

Background brief*Brussels, 13 March 2026*

Foreign Affairs Council

16 March 2026, Brussels

PRESS
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EN**Chair:** Kaja Kallas, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy**Starting time:** 10:15**Media opportunities:**

- Doorstep of the High Representative: +/- 8:00
- Press conference on FAC: +/- 17:30

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Main agenda topics:

The March Foreign Affairs Council will start with an exchange of views with the **Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine**, Andrii Sybiha, who will participate via VTC. The Council will then discuss **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**.

EU foreign affairs ministers will also discuss the situation in the **Middle East** in light of the most recent developments and its effects across the region and beyond.

Finally, the Council will discuss the EU relations with the **Southern Neighbourhood** and will take stock of the implementation of the Pact for the Mediterranean.

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Related events:

Prior to the Foreign Affairs Council, EU ministers will have an informal discussion over breakfast on the proposed **European Security Strategy**.

Over lunch, EU ministers will informally exchange views on bilateral relations with the **Minister of External Affairs of India**, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

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[Foreign Affairs Council 16 March 2026 – meeting page](#)[Press conferences, doorsteps and other public events in video streaming](#)[High quality photo and video material of the event](#)

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

The Council will hold a discussion on **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**, following a VTC statement by the Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Andrii Sybiha**, who will give an overview of the situation on the ground and Ukraine's most urgent needs.

The discussion will then focus on the **impact of the additional Middle East crisis** on Ukraine and Russia's war of aggression, particularly its military and energy repercussions. The Council will discuss **support for Ukraine**, including through the €90 billion Ukraine Support Loan for the years 2026-2027, in light of the agreement reached by the European Council in December 2025. In addition, the Council is expected to discuss ways to further increase **pressure on Russia**, including sanctions, actions to counter the Russian shadow fleet and countering Russia's hybrid threats. The Council is expected to approve conclusions on advancing the EU's capacity to counter hybrid threats.

[European Council, 18 December 2025, Ukraine](#)

[Russia's war against Ukraine \(background information\)](#)

[EU military support for Ukraine \(background information\)](#)

[EU solidarity with Ukraine \(background information\)](#)

[Hybrid threats \(background information\)](#)

[Russia's hybrid activities: EU sanctions \(background information\)](#)

[Hybrid threats / Russia: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU condemning Russia's persistent hybrid campaigns against the EU, its Member States and partners, 18 July 2025](#)

Situation in the Middle East

Ministers will discuss the **situation in the Middle East**, focusing in particular on **Iran and the broader regional ramifications of the conflict**, including the escalation in **Lebanon**.

Following the VTC discussions on 1 and 5 March – the latter including representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – and the VTC of President Costa, President von der Leyen and the High Representative Kallas on 9 March with leaders from the Middle East and the wider region, the Council will discuss the latest developments and will take stock of outreach to and coordination with partner countries. The discussion will also focus on consular coordination and the role of CSDP operations, in particular with a view to safeguarding freedom of navigation and maritime security. The Council is expected to confirm the adoption of further sanctions against individuals and entities under the Iran human rights sanctions' regime.

The situation in **Gaza**, including humanitarian access, continued EU support to the Palestinian Authority and as well as the deteriorating situation in the **West Bank** will also be addressed.

[Joint statement by GCC-EU Ministers' meeting on recent developments in the Middle East: Iran's attacks against GCC states, 5 March 2026](#)

[Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on developments in the Middle East, 1 March 2026](#)

[Timeline - Iran and the Middle East \(background information\)](#)

[EU sanctions against Iran \(background brief\)](#)

[Lebanon: Statement by the High Representative on the recent developments \(EEAS\)](#)

[Joint Statement by High Representative Kallas and Commissioners Šuica and Lahbib on the Israeli Security Cabinet decision to amend the land registration and property acquisition procedures in the West Bank, 11 February 2026 \(EEAS\)](#)

[EU position on the situation in the Middle East \(background information\)](#)

[EU humanitarian support for Palestinians \(background information\)](#)

EU-Southern Neighbourhood

EU ministers will exchange views on EU relations with the **Southern Neighbourhood** ahead of the Informal meeting of Heads of State or Government on 24 April in Nicosia. Ministers will discuss the progress on the implementation of the **Pact for the Mediterranean**.

On 20 November 2025, the Council approved conclusions on the Pact calling for its swift and efficient implementation, backed by a monitoring and governance system and supported by the mobilisation of relevant EU policy tools, including existing financial ones. The Pact was subsequently launched at the 6th EU-Southern Neighbourhood Ministerial meeting on 28 November in Barcelona.

[One Sea, one Pact, one Future: Council approves conclusions on the Pact for the Mediterranean \(press release, 20 November 2026\)](#)

[Joint communication on the Pact for the Mediterranean: One sea, one pact, one future \(17 October 2025\)](#)

[EU-Southern Neighbourhood \(European Commission\)](#)

Any other business

During the Council meeting, Germany and France will raise the situation in **Georgia**, while Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will bring to the attention of ministers **Russia's allegations against the Baltic states of non-compliance with the international Convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination (CERD)**.

Related events

Working breakfast

Prior to the Foreign Affairs Council, EU foreign ministers will hold an informal exchange of views on the **European Security Strategy**.

[Security and defence \(background information\)](#)

Working lunch

Over a working lunch, EU ministers will meet **Minister of External Affairs of India**, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, to discuss bilateral cooperation in follow-up to the 16th EU-India Summit, including the Joint Strategic Agenda and the Security and Defence Partnership. The discussion will also focus on the respective foreign policy and security policies, including in multilateral contexts.

[EU-India summit, 27 January 2026](#)

[Joint statement EU-India summit, 27 January 2026](#)

[EU-India trade relations \(infographic\)](#)

[Factsheet: EU-India relations \(European External Action Service\)](#)