

Foreign Affairs Council, 18 October 2021

Main results

Gulf region

The Council held a strategic discussion on the EU's approach to the Gulf and how to **strengthen the EU's presence in the region**.

Ministers acknowledged the key role that Gulf partners can play on foreign policy issues, such as the crisis in **Afghanistan**. They discussed the need to actively support and accompany the positive momentum in the region in areas that can help build confidence, while also contributing to the EU's **global agenda** (e.g. green transition, digital, trade). The Council also focused on the need to support socio-economic reforms and openly discuss issues where there is disagreement, for instance human rights.

The ministerial discussion will feed into preparations for a **Joint Communication on a "Partnership with the Gulf"**, that is due for adoption in the first quarter of 2022. An **EU-GCC Joint council** will also take place early 2022.

Eastern Partnership

Foreign Affairs Ministers had an exchange of views on EU's relations with the Eastern Partnership (EaP), in preparation for the ministerial meeting that will take place in November and the **EaP summit scheduled for December** in Brussels.

Ministers discussed the **difficult geopolitical context** faced by some partner countries in the region, and agreed that the EU would keep pushing for **fundamental values** such as democracy, human rights, rule of law, and anti-corruption. At the same time the EU will remain focused on **long-term socio-economic recovery**, making sure it is sustainable and inclusive, delivering concrete results for the people.

The EU will also support partners with **vaccines**, vaccine certificates and the fight against disinformation.

Ethiopia

Over lunch the Foreign Affairs Council exchanged views on the situation in Ethiopia, in light of the latest developments in the country and in the **Tigray region**, one year after the beginning of the conflict.



Foreign affairs ministers discussed Gulf region, Eastern Partnership, Ethiopia, Nicaragua and current affairs



Tigray has been shattered by systematic violations of human rights by armed groups that use war crimes and crimes against humanity as a weapon. Humanitarian aid has been prevented from arriving. We prepare the ground in view of the upcoming United Nations report on Human Rights expected on 1st of November, to give an adequate response, that can start by preparing sanctions. I am tasking my services to take this forward once we have the human rights abuses report.

— Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Ministers agreed to continue humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia and supported the upcoming mission of the EU Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta Urpilainen, who will travel to Ethiopia together with the EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa, Annette Weber, to convey a clear message on behalf of the EU on the need to finally implement a ceasefire and the start a political process including all actors.

Nicaragua

Over lunch the Foreign Affairs Council also exchanged views on the situation in Nicaragua. Since 2018 violent suppression of protest killed at least 328 people.

Ministers reflected in particular on the need to adjust EU policies in relation to the upcoming general elections in the country on 7 November 2021, for which the prospects of a credible and legitimate electoral process are very weak.

The EU will continue to insist on democracy, human rights and rule of law, such as the release of political prisoners or the return of international human rights organizations and the holding of free and fair elections.

Current affairs

The Foreign Affairs Council had a discussion on the deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation in **Afghanistan**. They concurred that an EU minimal presence in Kabul was necessary to support the Afghan people and ensure safe passage for Afghans at risk, but that this did not mean any EU recognition.

Tunisia was also discussed in light of the latest developments. Ministers stressed the importance of preserving the democratic acquis, respecting the separation of powers and resuming institutional normalcy. The recent appointment of a new government was considered to be a first positive step that the EU will keep monitoring closely.

Ministers then touched on **Western Balkans**, following up on the recent summit in Brdo and against the background of the recent tensions in the north of Kosovo. The EU will continue its strong political engagement with the region, follow up on the important foreign and security policy tasking from the summit, and facilitate the dialogue on the comprehensive normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

With a view to the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), the Council discussed **climate diplomacy**. Ministers underlined the importance for all countries to submit mitigation plans and long-term zero-emission strategies without delay.

Ministers were then informed about the latest developments around **Varosha**, and expressed strong solidarity with Greece and Cyprus over the Turkish interventions against vessels operating in their exclusive economic zones. The High Representative underlined that the only durable solution to the issues is a Cyprus settlement in line with relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the principles on which the EU is founded.

The Council also had a long discussion on **Belarus and the issue of migrants** being pushed towards the border of the EU. Ministers warned against the political use of migrants by the Belarusian regime and underlined that contacts with origin and transit countries would continue, as well as work on an appropriate EU response.

Before concluding the meeting the Council also touched on **Mali**. Ministers looked at the EU's financial and political levers, including the possibility to consider restrictive measures, in support of the efforts by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and in line with the conclusions adopted by the European Council in May against those hampering the transition agenda.

Council conclusions

The Council approved conclusions on **Bosnia and Herzegovina / EUFOR Operation Althea**.

› Council Conclusions on Bosnia and Herzegovina/Operation EUFOR Althea

Meeting information

Meeting n°3819 Luxembourg 18 October 2021

Preparatory documents

- › Provisional agenda
- › Provisional list of A items, non-legislative activities
- › Provisional list of A items, addition 2
- › List of A items, non-legislative activities
- › Background brief

Outcome documents

- › Outcome of the Council meeting
- › List of participants

Press releases

- › Bosnia and Herzegovina: Council approves conclusions on EUFOR Operation Althea

18 October 2021

11:50

➤ **ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaeda: sanctions regime prolonged until 31 October 2022**

18 October 2021

10:15

➤ **Media advisory - Foreign Affairs Council of 18 October 2021**

15 October 2021

10:30

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Photos and videos



Press conference



Roundtable





Doorstep by Josep Borrell



Doorstep by Anže Logar



Highlights

Foreign Affairs Council: Other meetings



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