



## **Foreign Affairs Council** **24 February 2025**

The February Foreign Affairs Council will start at 8.00 in Brussels, and be chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, **Kaja Kallas**. At the beginning of the meeting, the High Representative will invite ministers to join in a minute of silence paying tribute to the lives lost due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

After an intervention via videoconference by the **Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine**, Andrii Sybiha, the Council will discuss the latest developments related to the **Russian aggression against Ukraine** on the third year mark of Russia's full-scale invasion.

Ministers are then expected to discuss the situation in the **Middle East**, including the latest developments in Syria, Israel/Palestine, and Lebanon.

The Council will then focus on the situation in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** and will exchange views on **Iran** and **Georgia**.

### In the margins:

On the eve of the Foreign Affairs Council, the High Representative will host an informal exchange on the humanitarian situation in the Middle East, with the **UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process** ad interim / **Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza**, Sigrid Kaag (via videoconference) and the **Commissioner-General of UNRWA**, Philippe Lazzarini (in person).

The Foreign Affairs Council on 24 February will be followed by the **EU-Israel Association Council**.

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Doorstep of the High Representative: +/- 7.45

Press conference on FAC: +/- 18.00

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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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<sup>1</sup> This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the Council press office.

## Russian aggression against Ukraine

The Foreign Affairs Council will first discuss the Russian aggression against Ukraine on the third year mark of Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Andrii Sybiha**, will join at the beginning of the meeting via videoconference to provide updates on the latest political developments and the situation on the ground, as well as Ukraine's most urgent priorities.

In the ensuing EU27 discussion, ministers will discuss the next steps on Ukraine, following recent meetings and initiatives, including meetings in Munich and Paris, and the talks held in Riyadh between the US and Russia's envoys.

Ministers will also discuss a new initiative by the High Representative on enhanced EU military support to Ukraine in 2025. Ministers will also discuss the need for **increased defence spending** and sustainable financing to ensure long-term security of both Ukraine and the EU.

The Council is expected to adopt a **16<sup>th</sup> package** of restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine, and to address how to better tackle **Russia's shadow fleet**. The Council is also expected to adopt the extension of the Belarus sanctions regime.

In its conclusions of December 2024, the European Council reconfirmed the EU's unwavering commitment to providing continued political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes and as intensely as needed. Russia must not prevail.

The European Council also reaffirmed its support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law, in line with the key principles and objectives of Ukraine's Peace Formula. To this end, the European Union and its member states will maintain their intensive global outreach efforts and will participate in the discussions affecting Europe's security.

- [Timeline - Packages of sanctions against Russia since February 2022 \(background information\)](#)
- [European Council conclusions, 19 December 2024](#)
- [Russia's war against Ukraine \(background information\)](#)
- [EU solidarity with Ukraine \(background information\)](#)

## Situation in the Middle East, including Syria, Lebanon and UNRWA

The Foreign Affairs Council will exchange views on EU support to **Syria**. In this context, the Council is expected to adopt decisions and a political declaration on easing the EU's sanctions framework in certain sectors, with the aim of supporting an inclusive transition in Syria, as well as its economic recovery, future reconstruction and stabilisation. The High Representative is also expected to touch on the upcoming 9<sup>th</sup> Brussels Conference on "Supporting the future of Syria and the region" on 17 March.

Ministers will discuss the latest developments in **Israel and Gaza**, in light of the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, to which the EU has been contributing also

through the redeployment of EUBAM Rafah. The Council is also expected to exchange on recent developments on the ground and to the EU and Member States' support to the Palestinian Authority. The Council will also touch on the EU-Israel Association Council that will take place after FAC.

In a statement of the High Representative on behalf of the EU dated 18 January, the EU welcomed the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, allowing for the phased release of the hostages, the end of hostilities, and the easing the humanitarian suffering in Gaza. The EU is committed to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace based on the two-state solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. The EU will contribute to this objective through support to the Palestinian Authority to help it address its most pressing needs and support the reform agenda, and engagement with Israel and international partners in order to revive the political process.

As to **Lebanon**, the High Representative will update the Council about the latest developments, including following the ceasefire agreement of 27 November between Israel and Lebanon, the creation of a new government, and further steps to reinvigorate EU-Lebanon relations, including through the support to the Lebanese Armed Forces through the European Peace Facility.

In a statement of the High Representative on behalf of the EU dated 9 January, the EU reaffirmed its steadfast support for the Lebanese people, and looked forward to the swift formation of a fully-fledged government, able to take forward a reform-oriented and forward-looking agenda. This will pave the way for renewed international support and for the full relaunch of the EU-Lebanon Partnership.

- [Israel/Palestine: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU welcoming the ceasefire and hostage deal in Gaza, 18 January 2025](#)
- [Lebanon: statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the presidential election, 9 January 2025](#)
- [European Council conclusions, 19 December 2024](#)
- [EU position on the situation in the Middle East \(background information\)](#)
- [EU humanitarian support for Palestinians \(background information\)](#)

## Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Foreign Affairs Council will exchange views on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where the conflict has dramatically escalated since the beginning of January, and is aggravated by the **renewed offensive of the M23 in the eastern part of the country** supported by the Rwandan Armed Forces.

The Council is expected to refine the EU's position and **possible concrete reaction** to the most recent events. The discussion will discuss the dire **humanitarian situation** in the country, and the **risk of regionalisation** of the conflict.

In a statement of the High Representative on behalf of the EU dated 25 January, the EU strongly condemned the capture of Minova and Saké, and the continued advance of the M23 as an unacceptable violation of the agreed ceasefire and a further cause of deepening of the disastrous humanitarian crisis in eastern DRC. The EU reaffirmed its support to the Luanda and Nairobi processes, and declared that it would consider all the

tools at its disposal in order to hold accountable those responsible for sustaining armed conflict, instability and insecurity in the DRC.

- [Democratic Republic of the Congo: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the latest escalation in eastern DRC, 25 January 2025](#)

## Iran

Ministers will also exchange views on the EU policy towards Iran. The discussion will focus likely focus on various elements such as: Iran's military support to Russia, its arbitrary detentions of EU citizens, hybrid operations in the EU, its destabilising role in the Middle East region, as well as its and nuclear trajectory capabilities.

- [EU sanctions against Iran \(background information\)](#)

## Current affairs

Under current affairs, the High Representative will refer to **Georgia**, in light of recent developments.

- [Georgia \(background information\)](#)
  - [European Council conclusions, 19 December 2024](#)
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## **In the margins of the Council meeting**

On the eve of the Foreign Affairs Council, the High Representative will host an informal exchange on the humanitarian situation in the Middle East, with the **UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process** ad interim / **Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza**, Sigrid Kaag (via videoconference) and the **Commissioner-General of UNRWA**, Philippe Lazzarini (in person).

The meeting will focus on the situation on the ground, the delivery of humanitarian assistance, UNRWA's operational risks and feasibility of different plans for the reconstruction of Gaza.

The Foreign Affairs Council on 24 February will be followed by the **EU-Israel Association Council**.

- [EU humanitarian support for Palestinians \(background information\)](#)
  - [EU-Israel Association Council](#)
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