

Foreign Affairs Council meetings on 27 and 28 May 2024

Foreign Affairs Council on 27 May

The Foreign Affairs Council, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, **Josep Borrell**, will take place in Brussels starting at **8.15**.

After a short intervention via videoconference by the **Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine** Dmytro Kuleba, the Council will discuss the **Russian aggression against Ukraine**.

The Council will then be informed about current affairs, and exchange about developments in **Georgia** and **Venezuela**.

Lastly, ministers will discuss the situation in the **Middle East**, including an informal exchange with the Ministers of the Arab Quint: **Qatar, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt**, the **United Arab Emirates**, as well as the Secretary General of the **League of Arab States**.

The Council meeting will be followed by the **Eighth Brussels Conference ‘Supporting the future of Syria and the region’**.

The Council is expected to approve conclusions on **EU Security and Defence**.

* * *

Doorstep of the High Representative: +/- 7.45

Press conference on FAC: +/- 15.00

* * *

[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](#)

* *

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

Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) on 28 May

The Foreign Affairs Council in its defence configuration will meet in Brussels at **10.30** and will be chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, **Josep Borrell**.

The Council will first discuss **EU support to Ukraine**. After the EU-27 internal discussion, Ministers will be joined by the **Defence Minister of Ukraine**, Rustem Umerov, and **NATO Secretary-General**, Jens Stoltenberg, for an informal exchange.

Under **current affairs**, ministers will welcome the approval of Council conclusions on Security and Defence, and will touch on the PESCO strategic review, the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC) as well as Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) engagements.

This item will be followed by a discussion on **defence readiness**, focused on the implementation of the European Defence Industrial Strategy, among other things.

The Council meeting will be preceded by a meeting of the **European Defence Agency Steering Board** in ministerial composition, starting at 8.45.

Doorstep of the High Representative: +/- 8.30

Press conference on FAC Defence: +/- 15.30

* * *

[Foreign Affairs Council \(Defence\) - meeting page](#)

[Video coverage of the event in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

[Press conferences and public events via video streaming](#)

* * *

Foreign Affairs Council with Foreign Affairs Ministers: 27 May

Russian aggression against Ukraine

The Foreign Affairs Council will discuss the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Dmytro Kuleba**, is foreseen to join the beginning of the meeting via videoconference to provide updates on the latest developments on the ground and Ukraine's current priorities.

Against the backdrop of increasing Russian attacks against the frontline, cities and energy infrastructure, ministers are then expected to exchange views on the EU **support to Ukraine**. They will notably take stock of the deliveries of military equipment - especially air defence and ammunition - resulting from **member states' initiatives**, the European Peace Facility and progress towards agreeing **EU security commitments** with Ukraine. The Council is also expected to touch on the use of the windfall profits stemming from **immobilised Russian assets**.

Other issues likely to be raised include: preparations for the **Summit on Peace** organised by Switzerland on 15-16 June, and **sanctions** (progress towards agreement on a 14th package of restrictive measures and the establishment of new sanctions regimes on human rights violations and repression in Russia, and Russia's destabilising activities abroad).

On 21 May, the Council adopted a set of legal acts ensuring that the net profits stemming from unexpected and extraordinary revenues accruing to central securities depositories holding assets and reserves of the Central Bank of Russia that are immobilised in the EU as consequence of EU's restrictive measures, will be used for further military support to Ukraine, as well as its defence industry capacities and reconstruction.

Furthermore, the Council recently decided to suspend the broadcasting activities in the EU of Voice of Europe, RIA Novosti, Izvestia and Rossiyskaya Gazeta, in view of their activities spreading and supporting the Russian propaganda and war of aggression against Ukraine.

- [Extraordinary revenues generated by immobilised Russian assets: Council greenlights the use of net windfall profits to support Ukraine's self-defence and reconstruction, 21 May 2024](#)
- [Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine: Council bans broadcasting activities in the European Union of four more Russia-associated media outlets, 17 May 2024](#)
- [European Council conclusions, 17-18 April 2024](#)
- [EU response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine \(background information\)](#)

Current Affairs

The Foreign Affairs Council will discuss current affairs, during which ministers will be able to exchange views on recent events and on fast-moving developments in external relations.

The Council will address the current situation in **Georgia**. The High Representative will provide an assessment in the light of the country's general backtracking on a number of core EU norms and values, in particular the adoption of the “transparency of foreign influence” law, and in view of the upcoming parliamentary elections in October 2024.

The High Representative is also expected to update ministers about the latest developments in **Venezuela**, with a focus on the ongoing electoral process leading to the presidential elections on 28 July 2024, EU engagement - including a possible EU Election Observation Mission -, and the recent alleviation of EU sanctions, including the shortening of the extension of the sanctions regime until 10 January 2025.

EU ministers are also expected to address the grave institutional and humanitarian crisis in **Haiti** under Any Other Business.

- [Venezuela: Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell in the EP Plenary on the situation of political prisoners \(EEAS website\)](#)
- [Timeline EU response to the crisis in Venezuela \(background information\)](#)
- [Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell with the European Commission on the adoption of the “transparency of foreign influence” law in Georgia \(European Commission website\)](#)

Situation in the Middle East

The Foreign Affairs Council will once more discuss the situation in the Middle East, against the background of intensifying hostilities around **Rafah** and a dire humanitarian situation on the ground.

Ministers will have an informal exchange with the Ministers of the Arab Quint: Qatar, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, as well as the Secretary General of the League of Arab States. The discussion is expected to focus on EU-Arab cooperation in response to the crisis, improving the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and reviving the political process towards a two-state solution.

A formal exchange in EU 27 format will follow, during which ministers are expected to touch on the ever-worsening **humanitarian situation** in Gaza, and efforts towards **de-escalation and regional stability**. This discussion is also likely to focus on: means to contribute to and/or sustain a ceasefire/end of hostilities in Gaza, humanitarian assistance, reviving the political process towards a two-state solution, as well as support for the reforms of the Palestinian Authority to prepare their future governance of Gaza.

In its conclusions of 17-18 April 2024, the European Council reiterated its commitment to work with partners to end the crisis in Gaza without delay and implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 2728, including through reaching an immediate ceasefire and the unconditional release of all hostages, as well as providing full, rapid, safe and unhindered access to humanitarian aid at scale for Palestinians in need.

The European Union remains firmly committed to a lasting and sustainable peace based on the two-state solution.

- [European Council conclusions, 17 and 18 April 2024](#)
- [European Council conclusions, 21 and 22 March 2024](#)
- [EU humanitarian support for Palestinians \(background information\)](#)

In the margins of the Council meeting

Supporting the future of Syria and the region - Brussels VIII Conference

#SyriaConf2024

The ministerial part of the eighth Brussels Conference on “Supporting the future of Syria and the region” will take place on **27 May** in Brussels, in the Council premises, starting at 15:15. It will bring together delegations from EU member states, neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees, partner countries, as well as representatives from United Nations stakeholders and agencies, and international NGOs.

The High Representative Josep Borrell will co-chair the conference on behalf of the European Union, together with Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, and Janez Lenarčič, Commissioner for Crisis Management.

The meeting was preceded by the **Day of Dialogue on 30 April**, which was an opportunity to engage with Syrian civil society, in the premises of the European Parliament in Brussels.

The Brussels Conferences has the twofold objective of mobilise vital financial support to alleviate the crucial needs of Syrians and their host communities in neighbouring countries, particularly Jordan, Lebanon and Türkiye, as well as Egypt and Iraq; while also, rally the international community in support of a comprehensive and credible political solution to the Syria conflict, in line with UN Security Council resolution 2254.

Brussels VIII remains the **main pledging event** this year for Syria and all its neighbouring countries. The EU and its member states have been the largest donors supporting people in Syria and the region since the beginning of the crisis in 2011, mobilising over €30 billion overall.

Last year, at the Brussels VII Conference held on 14-15 June 2023, the international community pledged close to €5.6 billion of which over €3.8 billion pledged by the EU and its member states.

- [Webpage of the Conference \(EEAS website\)](#)
- [Video coverage of the event in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)
- [Press conferences and public events via video streaming](#)

Previous events

- [Brussels VII, 14-15 June 2023](#)
- [Brussels VI, 9-10 May 2022](#)
- [Brussels V Conference, 29-30 March 2021](#)
- [Brussels IV Conference, 22-30 June 2020](#)
- [Brussels III Conference, 12-14 March 2019](#)
- [Brussels II Conference, 24-25 April 2018](#)
- [Brussels I Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, 4-5 April 2017](#)

Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) on 28 May

EU support to Ukraine

The Foreign Affairs Council in its defence configuration will discuss EU support to Ukraine focusing on the **latest developments** on the ground. It will take stock of the various ongoing **initiatives** to speed up and intensify the delivery of necessary military assistance, including ammunition and air defence, and progress towards the **EU's future security commitments** to Ukraine and the implementation of the **Ukraine Assistance Fund**, as well as of continued defence and training support through the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (**EUMAM Ukraine**).

EU Defence Ministers will also have an opportunity to informally exchange with NATO Secretary-General **Jens Stoltenberg**, and the Minister of Defence of Ukraine **Rustem Umerov**, who will give an update on latest developments and Ukraine's most pressing needs.

The EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) was set up in October 2022 to strengthen the capacity of the Ukrainian Armed Forces to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and to deter and respond to possible future military offensives by Russia and other potential aggressors. So far, the mission has trained 50,000 soldiers and has set a goal to train a total of 60,000 Ukrainian soldiers by the end of summer. A Strategic Review of the Mission will be conducted in the third quarter of 2024.

On 18 March 2024, the Council decided to increase the financial ceiling of the European Peace Facility (EPF) by €5 billion in current prices, and ringfence this top-up for Ukraine, by establishing a dedicated Ukraine Assistance Fund within the EPF. The aim is to further support the evolving needs of the Ukrainian Armed Forces through the provision of both lethal and non-lethal military equipment and training.

- [EUMAM website](#)
- [Ukraine Assistance Fund: Council allocates €5 billion under the European Peace Facility to support Ukraine militarily, 18 March 2024](#)
- [European Council conclusions, 17-18 April 2024](#)
- [EU response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine \(background information\)](#)

Current affairs

The Foreign Affairs Council will exchange on current affairs during which ministers will be able to exchange views on recent events and on fast-moving developments in security and defence.

First, ministers will receive an update on **CSDP missions and operations**, particularly in the Red Sea and the Sahel. Focus will be placed on Operation ASPIDES, as well as on the changing political and security situation in the Sahel and its impact on the CSDP engagements.

The Council will then be informed about progress in the operationalisation of the **EU Rapid Deployment Capacity**.

EU Defence ministers will also exchange on **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)**. The ongoing PESCO strategic review should result in a stronger and more strategic and effective PESCO beyond 2025.

- [Operation ASPIDES website](#)
- [Rapid deployment capacity \(EEAS website\)](#)
- [PESCO website](#)

Defence readiness

The Council will hold a discussion on defence readiness, with a focus on reinforcing the EU's Defence Technological and Industrial Base on the basis of the **European Defence Industrial Strategy** (EDIS) and improved **access to public and private financing**.

Discussions are expected to cover the need to ensure defence financing in the longer term.

In its conclusions of March 2024, the European Council expressed its commitment to increasing its overall defence readiness and capabilities to match its needs and ambition in the context of rising threats and security challenges. EU Leaders also invited the Council and the Commission to explore all options for mobilising funding and report back by June.

- [European Council conclusions, 21 and 22 March 2024](#)
- [EU cooperation on security and defence](#)
- [Questions and answers on the European Defence Industrial Strategy and the European Defence Industry Programme](#)
- [European Defence Industrial Strategy \(Factsheet\)](#)

In the margins of the Council meeting

European Defence Agency Steering Board

EU ministers of defence will meet in the European Defence Agency (EDA) Steering Board under the chairmanship of High Representative Borrell in his capacity as Head of Agency.

In the context of the EDA's 20th anniversary, ministers will approve the **EDA's 2024 Long-Term Review**, which sets out a reinforced mandate for EDA along five core tasks. This higher level of ambition is in line with the necessity to step up the EU's security and defence role in support of member states.

Ministers will also be presented with a preliminary assessment of new collaborative opportunities deriving from the coordinated annual review on defence (**CARD**), so that they can provide early guidance. The CARD report is foreseen to be approved in November 2024.

- [European Defence Agency website](#)

Schuman Security and Defence Forum 2024

The second edition of the Schuman Security and Defence Forum (Schuman Forum) will take place in Brussels on 28-29 May 2024. It will bring together senior decision-makers from more than 60 partner countries, EU member states, high-level representatives of the EU, international and regional organisations, as well as leading think-tanks and academia.

The Forum will aim at shedding light on how ongoing and potential peace, security and defence partnerships can respond to the most pressing security threats and challenges and contribute to global peace and security as well as uphold the international rules-based order and multilateralism.