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NOTE

From: High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

To: Political and Security Committee (PSC)

Subject: CFSP Report – Our priorities in 2018

1. The Inter-Institutional Agreement (IIA) of 2 December 2013, part II, point E, paragraph 25, provides that each year, the High Representative shall consult the European Parliament on a forward-looking document which will set out the main aspects and basic choices of the CFSP.
2. The Nicolaidis Group examined the report and agreed on 9 July 2018 via silence procedure that the PSC should be invited to approve the amended draft report as set out in the annex.
3. In light of the above, the Political and Security Committee is invited to approve the draft report and forward it to the Council, via Coreper, for endorsement.

CFSP Report – Our Priorities in 2018¹

(1) INTRODUCTION

1. 2018 is a significant year for external relations. A year in which uncertainty in international relations and the unstable global landscape have become the new normal and long held certainties are increasingly put into question.
2. With the challenging strategic environment, preoccupations with our immediate neighbourhoods – East and South, and numerous crises and threats affecting the EU, in 2018 the EU continues to enhance its role as a security provider, anchor of stability and a reliable international partner. 2018 is also a year to reaffirm our full commitment to the European perspective of our partners in the Western Balkans.
3. We stand for our values, defend our interests and promote cooperative approaches, support multilateralism and rules-based global order with responsible global governance and respect for international law. Our external action contributes to the security and prosperity of our citizens also by addressing the root causes of the challenges that we face. The Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy of 2016 continues to guide our common action in the foreign and security policy. On this basis we have launched new, unprecedented projects, as well as to put into action the unexplored clauses of the Treaty of Lisbon, especially in the security and defence area. In our external action we also continue to implement global frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
4. Greater unity and consistency of our external action and better linking the internal and external dimensions of EU policy have been achieved through the leadership of the HR/VP supported by the EEAS and joined-up work with the Member States, the European Commission, and the European Parliament.

¹This report should be read in conjunction with agreed Council and European Council Conclusions.

5. In 2018 the EU is building up on the achievements of the EUGS implementation in 2017. Effective work has been further taken forward on five priority areas agreed by the Council in October 2016 and endorsed by the December 2016 European Council: (i) resilience building of states and societies to our East and South, and an integrated approach to conflicts and crises; (ii) strengthening security and defence; (iii) reinforcing the internal/external policy nexus; (iv) updating existing or preparing new regional and thematic strategies; (v) stepping up public diplomacy efforts.
6. At the July 2017 FAC two further overarching EUGS priorities were added to the work on its implementation for 2018: commitment to reinforce a global order based on international law with the UN at its core and support for regional organisations and co-operative relationships. We have made important headways in both areas.
7. In 2018 we are building on the historic steps taken throughout 2017 in the field of security and defence - from the work on a Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) through the establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) to the launch of the European Defence Fund by the European Commission. Work continues on civilian aspects of CSDP, partnerships and enhancement of the European strategic culture.
8. On resilience we continue to implement our policy framework established through the Joint Communication on Resilience adopted last year and subsequent Council Conclusions. We are making steady progress on another important policy focus which is the Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises along with conflict prevention and mediation.
9. In the area of strategic communication and public diplomacy, the EU continues to bolster its efforts and resilience, building on the successful implementation of the Global Strategy, to engage effectively, inside and outside the EU – in particular in the Western Balkans, and our neighbourhood to the East and South. We need to further develop EU's strategic communication strategy together with Member States for a coordinated EU response to the challenge of disinformation, including appropriate mandates and sufficient resources for the relevant EEAS Strategic Communication teams.

10. In view of the uncertain international environment in which we operate, early warning, situational awareness, strategic foresight and planning have become indispensable instruments in building up and taking decisions on our external action.
11. In order to reflect the EU comprehensive approach to contexts, crises and issues, this report includes, when appropriate, references to non-CFSP policies and instruments.

(2) GEOGRAPHICAL

Europe and Central Asia

12. The future of the **Western Balkans** lies within the European Union. The enlargement and Stabilisation and Association processes, with their support for reforms and good neighbourly relations, as well as with the established conditionality, represent a strategic investment in peace, democracy, prosperity, security and stability in Europe. The EU remains committed to the European perspective of the region and to supporting EU-oriented reforms and projects, in particular focusing on further strengthening the rule of law and good governance and fostering good neighbourly relations and inclusive regional cooperation, while promoting socio-economic development and mitigating stability risks from political polarisation and divisive rhetoric.

13. In 2018, the overall priority remains to take forward the **European perspective of the region** in order to enhance its resilience and thus, in line with the Global Strategy, the security of the EU itself. To pursue this shared interest the EU will strengthen and intensify its engagement with the Western Balkans,, in line with **the Sofia Declaration** and the Sofia Priority Agenda of May 2018 and building on the Strategy and Action Plan published in February 2018. Member States together with the Western Balkan reaffirmed their unequivocal support for the European perspective of the region and agreed concrete measures for enhanced cooperation on strengthening rule of law and good governance, transport links, energy security, digital economy, business climate and opportunities for youth, as well as on addressing common security challenges and migration. During 2018, the EU strongly supported the negotiations under UN auspices that on 17 June 2018 led to the signature of an agreement on the name issue between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This, together with the agreement between Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness, and Cooperation, sets a strong example for others in the region to strengthen good neighbourly relations.

14. Throughout 2018, attention will focus on addressing the following political stability and security factors: supporting work on the **normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo*** through facilitation of the Dialogue between the two sides, aiming for a comprehensive, legally binding normalisation agreement so that Belgrade and Pristina can advance on their respective European paths; in **Albania** and the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, continued and intensified engagement for further progress on key reforms will set the path for opening accession negotiations in June 2019, depending on the progress made; supporting inclusive socio-economic and rule of law reforms, better internal cohesion and state functionality in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, and follow-up on Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership application as the Commission prepares its Opinion; deepening co-operation with **Serbia** on foreign and security policy to further reinforce its orientation towards shared EU values and interests, with a focus on the current declining trend in the CFSP alignment; and seeking to maintain **Montenegro's** and **Serbia's** accession pace and stance as a solid security partner.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) and the Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

15. The EU will strengthen and expand dialogue with the Western Balkans on further **deepening cooperation on foreign policy and defence issues** and progressive alignment with the EU's foreign policy positions, increasing capacity-building support on cyber-security and further developing participation in actions related to hybrid threats. The EU will promote cooperation on counter-terrorism, organised crime and border security, including through implementation of the Integrated Internal Security Governance Initiative, agreements with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and developing the envisaged joint action plans on counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism. The EU appreciates the contributions of the Western Balkan countries to CSDP missions.

16. The EU will strengthen its capacity for **effective public diplomacy and strategic communication** in the region in co-ordination with Member States and national authorities, developing and communicating positive narratives in the Western Balkans and our capacity to identify and rebut disinformation. The work of the StratComm Western Balkans Task Force remains crucial in this regard.

17. Member States have agreed to extend the mandate of the **EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX)** in Kosovo until June 2020. Under its new mandate, the Mission will chiefly focus on correctional services and trial monitoring as well as some residual executive support functions, while the Mission's operational support to the implementation of EU-facilitated dialogue agreements will be transferred to the EU Special Representative's Office, as soon as the conditions are met. A reinforced EU Office in Kosovo will assume a greater role in assisting rule of law development, in particular for law enforcement agencies. The Specialist Chambers in The Hague stand ready to conduct proceedings on the basis of the prosecution conducted by the Specialist Prosecutor Office. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the **EU military operation EUFOR ALTHEA**'s presence on the ground continues to make an important contribution to stability and security in the country through its support for efforts to maintain a Safe and Secure Environment (SASE). Following adoption of the Strategic Review of EUFOR ALTHEA in early 2018, its capacity-building and training activities of the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be gradually phased-out allowing other multilateral and bilateral actors to take forward support for the professionalization of the armed forces and allowing EUFOR to re-focus its efforts on situational awareness, which is key for maintaining the Safe and Secure Environment.
18. To address remaining issues regarding **migration**, close coordination and cooperation with the countries of the region will need to continue throughout 2018, including follow up of assistance provided to manage borders, improve reception capacities and fight smuggling networks and conclusion of status agreements with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. Continuous monitoring in particular through EU Agencies is a priority. Cooperation with, and support for, partners in the Western Balkans region remain key to exchange information on migratory flows, prevent illegal migration, increase the capacities for border protection and improve return and readmission procedures.

19. **Turkey** remains a candidate country and a key partner in many areas. In 2018, the EU remains committed to maintaining an open and frank dialogue with Turkey, to addressing common challenges and to cooperating in essential areas of joint interest such as migration, counter-terrorism, energy, transport, economy and trade, .We will continue our political dialogues on foreign policy issues with Turkey (Africa, Asia, Middle East/North Africa, Russia/Eastern Europe/Central Asia, Western Balkans, CSDP). There is an urgent need to further develop human rights-compliant counter-terrorism cooperation with Turkey, in close partnership with the Council of Europe. Regarding the visa liberalisation process, the full and effective implementation of the visa road-map vis-à-vis all Member States is recalled. Cooperation in the area of justice and home affairs with all EU Member States remains essential.
20. Implementation of the **EU-Turkey Statement** agreed on 18 March 2016 remains a priority and the European Union continues to abide by its commitments, notably to provide support to refugees in Turkey through the Facility for Refugees. The EU-Turkey Statement has contributed to tangible results in keeping the irregular migration influx under control and in preventing loss of life at sea. The continued implementation of the Statement is in the interest of both sides and remains crucial. Furthermore, the EU-Turkey readmission agreement and the bilateral readmission agreements should be fully implemented in a non-discriminatory manner towards all Member States.

21. The EU immediately and **strongly condemned the coup attempt** of 15 July 2016 and expressed solidarity with the Turkish people and full support for the democratic institutions of Turkey. However, the disproportionate scale and scope of measures taken in its aftermath raise serious concern. The EU will continue to call on Turkey to respect the international standards and the obligations to which it has subscribed and committed itself, and to urgently reverse the negative trends. Turkey should also step up its cooperation with the Council of Europe and its relevant bodies and institutions, address their key recommendations and implement all judgements of the European Court of Human Rights in line with Article 46 of the ECHR.
22. As noted by the EU Council on 26 June 2018, Turkey has been moving further away from the European Union. Turkey's **accession negotiations** have therefore effectively come to a standstill and no further chapters can be considered for opening or closing and no further work towards the modernisation of the EU-Turkey Customs Union is foreseen.

23. The EU has repeatedly expressed serious concern and urged Turkey to avoid any kind of threat or action directed against a Member State, or source of friction or actions, which damage **good neighbourly relations and the peaceful settlement of disputes**, having recourse, if necessary, to the International Court of Justice. The EU underlines that negative statements that damage good neighbourly relations should be avoided and reiterates the need for Turkey to respect all sovereign rights of EU Member States. Recent actions taken by Turkey in the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas undermine regional stability and security. The European Council, in its conclusions of 22 March 2018, strongly condemned Turkey's continued illegal actions in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Seas and underlined its full solidarity with Cyprus and Greece. The European Council also expressed its grave concern over the continued detention of EU citizens in Turkey, including two Greek soldiers, and calls for the swift and positive resolution of these issues in a dialogue with Member States. Recalling its conclusions of October 2014 and the Declaration of 21 September 2005, the European Council urgently called on Turkey to cease these actions and respect the sovereign rights of Cyprus to explore and exploit its natural resources in accordance with EU and International Law, including UNCLOS, and stressed the need to respect the sovereignty of all EU Member states over their territorial sea and airspace. In this context, the European Council recalled Turkey's obligation to respect International Law and good neighbourly relations, and normalise relations with all EU Member States including the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey, despite repeated calls, has still not fulfilled its obligation of full, non-discriminatory implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement towards all Member States. Recognition of all EU MS is essential. In the absence of progress on this issue, including Turkey's restrictions as regards the Republic of Cyprus, the EU will maintain its measures from 2006². Furthermore, Turkey has still not made progress towards the necessary normalisation of its relations with the Republic of Cyprus. The EU also recalls its position on accession of EU Member States to international organisations.

²In December 2006, the Council decided that eight negotiating chapters could not be opened and no chapter could be closed until Turkey meets its obligation of full, non-discriminatory implementation of the additional protocol to the Association Agreement.

24. The EU recalls it remains crucial that Turkey commits and to contributes to a comprehensive **settlement of the Cyprus problem**, including its external aspects, within the UN framework, in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and in line with the principles on which the European Union is founded and the *acquis communautaire* as well as to refrain from any activities that contribute to polarisation in EU Member States
25. The EU is closely connected to, and has excellent relations with, the **non-EU Western European countries**. Western European countries are important, likeminded partners in international affairs, and generally support and cooperate with the EU on issues like climate change, migration or security. Norway and Switzerland are also contributing to the EU's CSDP missions – such as EUFOR Althea, EULEX Kosovo, and are participating in projects and programmes of the European Defence Agency. Regular informal political dialogue is taking place with these two countries at senior official level on overall CSFP/CSDP matters, as well as on a geographical basis and specific topics, e.g. sanctions or human rights. Switzerland and Norway are among the EU's main trade and investment partners. Bilateral relations with Switzerland and European Economic Area (EEA) countries will be further strengthened, both on internal market and on other key issues. As regards Switzerland, the main objectives are to finalise negotiations on an institutional framework for the complex system of existing agreements, as well as on other open matters. Another aim is to further foreign policy co-operation and dialogue with all non-EU Western European countries, including the Holy See. Negotiations will intensify on Association Agreement(s) with Andorra, Monaco and San Marino, with the aim of their full participation in the EU's internal market.

26. The EU's approach to the **Eastern Partnership (EaP)** will keep its focus on further developing strong and mutually beneficial relations with all six partners, reaffirming the sovereign right of each partner to choose the level of ambition and the goals to which it aspires in its relations with the European Union. This will encompass support for a market economy, sustainable development, good governance, interconnectivity mobility, people-to-people contacts, contributing to security and building the resilience of our partners – at state, economic and societal level – in the face of new challenges to their stability, as confirmed at the Brussels summit of 2017, and as set out in the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Global Strategy. The association agreements provide for accelerating political association and economic integration with the European Union. With the other three Eastern partners, the EU is developing individual forms of relations, in line with the EU principle of differentiation. The EU's approach will be also guided by the partners' commitment to strengthen democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as principles and norms of international law. The EU will continue to express its concerns as regards the situation in certain partner countries. The EU will take forward its cooperation with the countries of the region, based on the 20 deliverables for 2020 and the revised EaP institutional framework, both of which were endorsed by the 2017 Brussels EaP summit, aiming at results with concrete benefits for the citizens of both the partner countries and Member States. The EU will continue its work to improve strategic communication on the EaP and to ensure greater visibility and outreach for the policy and its outcomes. The EU will continue dialogue with EaP countries on further deepening cooperation on foreign policy and security and defence issues and will continue providing regional training programmes for the Eastern Partners. In this context, the EU appreciates the contributions of the EaP countries to CSDP missions.

27. With **Georgia and the Republic of Moldova**, the revision of the Association Agendas was completed in 2017. These documents provide guidance on the implementation of the Association Agreements by setting short and medium term priorities in the different policy areas covered by the Agreements. The EU and Georgia held a first informal **Strategic Dialogue on Security** in October 2017 that targeted inter-alia cooperation on CFSP and CSDP. The format will be repeated annually. The EU will continue cooperation under action 18 of the Joint Communication "Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats" to build partners' capacities and strengthen their resilience to hybrid threats engaging further with the Republic of Moldova on the basis of the recommendations of the hybrid threats survey and by conducting hybrid threats survey with Georgia.
28. The EU also remains committed to supporting the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally-recognised borders and a special status for the Transnistria region.. The EU will support a peaceful Transnistrian **settlement process** through its participation in the 5+2 talks and by continuing Confidence Building Measures and the **EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM)**. In line with the Council Conclusions of 26 February 2018, and in light of the encouraging progress made under the 5+2 process during the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship in Office (2017), the EU will continue to strongly encourage the Republic of Moldova to build on this level of engagement during the Italian OSCE Chairmanship in Office (2018).

29. The EU remains firmly committed to its crucial role in conflict resolution and to its policy of non-recognition and engagement in Georgia's **breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia**, including through the activities of the **EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM)** and the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia. The EU will remain firmly committed to its policy of supporting Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally-recognised borders. Through its monitoring and reporting about developments along the Administrative Boundary Lines between Tbilisi Administered Territory and the breakaway regions, EUMM Georgia continues to deliver against all four core tasks of its mandate, namely monitoring, analysing and reporting on stabilisation and normalisation, contributing to confidence building and to informing EU policy. It also plays an important role of providing unbiased and objective information.
30. The Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine benefit from a **visa free regime** with Schengen countries, since 2014, March and June 2017 respectively. The European Commission published the first report assessing the implementation of the visa liberalisation benchmarks in December 2017. The report concluded that all countries assessed continue to fulfill the benchmarks. The first year of visa liberalisation for Georgia has seen a spike in the number of asylum applications in some EU Member States, to which the Georgian government reacted immediately by stepping up collaboration with affected countries and increasing measures internally to prevent abuses. As regards the Republic of Moldova, the report concluded that immediate actions were necessary in order to ensure continuous and sustainable implementation of benchmarks related to anti-corruption and anti-money laundering. As regards Ukraine the report concluded that overall benchmarks continued to be fulfilled and pointed to a need of the immediate action to safeguard anti-corruption measures already introduced and to allow further progress to be made and to inform its citizens on the rights and obligations entailed in visa-free travel.

31. The EU reaffirms its resolute support for **Ukraine's** independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognised borders. Against the background of a lack of substantial progress in solving the conflict in eastern Ukraine, despite ongoing diplomatic efforts, the EU has maintained its united position vis-à-vis Russia's military intervention, its illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula and the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The EU will remain fully committed to the policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol by Russia. The EU condemns the ongoing militarisation of the peninsula by Russia and the deterioration of the human rights situation there. In this context the EU calls for full compliance with international human rights standards in the peninsula.

32. While supporting the negotiating efforts of the Normandy 4, the Trilateral Contact Group and the OSCE, the EU has also continued to urge for full implementation of the Minsk agreements, aimed at a sustainable and peaceful resolution of the conflict based on respect for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, to avoid any further isolation of those living in areas not currently under the control of the government. Whilst already supporting substantially the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in eastern Ukraine, the EU has also recalled that it stands ready to provide more support once the conditions on the ground allow.

Throughout the last year, the EU has continued monitoring and assisting the reform process in Ukraine that is underpinned by the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement³ which entered into force on 1 September 2017. The EU confirms its support for Ukraine's substantial reform efforts, including financial assistance linked to concrete reform progress. With regard to the Ukrainian law on education, the EU and Ukraine will work in line with the Joint Statement of the 20th EU-Ukraine Summit.

³As provided in the Decision of Heads of State or Government in the EC conclusions on Ukraine of December 2016

33. The **EU Advisory Mission to Ukraine (EUAM)** has been playing a key role in supporting the Ukrainian authorities towards a sustainable reform of the civilian security sector through strategic advice and practical support in order to achieve civilian security services that are efficient, accountable, and enjoy the trust of the public. The opening of a third regional presence of EUAM in Odessa in 2018 will help Ukraine streamline and unify reform efforts throughout the country. A new strategic review of EUAM is scheduled for the second half of 2018.
34. EU and Ukraine will also cooperate on strengthening cyber security and integrity of elections, tackling hybrid threats, including disinformation, and continuing to enhance the work on strategic communication.
35. In relations with those Eastern Partners which do not seek Association Agreements – **Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus** – the EU has proposed differentiated models of cooperation based on common values, fundamental principles and common interests for promoting comprehensive cooperation and sustained reform processes. With Armenia, the EU signed a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement on 24 November 2017 and Partnership Priorities on 21 February 2018. In February 2018 the Council decided to prolong for one year the restrictive measures against Belarus related to human rights violations.
36. Negotiations on a new agreement with Azerbaijan were initiated in February 2017. The new text will upgrade our relationship and develop its full potential reflecting the significant development of relations between the EU and Azerbaijan since the signature of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in 1996.
37. Partnership Priorities will be agreed jointly to replace the outdated ENP Action Plans and, in the case of Belarus, as the first broadly agreed political document.
38. The EU will continue to support the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs for a peaceful resolution of the **Nagorno-Karabakh conflict**, and encourage Azerbaijan and Armenia to reduce tension and re-engage in substantive negotiations to reach a lasting agreement.

39. Managing the relationship with the **Russian Federation** during 2018 will continue to represent a key strategic challenge for the European Union. The EU's relations with Russia in 2018 will continue to be dominated by Russia's violation of international law in Ukraine, including the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula and Russia's actions in destabilising the situation in eastern Ukraine. The EU will remain fully committed to the policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. The European Council of March 2018 condemned in the strongest possible terms the attack with toxic chemicals in Salisbury, agreeing with the United Kingdom government's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible and that there is no plausible alternative explanation, and stated that the use of toxic chemicals as weapons under any circumstances is completely unacceptable, must be systematically and rigorously condemned and constitutes a security threat to all. The EU will remain closely focused on this issue and its implications. Against this background, the EU will strengthen its resilience to disinformation, Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear-related risks and bolster its capabilities to address hybrid threats, including in the areas of cyber, strategic communication, and counter-intelligence. The EU fully supports UNSC resolution 2166 concerning the downing of flight MH-17 and calls on Russia to accept its responsibility and to fully cooperate with all efforts to establish truth, justice and accountability. The EU's policy towards Russia will continue to be guided by the five principles, as confirmed again by the FAC in April 2018 (implementation of the Minsk agreement as the key condition for any substantial change in the EU's stance towards Russia, strengthening relations with Eastern partners and other neighbours, strengthening internal EU resilience, the possibility of selective engagement with Russia on issues of interest to the EU, and the need to engage in people-to-people contacts and support Russian civil society). The balanced and effective implementation of the five principles is in line with the implementation of the Global Strategy and will ensure a united EU approach. All three of the EU's regimes of restrictive measures (travel ban/asset freeze on individuals and entities; measures related to the annexation of the Crimean peninsula; and economic measures) will be subject to a regular review in the course of 2018, but remain linked to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

At the same time, the EU remains committed to maintaining open lines of communication with Russia and selective engagement on international crises, global and other issues that are in the interest of the EU. The situation regarding human rights, rule of law and democracy in Russia continues to be a cause of concern. The importance of the role of the Council of Europe is recalled in this context. The EU will continue to express its serious concerns, in particular as regards measures that restrict fundamental freedoms and restrictions imposed to curtail an independent civil society in Russia. The EU will maintain and enhance its support for people-to-people contacts and Russian civil society as an indispensable element of our relations with Russia.

40. In **Central Asia**, the EU is prioritising good governance and sustainable economic development to strengthen state and societal resilience, security and stability in the region. In the context of reforms and opening-up in Uzbekistan, the **EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting** in Samarkand in November 2017 provided an opportunity for the Central Asian states to reiterate a strong commitment to developing closer links with the EU and to intensify regional cooperation among themselves, as well as with Afghanistan. These new positive dynamics are opening up new cooperation opportunities, which will be reflected in a new **EU Strategy for Central Asia**, intended to be presented in 2019. The EU is conducting with each Central Asian partner a number of bilateral dialogues (including in the field of human rights), reinforced under a new generation of enhanced **Partnership and Cooperation Agreements** (already signed with Kazakhstan, under negotiation with Kyrgyzstan). The EU is also actively promoting regional cooperation, in particular in the areas of rule of law, education, water and environment, as well as connectivity in the Euro-Asian context. Established structures for dialogue such as the **EU-Central Asia High-Level Political and Security Dialogue** (latest meeting in May 2018 in Turkmenistan) meetings are particularly useful to promote a regional approach to common challenges, including in the area of security (a regional conference on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism took place in Tajikistan on 4 May 2018).

41. The EU's response to the challenges and opportunities in the **Arctic** will continue to be based on the implementation of the 2016 Joint Communication on An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic, as well as the EU Global Strategy. The EU engages on Arctic matters both via Arctic-specific forums including the Arctic Council, the Barents-Euro Arctic Council and the Northern Dimension policy framework and via general forums whose decisions affect the Arctic including the UN Framework Convention of Climate Change, Science and Research projects e.g. under Horizon2020 as well as maritime bodies addressing key challenges for the World's oceans. In 2018, the EU will co-host the Second Arctic Science Ministerial together with Germany and Finland. The EU will continue to work in order to become an observer in the Arctic Council.
42. The EU will continue to support the strengthening of the **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe** (OSCE) as a platform for political dialogue between the participating states, especially aiming at finding a sustainable political solution to protracted conflicts and to crises, notably in Ukraine. The EU will strengthen its contribution within and its cooperation with the OSCE on the basis of the Exchange of Letters between the two organisations. The OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and full implementation of the existing commitments in all three dimensions will remain key for the EU's approach to the organisation.

Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

43. In line with the Global Strategy, the EU will contribute to the security of the Union and to the stability of the **MENA region** through a number of interrelated actions and processes. These focus on crisis management, conflict reduction and prevention, commitment to the unity and territorial integrity, countering terrorism and violent extremism, improved governance and sustainable economic growth. There are numerous challenges in these areas within MENA, with several countries currently in the throes of civil strife which also affects many of their own neighbours.

44. Ending the conflict in **Syria** - that every day takes the lives of innocent people and has resulted in millions of refugees and IDPs - continues to remain a high priority for the European Union. The objectives of the EU strategy for Syria, adopted on 3 April 2017, remain valid. The EU believes there cannot be a military solution to the conflict and will continue to support the efforts of the UN Special Envoy to promote a genuine political transition, in line with UNSCR 2254 and the 2012 Geneva communique, within the UN-led Geneva process. Work with the Syrian opposition and civil society will continue as well as support for accountability and transitional justice toward a genuine national reconciliation. To contribute to the enduring defeat of Da'esh, the EU will engage in stabilisation efforts in the areas liberated from Da'esh by the Global Coalition in northeastern Syria. Inclusive, independent and representative local governance will be an important factor for the deployment of more comprehensive, sustainable, and inclusive European stabilisation efforts. The EU-hosted a second Brussels Ministerial Conference for Syria on 24-25 April, co-chaired by the EU and the UN, gathered international support for UN-led peace process and succeeded in mobilising **humanitarian aid** to Syrians inside the country and in the neighbouring countries, including for hosting communities, through pledges totalling \$ 4.4 billion (€ 3.5 billion) for 2018, as well as multi-year pledges of \$ 3.4 billion (€ 2.7 billion) for 2019-2020. The EU will build on the implementation of ENP Partnership Priorities with **Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt** to enhance cooperation in all fields of common interest. The EU will also continue to support Jordan and Lebanon in tackling the consequences of the Syria crisis and to foster stability and economic development in both countries in the spirit of the aforementioned second Brussels Conference. In Egypt, the EU will continue to support the implementation of the G20 Compact with Africa initiative.

45. In the context of a stalled **Middle East Peace Process**, the EU, including through the EU Special Representative's mandate, and in line with relevant UN Security Council resolutions, will continue to engage with the parties and international partners towards a two-state solution that meets both parties' security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967, and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict. As set out in its successive Council conclusions and in the conclusions adopted by the European Council on 14 December 2017, the EU reiterates its firm commitment to the two-state solution and its existing policies, including on Jerusalem. A way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both States, so that aspirations of both sides are fulfilled. The EU recalls that settlements are illegal under international law, as reaffirmed by UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016); they constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible, the EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, such as demolitions and confiscation, including of EU funded projects. The EU is deeply concerned that the continuing cycle of violence has led to loss of human life in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. The EU will continue to work within the Quartet and with other stakeholders in the region to preserve the prospect of a viable two-state solution and to recreate the conditions for meaningful negotiations. In this context, at the end of 2017 and at the beginning of 2018, both parties and Arab partners have been invited to engage in discussion with the Foreign Affairs Council. In the Gaza strip, the EU calls for parties on the ground to act with restraint and facilitate a de-escalation of violence. Swift steps are needed to produce a fundamental change to the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end to the closure of Gaza and a full opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. The EU further urges all Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process, which is an important element for reaching a two state solution. The Palestinian Authority must fully resume its governmental functions in Gaza, as it is an integral part of a future Palestinian State. The EU has repeatedly offered to support this process with all the instruments at its disposal.

46. In the Middle East, the EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (**EUPOL COPPS**) continues to assist the Palestinian Authority in building the institutions of a future State of Palestine in the areas of policing and criminal justice. The EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (**EUBAM RAFAH**), currently located in Tel Aviv, with a standby operational capacity to provide a third-party presence at the Rafah Crossing Point as part of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA agreement) forms part of the confidence-building measures between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The EU has reiterated EUBAM Rafah's readiness to redeploy to Rafah, once conditions allow, to support efforts to reunite Palestinian Territories under a single and legitimate Palestinian Authority; prudent operational planning for a possible redeployment was conducted in this context. Both missions were subject to a comprehensive strategic review in April 2018.
47. In a context of multiple challenges, aggravated by the crises in **Libya** and the **Sahel**, the EU will endeavour to deepen its diplomatic and political commitment in North Africa. The EU will further deepen its Privileged Partnership with **Tunisia**, notably through implementing the comprehensive approach to support democratic transition and economic transformation as reflected in the Strategic Priorities for 2018-2020 adopted in May 2018 and continue developing the joint reflection of the future of the partnership in view of bringing Tunisia closer to the EU. With **Morocco**, the EU will work towards developing the advanced status, in full coherence with the recent jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice. In Tunisia and Morocco, the EU will continue to support the implementation of the G20 Compact with Africa initiative. With **Algeria**, the EU will pursue its implementation on the common Partnership Priorities, as well as cooperation on regional security and stability, in full respect of the provisions of the Association Agreement.

48. In Libya, the EU will continue to support the UN-led political process , in line with the Presidential Statement (PRST) of the Security Council of 6 June 2018, which welcomed the momentum generated by the international conference on Libya hosted in Paris on May 29th, 2018. The EU will continue its work in support of the Libyan people and municipalities and is coordinating with neighbouring countries and regional organisations, in particular within the Libya Quartet.
49. On **migration**, in order to stem irregular migration flows across the Central Mediterranean and to avoid further loss of lives at sea, in the desert, and in the hands of traffickers, the EU will continue action along the Central Mediterranean route as a follow up to the Joint Communication adopted by the Commission and the HR/VP and the Malta Declaration. The EU cooperates closely with the Libyan authorities, the African Union and UN agencies (IOM and UNHCR) to improve conditions at detentions camps for migrants and remove hurdles to an orderly programme of Assisted Voluntary Returns and resettlement for those in need of protection. It also continues training programmes and monitoring for Libyan maritime patrol officers who counter dangerous illegal crossings and thus avoid further loss of lives at sea. Particular attention will be given to work in the framework of the AU-EU-UN Taskforce, created in the margins of the November 2017 AU-EU Summit and the follow-up to the December 2017 Brussels Taskforce meeting, which has substantially reinforced cooperation with Libya and the countries of origin and transit, notably by stepping up assisted voluntary returns and transit evacuation and resettlements from Libya. A key objective remains breaking the business model of smugglers, by also stepping up work with Libya's North African and sub-Saharan neighbours. The EU will pursue its close monitoring of the situation along the Eastern and Western Mediterranean in light of increases in migration flows along those routes.

50. This remains the focus of our work in the Mediterranean, with **EUNAVFOR MED (ENFM) Operation SOPHIA**. Launched in 2015, ENFM Operation SOPHIA is also part of the EU's comprehensive approach to migration and it complements EU action, which includes regional cooperation, policies on migration and asylum, humanitarian aid, diplomatic action, conflict prevention and crisis management. ENFM Operation SOPHIA, whose main task is to actively disrupt the migrant smugglers and human traffickers' business model, also contributes to enhancing security by training the Libyan Navy and Coast Guard, implementing the UN arms embargo on Libya and gathering information on illegal trafficking, including oil smuggling, and has also contributed to the saving of thousands of lives in the Mediterranean. The mandates of ENFM Operation SOPHIA, European Union Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in Libya (**EUBAM Libya**) and the EU Liaison and Planning Cell (EULPC) are being reviewed in 2018. On 17 July 2017, the Council extended EUBAM Libya's mandate until 31 December 2018 to assist in a comprehensive civilian security sector reform planning process with a view to preparing for a possible civilian CSDP Mission, and to engage with and assist the Libyan authorities in the fields of border management, law enforcement and the broader criminal justice system. On 5 December 2017, EUBAM established a "light presence" in Tripoli which has enabled the Mission to enhance its mapping of the relevant Libyan actors and to increase its overall engagement with the Libyan partners on the ground. EUBAM has played a strong coordination role for the EU and other international organisations' activities on the ground. Relevant proposals for more operational support are part of the review to be presented to Member States in autumn 2018 with subsequent revision of EUBAM's mandate and operational plan prior to its end of mandate in December 2018.

51. In **Iraq** , following the adoption of the new EU-Iraq Strategy in January and after the EU co-chaired Kuwait Conference for Reconstruction in Iraq in February, the EU will continue to support the Iraqi federal government's efforts to address the critical stabilisation, reconciliation and reconstruction challenges following the military defeat of Da'esh and after the May 2018 Parliamentary elections. It will seek an integrated approach that places Iraqi citizens at its centre and addresses the root causes of the crisis. This includes support to the rule of law through the **EU Advisory Mission in support of Security Sector Reform in Iraq (EUAM Iraq)** launched in November 2017, which will provide specific support to the civilian aspects of security sector reform and the implementation of the Iraqi National Security Strategy through the Office of the National Security Advisor and the Ministry of Interior. The Mission reached full operational capability in March 2018. A Strategic Review of the mission was presented to MSs in June and is currently under consideration. This will help shape an ambitious and progressive reinforcement of the mission for the next 18 months. The current mandate expires in October 2018.
52. The EU will remain actively engaged in fostering dialogue and cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), including bilaterally with the GCC Member States, despite current constraints affecting intra-GCC relations. In this regard the EU will continue to work with all parties in support of Kuwaiti mediation efforts in order to de-escalate tensions.

53. On **Yemen**, the ongoing protracted conflict continues to produce devastating humanitarian consequences for the country and its population, which is now the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. The EU will continue to lend unrelenting support to the efforts of the UN Secretary General and the new UN Special Envoy for Yemen in order to achieve a prompt resumption of political negotiations, and an effective lifting of current restrictions on trade and humanitarian flows into the whole country. The EU will also consider reinforcing the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM).
54. On the regional side, the EU will consolidate its interaction with the League of Arab States (LAS) notably following the participation of the HR/VP to the 29th Summit of the League of Arab States (LAS) in Dhahran, **KSA** in April, also with a view to hold the first Euro-Arab Summit. In parallel the EU will continue its already strong collaboration with and support to the **Union for the Mediterranean** as a key platform for regional dialogue and a catalyser for integration initiatives and projects.

Iran

55. 2018 proved to be a decisive year for relations with Iran and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). As the culmination of 12 years of diplomacy facilitated by the EU, and following unanimous endorsement by the UN Security Council through Resolution 2231, the JCPOA is crucial for the security of the European Union and for the region. Given her mandate following UNSCR 2231, the HR/VP continues to coordinate the implementation of the agreement.

56. Following the statement of the US President on 8 May announcing the US withdrawal from the agreement, the EU has worked, together with Member States, at preserving the JCPOA as a key element of the international non-proliferation architecture. The EU remains committed to the continued full and effective implementation of all parts of the JCPOA, as long as Iran continues to respect its commitments under the deal.
57. As the lifting of nuclear-related sanctions leading to the normalisation of trade and economic relations with Iran constitutes an essential part of the agreement, the EU has worked on avenues to preserve the interests of businesses and investors who – acting in good faith based on commitments made by the international community and endorsed by the Security Council – are choosing to do legitimate business with Iran.
58. At the same time, the EU has continued to address issues of concern outside the JCPOA, notably Iran's role in the region, ballistic missiles or Human Rights. As such the EU chaired a number of meetings with Iran on regional issues seeking constructive and tangible results, such as on the situation in Yemen.
59. Some of these concerns are addressed through sanctions which include designation of Iranian individuals and entities. In addition, as regards proliferation a number of sectoral measures are still in place including: an arms embargo, sanctions related to missile technology, restrictions on certain nuclear-related transfers and activities, and provisions concerning certain metals and software which are subject to an authorisation regime. EU restrictive measures vis-à-vis Iran include the provisions of relevant UNSCRs.
60. As the implementation of the JCPOA has enabled the establishment of a regular EU-Iran High Level Dialogue, and following the April 2016 Joint Statement of HR/VP and Foreign Minister of Iran, the EU and Iran continue to progress on concrete projects of cooperation in a number of areas, including trade and the economy, energy, environment and climate change, migration and humanitarian issues, education and research. Discussions continue on human rights, also following encouraging developments as regards decisions on the non-application of the death penalty for a number of drug-related offences.

Africa

61. 2018 will be a year of opportunity for the even closer EU-Africa partnership as the continent embarks on an ambitious agenda for continental integration, with many occasions to reaffirm and enhance engagement at bilateral, regional and continental level. The EU's engagement with Africa will focus on the follow-up of the **fifth AU-EU summit** (Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, end of November 2017) which was focused on investing in youth. Both sides agreed on a number of priority areas which will guide EU action in 2018 and beyond: (i) Investing in People – education, science technology and skills development; (ii) Strengthening Resilience, Peace, Security and Governance; (iii) Mobility and Migration and (iv) Mobilising Investments for African structural sustainable transformation. The meeting of the African Union and the European Union Commissions on 23 May enabled concrete follow up of the Summit, notably the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on a Peace and Security Framework and discussions on a new framework for Continental Dialogue on Migration, which will pave the way for a strengthened engagement over the next years in order to meet the new challenges the two continents are facing. The implementation of decisions taken at the Abidjan summit will be of particular importance both in 2018 as in subsequent years, namely as regards initiatives contained in the Summit declaration. These include adoption of the Abidjan Action Plan as well as establishing the appropriate follow-up structures. The start of the negotiations on the future relations "**Post-Cotonou**" with African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) Group of States will have to capture this renewed partnership more strategically.

62. The EU will continue working with the **African Union** (AU) and will pursue a political dialogue at ministerial level with the holding of a first annual EU/AU ministerial meeting due to take place late 2018/early 2019. The EU will engage with the AU, regional organisations and bilateral African partners, including civil society organisations and the private sector, to develop the environment that would foster investment and job creation with the needs and ambitions of a young population in mind. Collaboration between African and European researchers and innovators in fields such as food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture, climate change and sustainable energy will further be promoted. Engagement in the field of international peace and security will also deserve special attention, and in particular further support to the African Peace and Security Architecture, which has been enlarged recently to encompass new African led initiatives including the Lake Chad Basin Commission-led Multinational Joint Task Force and the G5 Sahel Joint Force. Trilateral cooperation with the AU and the UN will be widened both horizontally and geographically building on the successful experience of the Joint AU-EU-UN Taskforce to Address the Migrant Situation in Libya set up at the margins of the AU-EU Summit in November 2017.
63. The EU will also continue supporting the implementation of the G20 Compact with Africa initiative in Ghana, Ivory Coast, Benin, Rwanda, Senegal, Ethiopia, Togo and Guinea. A specific contribution from the EU will be the support of further investments through the European External Investment Plan.

64. With persisting security vulnerabilities linked to violent extremism, piracy, terrorist attacks and organized crime, work on the comprehensive implementation of the regional strategies and action plans for the **Sahel, Gulf of Guinea** and the **Horn of Africa** will continue, in a joint effort. Contributing to regional and international efforts for peace and stability – particularly in **Mali** and **Somalia**, which are fundamental for the stability of their wider regions - will remain a key priority in 2018. The EU will support economic and security progress in Somalia that will promote a gradual shift towards greater ownership by Somali actors. In the Horn, the EU will continue to utilise its convening power to bring the member countries of IGAD together in ministerial format, with a view to encourage regional cohesion and resilience. The EU will aim to engage external actors on maritime security issues as a means of contributing to stabilising the wider Horn region. The EU is increasing its attention to the adverse external influences on both sides of the Red Sea on the stability of the wider region. The EU is exploring options to step up its engagement with partners in the **Red Sea** region, in order to promote stability while protecting the EU' interests more effectively.

65. With regards to open conflicts, work will continue to consolidate progress and to foster reconciliation and peace in the **Central African Republic** and to avoid the outbreak of large scale violence in **South Sudan** by bringing the parties back to a political process. Continued attention will be paid to addressing security and migration-related challenges in Sahel and Northern Africa (particularly Libya); exploring and enhancing cross-regional synergies and cooperation in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea region with African and Gulf countries in areas such as security, economic development and addressing irregular migration; and boosting the effectiveness of regional action in addressing the challenges faced by countries in the Lake Chad Basin, including the fight against Boko Haram and support the existing initiatives aiming at stabilising the region through enforced cross-border cooperation such as the Forum of Governors who met in Maiduguri in May 2018 and the upcoming Lake Chad Conference in Berlin in September 2018 to address the crisis and its root causes by a multi-faceted approach. Sustained work with the G5 Sahel will remain a priority, confirmed also in the context of the ministerial dialogue and most recently with the High-level International Conference on the Sahel, in Brussels, 23 February 2018. Follow up will be given to the outcome of the Sahel Conference in political, security and development terms. The issue of maritime security will need to be closely monitored, in the light of the alarming trends of piracy and armed robbery at sea (including "kidnap for ransom" events) in particular off the **Nigerian** coasts. The EU is committed to supporting stability and progress in the West Africa region, as well as the work of the Economic Community of West African States/ECOWAS, namely by encouraging dialogue and equitable solutions in countries such as Togo and Cameroon and by fostering democratic consolidation in countries such as the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. Finally, in the Great Lakes the EU will continue to use the instruments at its disposal to support international efforts to resolve the crisis in **Burundi**, in compliance with the Arusha Agreement, and to achieve credible and inclusive elections in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, allowing a resumption of longer term efforts at development and regional integration.

66. Efforts to draw together the impact of the several **CSDP missions and operations** currently deployed **in Africa** are progressing, with the support of Member States for the implementation of the first phase of the regionalisation of CSDP in the Sahel region. CSDP operations and missions cover a broad range of activities and competencies. CSDP features in the EU's efforts to work with partners towards the common goal of stemming irregular migration at source and in transit countries in the Sahel. Stability in the Sahel region is enhanced through CSDP missions in Mali and Niger (**EUCAP Sahel Mali, EUTM Mali, EUCAP Sahel Niger**) in close cooperation with host governments. The strengthening of an integrated approach in the region builds on efforts under CSDP (e.g. training and capacity-building) and goes hand in hand with the strengthening of coordination between CSDP missions in the Sahel, with new actions like the stability action in Central Mali on the basis of Article 28 of the Treaty on European Union, and with projects financed under other EU instruments such as the EU Trust Fund for Africa and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, and in particular with those Member States' projects in the region which will be an integral part of this approach including in the context of the initiative for capacity building in support of security and development (CBSD). For the first time, a stabilisation action under Article 28 TEU is ongoing on the field and provides advice and assistance to the Malian authorities, to consolidate and support democracy, by enhancing governance, supporting the public administration and improving regional and local capacities. The **CSDP regional approach in Sahel** is in line with the emphasis in the Global Strategy on strengthening cross border cooperation in the face of complex issues that increasingly require a regional approach. A thorough analysis of the gaps and needs in the five Sahel countries has been carried out and provides the basis for a Regional Implementation Plan. In addition to the strengthening of national capabilities by CSDP actions, the regionalisation of CSDP in the Sahel aims at strengthening, as appropriate, the civilian and military support to cross-border cooperation, the regional cooperation structures – in particular those of the G5 Sahel – and the capacity and ownership of the G5 countries to address the security challenges in the region.

This regionalisation approach will also take into account the EU efforts, including CSDP, to stabilise Libya. The aim is, among others, to extend training and advisory support for security and defence forces to G5 Sahel countries, with particular emphasis on cross border cooperation and support of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, using as a starting point current deployments in Mali and Niger. Within the framework of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2391, the EU will work on its commitment to engage with and support the G5 Sahel countries on the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force. The EU CSDP Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (**EUTM RCA**) is demonstrating the strong EU commitment and is contributing to the restoration of peace and stability in the country. This contribution is broadly acknowledged by the UN and the CAR authorities, though President Touadera has requested more support from the EU to build the CAR internal security forces capabilities. Military engagement exists on the seas off the Horn of Africa (**EUNAVFOR Operation ATALANTA**) countering piracy to great effect and on land with the Somalia Training Mission (**EUTM Somalia**), based in Mogadishu, developing the capacity of the Somali National Army. **EUCAP Somalia** is a civilian mission headquartered in Mogadishu and with elements in Nairobi focused on Somali maritime civilian law-enforcement. Further enhancement of the EU's engagement in the security sector in Somalia is being considered in order to empower National structures in advance of AMISOM's draw-down in the framework of the transition plan elaborated by the Federal Government of Somalia currently under elaboration. AMISOM has been supported by the EU since 2007 and its transformation to adapt to the new context remains critical to support a successful transition of the national security to the Somali security forces. Coordinated international support for its transition to Somali security forces beyond 2018 will be paramount to the return of security in the whole country.

67. The EU will continue to work together with regional and international partners with regards to **democratic consolidation, promotion and protection of human rights** and to prevent further violence in the more fragile countries, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic. Contentious political processes in the past years, e.g. Burundi and **Gabon**, have strained our political dialogue, further highlighting the need for increased investment in the long term consolidation of rule of law and democratic governance.
68. The EU will continue to follow closely upcoming electoral processes, deploying electoral observers for a number of elections during 2018. The EU will continue to manage relations in a way which is consistent with the essential elements of the Cotonou Agreement and which responds to each specific context.

69. Increased attention will be paid to promoting the **economic and investment aspects** of relations with Africa. Efforts to have the Economic Partnership Agreements with West Africa and the countries of the Southern African Development Community and the East African Community signed, ratified and implemented will continue. Strong economic diplomacy, including business-to-business interaction and accommodating the investment promotion efforts of Member States, will be built into bilateral political dialogue. The External Investment Plan will start being implemented.

Sustained efforts to implement the Joint Valetta Action Plan will be continued in a comprehensive manner in a spirit of partnership and covering all aspects of **migration**, capitalising on concrete achievements of Khartoum and Rabat processes, as appropriate. Following the AU-EU Summit in Abidjan (November 2017), further efforts will continue to reinforce dialogue on migration and mobility at continental level. While respecting fully the international law and EU and national competences, increased cooperation will be pursued with countries of origin, transit and destination aiming to address root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, tackle related cross-border challenges, continue national work on regular migration and mobility, save lives, ensure protection, stem irregular migration, enhance cooperation on return, readmission and sustainable reintegration, and address vulnerabilities of people subject to forced displacements. In parallel, those efforts will be consistently pursued jointly with African countries and financed in the framework of the implementation of the EU Trust Fund for Africa.

70. Ministerial dialogues notably with **Nigeria, Ethiopia, Angola** and **Cape Verde** are being planned to step up EU's engagement with these partners. A summit with **South Africa** (the first since 2013), also marking 10 years of strategic partnership with the EU, would cement the bilateral relationship and could give a particularly healthy boost to economic engagement. The EU will continue to build on the ministerial dialogues with regional organisations (e.g. Economic Community of West African States/ECOWAS, Southern Africa Development Community/SADC, Intergovernmental Authority on Development/IGAD) in order to make progress on the implementation of the joint trade and investment agendas and enhance joint contribution to peace, stability and democratisation processes in the regions concerned.
71. In view of the expiry of the **Cotonou Partnership Agreement** in 2020 formal negotiations with the 79 ACP countries on the future of relations will be launched in 2018.

Americas

72. The transatlantic relationship remains vital for global and foreign policy challenges. The EU is committed to the strategic partnership with **the United States**, based on shared values, interests, and willingness to play a responsible role in world affairs. The EU will continue working strategically with the US Administration and Congress in taking our common work forward in all areas of mutual interest (Syria, DPRK, Russia/Ukraine, Western Balkans, energy policy), while remaining true to our values. The EU will continue to engage with the United States in search for cooperative solutions on global challenges, including on counter terrorism, cyber, climate change, migration, global governance issues and multilateralism.
73. The strong EU-US bilateral **cooperation in security and defence**, complementing **EU-NATO** cooperation, will be further developed by stepping up our military-to-military ties and establishing forms of operational cooperation (exchange of information; CSDP Missions and Operations; Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement). Consultations are ongoing with the aim of launching a dedicated EU-US security and defence dialogue. Strengthening EU Members States defence capabilities through the EU (PESCO, CARD, European Defence Fund) will also enhance the capabilities potentially available to NATO and, for those Member States concerned, contribute to Trans-Atlantic burden-sharing. The EU and the US have developed and are expanding excellent bilateral military-to-military cooperation. In Africa, this partnership provides added value in terms of the information exchange and strategic and tactical cooperation on the ground. The annual CSDP Symposium in Washington constitutes a solid basis for EU-US engagement in the area of security and defence.

74. The **EU-Canada** strategic partnership is based on shared common values, a long history of close cooperation and strong people-to-people ties. The provisional entry into force of the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) in April and September 2017 respectively gave the relationship an additional boost. Following up from the first meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee held in December 2017 the EU will work with Canada to I) strengthen the EU-Canada bilateral relationship, notably in the three priority areas of security and defence, the empowerment of women and girls, and cooperation around the world II) enhance foreign policy coordination on topical issues like Ukraine or DPRK and III) address global challenges and opportunities such as climate change and human rights. The signature of the Agreement on the Security of Classified Information in December 2017, opens up new cooperative avenues, e.g. in the field of exchanging lessons identified/learned in operations and missions, as well as Canadian participation as observers in EU-led crisis management exercises. Canadian contributions to EU CSDP Missions (EUPOL COPPS and EUAM Ukraine) as well as the annual bilateral security and defence dialogue and the EU CSDP symposia in Ottawa constitute further important elements of our strategic partnership. The EU and Canada will continue its close cooperation also in the framework of G7 and G20.
75. The EU will continue to strengthen its strategic partnership with **Latin America and the Caribbean** at bilateral, sub-regional and regional level. A Joint Communication by the High Representative and the European Commission setting out the vision on relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean is to be published in the latter half of 2018 and will serve to demonstrate why and how the partnership between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean should be enhanced and deepened over the next 10 years. The EU will help enhance the resilience of LAC partners as a part of broader efforts to address global challenges.

76. As part of the objective to **sustain close partnerships** with Latin American countries, the EU has the ambition to conclude in 2018 the negotiations on the **EU-Mercosur** bi-regional Association Agreement that have been going on since the year 2000 and intensified since mid-2016. The agreement will consolidate excellent relations the EU already has with each of the four Mercosur countries and which the EU intends to keep on developing in parallel with the region-to-region association.
77. The strategic partnership with **Brazil** remains an important framework through which the EU is constantly increasing cooperation with Brazil in the international arena. In 2018 the EU will also work closely with **Argentina** during its first G20-Presidency.
78. With **Mexico**, a strategic partner and an important multilateral player, the EU aims at completing negotiations on the modernisation of the Global Agreement at the earliest possible time, which will provide an even wider framework for strengthened cooperation. The EU will pursue negotiations for a modernised Association Agreement with **Chile** started in November 2017.
79. This year will also see the launch of negotiations on the **post-Cotonou framework** which will determine the future of EU's relations with **the Caribbean**. The EU has been engaging with the region ahead of the negotiations in order to increase understanding of common interests and priorities.
80. Putting in practice the **EU-Cuba** Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement which started being provisionally applied in November 2017 will be among the main priorities for the coming year.

81. In **Colombia** the EU will continue to play an important role in supporting the peace process, including through the efforts of the Special Envoy of the High Representative and projects to support rural development and the reincorporation of ex-FARC combatants under the EU's Trust Fund for Colombia. Following general and presidential elections in the country, the EU aims to engage as quickly as possible with the new government and President in the autumn.
82. The EU will continue to contribute to reconstruction in Caribbean region in the aftermath of natural disasters. In **Haiti**, the EU will continue its support to improve the internal situation, through development cooperation and political dialogue aiming at promoting reforms and stability.
83. In the light of the worsening of the situation in **Venezuela**, and in particular of the election of a National Constituent Assembly viewed as lacking legitimacy and which has de facto taken over the prerogatives of the National Assembly, the European Union decided to impose targeted individual sanctions against persons responsible for human rights violations and/or for undermining the rule of law. At the same time, the EU is continuing to advocate a peaceful and inclusive solution to the current severe crisis affecting the country, coordinating its efforts with relevant international partners and maintaining open channels of communication with all relevant actors in the country. It is also stepping up its efforts to address the most urgent needs of Venezuelans affected by the crisis (shortages of foods and medicines, etc.).
84. Pending the entry into force of the **EU-Central American Association Agreement**, the EU will continue enhancing cooperation with Central American countries in all areas of common interest, in particular, in promoting democracy and human rights, sustainable development, good governance and the rule of law.
85. The Summit between the EU and the **Community of Latin America and the Caribbean States** (CELAC) due to be held at the end of October 2017 in San Salvador was cancelled, but the EU and CELAC subsequently agreed to hold a Foreign Ministers Meeting in Brussel on 16 and 17 July 2018. The Foreign Ministers Meeting will serve to reinforce the bi-regional political and economic relationship with a like-minded region, focusing on areas such as security, economic development, trade, climate change and human rights.

Asia-Pacific

86. In **East Asia**, the EU intends to continue its close cooperation with our strategic partners **Japan** and the **Republic of Korea (RoK)**, which face important security and stability challenges, which also have implications for the EU. The EU remains fully committed to concluding both a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Japan at the EU-Japan Summit in July, and aims to improve coordination of sectoral policy dialogues between the EU and Japan through the Joint Committee to be established by the SPA. Beyond existing forms of cooperation in the security sphere, which include support to EU crisis management missions in Africa and joint counter-piracy exercises in the West Indian Ocean, the EU aims to strengthen dialogue with Japan on non-proliferation and weapons of mass destruction, counterterrorism and maritime security. The Framework Agreement for the Participation of RoK in EU Crisis Management Operations continues to be the main framework for joint operations, where the EU welcomes the RoK's contributions. The EU will also remain engaged with RoK through our Dialogue on Non-proliferation and Disarmament.
87. As regards **China**, the EU will continue to focus on the implementation of its China strategy adopted on 18 July 2016, an ambitious guiding policy framework stating that the EU's engagement with China will be practical and pragmatic, staying true to European interests and values. The EU expects China to assume responsibilities in line with its global impact and to support the rules-based international order. The promotion of human rights and the rule of law will continue to be a core part of the EU's engagement with China.

88. In 2018, the EU will continue to remain committed with China to address global and regional issues such as climate change and security threats. The EU will pursue action-oriented discussions on Iran, the Middle East, Africa, the Korean Peninsula and Afghanistan in upholding the Rules based international system. The EU will encourage China to bear a greater share of the global burden on migration, post-conflict reconstruction, and humanitarian efforts. The EU will continue to seek a new donor-to-donor relationship with China based on SDGs implementation. In the China strategy, the EU reaffirmed its support to the continued implementation of the "one country, two systems" principle in Hong Kong and Macao. In the framework of its "one-China" policy, the EU will also continue to develop its relations with **Taiwan** and to support the shared values underpinning Taiwan's system of governance.
89. In 2018, the EU will pursue to deepen its cooperation with **Mongolia** in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) which entered into force on 1 November 2017 as well as in the context of the opening of the new EU Delegation in Ulaanbaatar (2 November 2017).

90. The EU will continue to monitor developments and, when need be, take appropriate action regarding the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea** in terms of its nuclear, other WMD and ballistic missile programmes and human rights concerns. The EU's priorities for 2018 will be to maintain the pressure on the DPRK, while keeping the communication channels open in line with its policy of "critical engagement". In addition to ensuring the full implementation of the existing UN Security Council resolutions on DPRK, as well as the full and timely transposition of any further UN Security Council resolutions, the EU will continue implementing and adopting when necessary additional EU autonomous measures. The EU conducted a second round of demarches towards third countries to emphasise the need for a robust implementation of UN sanctions and offer concrete support for capacity building on sanctions enforcement, where needed. While welcoming any potential progress in terms of the inter-Korean dialogue and DPRK-US relations, the EU will continue its Critical Engagement, as a mean to promote the DPRK's full compliance with UNSC Resolutions in terms of abandoning its nuclear, WMD and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and progress on all other issues.

91. As regards **South-East Asia**, the EU and **ASEAN** celebrated in 2017 the 40th anniversary of the establishment of official relations. President of the European Council attended in November an ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit in Manila, and was also invited, for the first time, to the East Asia Summit lunch as Guest of the Chair. In August 2017, HR/VP attended in Manila the annual ASEAN-EU Post-Ministerial Conference with ASEAN Foreign Ministers, which adopted the second ASEAN-EU Plan of Action 2018-2022. In 2018, the EU will keep up its efforts towards closer cooperation with the EAS and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting +, with a view towards future accession. Work continued towards the signature of the FTAs with **Singapore** and with **Vietnam**. The **EU-Philippines** Partnership and Cooperation Agreement entered into force in March 2018. The EU expressed its concerns about human rights issues in the Philippines on numerous occasions. As regards **Myanmar/Burma**, the EU will continue to address the issue of accountability in the dialogue with Myanmar and within relevant UN fora and mechanisms, in particular the Human Rights Council (HRC). The EU will also keep up pressure over the Government of Myanmar towards cooperation with the Fact Finding Mission set by the UNHRC, and will continue to monitor and assess the situation in view of proposing additional measures as necessary. The EU welcomed the arrangement between **Bangladesh** and Myanmar on return and urged that it be fully implemented according to international standards with a strong role for the UNHCR. The EU suspended some development assistance to **Cambodia** in 2017 following the deterioration of the political situation; further measures would be envisaged if the situation does not improve. Following the Conclusions of the EU Council of December 2017, the EU resumed political contacts at all levels with **Thailand** in order to facilitate meaningful dialogue, including on human rights and fundamental freedoms and the road towards democracy.

92. As regards **South Asia**, the EU will continue to work with **India** on enhancing cooperation on foreign policy and security issues, including counterterrorism, cyber, maritime and global issues. Work started on the preparation of a new EU Strategy on India, putting forward the EU's vision to strengthen the Strategic Partnership based on common values and principles in order to bring it to its full potential. As regards **Bangladesh**, cooperation focused on addressing the Rohingya refugee crisis, on countering terrorism, violent extremism and radicalisation and on implementing Standard Operating Procedures agreed for the return of irregular migrants. The EU adopted and implements a new **Afghanistan** Strategy, started to provisionally implement the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development with Afghanistan and continued to follow-up on the political and financial commitments made at the 2016 Brussels Conference on Afghanistan. The EU will participate in the Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan at the end of November 2018 in Geneva, and will continue to seek to facilitate opportunities towards a regional consensus on peace and to engage on concrete regional cooperation initiatives in support of peace. Negotiations on the new EU–Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP) were finalised in view of the expiry of the 5-Year Engagement Plan at the end of 2017. The SEP aims at strengthening cooperation in the following areas: Peace and Security; Democracy, Rule of Law, Good Governance, and Human Rights; Migration and Mobility; Trade and Investment; Sustainable Development including Energy; Education and Culture; and Science and Technology.
93. The Joint Communication on the EU strategy on connecting Europe and Asia was in preparation, on the basis of a mapping exercise conducted in 2017 and aiming at enabling the EU to engage with partners in Europe and Asia, on the basis of sustainable connectivity.
94. The EU will enhance its security cooperation in and with Asia, based on the Council Conclusions adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council in May 2018. The priority areas identified are: maritime security, cyber security, counter-terrorism, hybrid threats, conflict prevention, non-proliferation and the development of regional cooperative orders.

95. In **Oceania**, the EU has envisaged raising the EU's profile and presence in the Pacific, continuing the strategic reflection on the EU-ACP relations after 2020. The EU also launched FTA negotiations with **Australia** and **New Zealand** and foresees the implementation of the Framework Agreements with both countries. The EU will continue security dialogues with Australia and New Zealand and work with both partners on implementation of their respective Framework Participation Agreement facilitating their possible participation in the EU-led crisis operations.
96. Preparations started for the 12th **ASEM** Summit that will take place on 18-19 October 2018 in Brussels, aiming at enhancing the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) dialogue through engagement on key areas of global concern such as shared security challenges, climate change, counter-terrorism and cyber security as well as ruled-based international order and sustainable connectivity.

(3) GLOBAL ISSUES

97. In line with its Global Strategy, the EU will continue to defend and promote effective multilateralism and human rights at a time of increasing uncertainty and contestation of well-established basic rules and norms of the international system. Against a background of ever more complex global challenges, efforts to promote change and reform in the ways the **United Nations** works to be able to tackle the conflicts, threats and megatrends of today will be stepped up. **The EU-UN Partnership** is stronger than ever, covering comprehensively the full range of the UN's work and cuts across the full political spectrum of actions. The 73rd UN General Assembly beginning in September 2018 will provide an opportunity to project EU priorities. The EU will continue to mobilise support for the UN Secretary-General's ambitious reform agenda and his determination to ensure that the UN delivers across all pillars: peace and security, development and human rights. This will include inter alia the conclusion in 2018 of the three reform strands (peace and security; development system; management) as well as enhanced support and implementation of the UN Secretary General focus on prevention and the notion of sustaining peace. The EU will support and shape UN action to integrate conflict prevention, governance and the rule of law, development, human rights and Responsibility to Protect in tackling the challenges of sustaining peace. The principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is at the core of EU's primary goal, namely to allow our populations to live in peace and security. The EU will further engage in strengthening partnerships and find ways to address pressing challenges such as on international peace and security, migration, promotion of global governance and effective multilateralism. The AU-EU-UN trilateral cooperation started in 2017 will be further promoted during 2018.

98. In 2018 external aspects of **migration** will continue to be a major priority for the EU. The EU reaffirms its commitment to a comprehensive and geographically balanced approach on migration. The EU will continue to work with its partners to turn mobility and regular migration into opportunities, stem irregular migration and address its root causes, in full respect of international law and EU and national competences. These issues will be addressed between countries of origin, transit and destination, in a spirit of genuine partnership and shared responsibility. Two overall strands of work will be of particular importance. I) Following the adoption of the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants in 2016, the EU and its Member States, as appropriate, have established strong presence and leadership in the two distinct processes leading to the development of a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and of a Global Compact on Refugees by end 2018. The EU and its Member States, as appropriate, will continue actively engaging in the UN processes, shaping their content and placing migration and refugees firmly on the UN agenda. The Global Compacts present a unique opportunity to bring forward a common approach on migration and forced displacement at the global level. The EU underlines its strong and continued commitment to the establishment of robust, balanced and inclusive Global Compacts as political and non-legally binding cooperative frameworks to address movements of migrants and refugees. II) Continued implementation of the Partnership Framework approach remains important, while respecting EU and national competences.. This goes in terms of continued engagement in view of fully exploiting the spirit of the Partnership Framework in our migration-engagement in the Central Mediterranean, the Middle East, and countries in Africa and Asia.

99. As UN processes such as the **Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** focusing increasingly on implementation, the EU will lead efforts to drive ahead with global implementation of concrete commitments.
100. With 2018 as a crucial year to operationalize the **Paris Agreement**, the EU will continue to lead the way in the global pursuit of climate action. At COP24 in Katowice, Poland, we are committed to agreeing on the governing rules enabling swift and full implementation of (for) the Paris Agreement (concluding the so called Paris Agreement Work Programme), covering all items. As well as driving forward global climate action on the ground, working hand in hand with partners from all regions, including non-state actors, we will also participate fully in the different phases of the first global conversation on mitigation ambition since the Paris Climate conference in 2015, the so-called "Talanoa Dialogue".
101. The EU is stepping up its work to confront direct and indirect implications of climate change for international security and stability, chiefly affecting those in most fragile and vulnerable situations, contributing to the loss of livelihoods, reinforcing environmental pressures and disaster risk, forcing the displacement of people and exacerbating the threat of social and political unrest. These issues were recognised most recently by the Council in its conclusions on climate diplomacy on 26 February 2018 and were the theme of a high level event convened by the HR/VP in Brussels on 22 June.

102. To support all of these efforts, we will reinforce our EU **Climate Diplomacy**, working through multiple policy communities and the full range of regional and sub-regional actors, with strengthened strategic communication to better project and promote the EU's high level of ambition and commitment.
103. The EU will continue to advance with the implementation of the EU **Economic Diplomacy** (EED) Guidelines issued to EU Delegations in July 2017 through the endorsement and implementation of jointly identified EED priorities and action plans for some 90 third countries. These initiatives are aimed at pursuing strategic EU economic interests, in particular creating jobs and growth and they benefit from the close involvement of the EIB, EU Member States and EU Business Organisations.

104. The EU will continue to support the implementation of **2030 Agenda** and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in partner countries. The new European Consensus on development, adopted in 2017, provides the EU common framework for development cooperation, in line with the 2030 Agenda. The European Consensus on Development highlights important cross-cutting elements such as: youth, gender equality, mobility and migration, sustainable energy and climate change, environment and pollution, investment and trade, good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights, digitalisation, innovative engagement with more advanced developing countries and mobilising and using domestic resources. It also recognises the importance of the nexus with security, migration, climate change and humanitarian action. The mid-term review of EU thematic and geographic programming takes into account with Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy and the European Consensus priorities. The EU and its Member States will produce a Joint Synthesis report on the implementation of the new Consensus by the UN High Level Political Forum in 2019. As for the EU's longer term vision for the implementation of the SDGs in Europe and the world, President Juncker announced a sixth Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030', which is expected to be published in the second half of 2018. The EU also contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with the European External Investment Plan (EIP), which leverages investment in partner countries in Africa and the Neighbourhood. The EIP promotes inclusive growth, job creation and sustainable development, thereby tackling some of the root causes of irregular migration. As highlighted in the European Consensus on Development, working better together through joint programming is also key to delivering on the 2030 Agenda, by bringing together the EU and its Member States' resources and capacities and increasing their collective impact.

105. The EU action in **promoting human rights and supporting democracy worldwide** will continue to be anchored in the implementation of the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. According to mid-term review carried out in 2017, the Action Plan remains a key element of the CFSP and has been instrumental in fostering a more coherent approach to mainstreaming human rights in all areas of EU external action. Against this backdrop, the EU human rights and democracy policy in external action will continue to be oriented towards empowering third country actors and regional bodies, boosting their ownership and resilience. In line with the Consensus, the EU and its Member States will implement a rights-based approach (RBA) to development cooperation. Support for civil society and human rights defenders will continue to be a key priority. The EU will pay particular attention to the specific risks faced by women, indigenous human rights defenders and other human rights defenders in vulnerable situations, including the LGBTI human rights defenders. The EU will remain a staunch supporter of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, including for journalists and bloggers, and freedom of association and expression more generally. Freedom of religion or belief also remains a priority and the EU will continue to condemn attacks against religious minorities. It will unequivocally condemn the indiscriminate and atrocious attacks against them. On the 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute, the EU will further strengthen its support to, and promotion of, the International Criminal Court (ICC). The EU will continue to protect effectively the human rights of migrants and refugees, paying particular attention to the specific risks faced by those in vulnerable situation. Over 2018, work will continue to develop economic, social and cultural rights, inter alia by developing human rights guidelines on clean drinking water and sanitation, and the EU will continue to promote the full implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human rights.

As regards EU support to security structures, including through CSDP missions and operations, further steps will be taken to develop a due diligence framework. At the multilateral level, the EU will continue to advocate the universality of human rights, working in particular through the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council, as well as the Council of Europe. The continuing focus on advocating the universality of human rights will be particularly pertinent over the coming months with the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Supporting democracy worldwide will continue to be high priority for 2018, including via deployment of EU elections observation missions (EOM) and election expert missions (EEM) in agreed priority countries. The promotion of the effective implementation of EOMs recommendations will be enhanced, notably through the deployment of an increased number of election follow-up missions. The EU will continue to oppose the death penalty in all circumstances, as it constitutes a serious violation of human rights and human dignity

106. Gender equality is a key priority in the EU's internal and external policy. The EU and its Member States will continue promoting gender equality and women and girls' empowerment and full and equal enjoyment of all human rights across all external action. The first report on implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 was published in 2017, highlighting progress in the first year; a second report will be prepared in 2018. 2017 also marked the launch of the Spotlight Initiative, a new partnership of the EU and UN to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, providing a unique model for partnerships on implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as a catalyst for a new way of working in the UN. 2018 will be an important year for the implementation of this initiative.

107. The EU will continue to take initiatives on upholding the rights of the child in UN fora, and engage with the wider UN membership to advance this priority, in particular the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, including in the context of armed conflict, children living in poverty, and the elimination of all forms of violence, including bullying, and harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
108. The EU promotes all synergies and the need for coherence between the **Women, Peace and Security** (WPS) agenda and other relevant UN and EU policy frameworks, such as the 2030 Agenda, the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, the Global Strategy, as well as other EU strategies, guidelines, action plans, tools and financing instruments. The WPS agenda is universally applicable and, therefore, must be implemented in the EU domestically as well as externally. In 2018 the EU will continue to strengthen its effective implementation of the WPS agenda. We will build on enhancing our targeted cooperation with the UN and with all national, regional and international partners. Furthermore, the EU will continue to promote the integration of the gender perspective into the analysis, planning and conduct of CSDP operations and missions, and of its diplomatic/political activities, in order to support the meaningful, equitable and transversal empowerment of women, as critical to peace, security and sustainable development. The EU will remain a strong supporter of the UN approach of promoting women peace and security through restrictive measures countering sexual and gender-based violence.

109. **Empowering youth.** The EU will continue to promote youth voice, agency and leadership across Europe, Africa, the Middle-East, the Eastern Partnership and at the global level, including through direct dialogue and engagement with young peacebuilders. As a founding member of the Champions of Youth group in the UN, the EU will continue its investment into youth and peacebuilding and accelerate the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda within the EU and externally. An EU Conference on Youth, Peace and Security took place in Brussels on 23 May 2018.
110. In 2018, the EU will continue implementing the concrete commitments resulting from the 4th Our Ocean Conference hosted in Malta in October 2017 and keeping **Ocean diplomacy** high on the international agenda, including on maritime security. The EU is fully engaged in assisting Indonesia in hosting the 2018 Our Ocean Conference and promoting cooperation among all actors on a global level towards safe, secure, clean and environmentally sustainable oceans. The EU will also continue to engage actively in the elaboration of a new legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) at the UN.

111. **Energy Diplomacy** increasingly focuses on the geopolitical impact of the ongoing global energy transition, which creates significant opportunities for economic growth and climate change mitigation, but also raises a set of new challenges. The changing role of fossil fuels tests existing trade and economic models, potentially upsetting current regional balances, while new technologies may create new resource dependencies and link energy diplomacy with other global challenges. Within this changing environment the EU continues to engage with more traditional energy security challenges, completing diversification efforts, safeguarding the sovereign rights of Member States to explore and develop their natural resources, engaging partners to ensure the integrity of our internal market, and supporting the strategic efforts of countries within our neighbourhood engaged in difficult reform processes. In this context, the EU has an interest to strengthen global energy markets through multilateral governance, engage with partners to set and promote global standards to improve the functioning and transparency of markets, including the growing global Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) market, and expand the use of sustainable energy sources and energy efficiency technologies. The EU also remains committed to the promotion and continuous improvement of the highest standards of nuclear safety in third countries.

112. In line with the Global Strategy and the Council Conclusions of July 2013, the EU will develop and strengthen its **water diplomacy**. In order to promote transboundary water cooperation – and the transformation of potential sources of tension into domains of cooperation - the EU will undertake political outreach promoting global membership of the 1992 Water Convention of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). We continue to support sustainable water management through our cooperation with key partner countries, including in policy dialogues at different levels.
113. EU holds the Kimberley Process Chairmanship during 2018. The priorities are to ensure that the Kimberley Process remains fit for purpose in a changing world, reinforce its tripartite structure, strengthen implementation and effectiveness; focusing on human conditions and the prosperity of mining communities as well as ensuring full consideration of the Kimberley Process’s reform agenda. Moreover, the EU will promote close cooperation among the four Mano River Union countries on Kimberley Process compliance issues.

(4) CSDP AND CRISIS RESPONSE

Conflict prevention and Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crisis

114. The Global Strategy made the Integrated Approach to Conflict and Crisis a key foreign and security policy priority for the EU. It also calls for strengthening the EU's integrated action in area of conflict prevention and mediation. Anchoring the EU as a uniquely placed actor on conflict prevention is a priority in 2018. Various work strands, in line with the Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises adopted in January, are undertaken to make progress in: 1) strengthening the longer-range EU conflict Early Warning System; (2) moving towards generating earlier Member States' political attention and preventive action; (3) using joint conflict analysis and embedding conflict sensitivity more systematically to guide EU action and resources; (4) working on the implementation of issues paper on a the concept on Stabilisation; (5) reflecting on how civilian CSDP can best serve the prevention agenda; (6) further enhancing engagement with EU Member States and key multilateral partners. The EU will continue its work on stabilisation actions, including making use of Article 28 TEU.

Security and Defence

115. The implementation of the Global Strategy in the area of **security and defence** will continue to be a priority in 2018. Our initiatives enhance our strategic autonomy while complementing and reinforcing the activities of NATO, in line with previous conclusions. In 2016 the November Foreign Affairs Council and the December European Council gave a substantive tasking to step up cooperation on Security and Defence, setting the EU level of ambition. Work on implementation will continue on this basis, including the actions which were identified by the Council in follow-up to the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence presented by the HR/VP in November 2016. The Council reported on progress in March, May and November 2017 as well as June 2018 with substantive Council conclusions, which is reflected in the report on the overall implementation of the Global Strategy. These steps will be closely synchronised with the implementation of the European Defence Action Plan and the Joint Declaration signed by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of NATO in Warsaw on 8 July 2016.

116. The new EU level of ambition in security and defence is driving EU capability development, based on a review of the priority areas of civilian CSDP missions and of required defence capabilities and priorities set out through the Capability Development Plan. Defence cooperation and strengthening civilian CSDP will be of key importance to fulfilling this ambition.
117. Agreement was reached in the Council to launch a trial run of the Member State-driven **Coordinated Annual Review on Defence** – a report is due to be presented to Ministers in November 2018. Based on greater transparency, political visibility and Member State commitment, the aim is to develop a more structured way for delivering capabilities through, inter alia, monitoring defence plans as well as the implementation of capability priorities and identifying new cooperative opportunities.
118. The Council formally established the **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)** in December 2017, following the joint notification signed by 25 Member States who thus undertook a set of more binding commitment between one another, based on articles 42.6 and 46 TEU and Protocol 10 of the Treaties. As a measure that will contribute to fulfilling the EU's Level of Ambition including with a view to the most demanding missions and operations, PESCO aims to assist the participating Member States to develop new capabilities and thus the EU's capacity to act as a security provider, and enhance their operational availability. On 6 March 2018 the Council formally adopted a first set of 17 projects as well as a Recommendation which sets out a roadmap for the further implementation of PESCO. A common set of governance rules for PESCO projects has been adopted by the June Foreign Affairs Council and work is ongoing to develop a Council Recommendation on the sequencing of the fulfilment of the commitments and specifying more precise objectives. A next set of projects will be agreed in November 2018 and the general conditions for the exceptional third state participation in PESCO projects will also have to be decided upon.

119. The **European Defence Fund** launched by the Commission in June 2017 is another key element of the EU package to foster European defence cooperation, next to PESCO and CARD. Addressing the industrial angle, it aims to strengthen the competitiveness and innovativeness of the European defence industry, through supporting collaborations from research to development in line with capability priorities agreed by Member States within the EU, notably through the Capability Development Plan. Regarding research, the Preparatory Action (implemented by the EDA) is well on track. The contracts for the first five projects have been signed and the projects have started in 2018. As regards the capability window, co-legislators provisionally agreed to the Regulation on establishing the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (2019-2020) on 22 May. The provisional agreement reached by EU negotiators now needs to be approved by the Parliament and the Council with a view to becoming fully applicable at the beginning of 2019. The programme envisages that capability projects eligible for EU funding that are developed in the context of PESCO benefit from an additional financial stimulus of 10% (adding to the 20% EU co-funding of prototypes). Coherence between these defence initiatives - PESCO, CARD and EDF - will be ensured by the High Representative/Vice President of the Commission/Head of the European Defence Agency, in line with the Council Conclusions of November 2017.

120. In addition, the Council decided to establish the **Military Planning and Conduct Capability** (MPCC), as a short term objective within the EU Military Staff of the EEAS, which is responsible at the strategic level for the operational planning and conduct of non-executive military CSDP missions. The Joint Support Coordination Cell (JSCC) will make an important contribution in this regard. In this context it also agreed to reinforce civilian/military synergies and coordination between the MPCC and its civilian counterpart, CPCC. Work was also taken forward to strengthen the EU's rapid response toolbox, in particular by enhancing the preparation, modularity and effective financing of the EU Battlegroups; identification of possible projects and moving forward in the operationalisation of the **Capacity Building in support of Security and Development** (CBSD), reiterating its flexible geographic scope. **Developing a more strategic approach on Partnerships with third countries** was pursued, following the Council Conclusions in May 2017. In these, the Council supported the use of CSDP cooperation as a platform for developing also other forms of security cooperation, which helps to address security challenges faced by those partners and the EU (hybrid threats, CT etc.). A proposal for an enhanced EU Partnerships Framework on Security and Defence, looking at more tailored and coherent relations with third countries in this field, will be presented to Member States.
121. As part of the security and defence agenda, progress has been made on **military mobility** including in the framework of PESCO and EU-NATO cooperation as outlined in the European Council and Council Conclusions of 28 and 25 June 2018 respectively. In this regard, the Council welcomed an Action Plan on Military Mobility, adopted by the High Representative and the Commission on 28 March 2018 and called for its swift implementation. As a first step in the implementation of the Action Plan, the Council approved on 25 June 2018 the overarching high-level part of the Military Requirements. These efforts, which should fully respect the sovereignty of the Member States be mutually reinforcing and follow a whole-of-government approach, will be reviewed yearly on the basis of a report by the Commission and the High Representative, starting in Spring 2019.

122. The EU welcomes the work undertaken to strengthen **civilian CSDP** and calls for an agreement on civilian CSDP Compact by the end of the this year, thus providing a new EU framework for civilian crisis management and CSDP missions, with ambitious commitments at EU and national level. It recalls that military and civilian aspects need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner with a focus on concrete deliverables. In May 2018 the Council endorsed the Concept Paper presented by the High Representative as a basis for strengthening civilian CSDP and further work in this regard. It will be followed later in 2018 by a Civilian Capability Development Plan –already underway– and the Compact, which should lead to an eventual set of commitments from all actors involved, notably the EU and Member States. In addition, work is underway to enhance the responsiveness of civilian crisis management by implementing a multi-layered approach, including the operationalisation of a core responsiveness capacity acting as a planning and start-up capacity as well as providing scalable and temporary reinforcement or provision of specialised expertise. Considering the particular role CSDP missions and operations could play in the field of protection of cultural heritage, they can gradually support the development of relevant capabilities and capacities of host nations in these areas.

123. In light of the current political and security environment, cooperation with partners, notably the United Nations, NATO, the OSCE and the African Union, is of particular importance. With regard to **EU-NATO cooperation**, as a follow-up to the Joint Declaration signed in Warsaw by the leaders of the EU institutions and NATO, the EEAS and NATO International Staff – in close cooperation with the Commission and EDA – established a common set of proposals for implementation endorsed by both Councils in December 2016. It included 42 actions covering all seven areas of cooperation identified in the Joint Declaration: 1) countering hybrid threats and cooperating on strategic communication; 2) operational cooperation including maritime and migration issues; 3) cyber security and defence; 4) defence capabilities; 5) defence industry and research; 6) exercises; 7) supporting Eastern and Southern partners' capacity-building efforts. In December 2017, the two Councils endorsed a common set of new proposals adding 32 further actions and expanding cooperation to key issues such as counter-terrorism, maritime security, military mobility and women, peace and security. In June and December 2017, two progress reports were submitted to the EU and NATO Councils highlighting the main achievements in implementation. The Council welcomed progress made in implementation. This work is being taken forward in accordance with the key principles guiding EU-NATO cooperation: openness and transparency in full respect of the decision-making autonomy and procedures of both organisations, inclusiveness and reciprocity without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of any Member State. The EU Council Conclusions regularly reaffirm these principles. The third progress report on implementation was submitted to the respective Councils on 8 June 2018.

124. 2017 have confirmed the **EU-UN's mutual commitment** to strengthening cooperation on peacekeeping and crisis management at the strategic level, and showed what impact this can have on the ground. Cooperation between UN and EU missions and operations, notably in the Central African Republic, Mali (including on the G5 Sahel Joint Force), Libya and Somalia, has continued both between headquarters and in the field with exchanges on strategic reviews, delineation of roles and mutual support. Cooperation has been sustained as well on policing, Women, Peace and Security, and conduct and discipline. Looking ahead, planning began of the process to define the follow-up to the 2015-2018 joint priorities to strengthen UN-EU cooperation on peacekeeping and crisis management.

International Security

125. In 2018 the EU will continue to use its external security engagement to enhance the security of the EU and its citizens, focusing on the internal/external security nexus *inter alia* in the areas of counter-terrorism, non-proliferation and disarmament, cyber security, hybrid threats maritime security, sanctions and strategic communication. Work will continue on mainstreaming security policy into the EU's external action, also with a view to aligning policy with the strategic programming of the External Financial Instruments, including the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace and the European Neighbourhood Instrument. In the same vein, we will work to ensure that security is mainstreamed into the external component of the future Multiannual Financial Framework.

126. The EU's external action on **countering terrorism** contributes to the priority objective of strengthening the Union's internal security. Therefore, the strategic and policy continuum between EU's internal and external security will be further reinforced to enhance the effectiveness of counter-terrorism actions across the board.
127. The Foreign Affairs Council of 19 June 2017 renewed the strategic direction in these fields by adopting comprehensive Conclusions on EU External Action on Counter-Terrorism. The High Representative and the European Commission will jointly work as necessary towards the successful implementation of these Conclusions and reporting to the Council by July 2018. Priority will be given to: 1) enhancing cooperation between Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations and EU Justice and Home Affairs Agencies in respect of the collection, analysis and exchange of information, and further exploring how to enhance linkages between military and law enforcement actors for counter-terrorism purposes, 2) strengthening international cooperation in counter-terrorism and the prevention and countering of violent extremism with partner countries in the Western Balkans, the Middle East, North Africa, Turkey, the Gulf, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa; with key strategic partners, including the United States, Canada and Australia; and with key regional and multilateral partners as the United Nations, NATO, the Global Counterterrorism Forum, the Financial Action Task Force, the African Union, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the League of Arab States, 3) strengthening the network of counter-terrorism experts in EU Delegations.

128. In the field of **disarmament, non-proliferation and arms export controls**, the core thrust of the EU action in 2018, through inter alia Council conclusions, has addressed preparations for and EU engagement in review conferences, notably the third Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the fourth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the process leading to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in 2020. Other important conferences will bring together the states parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty and the Arms Trade Treaty, respectively. The EU will demonstrate its continued support to key international instruments in the global non – proliferation and disarmament architecture such as the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and to multilateral export control regimes such as the Australia Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement and other such instruments. The EU recalls its support for the membership of all EU Member States in all export control regimes. The EU will continue to actively support the work of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) which has entered in its Phase II 2017-2019. In the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) the EU takes an active part in seeking common ground and making further progress on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). Sustained high attention is paid to the prevention, detection and mitigation of risks and threats related to the illicit use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials including through the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence. The EU will work on a new EU regime of restrictive measures to address the use and proliferation of chemical weapons.

129. In 2018, the EU will continue to work to ensure that the **EU's autonomous restrictive measures** target those responsible for policies and practices which breach international law in order to bring about change. In particular it will continue to review and up-date, where necessary, restrictive measures including in view of the latest jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice and will seek to mitigate the risk of unintended consequences on the wider population. As always the EU will liaise with like-minded partners regarding its autonomous restrictive measures to ensure that they are effective and to avoid the risks of sanctions avoidance and back-filling.
130. In 2018, EU will continue to strengthen capabilities against cybersecurity threats from outside the EU, working jointly with Member States to implement the measures referred to in the Joint Communication of 2017 on the updated EU Cybersecurity strategy "Resilience, Deterrence and Defence: Building strong cybersecurity for the EU", including the work on attribution of cyber-attacks and the practical use of the cyber diplomacy toolbox, as approved by the Council in June 2017. The Council in June 2018 adopted conclusions on EU external capacity building guidelines. The EU has started to develop a cyber defence training and education platform that will facilitate to coordinate cyber-defence training opportunities offered by the Member States. Within the framework of PESCO, two projects on cyber-defence were launched on 6 March 2018. Several initiatives have been put forward within the EU–NATO cooperation on cyber defence. The review of the EU Cyber Defence Policy Framework is taking place in 2018 as Member States intend to add new aspects to the current objectives of the policy.

131. The **EU maritime security policy** has gained a new momentum building on the adoption of the Council Conclusions on Global Maritime Security adopted in June 2017. In this regard, the EU is promoting global maritime security, in particular through the revision of the EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan (June 2018) which will increase a focus on civil military cooperation, information sharing and address global challenges through regional responses to EU Sea Basins and all Oceans. In line with the EU Global Strategy, the revised **EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan** is reaffirming the role of the EU as a global maritime security provider. In this regard, the EU is developing regional approaches to the key maritime insecure regions taking full advantage of the EU co-chairmanship of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) intersessional meeting on maritime security together with Vietnam and Australia and making the best use of operational activities (EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia and **EUNAVFOR** Operation ATALANTA) and regional maritime strategies (Gulf of Guinea and Horn of Africa).

Intelligence and Situational Awareness

132. **Situational awareness and strategic foresight** are key conditions for proper decision making in CFSP, CSDP and Security (CT, CP, cyber- and hybrid threats). Timely all sources intelligence analysis, including 24/7 open sources and social media monitoring and exploitation, is an essential contribution to these fields of action.
133. As requested by the November 2016 FAC conclusions work was taken forward here notably through the systematic alignment of structures and procedures between the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (EU INTCEN) and the Intelligence Directorate of the EU Military Staff (EUMS INT) within the functional cooperation framework of the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC). This entailed as well enhanced structured support to the SIAC with satellite imagery by the EU Satellite Centre and with a wide range of intelligence contributions by EU Member States' civil and military intelligence and security services. Progress in intelligence supported situational awareness and foresight was noted and commended by the Council in May and November 2017.
134. Further improvements in timeliness, quantity, granularity and quality of SIAC support to decision making in the EU, based on an adequate level of contributions in staff and intelligence to EU INTCEN and EUMS INT by EU Member States, will be needed in view of the increased challenges to EU interests and the threats to the security of its citizens as latest put forward by the European Council Conclusions of 22 March 2018.
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