



Foreign Affairs / Defence Council **20 May 2025**

Foreign Affairs Council with Defence Ministers

The Foreign Affairs Council in its defence configuration will meet in Brussels at **9.30** and will be chaired by the **EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Kaja Kallas**.

The Council will first discuss **EU support to Ukraine**. After a short intervention by the **Defence Minister of Ukraine, Rustem Umerov**, EU Ministers will be joined by the **NATO Secretary-General, Mark Rutte**, in person for an informal exchange.

Over lunch, the EU defence ministers will then hold a discussion on **defence readiness**.

Foreign Affairs Council with Foreign Affairs Ministers

The Foreign Affairs Council will resume with EU Foreign Affairs Ministers at **14.00**.

After a short intervention by the **Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Andrii Sybiha**, the Council will discuss **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**.

The Council will then exchange views on the **situation in the Middle East, including Syria**.

The Council is expected to adopt the **17th package of EU sanctions** on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, new sanctions package countering **Russia's hybrid activities**, sanctions against the proliferation and use of **chemical weapons** and under the **Russia Human Rights** regime, as well as Council **conclusions on Yemen**.

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

In the margins of the meeting:

The Foreign Affairs Council will be preceded by an **informal breakfast** hosted by High Representative Kallas, the Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski and Commissioner Lahbib on the occasion of the **4th European Humanitarian Forum** on 19-20 May.

At lunchtime, EU Defence Minister's will participate in the **European Defence Agency's (EDA) Steering Board** in ministerial composition, starting at around 13.00.

The **3rd EU-African Union ministerial meeting** will take place on 21 May 2025.

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Doorstep of the High Representative: +/- 9.20

Press conference on FAC: +/- 17.30

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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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Foreign Affairs Council (Defence)

EU support to Ukraine

The Foreign Affairs Council in its defence configuration will discuss EU support to Ukraine against the background of the **latest developments** on the ground.

The Council will first hold a discussion on options for a possible EU contribution to **security guarantees for Ukraine**, also in the context of ongoing efforts by the Coalition of the Willing.

The High Representative is also expected to update on progress regarding the implementation of her **initiative on “enhanced military support to Ukraine”**, aiming to provide Ukraine with 2 million rounds of large calibre ammunition in 2025, based on states’ voluntary contributions. She is also expected to inform the Council about the second tranche of proceeds stemming from Russian immobilised assets to be channelled through the European Peace Facility (EPF).

The **Ukrainian Minister of Defence, Rustem Umerov**, is invited to address the Council at the beginning of the discussion. Furthermore, **NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte** will join the session in person, for an informal exchange.

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

Defence readiness

The Council will hold a discussion on defence readiness, focussing on the **implementation of the White Paper** for European Defence - Readiness 2030, **and the ReArm Europe Plan**.

Ministers will focus on the **identified priority capability areas** agreed by the European Council, and how to implement them into concrete, collaborative projects. The discussion will cover ongoing and planned work, including activities led by the European Defence Agency and the European Commission.

EU Ministers will be invited to share their interest to collaborate in various capability areas, making best use of the instruments offered by the EU.

- [European Council conclusion of 6 March 2025](#)
 - [EU defence in numbers \(background information\)](#)
 - [European Defence Industry \(background information\)](#)
 - [Questions and answers on ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030 \(European Commission\)](#)
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Foreign Affairs Council

Russian aggression against Ukraine

The EU27 discussion on the Russian aggression against Ukraine will be preceded by an intervention of the **Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrii Sybiha**, who will join to provide updates on the ongoing diplomatic developments, including the following the meeting in Türkiye on 16 May, the situation on the ground and Ukraine's priorities.

The Council debate will build on the outcomes of the Gymnich meeting in Warsaw on 7-8 May and the informal meeting of Foreign Ministers in Lviv on Europe Day, 9 May, and focus on how to contribute to the achievement of an **immediate, full and unconditional ceasefire**.

The discussion will also touch on **enhancing EU support to Ukraine** and stepping up EU work on sanctions to **increase pressure on Russia**, including with the 17th package that the Council is due to adopt.

As stated in the text supported by 26 Heads of State or Government on the occasion of the Special European Council on 6 March, in view of the new momentum for negotiations that should lead to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, the European Council underlines the importance of the following principles:

- a) there can be no negotiations on Ukraine without Ukraine;
- b) there can be no negotiations that affect European security without Europe's involvement. Ukraine's, Europe's, transatlantic and global security are intertwined;
- c) any truce or ceasefire can only take place as part of the process leading to a comprehensive peace agreement;
- d) any such agreement needs to be accompanied by robust and credible security guarantees for Ukraine that contribute to deterring future Russian aggression;
- e) peace must respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity

Achieving 'peace through strength' requires Ukraine to be in the strongest possible position, with Ukraine's own robust military and defence capabilities as an essential component. This applies before, during and after negotiations to end the war. To that end, the European Union remains committed, in coordination with like-minded partners and allies, to providing enhanced political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people, and to stepping up pressure on Russia, including through further sanctions and by strengthening the enforcement of existing measures, in order to weaken its ability to continue waging its war of aggression.

- [Text on Ukraine supported by 26 Heads of State or Government on the occasion of the Special European Council on 6 March 2025](#)
- [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

The Foreign Affairs Council will discuss the most recent developments in the Middle East, including Syria.

On **Israel and Palestine**, Israeli military operations continue to intensify while humanitarian aid to Gaza remains blocked and negotiations on a renewed ceasefire remain inconclusive. Against this background, the High Representative will seek the Council's guidance on possibilities for further EU action and to prepare a coordinated EU engagement at the UN Conference on the Two-State Solution in June in New York. She is also expected to touch on additional restrictive measures against Hamas and extremist violent Israeli settlers in the West Bank.

Regarding **Syria**, the High Representative will touch on the recent breakout of violence and on the need for the transitional authorities to maintain security and protect the population.

The Council will then discuss work on further **sanctions easing**, also in light of the announcement of President Trump on 13 May in Riyadh on the full lifting of US sanctions, the issue of security in **Da'esh camps** and detention centres in North-East Syria.

In the European Council conclusions of 20 March, the EU underlined the importance of a peaceful and inclusive transition in Syria, free from harmful foreign interference, and the protection of the rights of Syrians without distinction. Syria's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within secure borders should be fully respected, in accordance with international law. It welcomes the agreement reached on 10 March 2025 between the transitional authorities and the Syrian Democratic Forces.

The European Council recalled the EU's recent suspension of restrictive measures as part of a gradual, reversible approach. The European Union will continue to examine possible further suspensions of restrictive measures on the basis of close monitoring of the situation in Syria.

- [European Council conclusions of 20 March 2025](#)
 - [EU position on the situation in the Middle East \(background information\)](#)
 - [EU humanitarian support for Palestinians \(background information\)](#)
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In the margins of the Council meeting

Before the beginning of the Council, EU ministers will attend an **informal breakfast** hosted by High Representative Kallas, Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski and Commissioner Lahbib on the occasion of **4th European Humanitarian Forum** on 19-20 May.

European Defence Agency Steering Board

The EDA Steering Board will provide further guidance to the agency regarding the mid- to long-term lines of action for European capability development and will discuss the possibility of signing additional Letters of Intent (LoIs) for new joint capability projects. This follows the actions taken at the last EDA Steering Board – in November 2024 – where many member states signed four Letters of Intent (i.e. IAMD, Loitering Munitions, Electronic Warfare, European Combat Vessel) prepared by EDA on the most mature collaborative opportunities identified in the 2024 Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) report.

The EDA Steering Board will also adopt (A-point) a synthesis of the ongoing actions and proposals contributing to the implementation of the 6th of March European Council conclusions and the White Paper for European Defence objectives.

It is the first EDA Ministerial Steering Board chaired by High Representative Kallas in her capacity as Head of the European Defence Agency. It is also the first EDA Ministerial Steering Board with André Denk in his capacity as new EDA Chief Executive.

- [European Defence Agency website](#)

3rd EU-African Union ministerial meeting

The Council meeting will be followed by the **3rd EU-African Union ministerial meeting** taking place on 21 May 2025.

- [3rd EU-African Union ministerial meeting, 21 May 2025](#)
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