EU - League of Arab States summit
Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt
24-25 February 2019

The European Union (EU) - League of Arab States (LAS) summit will be held in the International Congress Centre in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, on 24-25 February 2019. The summit will for the first time bring together the heads of state or government from both organisations.

European Council President Donald Tusk will co-chair the meeting together with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker also representing the EU.

The EU High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission, Federica Mogherini, and the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn will also attend the summit.

The summit will seek to strengthen Arab-European ties. Leaders will address a wide range of current challenges and common opportunities, such as multilateralism and the rules based global order, trade and investment, migration, climate change and security. The summit will also provide an opportunity for leaders to discuss the latest developments in the region, such as the situations with the Middle East Peace Process, Yemen, Libya and Syria.

The summit will start on Sunday 24 February at 17.00 with the official welcome by the Egyptian host and co-chair President Al Sisi. At 17.30 there will be an opening ceremony, followed by a plenary session on ‘Enhancing the Euro-Arab partnership and addressing global challenges together - part 1’. After a family photo at 19.50 there will be a dinner for the heads of delegations.

On Monday 25 February the summit will resume at 10.30 with a restricted working session for the leaders devoted to ‘addressing regional challenges together’. This will be followed by part 2 of the plenary session starting at 12.00. The summit will end with a closing session at 14.20, followed by a press conference.


Video coverage in broadcast quality and photos in high resolution:
http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu

1 This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.
First EU-LAS summit

The summit in Sharm el-Sheikh will be the first meeting between the European Union and the League of Arab States at the level of heads of state or government. The decision to organise the summit was taken following the informal meeting of EU heads of state or government in Salzburg on 19-20 September 2018. In its conclusions on 18 October 2018, the European Council welcomed the holding of the summit.

The summit will be an opportunity for the leaders to emphasise the need for greater strategic cooperation between the EU and the Arab world, promoting a relationship of the kind that the EU has developed with other regional groupings.

Today the two regions comprise 12% of the world’s population. With the Middle East especially experiencing strong population growth (from 1950-2000 the population already grew from 92 million to 349 million, which is a 3.8 fold increase, or 2.7% per year) the cross-regional opportunities and challenges are likely to increase. The summit should hence be an opportunity to boost cooperation on a number of issues, such as socio-economic development, trade and investment, energy security, climate change and migration.

Euro-Arab opportunities

The two regions are already major trade and investment partners. Collectively the EU is the first trading partner for the LAS. This is also the case for 11 individual members of the LAS. The EU is also the biggest investor in the LAS countries.

For example, 23% of all EU oil imports come from LAS countries. The equivalent number for natural gas is 19%.

The summit will provide an opportunity for leaders to discuss how to further strengthen economic cooperation between the two sides. Leaders are expected to discuss possibilities to develop cooperation in the fields of energy, science, research, (digital) technology, tourism, fisheries and agriculture.

Global challenges

At the summit, leaders will have the opportunity to reconfirm their commitment to multilateralism and to an international system based on international law, as well as to discuss a number of pressing global issues. In particular, leaders are expected to reiterate their strong support for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to global efforts to tackle climate change, notably through the implementation of the Paris Agreement. They are also expected to discuss human rights and the promotion of cultural and religious tolerance.

Migration is a challenge for both the EU and LAS member states. Several LAS member states rank high among countries of origin, transit or departure of migrants and refugees to Europe (approximately 1/3 of total arrivals in Europe 2018 came from LAS countries) and some of them are also hosting large communities of migrants and refugees. Leaders are expected to underline the need to protect and support refugees in accordance with international law and to strengthen the fight against illegal migration and migrants' smuggling.

Leaders will also discuss concerns related to the fight against terrorism. They are expected to agree on the need to further increase cooperation and coordination aimed at addressing root causes of terrorism, to combat the movement of foreign terrorist fighters and in cutting-off support to terrorist networks.
Regional challenges
Recent developments have highlighted the direct impact that open conflicts, protracted and humanitarian crises have on stability and security in both regions. There is an added value of increased EU involvement in stabilising regions. The summit will provide an opportunity for leaders, in a more restricted format, to discuss developments in the region, such as the situations in Syria, Libya and Yemen, as well as the Middle East Peace Process.

The EU and League of Arab States
The League of Arab States is the only pan-Arab grouping gathering all Arab countries. It includes 22 member states from Africa and the Middle East: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Syria's membership was suspended in 2011, and it is not participating in the summit.

Since the signing of a memorandum of understanding in 2015, the EU and LAS have maintained an advanced relationship, including biennial ministerial meetings and annual meetings between the EU Political and Security Committee and the LAS Permanent Representatives. The EU and the LAS have also launched in 2015 a strategic dialogue to develop the Euro-Arab operational cooperation on security issues.

For more information see:
EU - League of Arab States Summit 24-25 February 2019, in Sharm el-Sheikh
EU - League of Arab States Ministerial meeting 4 February 2019, in Brussels

See also:
League of Arab States (EEAS)