



## Foreign Affairs Council

**17 March 2025**

The March 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**.

After an intervention via videoconference by the **Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine**, Andrii Sybiha, the Council will discuss **Russian aggression against Ukraine**.

Ministers are then expected to discuss the **situation in the Middle East**, followed by exchanges on **Syria** as well as on **Iran**.

The Council will then discuss **EU-US relations**.

In the margins:

After the Council meeting, the European Union will host the Ninth Brussels Conference - "**Standing with Syria**: Meeting the Needs for a Successful Transition", starting at 15.00.

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Doorstep of the High Representative: +/- 7.45

Press conference on FAC: +/- 14.00

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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 start the day with a discussion on the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

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.

The ensuing EU27 discussion will take place against the backdrop of current US and European initiatives, including the Ukraine-U.S. meeting that recently took place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the special European Council of 6 March, and ahead of the European Council of 20-21 March.

The High Representative is expected to underscore the importance of placing Ukraine in a position of strength and ensuring continuous military support, including through her initiative on enhanced EU military support in 2025. She is expected to underscore the importance of providing adequate security guarantees to Ukraine, including the reinforcement of Ukraine's defence capabilities. The discussion is also expected to stress the importance of maintaining maximum pressure on Russia.

On 24 February the Council adopted a wide-ranging 16th package of economic and individual restrictive measures, touching on vital sectors of the Russian economy, and further weakening the regime's ability to wage its illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine.

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.

[Ukraine: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union following the Ukraine-U.S. meeting in Saudi Arabia, 11 March 2025](#)

[Three years of Russia's full-scale invasion and war of aggression against Ukraine: EU adopts its 16th package of economic and individual measures, 24 February 2025](#)

[Timeline - Packages of sanctions against Russia since February 2022 \(background information\)](#)

[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](#)

[EU response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine \(background information\)](#)

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

## Situation in the Middle East

The Foreign Affairs Council will exchange views on the situation in the Middle East, starting with the situation in **Gaza**, where the ceasefire is at a critical juncture, and where it is crucial to ensure the release of all hostages and the flow of humanitarian aid.

The High Representative is expected to update ministers on the ongoing work of EUBAM Rafah - which has already helped with the crossing of over 3 000 individuals from Gaza over the last six weeks – and to welcome the Arab Plan for Gaza's recovery and reconstruction presented at the Cairo summit on 4 March. The discussion is also expected to focus on the situation in the **West**

**Bank**, where an Israeli military operation is also still ongoing, and EU support for the Palestinian Authority and a two-State solution, as well as to **UNRWA**.

[Statement by the High Representative on the Arab Plan for Gaza \(EEAS website\)](#)

[European Council conclusions, 19 December 2024](#)

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

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

## **Syria**

The Council is expected to discuss the recent episodes of widespread violence in the country's coastal region, resulting in a high number of victims, including many civilians, and to confirm the EU's support for the country and for a peaceful and inclusive transition with the objective of fostering political and economic stability, including through the ninth Brussels Conference on Syria, which will take place on the same day in the afternoon.

In a statement of the High Representative on behalf of the EU dated 11 March, the EU expressed its concern about the recent widespread violence in Syria's coastal region, and strongly condemned the attacks by pro-Assad militias against security forces, as well as horrific crimes committed against civilians allegedly perpetrated by armed groups supporting the security forces of the transitional authorities. The EU called for a swift, transparent and impartial investigation to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice, and for an end to violence across Syria, urging all parties to protect Syrians from all religious and ethnic backgrounds without discrimination.

[Syria: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the recent wave of violence, 11 March 2025](#)

[European Council conclusions, 19 December 2024](#)

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

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

## **Iran**

Ministers are expected to exchange views on the EU policy towards Iran. The discussion could 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 capabilities.

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

## **EU-US relations**

The discussion is expected to focus in particular on the impact of US foreign policy decisions, and the EU's approach. The High Representative is also expected to debrief ministers on her participation in the G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting on 12-14 March.

[EU relations with the United States \(background information\)](#)

## **In the margins of the Council meeting**

After the Council meeting, the European Union will host the **Ninth Brussels Conference - "Standing with Syria: Meeting the Needs for a Successful Transition"**, starting at 15.00.

The fall of the Assad regime marks a historic moment and an opportunity for the Syrian people to decide the future of their country. In this critical period, the EU stands with the Syrian people, both within Syria and across the region, and will continue to support a Syrian-owned, Syrian-led, inclusive transition, help address humanitarian needs and contribute to efforts towards economic recovery, reconstruction and stabilisation in order to build a free, peaceful and prosperous Syria.

A core objective of the Brussels Conference is to mobilise international support for an inclusive, peaceful transition and generate pledges for humanitarian and non-humanitarian assistance, ensuring sustained support for Syrians - both inside the country and in host communities across the region, particularly Jordan, Lebanon, Türkiye, Egypt, and Iraq.

The EU will also support a civil society event later this year in Damascus, reinforcing long-term engagement.

The EU remains unwavering in helping Syria and all its citizens, standing by them to build a free, peaceful, and prosperous future.

## **Ministerial Conference: agenda**

|             |                                                           |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 15:00-16:30 | Opening session, incl. closed-door Ministerial discussion |
| 16:30-16:45 | Family photo                                              |
| 16:45-17:45 | Plenary session – Part I                                  |
| 17:45-18:45 | Plenary session – Part II                                 |
| 18:45-19:00 | Concluding remarks                                        |
| 19:00-20:30 | Iftar – Seated ministerial buffet dinner                  |

[Standing with Syria, Brussels ninth conference \(European External Action Service\)](#)

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

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