



Foreign Affairs Council

24 January 2022

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

First, foreign affairs ministers will exchange with UN Special Envoy Geir O. Pedersen on **Syria**, who will brief ministers on his ongoing efforts for a political resolution in the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, including on his steps-for-steps initiative, followed by a ministerial discussion on the situation in Syria.

The Council will then exchange views on the most recent developments in **Libya**, after the postponement of the national elections in December 2021, and hold a comprehensive discussion on the **European security situation**, focusing on Russia's military build-up around Ukraine but also touching on Belarus and Kazakhstan.

US Secretary of State Antony **Blinken** will join EU foreign affairs ministers via video teleconference for an informal exchange on the European security situation.

Under **current affairs**, the Council will be informed about the situation in **Mali**, **Sudan** and the **Indo Pacific**.

The Council is due to approve various sets of conclusions.

Doorstep: +/- 8h00

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](#)

[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.

Syria

The Foreign Affairs Council will exchange views on how to revitalise the EU's engagement in Syria and make the EU strategy more effective in supporting conflict resolution and addressing the humanitarian needs of the Syrian population.

The exchange will take place in the presence of the Special Envoy of the United Nations for Syria Geir Pedersen.

After more than a decade, the Syria conflict is now at a military and strategic stalemate, but continues to generate violence, suffering and instability. Syria remains a failed state with a devastated economy.

Over the last decade, more than 400,000 people have died, some 6.1 million Syrians are internally displaced, and more than 5.6 million refugees are spread in the broader region. The crisis continues to generate increasingly severe and complex humanitarian needs, further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic and with profound repercussions for the overall stability of the entire region. Additionally, the regime has continued to resist meaningful engagement towards a political transition. The lack of progress towards implementing UNSC resolution 2254 delayed the ceasefire and political settlement in the country.

Ministers will discuss how to take forward the EU's engagement on Syria, in dialogue with key players, including the US, as well as with countries in the region and the Arab League. The united EU position on Syria is no normalisation, no lifting of sanctions, no reconstruction until a political transition as set out in UNSC Resolution 2254 is firmly underway. It demands an end to repression, the release of detainees, information on missing persons, and an end to impunity. Ministers will hear a briefing by UN Special Envoy for Syria Pedersen on his proposal for steps-for-steps - incremental, reciprocal, mutual, realistic, precise, and verifiable steps that could be taken to help move the political process forward towards full implementation of Security Council resolution 2254.

As the biggest humanitarian donor, the EU and its Member States will continue to provide assistance to Syrians in need. We are ready to intensify efforts to improve the livelihoods of ordinary Syrians.

The sixth Brussels Conference on Syria is due to take place in spring to ensure continued international focus and support for the Syrian people, whether in Syria or in the region, to continue pressing for progress towards a political solution, and give voice to the Syrian civil society.

- [EU strategy on Syria, policy page](#)
- [Delegation of the European Union to Syria](#)

Libya

The Foreign Affairs Council will exchange views on the latest developments in the country, notably the postponement of the Libyan national elections, which were foreseen to take place on 24 December 2021. Ministers will discuss the possible scenarios and priorities ahead to ensure that the EU can continue to contribute to maintaining Libya's political transition on a positive trajectory.

On 22 December 2022, the special electoral committee of the Libyan parliament - House of Representatives - and the High National Elections Commission formally acknowledged that the required conditions for the polls to proceed according to the timeline envisaged in the roadmap for political transition in Libya were not in place and postponed the elections without setting a new date. Discussions amongst relevant Libyan institutions to address existing challenges and devise a new roadmap are ongoing.

Ministers will discuss the elements of a clear and unified EU position in support of ongoing mediation efforts and will reiterate the EU's readiness to assist Libya in the short and longer term.

Since 2014, EU assistance to Libya has amounted to about EUR 700 million supporting a broad array of policies, including migration, humanitarian aid, capacity-building for institutions and governance, economic development and private enterprise, civil society and youth as well as the health sector. Currently, the EU funds projects to fight the COVID-19 pandemic for a total of EUR 60 million.

- [Libya: Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell on the postponement of the elections](#)
- [EU-Libya relations](#)

European security situation

Following up on the discussions held at the informal meeting of EU foreign affairs ministers on 13-14 January in Brest, the Foreign Affairs Council will discuss on the European security situation, with a view to approving conclusions on the matter.

Ministers will be updated on the latest developments in Russia's military build-up around Ukraine and be briefed about the latest diplomatic engagements around Russia's attempts to re-define security arrangements in Europe. Ministers will also touch on the situation in Belarus and Kazakhstan.

In the context of this discussion, ministers will have the opportunity to informally exchange views via video teleconference with **US Secretary of State Antony Blinken**.

The security situation in and around Ukraine has escalated in recent months as a result of Russia's unusual mobilisation of military troops and equipment. Military manoeuvres were accompanied by heightened rhetoric by Russian senior officials and a spike in information manipulation campaigns. The Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine met on 22 December 2021 and agreed to re-commit to the July 2020 ceasefire. Talks are being held on a possible upcoming meeting of the Normandy Format.

The European Council discussed the matter in December 2021, when it stressed the urgent need for Russia to de-escalate tensions, reiterated its full support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, clarified that any further military aggression against Ukraine would have massive consequences, and encouraged diplomatic efforts through the Normandy format in achieving the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

At the Gymnich press conference the High Representative noted an agreement to frame a EU position based on: a preference for dialogue and negotiation; a rejection of the Russian attempt to build spheres of influence in Europe; support for the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter; solidarity with Ukraine and the Eastern European countries; a call on Russia to de-escalate; commitment to respond to attacks on Ukraine; close coordination with the United States and NATO and within OSCE; strengthened confidence-building measures, including transparency of military activities; the relaunch of work on disarmament and arms control; continued preparatory work on further sanctions.

- [European Council conclusions of 16 December 2021](#)
- [Ukraine: High Representative Josep Borrell visited Ukraine to reconfirm EU's support against external threats, EEAS website](#)
- [Ukraine: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the cyberattack against Ukraine, 14 January 2022](#)
- [Réunion informelle des ministres des affaires étrangères \(Gymnich\): Remarques du haut Représentant à la conférence de presse, 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 on fast-moving developments in external relations.

Following the adoption by the FAC of a new sanctions regime targeting persons and entities obstructing the political transition in **Mali** on 13 December 2021, and the recent Gymnich discussion (13-14 January 2022), the High Representative will take stock of the situation and reflect on strands of EU action. Work on targeted restrictive measures will continue.

The High Representative will then update ministers on the latest developments in **Sudan**, where protests continue following the signature of a controversial political agreement between the Transitional Military Council and opposition forces on 21 November 2021, and the repression from the security services. Following the resignation of prime minister Hamdok on 2 January 2022, the Troika (Norway, UK, US) and the EU issued a statement on 4 January, stating that they would not support a prime minister or a government appointed without the involvement of a broad range of civilian stakeholders. A UN-facilitated intra-Sudanese political process has been announced by

UNITAMS (United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan) on 8 January and consultations with various social groups have been launched.

The High Representative will inform ministers about the upcoming ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the **Indo-Pacific**, that will take place on 22 February 2022 in Paris, co-chaired by the High Representative himself and French Minister for Foreign Affairs. The forum will gather European institutions, EU member states and Indo-Pacific partner countries and address specific challenges related to security and defence, and digital and connectivity issues in the context of the Global Gateway initiative to develop infrastructure worldwide, as well as global challenges such as global health, climate change, biodiversity and the protection of oceans.

- [Réunion informelle des ministres des affaires étrangères \(Gymnich\): Remarques du haut Représentant à la conférence de presse, EEAS website](#)
- [Foreign Affairs Council, 13 December 2021](#)
- [Sudan: Statement by the High Representative/Vice President Josep Borrell on the latest situation, EEAS website](#)
- [Sudan: Statement by the European Union and the Troika, EEAS website](#)
- [Kazakhstan: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the situation, 8 January 2022](#)
- [Joint communication: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific](#)
- [Indo-Pacific: Council adopts conclusions on EU strategy for cooperation, 19 April 2021](#)

At the request of one Member States, Ministers will also exchange on the situation in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, in particular the reform process and upcoming visits to the country

Council conclusions

The Council is due to approve conclusions on: taking the **UN-EU strategic partnership on peace operations and crisis management** to the next level: Priorities 2022-2024, **EU Priorities in UN Human Rights Fora 2022**, and the **European security situation**.