



Foreign Affairs Council

21 June 2021

The Foreign Affairs Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, **Josep Borrell**, will start at **9h30**.

Under **current affairs**, ministers will be informed about, or discuss: **Turkey, Lebanon, Iran**, the **Middle East peace process**, the recent visit of the High Representative to **Indonesia, Russia**, the situation in **Mali** and the **Sahel, Ethiopia**, and the outcome of the latest meeting in the framework of the **Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue**.

As full agenda items, ministers will discuss **Belarus, Iraq**, and **Latin America and the Caribbean**.

The Council will be preceded by an informal breakfast meeting with the representative of the Belarusian pro-democratic forces **Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya**, and will feature an informal exchange over lunch with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, **Fuad Hussein**.

Press conference: +/- 16h45 in a [hybrid 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.

Belarus

Following an informal breakfast meeting with the representative of the Belarusian pro-democratic forces **Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya**, during which EU foreign affairs ministers will be able to listen to her assessment of the latest developments in Belarus, the Foreign Affairs Council will start with a discussion on Belarus.

The discussion is taking place against the background of a deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus and the ongoing, well-orchestrated and systemic repression of the people of Belarus. It also follows the European Council conclusions of 24 May 2021, in which Heads of State or Government invited the Council to implement actions in response to the hijacking of a Ryanair plane on 23 May to detain the journalist Raman Pratasevich and Sofia Sapega. Those actions included a ban on overflight of EU airspace by Belarusian airlines, and access to EU airports for flights operated by such airlines, which was adopted by the Council on 4 June, and additional listings of persons and entities responsible for these events and further targeted economic sanctions.

At the meeting, ministers are expected to agree on a **fourth package of restrictive measures** in connection with the escalation of the serious human rights violations in Belarus and the violent repression of civil society, the democratic opposition and journalists, as well as the unlawful forced landing of a Ryanair flight in Minsk on 23 May 2021.

Ministers will also touch on the **comprehensive economic support package** recently published by the Commission.

- [EU bans Belarusian carriers from its airspace and airports \(press release 4 June 2021\)](#)
- [Special Meeting of the European Council \(24-25 May\) - Conclusions](#)
- [The European Union outlines a €3 billion economic support package to a future democratic Belarus \(European Commission\)](#)
- [Belarus sanctions \(timeline\)](#)
- [EU relations with Belarus](#)

Iraq

Foreign affairs ministers will take stock of the latest developments in Iraq, notably Iraq's upcoming elections, security-related issues and regional stability, and bilateral engagement.

As regards the upcoming early **Parliamentary elections in October 2021**, the UN Security Council has recently decided that the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq will provide monitors on election day and logistical support to observers from other international and regional organisations. Against this background ministers will be invited to reflect on how the EU and its member states can contribute to a conducive environment for inclusive and transparent elections, especially in light of the difficult security and political conditions in Iraq.

Ministers will then discuss the challenging **security** situation, and exchange on how the EU and its member states can further support Iraqi security sector reform efforts, and support Iraq as a regional bridge builder.

Finally, the Council will discuss the priority issues the EU should raise in **bilateral contacts** with Iraq. Over the past year, the EU has stepped up institutional engagement with Iraq under the EU-Iraq Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), in areas such as human rights and democracy, trade and energy, migration and political dialogue. Foreign ministers will also address challenges related to migration cooperation.

Over an informal working lunch, ministers will have an opportunity to exchange views directly with **Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein**, who will participate in person.

- [EU Advisory Mission \(EUAM\) in support of Iraqi security sector reform](#)
- [EU delegation to Iraq](#)

Latin America and the Caribbean

The Council will exchange views on Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

After discussing topics related to LAC twice in July and October 2020, when the Council agreed to step up high-level engagement with the region, ministers will take stock of the latest developments. They will touch on political and economic developments, as well as the negative socioeconomic consequences of the **spread of the COVID-19** virus. In this context, likely angles will be EU support and vaccines and post-COVID recovery.

Discussions will then touch on the EU's prospects for enhancing its high-level engagement with the region. Ministers are expected to provide guidance on elements that could potentially constitute a **shared EU-LAC agenda** at regional, bilateral and multilateral levels. Regarding trade, the EU is the LAC's third largest trade partner and the region's biggest investor. In this context, ministers will be informed of the state of play of the **negotiations** and association agreements with **Chile, Mexico and Mercosur**.

Exchanges will also be informed by recent **political events** in the region, namely the protracted crisis in **Venezuela**, the social discontent in **Colombia**, and the recent electoral processes, such as in **Peru**. Ministers will conduct discussions with a view to an inaugural **EU-LAC Summit** later in the second half of the year, depending on feasibility.

- [Foreign Affairs Council, 12 October 2020](#)
- [Latin America and the Caribbean \(EEAS website\)](#)

Current affairs

The Foreign Affairs Council will then have a discussion on current affairs during which ministers will be able to exchange views on recent events and fast-moving developments in external relations.

On **Turkey**, ministers will have an exchange of views following up on the video conference of the members of the European Council of 25 March 2021, and ahead of the next European Council on 24-25 June. Discussions may touch on the internal human rights situation, democracy and the rule of law, the situation of refugees, and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Ministers will then touch on **Lebanon**, in the context of the upcoming visit of the High Representative, who will travel to the country on 18-20 June to show EU's solidarity and call on Lebanese actors to take responsibility for the creation of a new reform-oriented government.

On **Iran**, Ministers will assess the outcome of Presidential elections taking place on 18 June 2021 and, in this context, discuss the state of play of ongoing negotiations on the JCPOA in Vienna.

Ministers will then take stock of the current state of play regarding the **Middle East peace process** (MEPP). Discussions will mainly focus on the outreach efforts to revitalise the Quartet's activity by the recently-appointed EU Special Representative for the MEPP, Sven Koopmans. The exchange will also offer ministers an opportunity to assess the latest political situation, including prospects for engagement with the new Israeli government.

The High Representative will then inform ministers about his **visit to Jakarta** where he held meetings with Indonesian authorities and ASEAN representatives. The High Representative may also address Myanmar, in the context of work ongoing towards the adoption of further sanctions.

Ministers will then discuss **Russia**, and in particular the Joint Communication presented on 16 June in the context of the preparations for the European Council on 24-25 June.

Next, ministers will have the opportunity to exchange views on the current situation in **Mali and the Sahel**, three weeks after the coup and one week after Colonel Assimi Goïta was sworn in. They are expected to reflect on the recent politico-military developments in Bamako, taking into account Mali's suspension from ECOWAS and the African Union, and the implementation of a follow-up mechanism, to ensure the holding of elections on 27 February 2022. Ministers will also touch on the situation in **Chad** within a broader discussion on the region. Discussions will also be informed by the **ECOWAS Summit** taking place on 19 June. This exchange follows the adoption by the Council of the EU's Integrated Strategy for the Sahel in April this year.

Discussions will move to the situation in **Ethiopia**, where deep concerns remain about Tigray, the ongoing electoral process in the country and the wider region. An exchange of views on Ethiopia will feature as full discussion item on the agenda of the July Foreign Affairs Council.

The High Representative will report on the outcome of the latest meeting of the **Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue**, which took place in Brussels on June 15 between Serbian President Vučić and Kosovo's Prime Minister Kurti.

Finally the Swedish Foreign Minister will also debrief ministers on her visit to Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Oman. The Irish Foreign Minister will report on his visit to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, while the Luxembourg Foreign Minister will update ministers on his visits to Egypt and Jordan.

- [Statement of the Members of the European Council, 25 March 2021](#)
- [Overview of EU-Turkey relations](#)
- [New EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process appointed \(Press release\)](#)
- [Joint Communication on EU-Russia relations - Push back, constrain and engage \(16 June 2021\)](#)
- [EU-Russia relations - five guiding principles](#)
- [The EU's Integrated Strategy for the Sahel](#)
- [EU-Ethiopia relations: EU Council conclusions stress the strategic partnership and EU's deep concerns about the situation in the Tigray region \(press release 11 March 2021\)](#)
- [Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue: Press statement by EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák following the meeting \(EEAS\)](#)

Council Conclusions

The Council is expected to approve **conclusions** on the protection and safeguarding of **cultural heritage in conflict and crisis situations**.
