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EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



**Report of the High Representative of the Union
for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy**

of 15/06/2023

CFSP Report – Our Priorities in 2023

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Report of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

"CFSP Report - Our priorities in 2023"

This report covers events up to 31 May 2023.

Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine is a threat to European stability and security. Trampling the basic tenets of the UN Charter, it is also a grave challenge to the rules-based international order and to world peace and stability. It has further accelerated major geopolitical transformations already under way. First, the increasingly acute strategic competition between the US and China has turned systemic, spanning across all dimensions from trade to technology and security, as well as competing models of society and governance. Second, other powers have become more assertive in the defence of their own interests and viewpoints they want to defend. This is obvious with consequential powers such as India, Brazil, Indonesia, Türkiye and is a reflection of the increasingly transactional reality of global geopolitical competition. This is also true for smaller states and developing countries who put economic development as a top priority, together with a call to make the multilateral system more representative.

These developments are fostering fragmentation and the weakening of the multilateral system, which in turn gravely impairs international cooperation just when it is needed the most to help address intensifying global challenges such as climate change, nuclear non-proliferation or inequality in parallel with the momentous transformations brought upon by the global green and digital transitions. Europe may well be in one of the most perilous moments of its recent history. For the EU this is a watershed moment, a moment of strategic reckoning. The EU responses now and in the coming years both to the immediate security challenge of Russia and to the strategic challenges of a global geopolitical competition will define the place and influence of the EU on the continent and the global stage. Our capacity to shape our future will rest on our response. First, it is critical to maintain strategic unity and solidarity within the EU, particularly regarding our efforts to achieve a just political settlement and the reconstruction and integration of Ukraine in a renewed and strengthened European stability and security architecture. Second, we must cement and strengthen our strategic partnerships with like-minded partners, particularly the transatlantic partnership and the G7. Third, we need to take the expectations and grievances of the emerging countries and the rest of the world seriously, because there is a battle of narratives and, even more, a battle of offers, going on.

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(1) GEOGRAPHIC PRIORITIES

Europe

Russia's unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine underlined more clearly than ever the need to keep the **Western Balkans** firmly on their path towards the European Union. Against this background, last year saw intensified political engagement and historic decisions, including the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, granting candidate status to Bosnia and Herzegovina and decision on visa liberalization for Kosovo*. Western Balkan partners continued to align with the vast majority of UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions condemning Russia's invasion and on its humanitarian impact. Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia aligned fully with EU foreign policy, including sanctions on Russia, while Bosnia and Herzegovina significantly increased its alignment. Kosovo voluntarily aligned with those measures. On 18 March 2023, under the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, the Parties agreed on the implementation of the Agreement on the Path to Normalisation of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia, which is foreseen to become an integral and binding part of their respective European paths. The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) held two discussions about the region and met with Western Balkans foreign ministers over lunch on 22 May 2023. The Western Balkans partners continued to provide inputs to FAC discussions and were debriefed after FAC meetings. The bi-annual informal CFSP Dialogue at Political Directors' level between the EU and the Western Balkan partners resumed in April 2022.

The EU's rule of law mission in Kosovo (EULEX) continued to provide a valuable contribution in support to security, stability and the rule of law in Kosovo. In light of the tensions in north Kosovo, EULEX reinforced its presence on the ground through its Reserve Formed Police Unit (RFPU). The Mission maintained an enhanced visibility, including through foot patrols that contributed to counter the sense of insecurity among the population in north Kosovo. Operation EUFOR ALTHEA continued supporting the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to maintain a Safe and Secure Environment (SASE) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, its core mandate. The increase in EUFOR troops contributed to alleviating concerns among the population of the possible spill over effects of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Following a gradual degradation in late 2022, 2023 saw a slight improvement of **EU-Türkiye** political context. Relations continued to be framed by the European Council Conclusions of June 2021 and several rounds of High Level Dialogues on different sectoral issues were held in late 2022. In the context of Russia's unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine, Türkiye continued supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity and playing a key role in facilitating the Black Sea Grain Initiative. However, the deepening of trade and economic relations between Russia and Türkiye coupled with the lack of alignment and implementation of EU sanctions are causes for concern and require further engagement in particular with regard to the prevention of sanction circumvention. EU-Türkiye exchanges on regional issues continued. There were increased efforts by Türkiye to

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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pursue regional normalisation with Eastern Mediterranean and Gulf countries. On Syria, an uptake in Turkish military actions was observed, while increased Russian-lead normalisation of ties between Türkiye and the Assad Regime were culminated in a quadrilateral meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 10 May 2023. In light of its candidate status, Türkiye's CFSP alignment remains extremely low. The Cyprus settlement process remained at a standstill while actions undertaken in the fenced-off town of Varosha were not reversed. Violations of Greek national airspace continued with increasingly hostile rhetoric being used until February 2023. With regard to the domestic situation, the backsliding of the respect for Human Rights, Rule of Law and fundamental freedoms continued. On 6 February 2023, southern Türkiye and northern Syria were hit by two devastating earthquakes leading to the deaths of thousands and to the displacement of millions. The EU expressed solidarity with the people in Türkiye and Syria and hosted a Donors Conference on 20 March 2023. On 14 May 2023, the Turkish Parliamentary and the first round of the Presidential elections took place. The second round of the Presidential election took place on 28 May 2023. On 28 May 2023, President Erdoğan was re-elected, while on the parliamentary elections held on 14 May 2023 his alliance secured the majority in the Turkish National Assembly.

Following the Russian aggression against Ukraine and statements jeopardising international security relations, **Arctic matters** are increasingly complex, requiring attention from several angles. Climate change remains the most comprehensive threat to the Arctic regions as ice on land and sea melts and permafrost thaws. Investors, industry and governments are paying increasing attention to resources in Arctic locations, including critical raw materials needed for technology shifts to reach to goals of zero net emissions in the next decades. Security matters in Arctic contexts are drawing increased attention (dual-use assets, threats to critical infrastructure, cyber security and hard security).

The start of the adoption procedures of the Windsor Framework in March 2023 has opened the door towards a more constructive engagement between the **EU and the United Kingdom**, including the decision of the March 2023 EU-UK Partnership Council to look into launching of the preparations for the bilateral cybersecurity and counter-terrorism dialogues foreseen in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. While there are so far no structures in place for formalised EU foreign policy cooperation with the United Kingdom, a joint understanding has also emerged to intensify informal consultations and pragmatic cooperation in areas of common interest in foreign, security and defence policy, building on the EU-UK cooperation following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The EU Delegation to the United Kingdom has also continued its outreach to UK counterparts and stakeholders, alongside contributing to the protection of the rights of the large number of EU citizens in the UK.

Eastern Neighbourhood and Central Asia

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has challenged the European security order and changed the overall geopolitical context in the Eastern neighbourhood. The war has given a new impetus to cooperation in the area of security and defence with the Eastern partners, to further strengthening their resilience as well as regional security and stability. This has been particularly

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highlighted within the **Eastern Partnership (EaP)** regional policy, and notably at the recent **annual EaP Foreign Affairs Ministerial meeting on 12 December 2022**. At the Ministerial, the EU Member States and EaP partners reaffirmed the continued relevance of the Partnership, while recognising the need to adjust it to new challenges, especially with regard to regional security in light of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and to tailor it to increasingly differentiated needs, notably the enlargement track. The 'recovery, resilience and reform' agenda remains valid, including the **EaP Economic and Investment Plan**. In March 2023, the EaP Senior Officials Meeting adopted an Annual EaP Work Plan for 2023. Belarus has suspended its participation in the EaP framework, however, the EU continues to engage with Belarusian people, civil society and democratic forces.

As a consequence of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the EU together with other partners decided to suspend Russia and Belarus from all **regional cooperation activities in the Baltic and Barents area (Council of the Baltic Sea States, Barents Euro-Arctic Council) as well as in the Northern Dimension policy**. Since then, Russia has decided to exit from Baltic cooperation altogether. Furthermore, the EU also stopped the derogation of all financial contributions from the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) to the Northern Dimension Partnerships, although they can still apply for specific sectoral EU funding. All financial arrangements with Russia in the Black Sea area were also suspended. Nevertheless, the EU together with partners continued its engagement and sectoral cooperation in all these formats in order to enhance sustainable development, to promote people-to-people contacts or to address environmental and energy security aspects.

The EU further actively supported **the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)** in order to promote multilateralism and the peaceful settlement of conflicts in the region. For the EU the OSCE remains one of the pillars of the European Security Order and the EU remains determined to support the Organisation politically and financially. The EU also enhanced political cooperation with the OSCE, through the High Level Dialogue at Secretary General's level, which in 2023 focused on the impact of the Russian aggression against Ukraine also in the regional context, the situation in Afghanistan and its impact on Central Asia, and programmatic cooperation between the EU and OSCE. In March 2023, Council Conclusions on EU priorities at the OSCE were adopted, which further demonstrate the relevance of the OSCE.

Regarding **bilateral relations with EaP partner countries**, the EU has responded decisively to Russia's war of aggression against **Ukraine**, following three main tracks: 1) wide-ranging support to Ukraine, 2) the diplomatic track to isolate and hold Russia to account, including restrictive measures and 3) global outreach to address the consequences of Russia's aggression. As Team Europe, the EU and its Member States have so far mobilised at least EUR 70 billion of assistance to Ukraine and its people. This includes Macro Financial Assistance, military support through the European Peace Facility and bilateral support, humanitarian assistance, and support made available to Member States for refugees. At the end of May 2023, more than 22,000 Ukrainian soldiers had completed or were undergoing training under the umbrella of the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM). The overall goal is to train 30,000 soldiers by the end of 2023. The civilian EU

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Advisory Mission (EUAM Ukraine) continues to implement its mandate for civilian security sector reform in addition to supporting to the investigation and prosecution of international crimes and support to law enforcement agencies in the newly liberated and adjacent territories. In June 2022, the European Council granted Ukraine candidate status, thereby paving the way for closer collaboration in all areas, including CFSP. Throughout the year, the EU and Ukraine increased its cooperation in the field of common foreign and security policy, through intense contacts at all levels and regular meetings at top level. On 4 February 2023, an EU-Ukraine Summit took place in Brussels.

In June 2022, the **Republic of Moldova** was granted EU candidate status on the understanding that the country would carry out reforms to fulfil the nine recommendations identified in the Commission's Opinion. Despite facing the direct consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and Russia's persistent efforts to destabilize the country and its pro-European government through hybrid actions, Moldova remained committed to its key objective of European integration. Moldova also showed strong solidarity with Ukraine by hosting large numbers of refugees and by supporting the EU's efforts in international fora, including by aligning for the first time, in March 2023, with two EU Council decisions targeting the Wagner group.

The EU and Moldova considerably enhanced cooperation on security and defence, with the objective to strengthen Moldova's overall resilience. In March 2022, a High-Level Political and Security Dialogue was launched and a second meeting took place in March 2023. Concrete cooperation on tackling hybrid threats, including strengthening cyber security and fighting disinformation, was put in place. On 11 July 2022, the EU and the Republic of Moldova launched the EU Support Hub for Internal Security and Border Management in Moldova, supporting cooperation on internal security and border management. The EU provided additional support to the modernisation of Moldova's defence capabilities through the European Peace Facility (EUR 87 million for 2021-2023).

On 22 May 2023, the Council launched a new civilian mission under the Common Security and Defence Policy, the EU Partnership Mission in Moldova (EUPM Moldova), aimed at strengthening Moldova's crisis management structures and to enhance its resilience to hybrid threats, including cybersecurity, and countering foreign information manipulation and interference. The High Representative inaugurated EUPM Moldova's Headquarters in Chisinau on 31 May 2023. The Council also adopted a framework for restrictive measures, providing the EU with the possibility to sanction persons who seek to destabilise Moldova and threaten its stability and sovereignty.

The EU remained firm in its commitment to a comprehensive, peaceful and sustainable settlement of the Transnistrian conflict and supported continued dialogue between the sides, in view of further confidence-building and to avoid destabilisation. The implementation of the Association Agreement continued and political dialogue advanced with the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Council held on 7 February 2023, followed by high-level dialogues on security and energy.

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In June 2022, the European Council recognised **Georgia's** European perspective and expressed readiness to grant the status of candidate country once the twelve priorities specified in the Commission's opinion on Georgia's membership application have been addressed. Georgia made progress in the implementation of sectoral reforms, in particular those linked to the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). The remaining challenges are related in particular to the justice reform, rule of law and de-oligarchisation, as well as the inclusivity and transparency of the process. A sharp increase of anti-Western narratives could be observed, increasingly coming from the ruling party, and including disinformation about a 'second front' in the war that the West would force Georgia to create.

In the context of Russia's war against Ukraine, Georgia's security situation remained calm and stable. In the past two years, the EU supported Georgia's defence forces with EUR 32 million through the European Peace Facility. In May 2023, the EU adopted a new set of assistance measures, worth EUR 30 million which will provide support in the areas of engineering, command and control, medical, cyber-defence and logistics (non-lethal). The fifth round of the regular EU-Georgia Strategic Security Dialogue took place in January 2023.

The EU continued its engagement in line with its Non-Recognition and Engagement Policy towards the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and continued to be involved in conflict resolution efforts, including through the work of the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia and the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM Georgia).

Georgia aligned with the EU in all international initiatives supporting Ukraine at the United Nations and has provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine. However it has not aligned with sanction regimes on Russia and Belarus. Overall, Georgia's record of alignment with the EU CFSP positions and decisions decreased (44% in 2022 and only 31% so far in 2023).

In **Belarus**, unrelenting human rights violations and repressions against all segments of the Belarusian society continued and worsened. The EU responded to this repression in a united way through its policy of Support, Solidarity, and Sanctions. Since the falsification of the 2020 presidential election, the EU has committed EUR 100 million in assistance to the Belarusian people. The EU remains ready to invest up to €3 billion in Belarus after a future democratic transition. Since October 2020, the EU has also progressively expanded its restrictive measures in light of the situation in Belarus and the regime's support to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The EU has now adopted 6 packages of sanctions against Belarus. The legal framework for those restrictive measures was prolonged until 28 February 2024. The EU continues to raise the human rights violations in international fora, to contribute to the international efforts to holding the perpetrators accountable and to assisting civil society and the democratic forces.

The EU worked on strengthening bilateral relations and supporting the reform agenda with **Armenia** while supporting its democratic path through the implementation of the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA). The EU-Armenia Partnership Council, the first one since the entry into force of the agreement took place in May 2022 and

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confirmed the role of the agreement as a blueprint for reforms in Armenia. The first ever EU-Armenia Political and Security Dialogue took place in January 2023 in Yerevan.

Azerbaijan remained a strategic energy partner. The EU continued cooperation with Azerbaijan to help to diversify its economy. At the same time, the EU underscored the importance of the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in our relationship. The EU held the fourth high-level Political and Security Dialogue with Azerbaijan in May 2023.

The EU continued to support efforts towards lasting peace **between Azerbaijan and Armenia**, demonstrating its commitment to a peaceful and prosperous South Caucasus. In this context, a civilian **EU Monitoring Capacity to Armenia** was set up for a period of two months in the second part of 2022 to observe the security situation in border areas of Armenia and contribute to confidence-building. This was followed by the launch of a new full-fledged civilian **EU Mission to Armenia (EUMA)** in January 2023. In 2022, the EU also substantiated its support to the mine clearance action activities in both Armenia and Azerbaijan and continued providing humanitarian support to help conflict-affected populations and improve livelihoods of vulnerable people in both countries

Russia

Following the unprovoked launch on 24 February 2022 of a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, Russia continued to escalate its war of aggression. In September 2022 Russia announced illegal annexation of Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. The European Council condemned this in the strongest possible terms and continued its unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

Along with like-minded partners, the EU successfully coordinated Russia's international condemnation and isolation, including the adoption of seven UN General Assembly resolutions that with overwhelming majority of UN member states condemned Russia's aggression and illegal actions. The EU adopted unprecedented and hard-hitting sanctions packages. It imposed sectoral measures in several fields, constraining Russia's economic activities, as well as individual measures against a large number of individuals and entities. The EU's sanctions have and will continue to have a significant effect on Russia's economy. They increased the cost of and curtailed the ability for Russia to carry out the war and showed the EU's determination and unity.

The period that followed Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine was also marked by a suspension of nearly all of the EU's bilateral engagement with Russia, including all EU funded programmes and projects in and with Russia. For the first time, the EU together with its international partners attributed the responsibility for a cyberattack to a Russian state actor.

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Central Asia

The EU enhanced its high-level political engagement with the countries of **Central Asia** as they were confronted with the repercussions of regional instability and international pressure from its big neighbours.

The situation in **Afghanistan** following the Taliban's takeover, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the more recent border disputes between **Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan**, generated new challenges for the region, including potential migration flows and a resurgence of violent extremism. High-level visits to the region, including the first meeting between President of the European Council Michel and the Heads of State of all five Central Asian countries in October 2022, demonstrated the strong geopolitical interest of the EU to strengthen its relation with Central Asia. Additionally, the 18th EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting, chaired by the HR/VP on 17 November 2022 and the EU-CA Global Gateway Connectivity Conference the following day in Samarkand (Uzbekistan) provided an opportunity for the EU to renew a strong message of commitment to the region. This was also illustrated in the conclusion of negotiations on a new-generation EU-Uzbekistan Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, and the agreement of a EU-Kazakhstan Strategic Partnership on sustainable Raw Materials, batteries and renewable hydrogen value chains. Following the border dispute between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in September 2022, the EU offered to provide assistance, as well as continued active political support for stability and prosperity in the region. The EU has also engaged closely with the five Central Asian states following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, emphasising its principled position and encouraging compliance with international sanctions, including in the context of the annual EU-Central Asia High-Level Political and Security Dialogue.

Middle East and North Africa

The High Representative and the European Commission adopted on 18 May 2022 the **Joint Communication “A strategic Partnership with the Gulf”**, which was followed by Council Conclusions on 20 June, which detailed concrete proposals for strengthened cooperation on global issues and challenges (green transition, energy, climate, trade), as well as regional stability, global security, development and people-to-people exchanges.

Building on this momentum, the EU's contacts with all Gulf Cooperation Council partners intensified throughout the year: the HR/VP visited the Sir Bani Yas Forum in **Abu Dhabi** in November 2022 and met with the Foreign Minister of **Kuwait** and **UAE** Climate Envoy in the margins of the Munich Security Conference on 17 February 2023. The President of the European Commission participated in the Manama Forum in **Bahrain** in November 2022. In addition, **Saudi Arabia** Foreign Affairs Minister H.H. Prince Faisal (13-14 February 2023) and UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed (16 May 2023) both visited Brussels, and engaged closely with the HR/VP on regional (Middle East Peace Process, Sudan) and global issues (security, climate). These high-level contacts were complemented by senior officials' engagement with GCC partners, with two new Senior Officials' Meeting launched in June, notably with **Saudi Arabia and Bahrain**. The EU also continued to engage intensively on human rights through dedicated annual

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Human Rights Dialogues that for the first time included all the GCC partners, including Oman. The EU also inaugurated a new **EU Delegation in Doha** in the presence of the President of the European Council.

The EU also reinforced its institutional engagement with the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**. The ministerial EU-GCC Joint Cooperation Council (21 February 2022) endorsed a 5-year Joint Action Programme, covering a wide array of sectoral areas of cooperation. Following the EU-GCC Troika Meeting in New York in September in the margins of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), the EU and the GCC held the first ever Political Dialogue on 11 October 2022 in Riyadh, to discuss regional crises and conflicts of shared concerns. The MENA Directors from EU Member States and the Political Directors from the GCC all met at the Political Committee in Riyadh on January 25th 2023 and discussed regional issues. The meeting was followed by the 31st EU-GCC Joint Cooperation Committee on 27 February 2023 that reviewed the state of play of sectorial cooperation and discussed new areas of engagement, such as maritime security and cyber security. These meetings paved the way for the forthcoming EU-GCC Joint Council tentatively scheduled for the end of 2023.

The Foreign Affairs Council reviewed its strategy towards **Yemen** in December 2022 (with comprehensive Council Conclusions) reconfirming its support to the internationally recognised Government of Yemen/ Presidential Leadership Council and to the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and his efforts. President Al Alimi and his Foreign Minister Dr Ahmed Bin Mubarak visited Brussels in February 2023.

The EU's relations with **Iraq** intensified in 2022 and 2023, after the formation of the new government of Prime Minister Al Sudani last October. The HR/VP engaged with re-appointed Foreign Minister Hussein in the same month and they launched the preparations for the **EU-Iraq Cooperation Council** that took place on 19 March 2023 in Brussels. The Cooperation Council set a new level of ambition in the Joint Declaration on sustainable development, green transition, governance, regional connectivity and sustainable finance and highlighted a need to find a workable solution on migration, including returns. The HR/VP participated in the **Baghdad II Conference** on 20 December 2022 in Amman where he reiterated the EU's support to Iraq's security, sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the margins, he met Qatari (then) Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed and Bahraini Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani.

The EU continued to support UN-led efforts to achieving a lasting solution to the **Syrian** conflict in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 2254) and to support the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, who attended the EU Foreign Affairs Council on 24 January 2022. The EU is organizing the **seventh Brussels Conference** on the future of Syria and the region (15 June). After last year (10 May), it will send a strong signal of the EU's continued commitment to the Syrian people and for refugee-hosting communities and to finding a political solution to the Syria conflict. The EU continues to impose sanctions on leading members and entities of the Syrian regime. From a security perspective, the EU is working on a package of measures to help alleviate the pressure on camps in North East Syria, where persons believed to be

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affiliated to Da'esh and their families are detained, by supporting rehabilitation centres and reintegration efforts of Syrian/Iraqi nationals. In April 2023, the EU also adopted additional sanctions against individuals and organisations associated with the Syrian regime, related to the production and trafficking of narcotics, notably Captagon.

The EU continued to work in support of the UN-facilitated political process in **Libya**, calling for the renewal of the legitimacy of institutions through national elections as well as the implementation of the ceasefire agreement (withdrawal of foreign forces, fighters, mercenaries and armed groups). Following the postponement of the Libyan elections scheduled for December 2021, the EU remained committed to assist Libya in its transition towards a stable, democratic and prosperous country, namely by providing concrete support to the UN initiative led by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Libya, Abdoulaye Bathily, appointed in September 2022. In line with the gist of the UN sponsored facilitation, the EU believes that the only viable and effective way forward to lift Libya out of the current impasse is to promote a consensual solution based on an inclusive intra-Libyan dialogue, which should pave the way for elections within 2023. In terms of **CSDP missions**, in April 2023, the Council extended the mandate of the European Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM Libya) until 30 June 2025. The new mandate offers the possibility to support the peace process in Libya, within the scope of EUBAM's core areas of engagement (law enforcement, border management and criminal justice). Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI, whose mandate was renewed until 31 March 2025, continued to be the only implementer of the UN arms embargo on Libya.

In 2022 and 2023, the implementation of the new **Agenda for the Mediterranean** (adopted in February 2021) continued, along with the full EU toolbox. At the 3rd EU-Southern Ministerial meeting held on 24 November 2022 in Barcelona, Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EU and of the Southern Neighbourhood focused on the consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine on the region, in particular on food and energy security, in presence of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development EBRD.

The EU continued substantive financing and political steering of the **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)** as Co-Chair alongside Jordan. The UfM continues to play an indispensable role in enhancing regional cooperation and development in the Southern Neighbourhood. The Seventh UfM Regional Forum was held on 24 November 2022 in Barcelona where Ministers reconfirmed their shared ambition for a solid and equal Euro-Mediterranean partnership and focussed their discussion on how to close the gaps across the Mediterranean, especially for the youth. In addition, successful UfM sectoral Ministerial meetings took place on research and innovation strengthening the role of women in society, transport, and sustainable urban development.

On **Tunisia**, the EU monitored and made its voice heard on important political developments in the country. EU Ministers addressed twice the political situation in **Tunisia** in 2022 at the Foreign Affairs Councils of July and December and three times so far in 2023 during the March, April and May Foreign Affairs Council meetings. As a result, the Belgian and Portuguese Ministers of Foreign Affairs travelled to Tunisia on behalf of the HR/VP in May 2023. Their visit concluded a

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series of high-level visits by Commissioners Gentiloni and Johansson in March and April. The EU also continued to impose restrictive measures against persons responsible for the misappropriation of State funds.

Together with **Morocco**, the EU has continued to develop a true “Euro-Moroccan partnership for shared prosperity” and to engage in political and sectoral dialogues in various areas of common interest. As a concrete step in implementing the EU priorities of tackling climate change and ensuring environmental protection, the EU signed a Green Partnership with Morocco in October 2022, the first with a country of the Southern Neighbourhood. The HR/VP visited Morocco on 5 and 6 January 2023 and launched two new initiatives: a High-Level Security Dialogue and an enhanced cooperation on multilateralism. The EU and Morocco will continue to jointly address the multiple global challenges based on shared political priorities and within the framework of the EU-Morocco Association Agreement.

The EU continued to work towards strengthening its partnership with **Algeria** in the context of the Association Agreement. In bilateral contacts, the EU has regularly underlined Algeria’s key role in maintaining regional security. The HR/VP visited Algeria in March 2023. He met with President Tebboune, Prime Minister Ben Abderrahmane and representatives from Algerian media, cultural and business spheres. The HR/VP explored areas of shared interest covered by the EU-Algeria Association Agreement, with the aim of stimulating or strengthening dialogue and cooperation. On potential priorities of a future EU-Algeria agenda, there was broad agreement to work on the following areas: energy – including renewables, improving the business climate and investment conditions, expansion of tourism, recuperation of illicit funds, and regional security. The parties agreed to re-launch the High-level Dialogue on Security before the end of 2023.

The EU and **Egypt** agreed on new Partnership Priorities setting the political framework of the partnership until 2027 at the **9th EU-Egypt Association Council** in June 2022. The Egyptian Foreign Minister Shoukry participated at an informal lunch at the June Foreign Affairs Council to discuss Egypt’s preparation of COP27 and food security. Energy and climate cooperation gained further momentum in view of Egypt’s Presidency of COP27. Several Commissioners, the President of the Commission and the President of the European Council attended COP27 in November. The EU together with Egypt and Israel signed a trilateral MoU on cooperation related to trade, transport, and export of natural gas. In the margins of COP27, the EU also signed a MoU on renewable hydrogen. A new cycle of meetings in preparation of the 2023 Association Council was organized, with the Association Committee taking place in May 2023 in Cairo.

In **Lebanon**, the EU deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) in the context of the 15 May 2022 parliamentary elections. The EU remains committed to assisting the Lebanese people in overcoming the multi-faceted crisis affecting the country, implementing reforms, supporting its economic recovery and pursuing its democratic renewal. The EU’s support remains crucial in addressing the socio-economic consequences of the Syrian crisis, the COVID pandemic and the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, notably regarding food insecurity in the whole Middle East and North Africa region. On 30 July 2022, the Council renewed the framework for targeted

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restrictive measures concerning Lebanon, against persons and entities who are responsible for undermining democracy or the rule of law in the country.

The EU and **Jordan** agreed on new Partnership Priorities until 2027 at the **14th EU-Jordan Association Council** co-chaired by the HR/VP and Deputy PM/FM Safadi on 2 June 2022 in Amman, Jordan. The meeting also declared the EU Multiannual Indicative Programme for Jordan for the period 2021-2027 (with the allocation of EUR 364 million until 2024) and launched the EU-Jordan Investment Platform. King Abdullah II met with the HR/VP (in the margins of the Association Council on 2 June), with the President of the Commission (on 15 June), and with President of the European Council (on 27 September in Tokyo.) As a follow-up to the Association Council, work has resumed in the different thematic subcommittees/clusters, aiming at having the next Association Committee in autumn 2023. In May 2023, the EU disbursed the third tranche of the EU Macro-financial assistance III programme for Jordan (EUR 200 million). The Hashemite Kingdom continued to be a strategically important partner, notably due to its special role in the Middle East Peace process. The HR/VP regularly met with Jordan's Deputy PM/FM Ayman Safadi in Amman (December 2022), in Brussels (April 2023) or in the margins of international meetings.

The **Middle East Peace Process (MEPP)** remained a key EU priority with the EU committed to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the two-state solution, respecting all relevant UN resolutions, and internationally agreed parameters. The EU continued to encourage engagement between the parties to restore a political horizon and to open the path towards the relaunch of the peace process. Towards this end, the HR/VP met with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal and with Arab League Secretary-General Aboul Gheit in Brussels on 13 February 2023. They agreed to revive and build on the Arab Peace Initiative, and the EU reaffirmed its proposal of an unprecedented package of economic, political and security support in the context of a final status agreement as endorsed in the Council Conclusions of December 2013. This is the priority of the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, who continued to engage actively with the parties and other relevant stakeholders.

The EU has spoken actively against any unilateral measures, including consistently reiterating its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy, settler violence, demolitions and evictions and calling for further lifting of restrictions in Gaza. In June 2022, the EU announced a three-year multiyear contribution of EUR 246 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (**UNRWA**). The EU remains the largest donor to Palestine[†], with a bilateral envelope allocated to Palestine in 2022 of EUR 296 million. In November 2022, the European Commission adopted the renewed **European Joint Strategy 2021-2024**, for the EU and its Member States, plus Norway and Switzerland to effectively align their support to the Palestinians. Co-hosted by the EU and Norway, the **Ad Hoc Liaison Committee** met in Brussels on 3-4 May 2023.

[†] This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

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On 23 January 2023, **Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh** was invited to the Foreign Affairs Council for an informal discussion with EU Foreign Ministers, where the EU recalled the need to hold the postponed national elections and to progress with the Palestinian reform plan and with intra-Palestinian reconciliation. The President of the European Commission visited Egypt, Israel and Palestine in June 2022 and signed a tripartite Memorandum of understanding on natural gas exports from Israel.

For the first time in 10 years, **the EU-Israel Association Council** took place, on 3 October 2022. Following this meeting, the Political Dialogue and the informal working group on human rights and international organisations with Israel were resumed in December 2022 after a 6-year hiatus. The EU constantly condemned terrorist attacks against Israel as well rockets targeting civilians and reiterated in many public statements its commitment to the security of Israel.

On 2 May 2023, **Israeli Foreign Minister Cohen** traveled to Brussels for his first in-person meeting with the HR/VP and further meetings with several EU Commissioners and the President of the European Parliament.

Two **CSDP Missions** continue to play an important role: EUPOL COPPS, mandated to contribute to the establishment of effective and sustainable policing and wider criminal justice arrangements under Palestinian ownership and to Security Sector and Justice Sector Reform, and EUBAM Rafah, currently on stand-by, supporting the PA General Authority for Borders and Crossings. Following a Strategic Review in February 2023, agreement was reached to extend the mandates of both missions until 30 June 2025.

Senior officials of the EEAS and **League of Arab States (LAS)** Secretariat met in June 2022 in Cairo (in addition to a PSC-LAS meeting 8 June), agreed on a Joint Work programme 2022-2024 and created an ad-hoc working group on food security. A Senior Officials Meeting also took place in November 2022. A third phase of EU-funded El Hiwar project was launched on 30 March 2023 which aims at facilitating political and strategic discussions between the EU and LAS.

More generally, both **at bilateral and regional level**, the EEAS continued to work closely with all southern Neighbourhood and Gulf partners on the main challenges affecting the region. The EEAS led sectoral dialogues and subcommittees with many countries on issues of common interest such as governance, the rule of law, inclusive growth, climate change, energy taking into account recent political developments in each country. Human rights issues are explicitly at the centre of our dialogues with all MENA countries, with the holding of several official HR Dialogues throughout the year. On **programming and cooperation** through financial assistance, the work on the implementation of the Agenda for the Mediterranean progressed in 2022, in all its priority areas. Multiannual programming under NDICI-Global Europe made good progress with, in particular, the adoption of MIPs for Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria and the Multi-country MIP on Migration. By the end of 2022 the Commission had mobilised 3,3 billion € in grants to the support of the region and 5,7 billion € of investments into our partners' societies and economies. Important work has been undertaken to identify 2023 Global Gateway flagship initiatives (ex. MEDUSA, ELMED).

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Against the background of the grave actions by **Iran**, including the brutal repression of protests following the death in police custody of Mahsa Amini, the arbitrary detention of an increased number of EU nationals as well as Iran's military support to Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine - the European Union has adopted Council Conclusions to update its policy approach towards Iran in December 2022. The EU has reaffirmed its commitment to a comprehensive approach considering all options at its disposal: critical where necessary, and ready to engage, on the basis of mutual respect, where interests align. Upon proposal by the High Representative the Council adopted 8 packages of restrictive measures for serious human rights violations and 3 for Iran's military support to Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. The High Representative, as coordinator of the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) Joint Commission**, continued the diplomatic efforts and facilitated the intense negotiations in Vienna aimed at a return to the JCPOA by the United States and the resumption of full implementation of respective JCPOA commitments by the United States and by Iran. However, Iran was not in a position to accept the compromise package tabled by the Coordinator in early August 2022 and accelerated its nuclear programme to alarming levels that gravely departs from Iran's JCPOA commitments. Close attention was given to issues related to the regional security context and possible positive impact of the bilateral agreement between Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in early March to restore their diplomatic ties.

Africa

In Africa, the EU continued to develop the continent-to-continent partnership, and advanced the implementation of the 6th EU-AU Summit commitments. The **11th EU-AU Commission-to-Commission meeting** was held in Brussels on 28 November 2022. In a series of working sessions, the two Commissions discussed the urgent issues facing both continents, and took stock of progress made in implementing the February 2022 Summit commitments in four key areas: (1) Enhancing connectivity through economic integration: Digital, Energy, Transport, Value chains and implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area; (2) Boosting human development: Health, Education, Science, Technology, Innovation, Migration and Mobility; (3) Building resilience for people through sustainable Food systems, tackling Climate and Environmental crises, and Humanitarian action; (4) Peace, Security and Governance.

The EU and the AU continued their regular dialogue on peace and security issues. In November 2022, the EU hosted a **Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) under the 2018 EU-AU Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Peace, Security and Governance**. At the SOM the EU and the AU agreed, inter alia, to establish a structural AU-EU dialogue on Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation to be launched in the spring of 2023 with a view to facilitating strategic exchanges and exploring possible joint actions. The two sides also agreed to deepen their engagement in the critical areas of: (i) Counter-Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism (CT/CVE); Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR); and Cyber-security. **The EU Political and Security Committee and the AU Peace and Security Council held their annual dialogue on 2-3 May 2023.**

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In April 2022, the EU, through **the European Peace Facility**, which provides support for actions with military or defence implications to EU partner countries, adopted an assistance measure to provide support of EUR 600 million to the African Union for the period 2022-24. In addition, a number of bilateral actions within the EPF were adopted, including those to support the Armed Forces of Niger, Mauritania and Mozambique and the deployment of the Rwandan defence force in Mozambique).

The **EU-AU annual dialogue on Human rights** held in Brussels on 4 May, allowed both actors to review and reinforce their cooperation on topics such as the right to development, human rights and digital transformation, diversity and anti-racism, business and human rights, transitional justice and election observation.

In **Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean region**, the EU continued to work on the development of stronger relations with Southern African countries especially through an intensified political dialogue, including the **South Africa – EU Ministerial Dialogue**, and a successful **Senior Officials Meeting with Southern African Development Community (SADC)**. On peace and security, the EU continued the implementation of an integrated approach to **Mozambique's** violence affected Cabo Delgado province, encompassing political/diplomatic, humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and security actions. The EU Training Mission (EUTM Mozambique) reached its full operational capability on 9 September 2022 in the presence of the HR/VP who also witnessed the delivery of the first sets of non-lethal equipment for the trained units (EUR 89 million). Moreover, the EU has adopted new assistance measures under the European Peace Facility to support the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) for EUR 16.9 million and the deployment of the Rwanda Defence Force for EUR 20 million. On the economic front, EU successfully concluded negotiations with **Angola** on the Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement (SIFA) and organized business forums in Angola and **Zambia**. The EU also successfully concluded a Memorandum of Understanding establishing a strategic partnership with **Namibia** on critical raw materials value chains and renewable hydrogen. In **Zimbabwe**, the EU continued its policy of constructive engagement on human rights, democracy and reforms including a review of EU restrictive measures. The EU launched the preparations for the deployment of an Election Observation Mission to Zimbabwe's general elections in August 2023. A first ever EU Election Observation Mission was deployed in **Lesotho** for the National Assembly Elections held on 7 October 2022. The Mission acknowledged that the election was rather well organised. It also offered a number of recommendations to improve the organisation of future elections and the strengthening of democratic institutions.

In the **Horn of Africa and East Africa**, the EU continued to work on the development of stronger relations with the countries of the region, especially through an intensified political dialogue, notably with **Kenya**. The war in **Sudan** challenges the nascent momentum for stability in the Horn following the signature of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) in November 2022 aimed at ending the hostilities in **Ethiopia**, to which the EU has made a significant contribution. Closer partnerships with **Somalia** and **Kenya** are emerging. The latter continues to be an important pillar

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of stability in the Horn and is a major partner for the EU. Peaceful elections in August 2022, observed by an important EU Election Observation Mission, also set a new democratic benchmark for the region and allowed the EU to further engage with high-level contacts with the new government on the deepening of the EU-Kenya strategic partnership, trade negotiations, but also regional and multilateral issues.

On peace and security, the EU continued the implementation of an integrated approach with **Somalia**. Three ongoing CSDP missions are a clear testament to the EU's commitment towards this country, the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea region. Since 2008, Operation EU NAVFOR Atalanta deters piracy; it has been transformed into a maritime security operation at large, with tasks extended to the implementation of the arms embargo and the fight against trafficking, and its area of operation gradually broadened to the Red Sea and in the North Western Indian Ocean. EUTM Somalia (since 2010) provides capacity building through strategic level advice and training to Somali authorities within the Security Institutions in the Mogadishu Area as well as specific mentoring, advice, and training capacity. EUCAP Somalia (since 2013) works to enhance Somali maritime civilian law enforcement and, in particular, to reinforce the Somali capacity to carry out fisheries inspections and enforcement, ensure maritime search and rescue, counter smuggling, fight piracy and police the coastal zone on land and at sea. The European Peace Facility has been crucial to sustain the African Union military engagement and is instrumental to strengthen the Somalia National Army and contribute to a successful transition from the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).

The EU closely monitored developments in the **Central Africa region** and, wherever possible, pursued an intensification of its bilateral and regional relations, in the pursuit of its CFSP objectives. To do so, the EU relied on a number of tools, including regular political and sectoral dialogues, the extent of which varied from partner to partner, in line with mutually convergent interests. In early 2023, the EU held consultations on security and defence with **Rwanda**, the first such consultations with a Sub Saharan Africa partner. The EU continued to support the difficult transition process in **Chad** and deployed an EU Election Observation Mission to **São Tomé and Príncipe** for the parliamentary elections of September 2022 to assist democratic consolidation and consistently encouraged a peaceful resolution of the crisis in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. In addition to swiftly transposing any applicable UN sanction regime, the EU regularly reviewed and adapted its autonomous restrictive measures against human rights violators and conflict drivers in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Burundi** and calibrated its Global Human Rights Sanctions regime to individual and entities operating in the **Central African Republic (CAR)**. The EU continued to monitor and take precautions to avoid that its assistance to the CAR authorities, including the training and advice provided by the CSDP missions EUTM RCA and EUAM RCA, be misused by Wagner-affiliated forces, while continuing to work for the benefit of the population of CAR. Following progress on human rights, rule of law and good governance, the EU repealed its 2016 decision that had imposed the suspension of direct financial assistance to the Burundian administration. In February 2023, after an extensive consultation process, the EU adopted a new **Strategy for the Great Lakes region**, with the goal of promoting peace, democracy and sustainable development through contributing to all efforts aimed at the transformation of the

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main root causes of insecurity and instability into shared opportunities. The implementation of the Strategy has already begun, e.g. via the support to the regional initiatives launched to restore peace and security in the eastern part of the DRC, namely the Nairobi and Luanda processes, and the consideration of raw material partnerships that could eventually help transforming an insecurity driver such as trafficking of natural resources into legitimate trade.

In **Western Africa**, while the COVID pandemic and the implications of Russia's aggression against Ukraine had lasting socio-economic effects on the region, causing commodity price hikes and supply chain disruptions and a food security crisis, the situation in the Sahel remains worrying. In particular in **Mali**, where the junta seem to delay the transition process, and the terrorists attacks are still on the rise. The presence and influence of Wagner makes the situation even worse, and produces a more aggressive stance towards the EU and its Member States, leading to a redefinition of the EU's presence on the ground (in particular, the suspension of operational trainings provided by EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Mali). A Strategic Review of the EU's CSDP engagement in Mali and in the broader region is currently under discussion. Following the second coup d'état in less than a year (September 2022), **Burkina Faso** has joined Mali and Guinea on a path of a new political transition, with uncertainties around possible long-term outcomes, while the security and humanitarian situation keeps worsening. With several high level missions or visits to Brussels (President of the European Council visit to Nouakchott, Niger President visit to Brussels), **Mauritania and Niger** remained key partners of the EU in the region, in particular regarding security and migration. For Niger, this was also illustrated by the new EU military partnership mission in Niger (EUMPM) established in December 2022, several EPF assistance measures, or the ongoing joint operational partnership to struggle against trafficking and terrorism. In 2022, the EU responded to emergency humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable populations in these countries, mobilising EUR 315.3 million to support multisectoral humanitarian interventions to the benefit of about 8 million vulnerable people across the region – with priority to forcibly displaced people, their host communities as well as population caught in conflict areas. Meanwhile, the partnership with several coastal countries has also been strengthened, in view of the spill over of insecurity from the Sahel (President of the European Council visit to Ghana for the Accra Initiative conference), and economic challenges and cooperation in the region. **ECOWAS's** leadership role in the management of political crises in the region remains a priority, as discussed during the EU-ECOWAS ministerial meeting in February 2023. A ministerial dialogue also took place with **Cabo Verde** (31 January 2023), under the special partnership. The EU engaged with **Nigeria** to support the assessment and management of the global consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on third countries. Regarding elections in the region, the EU sent or will send Election Observation Missions to **Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone** in 2023. The region also suffered from macro-economic and debt sustainability challenges.

Regarding maritime security in the **Gulf of Guinea**, the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) concept helps to address the security challenges affecting freedom of navigation. It has contributed to reduce maritime security incidents and enhanced the cooperation with coastal countries.

Asia-Pacific

Given the intensifying **geopolitical competition** in Asia and the Pacific, the EU **focused on greater presence and impact** in the region. The EU continued the implementation of its **Strategy on Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific**. The second EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum was organised in Stockholm on 13 May 2023, together with the Swedish Presidency. The event brought together 58 countries and organisations, demonstrating the EU's convening power and its increasing role in the Indo-Pacific based on strong and developing partnerships.

The adoption of the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy had a positive impact on relations with like-minded partners. **EU-Japan relations** under the Strategic Partnership Agreement were strengthened, with the launch of the EU's first Digital Partnership at the 28th EU-Japan Summit in 2022, the implementation of the Green Alliance, and progress on connectivity issues (including aviation) and maritime security. Relations with the **Republic of Korea** intensified with the adoption of a new Digital Partnership in November 2022. The Leaders of the EU and the Republic of Korea held their regular Summit in May 2023 and adopted a Green Partnership on that occasion.

EU-Australia cooperation intensified, as illustrated by the entry into force of the EU-Australia Framework Agreement in October 2022 and the organisation of the second EU-Australia Leaders' Meeting in the margins of the G20 Summit in November 2022. Free Trade Agreement negotiations continued with Australia. The negotiations for a free trade agreement between the EU and **New Zealand** were concluded in June 2022 during Prime Minister Ardern's meeting with President von der Leyen in Brussels. The EU-New Zealand Partnership Agreement on Relations and Cooperation entered into force in July 2022.

The EU continued managing its complex relationship with **China** on the basis of its realistic and multifaceted approach, strengthening coherence and unity through strategic discussions on China at the Foreign Affairs and European Councils, respectively on 17 and 21 October 2022. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine remained a key issue in exchanges between the EU and China throughout the reporting period. The EU continued expressing concerns about the dismantling of the "One Country Two Systems" in **Hong Kong**, including the implementation of the National Security Law, and participated in trial observation. Throughout the past year, the EU continued developing relations with **Taiwan**, while expressing concerns for growing tensions across the Taiwan Strait. The partnership with **Mongolia** was further strengthened during the reporting period, inter alia through the holding of the EU-Mongolia Joint Committee in Ulaanbaatar (June 2022) and of the EU-Mongolia Political Dialogue in Brussels (October 2022).

Afghanistan's already dire humanitarian and economic situation further deteriorated, as the Taliban systematically violated the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Afghan people, especially of women and girls. The Foreign Affairs Council guided the EU's approach to Afghanistan through the Council Conclusions of March 2023, in addition to those of September 2021. The EU remains at the forefront of a principled approach to provide humanitarian and basic needs assistance to the Afghan people, notably supporting women and girls, without recognizing or

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reinforcing the Taliban *de-facto* authorities. The EU also adopted Global Human Rights Sanctions against two acting Ministers in March 2023. The **Safe Passage Task Force** continued the operations to allow those at risk to leave Afghanistan. The **EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan** engaged in dialogue with the Taliban-appointed interim government in line with the Council Conclusions. The Special Envoy consulted with likeminded and regional actors, through travel or exchanges with India, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and the US, to share analyses and harmonise messaging to the Taliban. The Special Envoy jointly with the EUSR for Central Asia continued their EU-Central Asia dialogue on Afghanistan and held frequent exchanges with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation on Afghanistan, in line with the EU's Joint Communication on a strategic partnership with the Gulf.

The EEAS actively engaged with **Pakistan** in dialogues at different levels, where human rights issues including the blasphemy laws and enforced disappearances were raised, in addition to trade relations (GSP+ regime), sustainable development, migration and regional security issues, especially as regards Afghanistan.

The EU continued deepening its ties with **India**, resuming negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement, and starting negotiations for an investment protection agreement and an agreement on geographical indications. During the visit of President von der Leyen to India in July 2022, it was agreed to launch an EU-India Trade and Technology Council which met on 15-16 May 2023. The implementation of the EU-India Connectivity Partnership continued with strengthened impetus in the framework of the Global Gateway initiative. The EU and India also held an annual Human Rights Dialogue in July 2022 and the Foreign Policy and Security Consultations in November 2022. Bilateral relations with **Bangladesh** further intensified with the first-ever Political Dialogue being held in Dhaka in November 2022 where an agreement was reached to launch negotiations for a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The EEAS also continued, jointly with the European Commission, to monitor respect for labour and wider human rights conditions linked to the preferential trade schemes benefiting several partners in South Asia, notably Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The EU also reviewed its development assistance to support those most affected by the financial and economic crisis in **Sri Lanka**.

The HR/VP took part in the first physical meeting in three years of the **ASEAN** Regional Forum in Phnom Penh in August 2022. Following the upgrade of relations to a strategic partnership, the EU hosted an **EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit** in Brussels in December, the first ever summit between the leaders of EU and ASEAN member states, marking 45 years of diplomatic relations. In the margins of the summit, Partnership and Cooperation Agreements were signed with both **Indonesia** and **Malaysia**, while agreement was reached on a political declaration establishing the Joint Energy Transition Partnership with **Vietnam**. The summit saw the launch of the **EU-ASEAN Plan of Action 2023-27**. In the context of the Global Gateway, the EU launched the Team Europe initiative on sustainable connectivity, to enhance EU-ASEAN cooperation, and leaders welcomed the signing of the EU-ASEAN Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement, the first-ever region-to-region aviation agreement. There was also a joint statement to announce the substantial conclusion

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of a new Digital Partnership between the EU and **Singapore**. The EU engaged with Indonesia throughout its inaugural G20 Presidency. Following the 2021 military coup in **Myanmar/Burma**, the Council continued to extend its targeted sanctions on those responsible for the coup and for the suppression of democracy, as well as against entities which provided financial and other support to the military regime. The temporary and partial withdrawal of EBA (Everything But Arms) trade preferences from **Cambodia** due to serious human rights concerns continued.

In **the Pacific**, the EU sustained its political role through support to the **Bougainville Peace Process and peacebuilding activities in Papua New Guinea**. The EU held Political Dialogues with Papua New Guinea and the **Solomon Islands**.

In February 2022, the EU launched the **Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP) in the North Western Indian Ocean**, establishing a Maritime Area of Interest in the region. Its objective is to reinforce the EU's strategic focus and actions in the region; to ensure a European naval presence in the Indo-Pacific; to strengthen partnership and cooperation in the region including with the maritime industry; and to enhance the EU's role as a global maritime security provider. The appointment of a Senior Coordinator in October initiated the implementation phase.

Americas

The EU and transatlantic partners continued to lead the international response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, closely coordinating on far-reaching sanctions, isolating Russia in international fora and providing comprehensive military, financial and humanitarian support to Ukraine. There has been ongoing collaboration in engaging partners to address long-term impacts of the war in terms of energy, food security and rising prices, while coordinating efforts to address emerging crisis and advance sustainable development.

The EU continued to engage closely with the **United States** on CSFP related matters, with frequent contacts at all levels. The EU and US engaged on a wide range of foreign policy priorities, including in the context of the high-level EU-US China Dialogue and EU-US Consultations on the Indo-Pacific, and through numerous contacts between the HR/VP and the Secretary of State. In April, the EU-US Energy Council reaffirmed shared commitment to address European and global energy security and to accelerate the energy transition. There was important progress on EU-US cooperation on security and defence, with the EU-US Security and Defence dialogue launched in April 2022 and the signature of an Administrative Arrangement between the European Defence Agency and the US Department of Defence in April 2023. In March 2023, the EU and US conducted their first ever joint naval exercise in the north-western Indian Ocean, illustrating the shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The EU and US continued to coordinate approaches on key global trade, economic and digital technology issues in the context of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council, with the third and fourth ministerial meetings held in the US (5 December 2022) and Sweden (30-31 May 2023). The opening of an EU office in San Francisco in September reinforced the EU's capacity to advance

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digital diplomacy objectives in the Bay area and the US more widely. In March 2023, President von der Leyen met with President Biden in Washington DC, committing to deepen cooperation on building clean economies, including by addressing outstanding challenges of the US Inflation Reduction Act, strengthening economic security and maintain the unwavering transatlantic support for Ukraine.

The EU's engagement with **Canada** on CFSP related matters intensified considerably during the year. In March 2023, Prime Minister hosted President von der Leyen for a two visit to Canada, resulting in a comprehensive agenda for engagement for the coming period. The leaders committed to a continued robust and coordinated response to Russia's illegal war, announcing the designation of Canada as Partner Country for the EU's sanction regime, while further reinforcing cooperation on its wider impacts, notably on energy security and critical raw materials. They also agreed to further cooperation to tackle key global challenges such as climate change in the run-up to COP 28, to advance the implementation of the landmark Biodiversity Framework agreed at COP 15 in Montreal, and strengthening the partnership to accelerate the green and digital transitions. Close cooperation continued on shared foreign policy challenges, including on the Indo-Pacific, and a number of dialogues on sectoral priorities were held in the framework of the EU-Canada Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), which celebrated their fifth anniversary. Also in March, the EU and Canada held the Joint Cooperation Committee, which highlighted the significant achievements over the last years, while also making a number of recommendations to further strengthen cooperation.

In July 2022, the Foreign Affairs Council endorsed a comprehensive and forward looking agenda ('Road to 2023') to bring about a qualitative leap in **relations between the EU and countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)**. The Ministerial meeting between the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the EU, held in Buenos Aires (Argentina) on 27 October 2022 and co-chaired by the HR/VP, demonstrated the renewed commitment by both regions to strengthen their partnership. The Ministerial also paved the way for a bi-regional Summit, the first since 2015, to be held in Brussels in July 2023 following the publication of a Joint Communication on a New Agenda for EU relations with LAC in June 2023. The participation of the President of the European Council in the CELAC Summit in January 2023, as the only extra-regional leader, was another step in this direction.

As part of this new agenda, and in the run-up to the EU-CELAC Summit, a number of important bi-regional events took in priority areas. The **EU-LAC Digital Alliance** launched in Bogota on 14 March 2023 in the presence of Executive Vice-President Vestager will be instrumental to promote a human-centric approach to the digital transformation that puts personal rights and privacy at the centre, fostering policy dialogue, entrepreneurship, innovation, skills and connectivity to close digital gaps. In the context of the EU-LAC Partnership on vaccine production, announced in June 2022 by the President of the Commission and the Prime Minister of Spain, the High-level Forum on Sharing Pharmaceutical Innovations took place on 21 March. On 5 May, the LAC-EU Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change held in Costa Rica with the participation of Commissioner Sinkevicius showed a strong bi-regional consensus on the need to urgently step up

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domestic and global action and cooperation on the triple environmental crisis on climate, biodiversity, and pollution.

In October 2022, the HR/VP visited **Uruguay and Argentina**, meeting the Presidents of both countries. The visit to these two countries focused on: a) Boosting political relations and cooperation with two countries that are among the most like-minded in the region and home to numerous European investments; b) Expressing commitment to the EU-Mercosur agreement. On 24 and 25 March 2023, he participated in the **28th Ibero-American Summit** in Santo Domingo as Guest of Honour, a further expression of his commitment to Latin America and the Caribbean and an opportunity to engage Ibero-American leaders ahead of the EU-CELAC Summit. On 26 May 2023, the HR/VP co-chaired the **3rd EU-Cuba Joint Council** in Havana in the framework of the EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement and met with Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla. The EU continued to work with its international partners to address the humanitarian and security situation in **Haiti**. During his five-day visit to **Colombia** in April 2023, the HR/VP represented the EU at the International Conference on Venezuela, held bilateral talks with the President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro and other high-ranking Colombian politicians, and met with representatives from civil society, victims of the armed conflict and Venezuelan migrants.

The change of government in **Brazil** on 1 January 2023 was an opportunity to reenergise bilateral relations. Commissioner Ferreira attended President Lula's inauguration, and subsequent visits by Executive Vice-Presidents Timmermans (January) and Vestager (March) as well as Commissioner Sinkevicius (May) focused on the green and digital transitions. The new dynamics with Brazil, and in particular the new administration's commitment to the preservation of the environment and the fight against climate change allowed resuming discussions on the finalisation of the EU-Mercosur Agreement. An important meeting of chief negotiators took place in Buenos Aires in March 2023, setting an ambitious goal of reaching agreement on all outstanding issues by the end of 2023.

The political conclusion of the comprehensive and innovative **EU-Chile Advanced Framework Agreement** during the visit of the Chilean Foreign Minister to Brussels in December 2022, was an important step for further strengthening the EU and Chile partnership. Work also continued with a view to concluding the modernisation of the EU-Mexico Global Agreement.

The EU pursued its active engagement in **Venezuela** in support of the Venezuelan-led negotiation process in Mexico in close coordination with key international partners such as the US and Canada. The EU has tried to improve the electoral process in Venezuela by promoting the 2021 EU Election Observation Mission's recommendations and encouraging their implementation by the national authorities. The EU has also supported regional initiatives to encourage Venezuelan parties to engage genuinely in the negotiations, such as the International Conference on Venezuela hosted by Colombia, with the participation of HR/VP. The EU continued its diplomatic role keeping all communication channels open to all Venezuelan parties, including with the HR/VP personally engaging in exchanges with both the Venezuelan government and the opposition in support of a Venezuelan-led peaceful and democratic solution to the ongoing crisis.

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In the context of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the EU intensified the **cooperation with LAC countries** in multilateral fora. Most LAC countries have been firm and clear in condemning Russia's aggression, hence confirming the position of the region as a staunch supporter of multilateralism and the rules-based international order and a key partner for the EU.

The EU fostered **citizen security in Latin America** including under the EU-CLASI (Comité Latinoamericano de Seguridad Interior) framework which was launched following the Joint Declaration signed in Brussels in March 2022 and through "EL PAcCTO" (Europa-Latinoamérica Programa de asistencia contra el crimen transnacional organizado: por el Estado de Derecho y la seguridad ciudadana), the flagship regional programme to help fight transnational organised crime.

The EU continued to work for the advancement of democracy, human rights and rule of law in the region. The EU deployed **Electoral Observation Missions (EOMs)** to **Guatemala and Paraguay** and following earlier EOMs, the EU sent electoral follow-up missions to **Guyana and Honduras**. In January 2023, the restrictive measures on **Nicaragua** were renewed.

The EU coordinated the public diplomacy campaign "Europe and Latin America for Culture" (#EULAT4Culture) together with the global network of EU National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC) and its pro tempore presidency Spain. 20 capital cities around the world hosting events celebrated EU-LAC cultural relations and their contribution to face global challenges. In December, the EU received the relay as next Guest of Honour to the important Guadalajara International Book Fair that will take place in November 2023.

EU Special Representatives (EUSRs)

Nine Special Representatives provided the EU with an active political presence in key areas: four EUSRs in the European neighbourhood (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Dialogue and Western Balkans regional issues, South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia), two on the African continent (Sahel, Horn of Africa), two in Asia and the Middle East (Central Asia, Middle East Peace Process), as well as one EUSR with a thematic mandate (Human Rights). The tenth EUSR, for the Gulf region assumed his function as of 1 June. Over the past year, EUSRs have played an active role in defusing tensions and contributing to peace and stability, notably in the Western Balkans, through several high-level meetings of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue; in the South Caucuses, including through regular engagement with both Armenia and Azerbaijan; as well in the Horn Africa, supporting efforts to reach and implement the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in Ethiopia and a resolution of the crisis in Sudan. The EEAS and the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) continued to collaborate to strengthen the general handling of the instrument in the context of an effective and cost-efficient CFSP.

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(2) GLOBAL ISSUES

The EU has worked with the UN and other partners, exploring fresh approaches to delivering **effective multilateralism for all**. This has involved keeping open channels to allow diplomacy to work, and resisting the efforts of those who try to sow division. In this context, EU coordination has assumed greater importance than ever, and substantial progress has been achieved in this regard. The EU has used its combined influence to maintain a strong focus on holding members of multilateral bodies to account for the fulfilment of their mandated responsibilities, not least upholding the UN Charter and international law. In the same way, the EU has supported candidates for election who are best able to represent the whole UN membership.

Inevitably, the fallout from Russia's aggression against Ukraine has affected multilateral work as much as any other. The EU has invested considerable resources and effort in **supporting work by the UN to address the consequences of Russia's aggression**, including through the UN's Global Crisis Response Group. At the same time, the EU has continued to work resolutely on a positive agenda, driven by the broad range of long-term challenges facing the whole UN membership. This includes issues popularly associated with the UN, such as humanitarian crises, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, as well as promoting the empowerment of young people, women and less represented and/or vulnerable groups. The EU has consistently taken an **ambitious approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals**, including by supporting follow-up of the UN Secretary General's 'Our Common Agenda' recommendations. A **Communication on the new EU Global health strategy** was adopted in November 2022, supporting a strengthened Global Health Architecture, with the World Health Organisation at its centre, strengthening capacities for surveillance, prevention and detection abroad, including biological threats, and fighting disinformation.

Following the Global Gateway Joint Communication in December 2021 and the adoption of the EU-African Union Global Gateway Investment Package in February 2022, a package of Global Gateway flagship projects for Central Asia was announced at the Samarkand **EU-Central Asia Connectivity Conference** in November 2022 and for ASEAN at the **EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit** in December 2022. President von der Leyen convened the first meeting of the Global Gateway Board on 11 December 2022, which identified operational priorities for all Team Europe partners in 2023 to roll out Global Gateway. A package of 87 Global Gateway flagship projects for 2023 was announced in March. In terms of working together with the private sector, a call for application for participation in the Global Gateway Business Advisory Group was announced in March. Global Gateway was discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council on 24 April as part of the discussion on the geopolitical consequences of the war in Ukraine and as one of the main tools for working with partners internationally in a geopolitical way.

To **accelerate international efforts towards a climate-resilient transition**, the EEAS led outreach activities vis-à-vis third countries, including both big emitters and small island developing states, throughout the period and in the run up to COP27 in November 2022. In terms of **energy diplomacy**, the EEAS led outreach actions including on the EU Energy Platform (AggregateEU) to

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priority gas producer countries, on support for Ukraine to counter critical infrastructure damages deriving from the Russian war of aggression, and on Russian oil-price-cap policy. The EEAS continued to engage in multilateral outreach actions on the Global Methane Pledge and preparations for a global Energy Efficiency First Initiative, the promotion of green energy transition and advocating for restoring and longer-term reconstruction of Ukraine's energy system. The launch of the investment plan with South Africa and the announcement of the Just Transition Partnership with Vietnam (December 2022) were important steps to accelerate the transformation of the energy sector in key coal-reliant emerging economies. The EEAS also promoted **ambitious outcomes for the Biodiversity COP15** in Montreal in December 2022, including preparatory work for the new Global Biodiversity Framework. Such outreach work also covered the Wildlife Trade COP19 in Panama in November 2022 and the Global Agreement on protection and sustainable use of resources and biodiversity in high seas (BBNJ) in New York in March 2023. The EEAS participated in the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York in March 2023 and promoted transboundary water cooperation. The EEAS also led active outreach towards partner countries on the upcoming new EU rules on deforestation.

As a direct follow-up to the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of 18 July 2022 establishing the **EU's digital diplomacy**, the EEAS and the network of EU Digital Ambassadors continued to support EU priorities in international initiatives, such as the Declaration for the Future of the Internet, the Christchurch Call, the Paris Peace Forum. The EU also submitted its contributions to the UN Global Digital Compact. Having concluded Digital Partnerships with Japan, Singapore and the Republic of Korea, the EU announced its first Global Gateway flagship projects to cooperate on digital connectivity, data centres and digital services with partners around the world.

On **economic issues**, one priority has been to support partner countries in managing the **global consequences of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine**, most notably in terms of energy and food security. Cooperation with Independent Fiscal Institutions (IFIs), including the EIB and EBRD, contributed to the support to Ukraine. The EEAS cooperated closely with Commission services on external aspects of **the EU list of Non-Cooperative Jurisdictions**. On **Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT)**, the EEAS contributed to the development of a new AML/CFT intelligence-driven policy, together with various Commission services, INTCEN and Europol.

The EEAS continued to put **human rights** at the centre of EU foreign policy during a year marked by the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine while the world was still battling with the profound effects of the COVID pandemic and saw a further backsliding of democracy and human rights. The EEAS continued to promote initiatives aimed at ensuring **accountability for international crimes** committed in the context of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine. It provided further support to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and to the investigations of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, notably through the EU Delegation to Ukraine, the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) Ukraine, and the Kyiv-based Atrocity Crime Advisory Group. The EEAS also continued to facilitate EU and global coordination of support efforts.

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Implementing fully the **Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024** as well as the €1.5 billion Global Europe Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy for 2021-2027, the EU continued to use its unique set of human rights instruments, including dialogue, public and private diplomacy, incentives and restrictive measures, and partnership with civil society and other stakeholders. In particular, the EU engaged in multiple human rights dialogues and consultations, including the resumed dialogue with China in February 2023, and continued the annual Strategic Dialogue between the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the EUSR for Human Rights. The annual EU-NGO Forum in December debated avenues to **end impunity for serious human rights violations and abuses, ensuring justice and accountability**. The special programme to support Afghans' participation in the Global Campus on Human Rights continued to operate. Listings under the 2020 EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime were both renewed and expanded, including thorough first-ever listings for sexual and gender-based violence in conflict adopted in March 2023, while many other listings for human rights violations and abuses were adopted under geographic sanctions regimes.

In **UN human rights fora**, notably the Human Rights Council in Geneva, successful initiatives included the EU-led Urgent Debate on women and girls in Afghanistan, as well as the resolution on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan which strengthened the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, and resolutions on DPRK and Myanmar, Eritrea and Belarus, Ethiopia and Burundi. The EU continued to condemn strongly the grave violation of human rights and humanitarian law in Ukraine and contributed to the renewal of the independent Commission of Inquiry. EU Member States also carried forward a resolution creating the mandate of a Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Russian Federation.

As the **global backslide of democracy** continues, the EU sustained its commitment to support inclusive, transparent and credible electoral processes through the deployment of observation missions. The EU deployed Electoral Observation Missions to Kenya, Sao Tomé e Príncipe, Lesotho, Nigeria, Paraguay, Sierra Leone and Guatemala. The missions illustrate the EU's commitment to strengthen public trust in electoral systems, enhance the resilience of democratic institutions and contribute to mitigate the risk of election-related violence in often challenging political and security contexts. Missions issued recommendations to improve the overall electoral framework, strengthen the accountability of state institutions.

The EEAS continued to address the **external aspects of migration** as an integral part of the EU's foreign policy and dialogue with partner countries and regions around the world and in line with the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. Comprehensive, mutually beneficial and tailor-made partnerships with countries of origin, transit and destination at bilateral and regional level were promoted. The EEAS has been actively engaged with supporting persons fleeing Ukraine, in particular third-country nationals, following the Russian aggression and has supported the fight against trafficking in the framework of the May 2022 Common Anti-trafficking Plan for Ukraine.

Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The EEAS continued to promote the **universality and indivisibility of human rights for all**, including non-discrimination throughout EU's external action; in bilateral external actions and in multilateral and regional fora. Gender equality and women's empowerment continued to be a priority, supported through the implementation of the EU's Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 (GAP III) and the related national and regional implementation plans (CLIPs).

In regards to the continuous implementation of the **EU Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security (WPS)** and its Action Plan, the EEAS took action to further engrain a gender perspective in EU diplomacy, political dialogue and policy decisions. Promoting gender-responsive leadership (GRL) plays an important role in achieving this goal, and significant efforts were carried out in this regard, including the organisation of a session on GRL in the Ambassadors conference in October 2022 and through the conduct of a pilot programme for senior leadership and management Headquarters and in the Delegations. Women, Peace and Security was consistently raised in different bilateral political, security and human rights dialogues, informal working groups and consultations with partner countries, based on the country contexts, with objective of identifying specific actions and deliverables. The EU continued to support the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls in conflict prevention and resolution. Additionally, the EU systematically put **gender equality, women's empowerment**, as well as the implementation of the WPS agenda at the heart of its regional partnerships, such as with the Council of Europe, the African Union, and the League of Arab States.

As a leader in **gender equality**, the EU is also a vocal advocate for gender equality, women's and girls' rights in bilateral political and human rights dialogues. Through these dialogues, the EU also supported the full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) across the world.

On **sexual and gender-based violence**, the EU continues its efforts on a global scale, by supporting and protecting survivors, but also by holding perpetrators accountable. Importantly, the EU strives to address the root causes of violence while strengthening legal frameworks and institutions as well as education, improve services for survivors and access to justice for victims, support women's rights organisations and civil society organisations.

In November 2022, the EU complemented its existing policy framework on WPS through adopting a new set of **Council Conclusions on Women, Peace and Security**. These conclusions put forward stronger linkages between gender equality and WPS in context of the changing geopolitical security framework and expressed concern about the worldwide backlash against women and girls' full and equal enjoyment of human rights and the declining security and safety for women and girls including notably the contexts of Ukraine, Afghanistan and Iran.

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In the case of **Ukraine**, the EU has supported in various ways the work to ensure full accountability for sexual and gender-based crimes including with a gender-responsive, survivor-centered and trauma-sensitive approach in all efforts to respond to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and its impact on women and girls. The EU liaised closely with the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to implement the Framework on cooperation between the Government of Ukraine and the UN on prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence. In April 2022, the mandate of the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform in Ukraine was amended to include the capacity to investigate any international crimes committed in the context of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, including conflict-related sexual violence. The EU also provided support to local civil society organisations and first responders and to specialised investigation teams led by the office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine.

The EU continued supporting the **Afghan Women Leaders Forum (AWLF)**, which had been launched in March 2022, through forum meetings and by facilitating additional platforms for Afghan women to engage on topics of concern. The forum now brings together over 100 Afghan Women Leaders from diverse backgrounds, continuing to aim to ensuring the participation of Afghan women in the political dialogue concerning Afghanistan. During a visit to the Human Rights Council in Geneva in September, members of the AWLF met inter alia with EU Member States as well as with UN Special Rapporteur Richard Bennett, continuously seeking broader platforms and entry points for engagement.

In 2022, an **EEAS Agenda for Diversity and Inclusion** for the years 2023 – 2025 has been elaborated and launched on 16 February 2023 by EEAS Secretary-General Sannino in an event with staff from Headquarters and EU Delegations. The Agenda is the first EEAS strategy that covers all grounds of discrimination, and brings together both internal and external aspects of diversity and inclusion. Building on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, the Agenda aims to uphold these core principles and promote equality and inclusion as a matter of human rights, but also of peace and security, social justice and economic progress. Main objectives of the agenda are to further strengthening existing mechanisms and enhancing the awareness and skills of staff to further mainstreaming of equality, diversity and inclusion so that it becomes engrained in all EU policies and external actions. While the Agenda sets out the overarching framework encompassing both internal as well as external policy aspects linked to Diversity & Inclusion, a more detailed action plan focusing on diversity and inclusion in the EEAS workplace, that is aligned with the Commission action plan on Diversity and Inclusion, has been developed.

Strategic Communications

As a top priority, the EEAS continued to raise awareness on Russia's increased use of **foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), including disinformation** accompanying its illegal, unjustified and unprovoked aggression of Ukraine. The EEAS exposed Russia's manipulative behaviours to weaponise its diplomatic network and official channels and Kremlin's use of FIMI campaigns to not only target Ukraine, but also the international community in order to undermine solidarity with Ukraine. The EEAS reinforced partnerships with G7 and like-minded

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countries to condemn the war, strengthen resilience, and impose the costs on Russia for gross violation of international law and principles. While the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has led the response to FIMI, the EEAS ensured a comprehensive approach to the EU's response across diverse threat actors and geographical regions, in particular strengthening situational awareness of EU Delegations in conflict prone countries.

Through the work of the **Strategic Communication, Task Forces and Information Analysis Division**, the EEAS has further stepped up efforts to strengthen situational awareness on FIMI actors. Based on a novel, comprehensive framework and methodology for systematic collection of evidence of FIMI incidents, the EEAS has published its first **Report on Foreign Information and Manipulation threats**, highlighting the analysis on actors such as Russia and China, and their FIMI operations. In addition, as foreseen in the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, the EEAS led the effort to create **an open source, decentralised and interoperable framework for a collaborative, community driven approach against FIMI**. This will increase the efficiency of sharing FIMI threat insights between different stakeholders and build a true defender community, facilitated by an Information Sharing and Analysis Centre (FIMI ISAC).

In 2022, the EEAS remained closely engaged with the Members States, international partners and likeminded through the **Rapid Alert System (RAS)** and shared FIMI insights related to the war in Ukraine and beyond, such as the tactics, techniques and procedures used by other foreign actors to conduct FIMI operations.

In cooperation with the European Commission and the Member States, the EEAS continued to **develop appropriate polices, strategies and instruments to respond to the threat**. **The EU framework for a coordinated response to hybrid campaigns** has been strengthened through the development of an **EU Toolbox to counter FIMI (FIMI Toolbox)**. The FIMI Toolbox brings together all relevant instruments that enable the EU and its Member States to effectively respond to FIMI and allows for strengthening existing and developing new instruments to **impose costs on FIMI perpetrators, including the development of international norms and principles on FIMI**, in the future.

The whole of society approach remained a key element in the EEAS' work to prevent, deter and respond to FIMI. **Public resilience and awareness of FIMI and capacity building in the Neighbourhood and Western Balkans** were key action areas for the EEAS, supported by the network of 27 Stratcom officers deployed in the EU Delegations. The EEAS conducted awareness campaigns and dedicated training on how to address disinformation and FIMI to a broad range of stakeholders and partners, such as independent media, academia, civil society, fact-checking and media literacy organisations. The EEAS worked closely with the government of Ukraine, civil society and media partners and supported their strategic communications efforts on the ongoing Russian aggression. Dedicated communication campaigns, such as "ARTvsWAR" and "Faces of Ukraine", helped show the dimension of the war and contributed to keeping Ukraine as well as EU's support to the country as a prominent topic amongst the EU audience.

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The **EUvsDisinfo campaign** continued to raise awareness of pro-Kremlin information manipulation and disinformation, and has attracted over 2.7 million visitors in 2022. Close to 20 million were reached via the EUvsDisinfo social media accounts. EUvsDisinfo awareness raising products have been made available and consistently shared with EU Delegations, the European Commission and the European Parliament Representations, the European Member States and international partners. Selected EUvsDisinfo products have been translated into multiple languages, including all the official EU languages, as well as Ukrainian, Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Chinese, Arabic and others. EEAS East Stratcom Task Force launched “**Learn**”, a training resource, created to educate on the basics of disinformation and information manipulation.

Activities in the **Western Balkans** continued to focus on narrowing or closing the space for anti EU-narratives, raising awareness and building resilience to FIMI, as well as building capacity for the EU’s partners in the region. In 2022, the EEAS has engaged with over 250 journalists discussing the most effective ways of supporting and practicing professional journalism in the region, which is of key importance for fighting FIMI. The joint work with institutions and civil society actors aimed to strengthen their capacity to identify, analyse and autonomously counter FIMI actors who aim to undermine the EU’s role in the region and the strategic choice of a European path for the Western Balkans. **Engagement with Civil Society Organisations** on societal resilience activities remained crucial and encompassed workshops on media and information literacy and awareness-raising digital campaigns. Ahead of the EU–Western Balkans Summit, the EEAS organised the EU-Western Balkans Media Conference in Albania and gathered about 200 journalists and media professionals from the region. The EEAS launched the first EU funded studies on disinformation and FIMI in Albania and Kosovo, and organised capacity-building events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, drawing attention to Russia’s manipulation of information environments in the Western Balkans and beyond.

In 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine prompted significant attention among pan-Arab media, demonstrating the value of the *@EUinArabic* as a leading EU strategic communication tool for **the MENA region**. The EEAS, jointly with EU Delegations across the region made it a priority to promote the EU’s response and counter Russian disinformation narratives on the consequences of its war against Ukraine and other FIMI activities.

In 2022, the EEAS continued to strengthen its **situational awareness of Chinese FIMI operations**, through monitoring activities, engagement with civil society researchers, and outreach to EU Member States and like-minded partners. The EEAS has identified a number of incidents of disinformation and information manipulation content moving between the Chinese and Russian online disinformation ecosystems. Particular attention was given to the **Indo-Pacific region**, in line with EU’s Indo-Pacific Strategy, where EEAS has established FIMI-related exchanges with a number of governments. The EEAS has also initiated capacity building and resilience projects in the Indo-Pacific region, to support building resilience of local information environments to FIMI.

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The deteriorating situation in terms of targeted actions of information manipulation and interference against countries and societies in wider Sub-Saharan **Africa**, and other geographic regions in Africa, Asia and to a certain extent **Latin America**, led the EEAS to build capacity in terms of analysis and response to FIMI from an EU perspective in the Sub-Saharan Africa and the Indo-Pacific region. In response to the January 2023 Foreign Affairs Council call for the creation of an EEAS Stratcom Task Force focusing on Africa, a nucleus of a **Task Force Africa** has been set up within the EEAS and supported EU Delegations in Sub-Saharan Africa on Strategic communications and countering FIMI. The EEAS has **reinforced Stratcom capabilities for the CSDP missions and operations in Africa**, namely through increased joint actions by EEAS Stratcom and EEAS Crisis Response Centre. Pilot projects were also initiated with EU Delegations in Africa on capacity building for civil society response to FIMI. This resulted in an increased situational awareness on the ground and new tools/venues to counter foreign information manipulation. To be fully operational, the Task Force on strategic communication in Sub-Saharan Africa will require significant additional human and financial resources on the ground and in Headquarters to respond to the challenge posed by a deterioration of the EU's image in this part of the world.

Public diplomacy and communication campaigns

In today's competitive information environment, **Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy** have become essential foreign policy tools to convey EU messages and explain EU actions to third countries' citizens to facilitate cooperation and, ultimately, achieving EU policy goals.

One example is the proactive **communication campaign of marking one year of the Russian war against Ukraine** in February 2023 that enabled the EU to present Ukraine's narrative, pre-empt a wave of Russian disinformation and complement the diplomatic outreach efforts in the run up to the vote of the last UNGA resolution on the war of aggression against Ukraine. The HR/VP's op-Ed entitled "One year of war against Ukraine: acting together to ensure international law will prevail" was translated and featured in some 90 countries and more than 150 media outlets globally.

During the year, EEAS launched a number of **thematic campaigns**, including a digital campaign for the UN General Assembly meeting, reaching 70 million people globally. The EEAS built a network of young influencers across the world for a #OurVoiceOurFuture campaign.

For women's day, the EEAS launched a **global campaign promoting women** in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), and other male-dominated roles, against all odds. The purpose of this campaign is to denounce structural discrimination, sexual and gender-based violence, persistent gender gaps and to support the empowerment of women and girls to unlock their full potential.

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The EEAS celebrated the **International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia** (IDAHOT) with the aim of raising awareness about the violations of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) persons, sharing testimonials of activists from different countries, promoting the human rights of LGBTIQ+ persons.

Public diplomacy activities continued to **build trust and support for EU policies and principles** by developing networks and new alliances. This included recurrent engagement with students, academics, youth groups, think tanks, media, business communities, civil society or cultural professionals as well as initiatives fostering people-to-people contacts.

Both in 2022 and in 2023 the EEAS implemented two successful **EU OPEN DAY activities** with around 5000 visitors each, marking a true communication success after the pandemic. For this occasion, plenty of activities tailored to visitors of all ages, including workshops, conferences, cultural events, talks to EU Ambassadors, interactive materials were an inspiration for EU Delegations, which tailored and adapted their own activities around Europe Day to local circumstances.

Furthermore, during the reporting period, the EEAS started the preparation for significant EU presence and public diplomacy activities, the **Expo 2025 Osaka**, in line with the College decision of June 2021. Additional specific activities were the EU Alumni Engagement Initiative (project allowing to engage with alumni of a variety of EU programmes and development of an online networking platform), the EU Film Festival (project providing movies local film festivals and supporting side events and trainings), and the Cultural Relations Platform (EU-funded project supporting cooperation between European and global cultural and creative sectors, with over 38 activities in EU Delegations and HQ, 41 studies and 85 events taking place).

EEAS Crisis Response Centre

Over the last years, the EU has faced a series of major crises – from COVID and the on-going Russian war of aggression on Ukraine to the security crises in Afghanistan and in Sudan – that serve as harsh reminders of the increasingly unstable global context in which EU Delegations work. In this context and in line with the objectives laid down in the Strategic Compass, the High Representative decided on the **creation of the EEAS Crisis Response Centre (CRC)** to serve as a permanent crisis response capability, in order to review and strengthen the EU's ability to prepare, evaluate and react to emerging security and consular crises outside its borders. To this end, the CRC brings together the EU Situation Room (24/7) as well as the Consular Affairs, Field Security and crisis management and coordination capabilities of the EEAS. The CRC is ultimately responsible for:

1. Serving as a permanent capability that is the first line of response in case of crisis, managing the EEAS Crisis Response Mechanism and working in close cooperation with EU Institutions, Member States and like-minded partners;
2. Ensuring the safety of EU staff in Delegations around the world, in line with our duty of care;

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3. Supporting Member States to ensure that all EU citizens (including unrepresented citizens) get the help they are entitled to in a consular crisis;
4. Providing 24/7 early-warning and situational awareness, bringing together all relevant information sources in a crisis;
5. Ensuring the business continuity of EU Delegations, as well as the crisis preparedness of the EEAS in headquarters and in Delegations via contingency plans, training and exercises.

In responding to the abovementioned crises, the EEAS worked hard to enable its diplomats and network of Delegations around the world to continue to do their essential work, even in difficult environments. In the case of the crisis in Sudan, ensuring close cooperation and coordination with EU Member States and like-minded partners' crisis structures proved vital in the safe evacuation of EU staff and facilitating the repatriation of EU citizens.

(3) COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has marked a 'Zeitenwende' in European history and triggered the provision of unprecedented support to Ukraine by the EU and its Member States. It also considerably accelerated the EU's ongoing work in the **Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) domain** across various work strands, with a view of strengthening the EU's capacity to respond to security challenges and to consolidate its role as global player, be able to protect its citizens, as well as to provide support to its partners on security and defence. This work further intensified throughout 2022 and in the first half of 2023.

In March 2022, EU Member States adopted the **Strategic Compass**, which will guide the EU's actions in security and defence for the next 5-10 years. Throughout the past year, the implementation has continued steadily, with significant progress having been achieved across its four pillars (Act, Secure, Invest, Partner). The HR/VP presented the first annual progress report to Foreign and Defence Ministers on 20 March 2023, where Member States recognised the concrete advancements and urged for a full and swift implementation of all commitments.

The mobilisation of the **European Peace Facility (EPF)** in response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine has marked a radical paradigm shift for EU foreign and security policy. Military support to Ukraine amounting to EUR 5.6 billion in total has been committed by the end of May 2023. This includes EUR 2 billion for the Three Track initiative to support the delivery and joint procurement of ammunition to Ukraine as agreed in March 2022. The EPF also financed military components of African-led peace support operations under the general programme for support to the African Union, as well as a number of assistance measures aimed at strengthening capacities of partners in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods, the Western Balkans, and in Africa. It has also covered the common costs of military CSDP missions and operations. The European Council in December 2022 acknowledged that the evolution of the international security environment may require further increases of the EPF budget until 2027, up to a total increase of EUR 5.5 billion. The EPF top up of EUR 2 billion was activated in March 2023 and discussions on the activation of the second top up are ongoing.

The EU continued to take a leading role as a **global security provider and partner**. It established four new CSDP missions: two military (EU Military Assistance Mission for Ukraine and EU Military Partnership Mission in Niger), and two civilian (EU Mission in Armenia and EU Partnership Mission in Moldova). This brings the total to 22 CSDP missions and operations (13 civilian, 9 military). These missions and operations operated in an overall more difficult environment but continued to support the strengthening of partners' security and defence capabilities and contributed to addressing security challenges in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, the Western Balkans, in Africa and in the Middle East. The EU also contributed to **global maritime security**, through the continuation of the implementation of the Coordinated Maritime Presences Concept in the Gulf of Guinea and in the Northern Western Indian Ocean. In March 2023, the Commission and the High Representative adopted a Joint Communication on the **update of the EU Maritime Security Strategy**.

The EU **strengthened its engagement with numerous bilateral, multilateral and regional partners** worldwide on a wide range of security and defence issues. The EU consolidated cooperation with the UN, including with the implementation of the new set of joint priorities until 2024. Cooperation with NATO significantly increased in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine, including through multiple dialogues on support to Ukraine and joint visits by the leadership of both organisations. Work progressed on the implementation of the common set of proposals. On 10 January 2023, the third Joint EU-NATO Declaration was signed, which calls for further strengthening existing cooperation, and expand and deepen cooperation in new areas including climate and defence, space and emerging and disruptive technologies. On 11 January 2023, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of NATO announced the establishment of a dedicated NATO-EU Task Force on the resilience of critical infrastructure. The first **African Union-EU Senior Officials Meeting**, under the 2018 Memorandum of Understanding on Peace, Security and Governance, was held in November, while the implementation of the agreed priorities continued.

Security and defence dialogues/consultations continued to be held with many partners (Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Georgia, Iceland, Japan, Moldova, Norway, South Africa, Switzerland, Vietnam, the US) and consultations were launched with Rwanda. Thematic structured dialogues/consultations were also conducted with many partners on various issues such as countering terrorism and preventing/countering violent extremism, cyber, hybrid threats, maritime security, space, non-proliferation, disarmament and arms export control. Operational cooperation was further reinforced, including through the participation/invitation of partner countries (Canada, Norway, the US, UK) to Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects, the participation of partners to EU-led exercises or the conduct of joint exercises and port calls, e.g. between EUNAVFOR ATALANTA and Japan, Oman, the US (for the first time in March 2023). The EEAS continued to engage with third states regarding contributions to CSDP missions and operations, e.g. a new Framework Participation Agreement was signed with Peru and partners further contributed/were invited to contribute to missions and operations such as the EU Mission in Armenia and the EU Military Assistance Mission Ukraine. The first edition of the **Schuman Security and Defence**

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Forum was successfully launched on 20-21 March, gathering more than 400 participants from EU Member States, partner countries, international and regional organisations, think-tanks/academia, as well as EU institutions representatives.

Good progress was achieved on the **implementation of the Strategic Compass** across its four pillars. In cooperation with the European Commission and the European Defence Agency (EDA), the first progress report on the implementation was published in March 2023. EU Member States agreed that the Compass remains more valid than ever in the wake of the changing geostrategic environment. Among one of the key military priorities of the Compass is the operationalisation of the Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC). Preparatory work has been brought forward, including through the adoption of first two generic operational scenarios and the preparations for the first ever EU live exercise, to be held in 2023. Work has also progressed on the Military Planning and Conduct Capability in view of its operationalisation by 2025.

Following the Versailles informal summit in March 2022, the High Representative and the Commission adopted the Joint Communication on Defence Investment Gaps analysis in May, showing that years of underinvestment in defence have resulted in large capability and industrial gaps within the EU. EU Leaders have reiterated the need to not only spend more, but also better and together, including through fostering joint procurement. To that effect, the **Defence Joint Procurement Task Force** was set up in July which brings together the European Commission, the EEAS, and the EDA to support the coordination of Member States' most urgent and critical needs. The work of the Task Force will be taken into account in the implementation of the proposed Regulation to establish the European Defence Industrial Reinforcement through common Procurement Act (EDIRPA). As part of the three-track ammunition initiative, and building on the work of the Task Force, a new proposal for an Act in Support of Ammunition Production was presented by the Commission in May 2023 to support the European defence industrial base in ramping up its production capacity in the field of ammunition and missiles. In parallel, EDA has been working on fostering joint procurement, including through a dedicated project.

In May 2023, the Council confirmed the participation of Denmark in **PESCO** as its 26th participating Member State, adopted the 5th wave of projects, and confirmed the closure of 3 projects, bringing the total number to 68 PESCO projects. The UK's request to take part in the "Military Mobility" project was authorised by the Council in November 2022 and Canada's request to participate in a second project - "Network of Logistic Hubs in Europe and Support to Operation", was authorised in February 2023. The 2022 **Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD)** Report was adopted by the Ministers of Defence in the EDA Steering Board of November 2022, confirming the increase in defence spending by Member States, while also addressing defence planning and cooperation aspects. In November 2022, the first **annual ministerial meeting on defence capabilities** has taken place, providing the framework for a high-level political exchange on the matter.

The EU further consolidated and developed tools to strengthen the **Integrated Approach**. Three Political Frameworks for a Crisis Approach were prepared (Eastern DRC, Gulf of Guinea, Moldova). An EU Stabilisation concept was presented to Member States and a first stabilisation

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assessment mission was conducted to Ethiopia, in the context of 2022 cessation of hostilities agreement. The first implementation report on the EU approach to cultural heritage in conflicts and crises was presented. The EU continued to be very active on **conflict prevention and mediation**. The first Annual Report on EU Peace Mediation was prepared while the EU engaged in mediation and dialogue support actions in more than 20 peace processes across the world, and continued assessing conflict risks. It also consolidated peace partnerships on conflict prevention and mediation with the UN and the OSCE and established new ones with the AU and ECOWAS. Joint Progress Reports were presented on Climate Change, Defence and Security and on the Joint Communication on EU strategic approach in support of Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration of former combatants. The Secretariat of the **Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel** continued its work on strengthening the capabilities of the G5 Sahel states' armed forces and the Sahel Coalition.

2022 was the last full calendar year to implement the remaining commitments of the first **Civilian CSDP Compact**. All Member States continued this effort, leading to increased contributions to civilian CSDP missions, where the representation of women increased from 24% to 28% in 2022. The EEAS has developed so-called mini-concepts to allow civilian CSDP missions to better address non-traditional security challenges and a working arrangement between Frontex and EUCAP Sahel Niger was signed in July 2022. In 2023, Member States, the EEAS and the Commission entered the final phase of the new Civilian CSDP Compact, adopted during FAC in May 2023, fulfilling a key task from the Strategic Compass.

In 2022, **the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability** underwent a comprehensive reform process in order to improve its role and capacity to command and control civilian CSDP missions and enhance the civilian CSDP contribution to EU foreign policy capability. The reform process reinforced CPCC's operational, coordination and expert capacities. This will allow civilian CSDP to step up its contribution to security sector reforms and crisis management around the world. The reform is the first step towards building a real civilian headquarters, which will be capable of ensuring fast deployment of missions, in line with the Strategic Compass objective of deploying 200 staff in 30 days in complex environments.

Important advances have been made when it comes to **space security and defence**. In March 2023, the High Representative and the Commission adopted the first EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence. It will allow the EU to protect its space assets, defend its interests, deter hostile activities in space and strengthen its strategic posture and autonomy. The work of the EU Satellite Centre has gained renewed importance in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, including by providing geo-spatial intelligence.

The implementation of the 2020 Joint **Cybersecurity** Strategy progressed well, with the objective to increase resilience and show leadership in cyberspace and strengthen capacities to prevent, deter and respond to cyber-attacks. The **Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox** has seen multiple applications while the work to revise its implementing guidelines continued. The EEAS hosted the second like-minded exercise on cyber deterrence and policy responses and strengthened partnerships, including through its cyber capacity building efforts. The High Representative and the European Commission

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presented a Joint Communication on the **EU Policy on Cyber Defence** in November 2022, thus completing the EU's full-spectrum approach to prevention, deterrence and response to malicious cyber activities and cyber threat actors. It enables further investments in modern and interoperable armed forces and technologies, enhances existing partnerships and allows the EU to build cyber defence capabilities and strengthen shared situational awareness. The EEAS advanced work to make the EU better able to detect, prevent and respond to **hybrid threats**. By the end of 2022, the EU Hybrid Toolbox was established to bring together all the relevant internal and external tools for responding and countering hybrid threats and campaigns in a more coordinated and coherent manner.

The EU continued to reinforce its role in **countering terrorism** (CT) and preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE). It did so as a donor of capacity-building projects around the world and as a norm setter, promoting a rights-based and whole-of-society approach to CT-P/CVE within the multilateral structures. This included coordinating a joint EU position in the biannual review of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy, which is expected to be finalised by mid/late-June 2023. The EU worked closely with third countries and international organisations, including through dedicated Counter Terrorism Dialogues and cooperation on the ground, facilitated also through its Network of Counterterrorism/Security Experts deployed in 20 EU Delegations. In September 2022, the EU took over the co-chair of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), steering the work of the Forum in line with its mandate and the EU's vision for a rights-based and comprehensive approach, first alongside Morocco and since March 2023 together with Egypt. The EU also continued to actively participate in meetings of the Global Coalition against Da'esh, sharing its experience and coordinating on stabilisation efforts.

The increasing strain on the **global disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control** architecture was further amplified in 2022 in the wake of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. EU efforts throughout the year focussed on upholding and strengthening the relevant multilateral instruments and institutions, including through strong positions at notably the 10th Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the 77th UN General Assembly, and the 9th Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. On 21 March 2022, the Council adopted Conclusions on the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention. In 2022, the EU also launched a review process of Common Position 2008/944 defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment. The EU continued to provide significant political and financial support in 2022, including through 8 dedicated new CFSP Council Decisions on projects for an accumulated value of EUR 25,4 million in support of its non-proliferation, disarmament and arms export control priorities.

(4) PRIORITIES FOR 2023

It is in the EU's shared interest to deliver on the EU perspective of the **Western Balkans**. This should include advancing in accession negotiations with Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia based on the implementation of EU-related commitments; encouraging full alignment with CFSP, including on positions and restrictive measures taken following the Russian aggression against Ukraine, implementing the Agreement on the Path to Normalization between Kosovo and

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Serbia and all past Dialogue agreements; supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina in advancing political reforms in view of fulfilling the 14 Key Priorities laid out in the Commission Opinion on its EU membership application. We should further enhance cooperation on CFSP/CSDP with the region, based on a common vision of geopolitical challenges.

Looking forward, the EU is ready to engage with **Türkiye** in a phased, proportionate and reversible manner in a number of areas of common interest, subject to the established conditionalities set out in March 2021 and previous European Council Conclusions and to support all-encompassing regional cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The EU remains committed to constructive cooperation with our **Arctic** partners, including indigenous peoples, as well as other interested parties.

Based on the constructive experience of **EU-UK cooperation** on countering Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and following internal reflections in both the EU and the UK, informal consultations on various topics are taking place with a view to deepening cooperation in areas of mutual interest in the field of foreign, security and defence policy.

In response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and in coordination with its partners, the EU continues to implement its **war-time approach to Russia**: to isolate Russia internationally, to impose sanctions, to ensure accountability, to support our neighbours and global partners in addressing the impact of the war and to enhance our own resilience. The EU will continue to support Russian civil society, human rights defenders and independent media inside and outside Russia.

The **Eastern neighbourhood** is the region most immediately exposed to Russian aggression and will likewise remain a major focus of our work. We are following up on the outcome of the Eastern Partnership Annual Foreign Affairs Ministerial of 2022 and the Senior Officials Meeting of 2023. The Eastern partnership (EaP) multilateral cooperation will be implemented in an adjusted format, and will continue, in parallel to the enlargement track, as envisaged by the EaP Annual Work Plan for 2023.

In addition to our unwavering and massive support to Ukraine in resisting the Russian aggression, the EU will remain committed to facilitate efforts of conflict resolution and peace-building in the Eastern neighbourhood. The EU will also continue to support the right of the Belarusian people to choose their own future and their democratic aspirations.

Central Asian states can count on the EU support when it comes to their efforts at preserving their independence and sovereignty as well as progress on regional cooperation. The EU will aim to sign the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) with Kyrgyzstan, finalize preparatory work towards signing the EPCA with Uzbekistan and rapidly progress in the on-going negotiations of an EPCA with Tajikistan. It will also reinforce economic relations through a dedicated Investment Forum, building on the outcomes of the second EU-Central Asia Economic

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Forum in Almaty (Kazakhstan) in May 2023, chaired by Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis, and political relations building on the second meeting between the President of the European Council and the Heads of State leaders of all five Central Asian countries in June 2023.

Our cross-cutting priority in the Middle East and North Africa will be to address the geopolitical consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and especially its political, economic, strategic communication and diplomatic impacts. As the region is heavily targeted by Russian foreign information manipulation and interference, it is important to demonstrate that the EU remains engaged and active with its Southern partners and the Gulf and does not shy away from its responsibilities.

Further developments in this regard will be of great importance in terms of other actors' policy, including the EU's. Apart from helping countries in the region mitigate these existential issues, building a comprehensive regional EU policy, fully integrating the EU's global priorities, notably the green deal/transition, the **Global Gateway and the Strategic Compass/CSDP**, will be a priority for the EU. The EU shall also strive to reinforce its role in addressing ongoing crises and conflicts and contribute to stabilisation processes in the region, using the full range of EU tools – from diplomatic, economic, development and humanitarian approaches up to civilian and military crisis management. Another key emphasis of our work will lie in deepening of the EU's partnership with the **Gulf States**, in line with the Joint Communication adopted on 18 May 2022. The appointment of the EUSR for the Gulf and the proposed establishment of a structured EU-GCC Security Dialogue will enhance the EU engagement in the region. Further action regarding a review of the role, functioning and efficiency of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) will be done in 2023, together with the Jordanian Co-Chair and the UfM Secretariat. The EU will also continue its work with the League of Arab States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for reviving the Middle East peace efforts.

The EU will continue to follow the domestic and human rights situation in **Iran** as well as its unacceptable military support to Russia, taking into account all options at its disposal, including additional restrictive measures. The diplomatic engagement on the JCPoA and contributing to regional cooperation in the Gulf will remain at the top of the EU's agenda.

The African continent is of key strategic importance to the EU. We will strengthen and deepen EU-Africa relations, with a focus on following up on the commitments of the 2022 AU-EU Summit and through deepening AU-EU engagement on multilateralism. Delivering on concrete projects of mutual interest through the implementation of the EU-Africa "Global Gateway" Investment Package is critical to positioning the EU as the partner of choice for transformative projects implemented under a responsible and sustainable partnership approach. The EU will pursue geographic priorities on the regional level - focusing on the implementation of regional strategies on the Sahel region and coastal countries, the Great Lakes region, and the Horn of Africa - and on the bilateral level, focusing on key African partners with potential for deepened relations: Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria and South Africa. To increase our footprint on the continent, the EU

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will strengthen its strategic communication towards key target audiences in Africa, particularly in the context of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

In an age of increasing instability and geopolitical competition, the **Indo-Pacific region** is of key strategic importance for the EU. In 2023, the EU will continue the implementation of both the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Global Gateway. About 25 Global Gateway flagship projects have been launched and will be implemented across the Indo-Pacific during 2023 and beyond. We continue to contribute to the stabilisation of the volatile security environment in Asia, with particular attention on security of global supply chains (e.g. semiconductors). Following up to COP27 is a key concern in the entire region, and the EU will enhance its partnerships with countries keen on stepping up cooperation on topics such as deforestation and phasing out or down of coal. Afghanistan and Myanmar will remain at the centre of our humanitarian efforts in the region.

The EU will continue the recalibration of its strategy vis-à-vis China, carefully articulating work on strengthening resilience and de-risking, with robust and realist engagement with **China**. This will be pursued through the consolidation of EU unity, focusing on the need to manage this complex relationship, though: engaging while standing firm on EU's principles, values and interests; increasing resilience and addressing risks linked to excessive dependencies; and working with partners.

The **transatlantic partnership** remains a key pillar of Euro-Atlantic security and of a rules-based international order, underpinned by multilateralism and democratic values. The EU will continue to work with the US and Canada to sustain a united and closely coordinated response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, including support to the future re-construction, while addressing the wider geopolitical implications. The EU will continue to engage closely with both partners to make progress on key shared foreign policy files, including on our respective relationships with China, on the Indo-Pacific, Europe's eastern and southern neighbourhood, as well as on Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. Building on recent progress, cooperation on security and defence will continue to deepen, and the EU will work to advance transatlantic trade and investment, economic security and reinforcing the resilience of value chains in critical areas, including under the EU-US Trade and Technology Council. The EU will continue to partner with the US and Canada to ensure coordination at the G7 and G20, to work on ambitious outcomes in the COP 28 climate conference and work towards establishing a green alliance and digital partnership with Canada. The EU will engage with stakeholders across the political spectrum, solidify existing mechanisms and work streams, to ensure that the transatlantic partnership remains durable.

2023 will be a key year for relaunching relations between the EU and Latin American and the Caribbean. In June, the HR/VP and the Commission will issue a **Joint Communication** to the EP and the Council 'Towards a New Agenda for EU-Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Relations'. The EU-CELAC Summit, to be held in Brussels on 17-18 July 2023, will be a political milestone for renewing and recalibrating the bi-regional relationship in the changing geopolitical context. The President of the Commission is scheduled to visit four countries in the region: Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico. The key objectives of her visit will be to show the EU's

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interest in revitalising relations, to set the stage for a successful summit and to make progress on the pending agreements with the region. ‘The EU will continue its active support to the peace process in Colombia in the context of the “Total Peace” initiative of President Petro, as well as efforts to bring a peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis in Venezuela, while addressing the humanitarian fall-out and the migration crisis. The reinvigoration of relations with Brazil should allow the holding of an EU-Brazil Summit at the end of 2023 or in early 2024. The EU will continue efforts to advance towards the finalisation of the modernisation of the EU-Mexico Global Agreement, to successfully conclude the negotiations related to the EU-Mercosur Agreement and to accelerate the signature and ratification of the EU-Chile Advanced Framework Agreement. Executive Vice-President Timmermans is expected to visit Barbados, Guyana and Suriname in June 2023. The EU will continue to support efforts to promote democracy, stability and dialogue in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia.

Regarding multilateral relations, three priorities have been identified in the coming year. First, to **accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs). A key occasion for this will be the SDG Summit, to be held in New York on 18 September 2023. The EU will work collectively to ensure a successful outcome covering important issues including ‘financing for development’, reform of the multilateral development banks and the UN development system, as well as effective action on climate change, biodiversity and global health. Second, the EU will contribute to efforts to **strengthen global governance** through ‘Our Common Agenda’. This will involve work on initiatives such as the ‘New Agenda for Peace’, the ‘Global Digital Compact’, the ‘Emergency Platform’, and the report of the High-Level Advisory Board, making a strong connection from the SDG Summit to the Summit of the Future due to be held in 2024. Third, the EU is committed to renewing and building its partnerships with the whole of the UN membership, including those countries most affected by climate change. This will involve more active and sustained outreach to partner countries to **promote truly inclusive multilateralism**.

The EU will also continue its multifaceted engagement in other areas at the multilateral level. When it comes to supporting **human rights and democracy**, the EU will further strengthen its human rights and democracy action under the 2020-2024 Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy and continue developing a Framework for Business and Human Rights to ensure strong coherence of our policies on responsible business conduct, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The EU will continue with its **electoral observation activities** where conditions allow and if invited by national authorities with possible missions under consideration in Liberia, the Maldives, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The EU remains committed to supporting and engaging with government authorities, political actors and civil society organisations of partner countries to implement the missions’ recommendations. In this light, Electoral Follow-up Missions will be organised in countries where Election Observation Missions have been deployed in the last couple of year.

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In June 2023, work will start on identifying **Global Gateway flagships** for 2024. In the meantime, at the EU-CELAC Summit on 17-18 July the EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda is to be announced. There is also a plan to identify joint projects under the Connectivity Partnerships with Japan and India as deliverables of the planned EU-Japan and EU-India Summits in 2023. In terms of governance, the first meeting of the Global Gateway Business Advisory Group and the second meeting of the Global Gateway Board are expected towards the end of 2023. When it comes to communication, a high-level Global Gateway Forum hosted by President von der Leyen is planned in the fourth quarter of 2023.

The EEAS will further develop **digital diplomacy** as an integral part of the EU foreign and security policy, including relevant bilateral and multilateral engagements, responding to the digital challenges through the promotion of European values and standards, and through regulation and international partnerships.

The EEAS will continue outreach to promote global support and action towards a **sustainable green transition** around the world. Regarding **climate diplomacy** guided by the Conclusions on climate and energy diplomacy of March 2023, strengthened coordination and joint outreach with EU Member States will continue, via both capitals and EU Delegations. Actions focused on promoting accession to the UN Water Convention, the swift ratification of the BBNJ Treaty and the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework will continue. We will engage with our partners on the new EU Deforestation Regulation and in the ongoing negotiations for a future Global Treaty on Plastics.

On energy diplomacy, the EEAS will prioritise outreach in the areas of the **global energy transition** (through the Joint Energy Transition Partnerships, the Equitable Framework and Finance for Extractive-based Countries in Transition), of the Energy Efficiency First initiative and of Ukraine's energy system reconstruction and EU's gas diversification. The implementation of the Just Energy Transition Partnerships, in particular with Vietnam and South Africa will continue.

On **economic issues**, the EEAS will continue to actively support the external dimension of the EU Anti Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism financing policies. With economic issues being increasingly tied to security, the new Joint Communication on Economic security will be a key aspect of foreign policy and of our relations with partner countries.

The EEAS will further contribute to the formulation, concrete operationalisation and development of actions and funding under the **external dimension of the Pact on Migration and Asylum** in the priority areas identified for specific countries. In the overall context of crisis situations, the EEAS will also continue to proactively address the **instrumentalisation of migrants** through active diplomatic engagement in selected third countries.

To further engrain **gender equality, diversity and inclusion** in EU political dialogues and diplomacy, the EEAS will continue to reinforce its efforts to enhance gender mainstreaming and gender responsive leadership as well as to implement the Agenda for Diversity and Inclusion. The

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EEAS will also continue actively with the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments, leveraging further collaboration jointly with the EU Member States on WPS.

The past months have shown that **information manipulation and interference** have become part of the arsenal that actors like Russia and China use in a strategic and coordinate manner to destabilise countries across the globe, weaken international cooperation and threaten democracy and security. These actors do not just target the European Union, the G7 countries or NATO, but as we have seen with Russia's attempts to manipulate and interfere in the debates around food insecurity, it is a global threat. Such activity, the use of manipulative tactics, techniques and procedures to distort and manipulate people for their own purpose, needs to be challenged by the international community dedicated to uphold universal values and international law. While in most cases not illegal, such manipulation has a harmful effect and should not be considered a legitimate instrument in the foreign policy of a state. The EEAS will continue its discussions with international partners and stakeholders to develop international principles on FIMI and information integrity. This is also connected to the EEAS engagement with the United Nations on Global Code of Conduct for Information Integrity, which aims to outline what is legitimate and illegitimate state behaviour in the information environment.

In view of the new threat environment and growing number of security and consular crises facing the EU, the EEAS will review and strengthen the **EU's crisis response processes**. The creation and ongoing setting-up of the EEAS Crisis Response Centre (CRC) is a key part of this effort and it is essential that sufficient resources be allocated to this task.

Looking to the year ahead, the aim is to reinforce the **security of EU Delegations** in critical locations, reflecting the evolving nature of threats; enhance crisis preparedness through tailored trainings and exercises for both HQ and Delegation staff; turn the EU Situation Room into a 24/7 situational awareness and information hub in crises; and strengthen coordination with Member States and partners' crisis structures.

The EU will continue and accelerate the implementation of the **Strategic Compass** across all work-strands. Continuing and increasing **military support to Ukraine** will remain a key priority. The EU looks forward to an increased and strengthened **European Peace Facility** to not only support Ukraine but also partners around the world as well as military CSDP missions. Existing and upcoming **military and civilian CSDP missions** will be implemented and designed with a more flexible, robust and partnerships-based approach. The EEAS will continue work on making the **Rapid Deployment Capacity** fully operational by 2025, on strengthening the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), on reflecting on the scope and definition of common costs, and on delivering the first ever EU live exercise in 2023.

On **space**, work will continue to implement the Space Strategy for Security and Defence and to ensure the strengthening of the EU Satellite Centre to support decision-making political and operational levels through geospatial analysis. On **countering terrorism**, the EU will seek to steer efforts of the Global Counterterrorism Forum in particular to help tackle the scourge of terrorism in

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the countries facing the greatest risk, in particular in Africa. The EU will also aim to expand the Network of CT/Security Experts in key posts to support this effort and advance the EU's priorities. Regarding **disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control** the EU will sustain efforts to maintain the effectiveness and functioning of the existing architecture, including in the context of the 11th review cycle for the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty. Increased dialogue and consultation on non-proliferation and disarmament issues with like-minded partners will continue while internally, the EU will reflect on how arms export controls could address emerging challenges, to be reflected in amendments in current legal framework scheduled for adoption in late 2024.

The EEAS will work towards the adoption by the Council of a revised EU **Maritime Security Strategy and Action Plan**, on the basis of the Joint Communication presented in March 2023. After the application of the **Coordinated Maritime Presences Concept** in the Gulf of Guinea and in the Northwest Indian Ocean, the EU should assess the opportunity of establishing new Maritime Areas of Interest in other regions. The EU will also seek to conduct more joint naval exercises with partners.

The EEAS is working on a pilot action to facilitate exchanges on countering **hybrid threats** with partners in the Indo-Pacific region. Work on the establishment of the EU **Hybrid Rapid Response Teams** will continue in 2023. Work will continue on advancing the common understanding of the **mutual assistance clause** (art. 42.7 TEU) and on a **Cyber Posture**. Continued implementation of the **Cyber Posture** is foreseen together with the **Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox'** revised implemented guidelines while continuing dedicated dialogues with partners. The implementation of the new **Civilian Compact** will be pursued. It should ensure these missions have a real and tangible impact and are able to swiftly adapt their tasks if so required. **Tailored security and defence partnerships** with bilateral, international and regional partners will be further strengthened and developed, on the basis of shared values and interests. The EU will seek to reinforce the operational dimension of such cooperation. The second edition of the Schuman Security and Defence Forum in 2024 will also be prepared.