



Foreign Affairs Council

13 December 2021

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

Foreign affairs ministers will hold a comprehensive discussion on **EU-Africa relations**, touching on the overall situation on the continent and the challenges it faces in fields such as security, development, demographic growth, health, democratic evolution, and engagement at a multilateral level.

The Council will then exchange views on **Central Asia** and the EU's bilateral and regional engagement in the region. It will focus, in particular, on security and the situation in Afghanistan, as well as on post-COVID recovery, and connectivity.

The third main subject to be discussed by the Council will be **Venezuela**. Ministers will assess the outcomes of the regional and municipal elections and the main findings of the EU election observation mission.

Under **current affairs**, the Council will be informed about the Russian military build-up and movements of troops and equipment at the border with **Ukraine**, and discuss **Varosha, Belarus**, and **Ethiopia**.

During a working, lunch ministers will have an informal exchange with the deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Ministers of Qatar, **Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani**.

The Council is due to approve conclusions on the **Civil Common Security and Defence (CSDP) Policy Compact**.

Press conference: +/- 17h30 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](#)

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

EU-Africa relations

Following up on the meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs of the African Union (AU) and the European Union in Kigali on 26 October, and ahead of the planned 6th EU-AU Summit in Brussels in February 2022, the Council will hold a comprehensive discussion on EU-Africa relations.

Ministers are expected to touch, in particular, on key challenges in the EU's relations with Africa, such as the **COVID-19 response**, including vaccine-sharing and solidarity, and **demographic and migratory pressure**. Ministers are also expected to focus on how to secure **peace, security** and **democratic governance** for Africa.

Economic recovery based on the **green transition, digital transformation** and connectivity will be also discussed. In the **connectivity** area, the EU strives to bring new impetus for investments in quality infrastructure, connecting goods, people and services around the world. The recent launch of **Global Gateway** provides an opportunity to implement a more strategic approach to these engagements. This will include support for renewable energy, energy efficiency, the just transition and the greening of local value chains, including the development of the hydrogen sector.

Lastly, ministers are expected examine how to ensure that the EU remains a strategic partner of choice for African countries, in the context of **geopolitical competition**.

- [African Union - European Union ministerial meeting, 26 October 2021](#)
- [EU-Africa relations, policy page](#)

Central Asia

Following the recent EU-Central Asia ministerial meeting in Dushanbe, the Council will exchange views on Central Asia. The main focus will be on promoting green and sustainable **post-COVID-19 recovery**, and on managing the repercussions of the situation in **Afghanistan and other security-related challenges**. Ministers will discuss, in particular, how to step up the EU's ambition in the region.

The pandemic has caused major socio-economic stress throughout Central Asia and could amplify some of the region's structural weaknesses. The EU is engaged in supporting international solidarity efforts to support Central Asia, through both COVAX and direct donations or resales by EU member states. Overall, EU member states have donated **1.8 million doses of vaccines** to Central Asian states. Almost 600 000 of these have been donated through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. The post-COVID recovery efforts provide an opportunity for the EU to vigorously promote a **"building back better" approach**, which includes providing support to green transition. The recent launch of the reinforced EU Global Gateway connectivity strategy will give new impetus for developing infrastructure networks and related enabling environment in the region. The EU is currently preparing **two Team Europe Initiatives for Central Asia as part of the "Global Gateway"**. As a key issue for Central Asia, **water management** will also be part of the discussion.

Central Asian countries are also faced with common challenges stemming from the political, security and socio-economic situation inside **Afghanistan**. Such challenges include the management of borders and potential migrant flows, the spread of violent extremism and terrorism, and the fight against organised crime, including drugs, arms and human trafficking, as well as the challenging task of delivering the region's strategic connectivity projects.

- [Central Asia: Council adopts a new EU strategy for the region, press release 17 June 2019](#)

Venezuela

The Foreign Affairs Council will exchange views on the results of the Venezuelan **regional and municipal elections** held on 21 November 2021, and on the main **findings of the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM)**.

The Chief Observer of the EOM and Member of the European Parliament, **Isabel Santos**, will participate in the meeting to brief ministers about the EOM preliminary findings, which stress that structural deficiencies in the electoral process persist.

Ministers will touch on possible avenues for **EU's commitment**, including measures to support civil society, to keep channels of communication with the regime open, and to pursue coordination with key international partners such as the US and other actors. Ministers will also have the opportunity to reiterate the EU's support for democracy and the resumption of negotiations between the government and the opposition in Mexico.

The EU accepted the demand from the Venezuelan National Electoral Council to send an EOM, once it was confirmed that the main opposition parties would participate in the elections. The EOM was composed of almost 140 persons. The EOM was under the responsibility of the Chief Observer, MEP Isabel Santos, who was accompanied by the Head of the European Parliament delegation, Jordi Cañas. EU experts were in the country well ahead of election day and remained to complete their final report.

- [Venezuela: 19 officials added to the EU sanctions list, 22 February 2021](#)
- [Venezuela: the Council's response to the crisis](#)

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 on fast-moving developments in external relations.

First, the High Representative will inform the Council about the Russian military build-up and movements of troops and equipment at the border with **Ukraine**. It is likely that ministers will reiterate their support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. In this context, they will discuss the EU position, also in coordination with transatlantic partners.

As a follow up to the discussion on 15 November, the High Representative will then present to the Council his options paper on **Varosha**. Ministers will exchange views on the paper, which presents a number of possible steps that the EU could take to ensure that the internationally recognised status of Varosha and the UN-led negotiation process are respected.

With regard to **Belarus**, the High Representative will update ministers on the actions undertaken so far by the EU. Such actions include diplomatic outreach to countries of origin and transit of migrants, humanitarian support and countering disinformation.

The Council will then be updated on the most recent developments in **Ethiopia**. Specifically, it will discuss the EU's engagement in relation to: the security situation, the cessation of hostilities, humanitarian access and accountability for human rights violations. Ministers are expected to discuss EU priorities, in particular securing a ceasefire and bringing parties to talks. In this sense, mediation efforts carried out by the EU and its Special Representative for the Horn of Africa, Annette Weber, in cooperation with the High Representative for the Horn of Africa region of the African Union Olusegun Obasanjo, remain essential.

- [Varosha: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union, 27 July 2021](#)
- [Belarus: EU adopts 5th package of sanctions over continued human rights abuses and the instrumentalisation of migrants, press release 2 December 2021](#)
- [Belarus: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the situation at the European Union border, 10 November 2021](#)
- [Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the situation in Ethiopia, 4 November 2021](#)

Council conclusions

The Council is due to approve conclusions on the **Civil CSDP Compact**.

Working lunch

During an informal working lunch, Foreign Affairs ministers will have an opportunity to exchange views with the deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Ministers of Qatar, **Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani**. The exchange will focus on the situation in **Afghanistan**, for which Quatar has played a key facilitating role, in terms of evacuation and acting as a diplomatic hub. Bilateral and regional relations will be discussed as well.
