the latest.

Discussions will also touch on **Russia**, following the unlawful and politically motivated imposition of restrictive measures against eight EU nationals, including the President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli, and Commissioner Věra Jourová. In addition, the meeting will address Alexei Navalny's situation in the penal colony, as well as the effective banning of his anti-corruption organisation and its political networks.

The HR will then brief the Council about progress in the ongoing **JCPOA negotiations** in Vienna and the recently postponed **Palestinian elections**. Ministers will also discuss the continued political stalemate and worsening of the financial and socio-economic crises in **Lebanon**.

Finally, ministers will also continue their discussion on **Belarus** in the light of the latest developments in the country, and in preparation for a comprehensive debate at a future Foreign Affairs Council meeting.

- [Sahel: Council approves conclusions on the EU's integrated strategy in the region, press release 19 April 2021](#)
- [The High Representative's visit to Mauritania, Chad and Mali, EEAS website](#)
- [Global Health Summit, 21 May 2021, Rome](#)
- [Council reaffirms Team Europe's commitment to the global fight against the pandemic, press release 23 April 2021](#)
- [United States: High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell meets with Secretary of State Antony Blinken, EEAS website](#)
- [Russia: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the imposition of restrictive measures against eight EU nationals, 1 May 2021](#)
- [Iran: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\), 25 February 2021](#)
- [Palestine: Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell on the postponement of the elections, EEAS website](#)
- [EU relations with Belarus](#)

Western Balkans

The Council will have a broad strategic discussion on the Western Balkans, their relations with the EU, and the elements of **reinforced EU engagement in the region**.

The importance of the Western Balkans for the EU and the region's clear European perspective have been fully and unequivocally reaffirmed by the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament at regular intervals, including by the EU member states at the EU-Western Balkans summits in Sofia and Zagreb in 2018 and 2020.

Foreign affairs ministers will discuss how to **further enhance the highest level of political engagement** with the region to unleash joint potential, work as partners in addressing global challenges, reinforce cooperation on security issues, and shape together a joint future within the EU through urgent and concrete action. This includes tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, the unprecedented levels of EU financial and economic support, and cooperation on strategic communication.

- [The future of the Western Balkans lies within the European Union \(EEAS webstory\)](#)
- [EU-Western Balkans relations \(infographic\)](#)
- [EU support for the Western Balkans in fighting COVID-19 \(infographic\)](#)
- [The EU and the Western Balkans](#)
- [EU-Western Balkans summit, 6 May 2020, Zagreb](#)

Transatlantic relations

The Council will exchange views on EU-US relations after the initial period of engagement with the new US administration.

Discussions will focus in particular on the **immediate and medium-term foreign policy priorities**, and the areas where EU-US cooperation offers the greatest potential to bring about positive change. Ministers are expected to highlight a variety of areas for engagement, such as the pandemic, climate and a green economic recovery, democracy and human rights, foreign policy issues, security and defence, multilateralism, trade and technology.

The European Council conclusions from December 2020, the joint communication 'A new EU-US agenda for global change' and the Council conclusions on EU-US relations from December 2020 lay down the framework for the EU's engagement with the new US administration.

- [European Council conclusions, 10-11 December 2020](#)
- [Council conclusions on EU-US relations, press release 7 December 2021](#)
- [EU-US: a new transatlantic agenda for global change](#)
- [EU-US trade \(infographic\)](#)

Informal video conference with United States Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry

Ministers will have an opportunity to exchange views with the US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, John Kerry, who will connect via video conference.

The exchange is expected to focus on an assessment of the recent US-hosted **Leaders' Summit on Climate**, and the direction of future coordinated diplomatic outreach with key partners, so as to ensure that the level of global climate ambition is raised further, placing the Paris Agreement temperature goal of 1.5°C within reach.

Ministers will also coordinate on how to make best use of the G7 summit in June, the UNGA in September and the G20 summit in October.

Council conclusions

The Council is expected to approve conclusions on **security and defence**, as well as on the **Horn of Africa**.
