

Background brief*Brussels, 8 May 2026*

Foreign Affairs Council

11 May 2026, Brussels

PRESS**EN****Chair:** Kaja Kallas, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy**Starting time:** 9:45**Media opportunities:**

- Doorstep of the High Representative: +/- 7:30
- Press conference on FAC: +/- 16:00

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Main agenda topics:

The May Foreign Affairs Council will start with a discussion on EU relations with the **Western Balkans**. This will be preceded by an **informal breakfast** with ministers from the six Western Balkans partners.

EU foreign affairs ministers will then discuss **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Andrii **Sybiha**, who will be present in person, will address ministers ahead of the EU27 discussion.

The Council will then focus on the situation in the **Middle East** in light of the most recent developments and its effects across the region and beyond.

After lunch, EU foreign affairs ministers will informally exchange with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Anita **Anand**.

Finally, EU ministers will receive a presentation on the outcomes of the updated comprehensive **EU Threat Analysis**.

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Related events:

At the end of the Council meeting, High Representative Kaja Kallas and Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos on behalf of the EU, together with Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Andrii Sybiha, and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada Anita Anand, will co-host the high-level meeting of the **International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children**, starting at 17:00.

Subsequently, High Representative Kallas will also co-chair, with the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates al-Shaibani, the **first EU-Syria high-level political dialogue** to which EU foreign affairs ministers are invited to discuss best ways to support the peaceful and inclusive transition in the country.

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[Foreign Affairs Council 11 May 2026 – meeting page](#)

[High quality photo and video material of the event](#)

[Press conferences, doorsteps and other public events in video streaming](#)

Western Balkans

Ahead of the FAC meeting, EU foreign affairs ministers will have an **informal exchange over breakfast** with their counterparts from the six Western Balkan partners. Ministers are expected to have a broad discussion on current issues, including key **geopolitical developments**, shared interest in promoting **stability and security in the region**, and cooperation in Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) matters.

The latest informal exchange with Western Balkans foreign ministers took place in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council in November 2025.

The Council will then discuss EU relations with the Western Balkans in a **EU27 format**. The discussion will focus on **increased CFSP/CSDP cooperation** to support building resilience and strengthening security, including in countering hybrid threats.

[EU-Western Balkans summit, 5 June 2026](#)

[EU-Western Balkans relations \(background information\)](#)

[Western Balkans \(background information\)](#)

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

EU27 ministers will hold a discussion on **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**, following an address by the Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrii **Sybiha**, who will be present in person and will give an overview of the situation on the ground and Ukraine's most urgent needs.

The focus of the discussion will be on **support for Ukraine**, considering several aspects: financial, military and energy support; EU security guarantees, including measures on ceasefire monitoring via SATCEN; and support for the return of Ukrainian children; as well as the geostrategic importance of **Ukraine's accession path**.

The FAC is expected to adopt a reviewed and widened mandate for the European Union Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform in Ukraine (**EUAM**), as well as restrictive measures against individuals and entities responsible for the unlawful deportation and indoctrination of Ukrainian children.

[Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine: 20th round of stern EU sanctions hits energy revenues, military-industrial complex, trade and financial services, including crypto \(23 April 2026\)](#)

[Council finalises €90 billion support loan to Ukraine \(press release, 23 April 2026\)](#)

[European Council, 19 March 2026, Ukraine](#)

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

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

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

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

Situation in the Middle East

The session on the situation in the Middle East is expected discuss developments in the **Gulf region**, including the Strait of Hormuz, as well as **Israel and Palestine**.

The discussion will focus in particular on **strengthening the EU's engagement with the Gulf countries** against the background of the regional escalation and four years after the adoption of the first EU Joint Communication on a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf (May 2022).

On **Israel/Palestine**, the Council will discuss the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, and take stock of the April FAC discussion.

[Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the ceasefire agreed by the United States and Iran \(9 April 2026\)](#)

[Leaders' statement on the two-week ceasefire concluded between the United States and Iran \(press release, 8 April 2026\)](#)

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

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

[European Council conclusions, 19 March 2026](#)

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

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

[Joint Communication on a "Strategic Partnership with the Gulf"](#)

Informal discussion with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada

EU foreign affairs ministers will informally exchange with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Anita Anand, focusing on bilateral relations and cooperation on international questions of mutual interest, ahead of the meeting of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children.

Updated threat analysis

At the end of the meeting, EU foreign affairs ministers will receive a presentation on the outcomes of the updated comprehensive **EU Threat Analysis**.

Any other business and other decisions

Under other business:

- Croatia will inform ministers about the outcome of the Three Seas Summit and Business Forum meeting held in Dubrovnik, Croatia, on 28-29 April 2026.
- Romania will brief the Council on the recent violation of Romanian airspace by Russian drones.
- MED9++ informal ministerial meeting in Rome – A Coalition for global access to fertilisers and food security amid the Hormuz crisis, from Italy and Croatia.

The Council is expected to renew restrictive measures against cyber-attacks.

During the FAC meeting, EU foreign ministers are also expected to adopt a decision to lift the partial suspension of the EU-Syria Cooperation Agreement, which was introduced in 2011 and extended in 2012 in response to serious human rights violations by the Assad regime.

Related events

International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children

The Council meeting will be followed by the high-level meeting of the **International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children**. The meeting will be co-chaired by High Representative Kaja **Kallas** and Commissioner for

Enlargement Marta **Kos** on behalf of the EU, together with Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Andrii **Sybiha**, and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada Anita **Anand**, and will start at 17:00.

[Bringing Ukrainian children back home \(European Commission\)](#)

EU-Syria High-level Political Dialogue

At around 18:15, High Representative Kallas will co-chair the first EU-Syria High-Level Political Dialogue, where EU ministers will be joined by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian transitional government, **Asaad al-Shaibani**. The dialogue will serve as an opportunity to take stock of the various work strands regarding the EU's support to the Syrian transitional authorities' efforts towards Syria's stabilisation, socio-economic recovery and inclusive political transition.

[First EU-Syria High-level Political Dialogue](#) (meeting page)

[Syria \(background information\)](#)