



Foreign Affairs Council 18 October 2021

The Foreign Affairs Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, **Josep Borrell**, will take place in Luxembourg starting at **9h30**.

Under **current affairs**, the Council will be informed about, or discuss: **Afghanistan, Tunisia, Western Balkans, climate diplomacy, and the situation in Varosha**.

The Council will then exchange views on **the Gulf**, following the recent visit of the High Representative to the region. Ministers will then discuss the **Eastern Partnership**, ahead of the ministerial meeting foreseen in November and the summit in December, and over lunch **Ethiopia** and **Nicaragua**.

The Council is due to adopt **conclusions** on Bosnia and Herzegovina/Operation EUFOR Althea.

Press conference: +/- 16h30 in a hybrid format

Media advisories for [physical presence in Luxembourg](#) and [remote participation](#))

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[Foreign Affairs Council meeting page](#)

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

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

The Gulf

Following the recent visit of the High Representative to Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Council will have a strategic discussion on the EU's approach to the Gulf region.

The political and security situation in the Gulf has shown some signs of improvement over the last twelve months but tensions remain.

At the same time, countries in the region have been raising their political and security profiles in the EU neighbourhood, while the EU has been enhancing its diplomatic presence in the region and its institutional engagement with these countries. They are increasingly interested in close co-operation with the EU on global issues and regional security.

Ministers are expected to discuss ways to further EU engagement with the region, with a particular focus on:

- what the EU can do to help Gulf countries build confidence regionally, in particular as regards the process launched by the Baghdad Conference on Cooperation and Partnership of 28 August 2021
- how a closer partnership between the EU and Gulf countries can best contribute to the EU global agenda (green transition/climate change, diversification away from hydrocarbons to fighting desertification and water resource management, connectivity, digital economy, the fight against pandemics or support to multilateralism and effective response to growing humanitarian needs)
- what is the best way of enhancing trade and investment flows between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council

The ministerial discussion is due to feed into preparations for a Joint Communication on a "Partnership with the Gulf", that was included in the letter of intent of European Commission President Von der Leyen on 15 September 2021, and that is due for adoption in the first quarter of 2022.

- [High Representative/Vice-President Borrell travels to Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia](#), EEAS website

Eastern Partnership

Foreign Affairs Ministers will have an exchange of views on EU's relations with the Eastern Partnership (EaP).

The discussion will focus on how to bring partner countries closer to the EU both politically and economically through enhanced cooperation, to build up resilience in areas such good governance, rule of law, security including hybrid and cyber threats, economy and connectivity green and digital transition, society, as well as disinformation. Support to vaccination roll-out and longer-term health resilience will also be discussed in the context of post-COVID socio-economic recovery.

Ministers are likely to reflect on the need for tailor-made approaches taking in due consideration the interests and needs of Eastern partners, and for strong conditionality in the areas of governance and rule of law. Their discussion will feed into the preparations for the Eastern Partnership summit scheduled in December, and the EU leaders' discussion on the matter on 21-22 October. A meeting of EU Foreign Affairs Ministers with their Eastern Partnership's counterparts is also scheduled for 15 November.

Since 2009, the EaP, through its bilateral and multilateral tracks, has brought the Eastern partners closer to the EU, and contributed to the development and the advancement of their societies. The ['20 deliverables for 2020'](#) gave a new impetus to EU-EaP cooperation and contributed to make achievements more tangible notably in the areas of economy, connectivity, environment and people to people contacts. At the same time, progress in the area of governance remains uneven.

The proposed post-2020 agenda 'Recovery, resilience and reform' stemming from the March 2020 Joint Communication and the Joint Staff Working Document of July 2021 puts forward a positive agenda of cooperation with EaP with the overarching objective of strengthening the resilience of partners to build back better, with continuous emphasis on shared values and fundamental principles as the core of the partnership.

Through the Economic Investment Plan and its country specific flagship initiatives accompanying the new agenda, the EU will mobilise EUR 2.3 billion that would crowd in up to EUR 17 billion of potential investment to support post-pandemic recovery. In addition, the EUR 3 billion comprehensive plan for a democratic Belarus reflects the EU's commitment to help Belarus to stabilise its economy, reform its institutions and help increase the economy's resilience, once Belarus embarks on a democratic transition.

- [20 Deliverables for 2020](#), policy page
- [Joint Staff Working Document "Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities"](#), 2 July 2021
- [Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Council approves conclusions](#), press release 11 May 2020
- [Eastern Partnership](#), policy page

Ethiopia

Over lunch the Foreign Affairs Council will exchange views on the situation in Ethiopia, in light of the latest developments in the country and in the Tigray region.

From a humanitarian point of view, 5.2 million people in Tigray (or 90% of the population) are in need of humanitarian assistance. Close to 1 million people are at the brink of famine. Humanitarian needs are also growing in the neighbouring regions of Afar and Amhara, while access to Tigray remains largely blocked. In addition operating conditions for humanitarians have deteriorated sharply in the last two months.

The EU humanitarian air bridge operation aiming at delivering assistance to Tigray and opening up humanitarian access is on-going.

UN/Ethiopia Joint investigations into human rights violations continue. The joint report should be published on the 1st of November.

Discussions are expected to focus on the definition and implementation of a common EU position, stepping up Team Europe actions for humanitarian access and respect of international humanitarian law, implementing a ceasefire, and encouraging a national dialogue and accountability.

- [Foreign affairs Council, 12 July 2021](#)[Foreign affairs Council, 12 July 2021](#)
- [European Council conclusions, 24-25 June 2021](#)
- [EU-Ethiopia relations: the EU Council conclusions stress the strategic partnership and the EU's deep concerns about the situation in the Tigray region](#), press release 11 March 2021

Nicaragua

Over lunch the Foreign Affairs Council will exchange views on the situation in Nicaragua. Ministers will be invited in particular to reflect on the need to adjust EU policies in relation to the upcoming general elections in the country on 7 November 2021, for which the prospects of a credible and legitimate electoral process are very weak.

The political use of the judicial system, the exclusion of candidates from the elections and the arbitrary delisting of opposition parties are contrary to basic democratic principles and constitute a serious violation of the rights of the Nicaraguan people. These actions further undermine the credibility of an electoral process, already hampered by an electoral reform that fell short of the recommendations of the OAS and EU Electoral Observation Missions.

Ministers will reflect on how to best support the population, while not legitimising the results of the elections, in case these are not carried out in a credible manner.

- [Nicaragua: EU sanctions prolonged for one year](#), press release 11 October 2021
- [Nicaragua: Statement by the High Representative Josep Borrell on developments ahead of the November elections](#), EEAS website
- [Nicaragua: EU imposes sanctions on eight more individuals](#), press release 2 August 2021

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.

The High Representative will inform ministers about the latest developments in and around **Afghanistan** since the UN General Assembly. Ministers will be debriefed about his contacts with the Gulf countries, the outcome of EU High-level Forum on providing protection to Afghans at risk on 7 October and of the informal video conference of development ministers, and the regional platform initiative.

Ministers will then discuss **Tunisia** in light of the latest developments, including the recent appointment of a new government on 11 October.

Ministers will touch on **Western Balkans**, following up on the recent summit and leaders' dinner hosted by High Representative in the margins of the UN Security Council in New York, and addressing the situation in north of Kosovo.

Climate diplomacy will be discussed in the context of the EU mobilisation towards the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26).

Finally ministers will be informed about the latest developments around **Varosha** after the visit of the Turkish President Erdogan on 20 July.

- [Afghanistan: Council conclusions set out the EU's position and next steps](#), press release 21 September 2021
- [Informal video conference of development ministers](#), 11 October 2021
- [Tunisia: declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union](#), 27 July 2021
- [Council adopts conclusions on climate and energy diplomacy](#), press release 25 January 2021
- [EU-Western Balkans summit, Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia](#), 6 October 2021
- [Varosha: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union](#), 27 July 2021

Council conclusions

The Council is due to approve conclusions on **Bosnia and Herzegovina / Operation EUFOR Althea**.