

## **Foreign Affairs Council**

### **17 February 2020**

The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) meeting, chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep **Borrell**, will start at **9.30** with a discussion on **current affairs**. This discussion item will allow foreign ministers to be updated and comment on a number of recent developments on the international scene.

The Council will then exchange views on **relations** between the **EU** and the **African Union (AU)**, with a view to providing political guidance on future strategic priorities with Africa and to coordinating outreach to African partners ahead of the forthcoming EU-AU ministerial meeting and EU-AU Summit later this year.

Next the Council will discuss **Libya** and how to enhance EU engagement in the country. This follows up on the FAC meetings of 10 and 20 January and the Berlin Conference of 19 January 2020.

Ministers will then have a short exchange of views on **EU-India relations** ahead of the informal lunch they will later have with the minister of External Affairs of India, **Subrahmanyam Jaishankar**.

During the informal lunch, ministers are expected to have a **forward-looking discussion** ahead of the **15th EU-India Summit**, which will take place on **13 March** in Brussels.

#### Press opportunities:

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| +/- 08.00 | Doorstep by High Representative Josep Borrell  |
| +/- 13.20 | Welcome of minister of External Affairs of India Subrahmanyam Jaishankar by the High Representative Josep Borrell (VIP entrance, statements) |
| +/- 15.30 | Press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council meeting   |

[Foreign Affairs Council meeting page](#)  
[Press conferences and public events via video streaming](#)  
[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

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<sup>1</sup> This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the Council press office.

## Current affairs

The Foreign Affairs Council will start with a discussion on current affairs, during which ministers will have the opportunity to be updated on a number of recent developments. In this context, the High Representative may address recent developments in the Western Balkans and the Middle East, Syria and the Sahel.

The High Representative will briefly report on his recent trips in the **Western Balkans**.

He will also inform ministers about his recent visit to Jordan and Iran and issues related to the wider **Middle East** region. In this regard, ministers will have an opportunity to discuss the **Middle East Process**, including the recent US proposals, the role of the EU and how best to respond to further developments on the ground.

The High Representative will report on his visit to the **United States**.

Next the High Representative will raise the unfolding crisis in North West **Syria**, where a military offensive by the Syrian regime and its allies resulted in a humanitarian crisis, and risks undermining the wider regional stability.

Concerning the **Sahel**, ministers will follow up on the FAC meeting of 20 January, when the Council agreed on the need to renew and scale up European commitment in support of stabilisation of the Sahel region. In their interventions ministers could also touch on the preparations of the meeting of the members of the European Council with the Heads of State of the G5 Sahel countries that will take place in Brussels on 26 March 2020.

[FAC meeting on 20 January](#)

[G5 Sahel – Pau Summit – Statement by the Heads of State, 13 January 2020](#)

[The European Union's Partnership with the G5 Sahel Countries](#)

[Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell on behalf of the EU on the Middle East Peace Process](#)

[Middle East Peace Process \(EEAS\)](#)

## EU-African Union relations

Building on their exchange of views at the December FAC, ministers will discuss EU-AU relations with a view to providing political orientations on future strategic priorities with Africa, and to coordinating outreach to African partners ahead of important forthcoming meetings.

These include the meeting of AU-EU ministers of Foreign Affairs and the upcoming 6th EU-African Union Summit to be held in Brussels in October 2020.

During the FAC discussion, ministers are likely to focus their interventions on the main geo-political interests, challenges and opportunities, how those should translate into EU priorities, and how member states could best coordinate to maximise the impact of the strategy and guarantee effective and harmonised outreach.

The ministers' contribution is due to feed into the upcoming joint communication "Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa". The Strategy was announced by President von der Leyen in her political guidelines for the new European Commission ([A Union that strives for more – My agenda for Europe](#)).

At the December 2019 FAC, ministers emphasised that 2020 should be a pivotal year in the relationship between Africa and the European Union, offering important opportunities to modernise and scale up the partnership. On that occasion an overall agreement emerged on the need to update the EU-Africa strategy with African partners, building on the political declaration agreed at the Abidjan Summit in 2017 and taking into account common global challenges such as climate change and digitalisation.

The [fifth and most recent AU-EU summit](#) took place in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in November 2017, bringing together EU and AU leaders to define the future direction for cooperation between the two continents. The theme of the summit was 'investing in youth for a sustainable future' and the outcome was a [joint declaration](#) setting out the leaders' commitment to investing in youth and accelerated inclusive growth and sustainable development.

[EU-African Union relations](#)

[Foreign Affairs Council, 9 December 2019](#)

## Libya

Building on the FAC meetings of 10 and 20 January, as well as the outcome of the Berlin conference of 19 January and of the Munich International Follow-Up Committee of 16 February, the Council will discuss Libya and further EU engagement towards a political solution to the crisis. Ministers will take stock of progress made on the operational follow-up, particularly as regards possible CSDP measures for EU monitoring of the arms embargo.

A meeting of the 5+5 inter-Libyan Committee held security talks in Geneva on 4 February and was moderated by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). A second meeting of the Senior-level Coordination Group on the Economy took place in Cairo on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

The latest FAC conclusions on Libya are from 10 December 2018. They expressed support for the efforts by the United Nations to expedite a Libyan-owned political process and, in particular, for the mediation by UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ghassan Salamé.

[Foreign Affairs Council, 20 January 2020](#)

[Foreign Affairs Council, 10 January 2020](#)

[EU-Libya relations \(EEAS\)](#)

## EU-India relations

Ministers will have a short exchange of views in preparation of the lunch discussion with the minister of External Affairs of India, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. Ministers will take this opportunity to review the main priorities in reinforcing the EU-India Strategic Partnership, based on the EU's India Strategy.

[Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan](#)

[EU's India Strategy](#)

[Factsheet EU-India relations](#)

## Informal lunch

During an informal lunch, Foreign Affairs ministers and the minister of External Affairs of India, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, are expected to have a forward-looking discussion ahead of the 15th EU-India Summit that will take place on 13 March in Brussels. The main focus of the exchange will be on multilateralism and upholding the rules based global order, climate change and environmental protection, foreign policy issues and regional security, as well as, trade and investment, sustainable modernisation and connectivity.

## Other items

The Council is expected to adopt a number of conclusions without debate.

### Conclusions on EU priorities at United Nations human rights fora in 2020

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the priorities to be followed by the EU in United Nations human rights fora this year.

On the occasion of the year marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, the conclusions will reaffirm EU's commitment to the rules-based international order – human rights protection being an important part of it. The EU will use all its tools to respect its commitment to human rights, denouncing human rights violations and abuses globally. The conclusions will also point out that the EU will pay more attention to the link between human rights and the environment, as well as the consequences of digital technologies for the protection of human rights. The EU will also pursue its thematic human rights priorities, including opposition to the death penalty and torture, the promotion of accountability, international humanitarian law, fundamental freedoms, non-discrimination, rights of children, and support for human rights defenders worldwide.

[Protection and promotion of human rights](#)

## **Conclusions on Zimbabwe**

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on Zimbabwe, restating the EU's continued support for economic and political reforms in the country, as well as for the EU-Zimbabwe political dialogue.

In its conclusions the Council is also expected to acknowledge the ongoing acute humanitarian crisis in the country, and renew the EU's support for the people of Zimbabwe in various sectors, such as economic development, primary health care, resilience building, as well as through humanitarian assistance.

[Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Zimbabwe](#)

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