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COVER NOTE

From: High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,
signed by Ms. Belén MARTINEZ CARBONELL, Secretary-General

To: Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the
European Union

Subject: Report from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs
and Security Policy "Common Foreign and Security Policy Report - Our
priorities in 2026"

Delegations will find attached document HR(2026) 150 COR 1

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EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



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

of 30/06/2026

Common Foreign and Security Policy Report – Our Priorities in 2026

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

"Common Foreign and Security Policy Report - Our priorities in 2026"

This report covers events up to 31 May 2026.

Europe is at a critical turning point. The world has entered times of great disruptions. There is rising geopolitical contestation and geo-economic fragmentation.

Russia continues its war of aggression against Ukraine and threatens Europe's security. China is challenging Europe geo-economically, weaponizing economic and trade dependencies, and remains a key enabler of Russia's war against Ukraine. Security challenges in the EU's strategic environment also derive from **the erosion of the rules-based international order** with a marked shift from rules to power and asymmetrical warfare, as exemplified by the current conflicts in the Middle East, an acceleration away from international cooperation including on new technologies, climate change and trade, as well as increased maritime, cyber, and hybrid threats. At the same time, the United States is in the process of recalibrating its foreign policy priorities and posture and calling for the EU to step up its own defence.

Against this background, the EU finds itself in a long-term, multi-dimensional crisis environment, in which the primary challenge is no longer to manage individual threats but managing cumulative and interacting shocks across domains and regions.

With more than EUR 200 billion in overall EU support, Ukraine has demonstrated extraordinary resilience in the face of Russia's aggression and managed to change dynamics on the battlefield to its advantage. Moreover, it has proven itself a crucial security provider beyond its borders, with untapped defence industry potential. The EU has continued keeping pressure on Russia, isolating and holding Russia to account, including through restrictive measures, with over 2,600 individuals and entities already sanctioned.

The EU's wider strategic environment is increasingly shaped by a complex and challenging combination of armed conflicts, violations of international law, fragile state structures, and revisionist actors. North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf remain key regions in the EU's neighbourhood, with direct implications for regional stability, security, economic resilience, and the diversification and security of energy and other critical supply chains. Recent developments in the Middle East have once again highlighted how regional crises can generate far-reaching global repercussions, underscoring the growing interdependence between different geopolitical theatres. These dynamics reinforce the need for a comprehensive and coordinated EU approach to external action.

Against this backdrop, the EU has continued to strengthen and expand its network of strategic partnerships worldwide, deepening cooperation with like-minded partners across trade, security, connectivity, and broader geopolitical priorities.

This evolving geopolitical environment also constituted an opportunity to advance the EU's strategic priorities. These include defending the EU's and its neighbourhood's security and stability, securing its prosperity and resilience, and protecting its values and its democratic political model. These call

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for a model of cooperation underpinned by a rules-based multilateralism and predictable, mutually beneficial long-term partnerships.

(1) GEOGRAPHIC PRIORITIES

Europe and Central Asia

The **non-EU Western European** partners¹, the EU's closest partners, are committed to the rules-based multilateral order. The EU works with these partners to advance shared values in bilateral contexts as well as in multilateral fora. Regarding Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway continued aligning with EU statements and restrictive measures. Switzerland, Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, and the Faroe Islands continued implementing equivalent restrictive measures. On 5 March 2026, the High Representative and Swiss Federal Councillor signed a **Joint Declaration on Strengthened Cooperation on Foreign and Security Policy**, which establishes a ministerial-level political dialogue and a **Framework Participation Agreement**, enabling Switzerland's participation in EU crisis management missions and operations. The EU continued holding bi-annual ministerial political dialogues with Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway in the framework of the **EU-EEA Political Dialogue**. A Joint Statement on "Strengthening EEA Foreign and Security Policy Cooperation" was signed in May 2025 between the High Representative and the Foreign Ministers of Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway, signalling the significance of political dialogue. Bilateral consultations and dialogues with Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland continued on a vast array of topics, including peace, security and defence, through dedicated security and defence dialogues with Norway and Iceland. Dialogues on peace mediation were held for the fourth time with Switzerland, and for the first time with Norway and the United Kingdom. Moreover, a **Security and Defence Partnership** was signed between the EU and Iceland on 18 March 2026, in addition to the **EU-Norway Security and Defence Partnership**, which was signed in 2024. Based on the resumption of the Structured Dialogue on foreign policy and global issues between the EU and the **Holy See** in 2025, contacts intensified with the Holy See at various levels.

Geopolitically, **the Arctic** has become an area of strategic importance with Russia no longer being a constructive interlocutor, intensified Russia-China cooperation in the region, hybrid and cyber-attacks, heightened competition for resources, and potential threats to the territorial integrity of the territory of an Arctic State. NATO and NATO allies are deploying more assets and conducting more exercises. This has effects on the daily life of Arctic inhabitants, including indigenous peoples. In addition, climate change remains the most comprehensive threat to the Arctic regions. All these developments have warranted the decision of the EU to **update its Arctic policy** in 2026 to make it fit for the new geopolitical landscape.

The EU maintained an active political dialogue with the **Western Balkans**, as reflected in the **EU-Western Balkans Summit** of 17 December 2025, joint meetings of the Foreign Ministers on 19 November 2025 and on 11 May 2026, Political Directors' meetings on 24 October 2025 and 23 April 2026, and in other high-level contacts and bilateral visits. During the High Representative's meeting with Western Balkan leaders on 24 September 2025 in New York, partners requested stronger engagement on foreign, security, and defence matters in the current geopolitical context. The European External Action Service (EEAS) subsequently developed options to increase Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)/Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) cooperation with the region; these were discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council on 11 May 2026.

Most Western Balkan partners continued to fully **align with the CFSP**, including with EU statements and restrictive measures against Russia and Belarus. These included Albania, Bosnia and

¹ Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, Holy See, Faroe Islands (as self-governing country within the Kingdom of Denmark)

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Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, as well as Kosovo* which aligned voluntarily. Serbia's alignment rate stood at 63% (as of October 2025).

During the reporting period, the Council adopted a number of CFSP instruments in relation to the region, including the extension of the EU framework for restrictive measures in view of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the extension of the mandate of the **EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue**, and the extension of the mandate of the **EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo)**. Furthermore, on 31 October 2025, the United Nations Security Council extended the mandate of Operation **EUFOR Althea** in Bosnia and Herzegovina for another 12 months.

In the area of CSDP, several Western Balkan partners contributed to EU crisis management operations and missions in Africa and in Europe. The EU launched a new **Security and Defence Dialogue** with Montenegro on 2 December 2025 and held second Security and Defence Dialogues with Albania and North Macedonia, on 16 April and 28 April 2026, respectively. Under the **European Peace Facility (EPF)**, most recently, the Council adopted a third assistance measure for Bosnia and Herzegovina worth EUR 15 million on 11 May 2026 and a third assistance measure for Albania, worth EUR 21 million, on 22 May 2026.

The EEAS, along with the European Commission services, also provided significant support to Western Balkan partners to **counter foreign interference and disinformation, cyber, and other hybrid threats**.

The EU-facilitated **Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue** remained the only framework for the normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo. During the reporting period, EU Special Representative (EUSR) Sørensen held more than a hundred bilateral meetings with the parties and convened three formal rounds of Chief Negotiators' meetings, leading, inter alia, to the launch of the **Joint Commission on Missing Persons** on 22 January 2026 and a follow-up meeting at the deputy level on 22 April 2026 to discuss access to archives. On 14 March 2026, the EUSR for the Dialogue and EUSR Kosovo reached an agreement with the Kosovo government on the implementation of the Law on Foreigners and on civil registration measures. At the community level, the EU facilitated inter-ethnic dialogue across Kosovo, with additional activities in the north.

The EU and **Türkiye** continued **gradually re-engaging** in areas of common interest, under an agenda framed by the April 2024 Council Conclusions that focused on ways to advance implementation of the recommendations of the November 2023 Joint Communication on EU-Türkiye relations in a phased, proportionate, and reversible manner. The European Council also stressed the particular importance it attaches to resumption of and progress in the **Cyprus settlement talks** in further enhancing EU-Türkiye relations. The increasingly challenging and shifting geopolitical context, including over developments in Ukraine and the wider Middle East has underscored Türkiye's growing strategic regional role, together with its diplomatic and mediation efforts. In this respect, the EU enhanced high and senior official-level coordination with Türkiye, largely intensifying contacts, visits, meetings, and consultations on foreign and security policy with a focus on regional developments, on security and defence, and on counterterrorism. Commissioners for Enlargement and the Mediterranean visited Türkiye respectively in February and May 2026. The High Representative engaged in further EU re-engagement with Türkiye by maintaining direct contacts and regularly exchanging on main developments with the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, who

□ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/1999 and the International Court of Justice opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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also participated in the Ministerial Meeting on Cross-Regional Security and Connectivity (October 2025, Luxembourg). Progress in the **normalization between Türkiye and Armenia**, coupled with the Azerbaijan/Armenia peace process, represented a drive for regional stability and opened new opportunities for developing regional connectivity, including EU-Türkiye's cooperation under the EU Connectivity Agenda. Moreover, several High-Level Dialogues took place in the reporting period (Economy, Trade, Migration and Security, Climate, Research and Innovation), and the European Investment Bank resumed operations in Türkiye (February 2026). The EU continued engaging with Türkiye on combating the **circumvention of EU's restrictive measures against Russia**, namely via Turkish territory, closely following and consistently raising the issue with the Turkish side.

Under the **CSDP**, Türkiye continued to make a substantial **contribution to the Operation EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina**, as the biggest non-EU troops' contributor, and remained a major contributor to the NATO KFOR peacekeeping force in Kosovo, as well as contributing to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations. Türkiye pursued to seek involvement in CSDP and EU defence initiatives, while simultaneously maintaining its policy of excluding one EU Member State from cooperation with NATO.

On domestic developments, the political initiative to end terrorism by dismantling the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in exchange for concessions on Kurdish rights and reintegration of PKK fighters, unfolded through the work of the Parliamentary Committee on National Solidarity, Fraternity and Democracy. At the same time, the economic situation in Türkiye remained difficult (high inflation), coupled with a continuous domestic democratic backsliding, following the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Imamoglu (March 2025, still in prison – for possible updates) and the ongoing crackdown on opposition, civil society and media. The EU has clearly expressed, both in public and private meetings with Turkish counterparts, serious concerns about these developments, which go against expectations that exist in relation to Türkiye's obligations as candidate country.

In 2025, the **Eastern Mediterranean** continued to stand as a critical geopolitical region of strategic significance for the EU, presenting opportunities for engagement, as well as challenges. Promoting sustainable de-escalation remained the overarching priority. While tensions over maritime zones have been markedly reduced, the developments in the Middle East impacted the region. Against the backdrop of the drone attack against British bases in Cyprus, the European Council, in March 2026, welcomed the support provided by Member States in this regard, through the deployment of military assets in the Eastern Mediterranean and in support of Cyprus. During the reporting period, the High Representative visited Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt, highlighting the strategic importance of the Eastern Mediterranean for the EU's CFSP and CSDP. The EEAS continued, in close coordination with the European Commission services, to support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary General and his Personal Envoy to create an environment conducive to the resumption of settlement talks within the UN framework. To increase focus and streamline coordination, the EEAS also appointed a **Strategic Coordinator on the Eastern Mediterranean** in September 2025.

The relationship between the EU and **the United Kingdom** in the areas of foreign policy, security and defence has continued to grow stronger since the new Strategic Partnership, which was agreed at the EU-UK Summit in May 2025. The implementation of the EU-UK **Security and Defence Partnership** (SDP), concluded at the Summit, has advanced at pace. In autumn 2025, the EU and the UK held strategic consultations on Russia and Ukraine, the Western Balkans, and hybrid threats. In October 2025, the High Representative held the first **High-Level Foreign and Security Dialogue** under the SDP with the UK's Foreign Secretary and Secretary of State for Defence. They exchanged views on key geopolitical developments, including Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the situation in the Middle East and Gaza, Iran, and China. Moreover, on 13 October 2025, the EU and UK held their first Dialogue on Peace Mediation, Conflict Prevention and Stabilisation, to explore

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areas for deepened cooperation and coordination. The operational implementation of the SDP also continues to progress. During the first EU-UK **Security and Defence Dialogue** in Brussels in March 2026, the EU and the UK identified avenues to advance shared operational priorities including on hybrid and cyber threats, maritime security, and cooperation on crisis management.

As the biggest provider of humanitarian, financial, and military assistance, the EU is already the main guarantor of **Ukraine's** security. Advancing in the implementation of the EU-Ukraine joint security commitments, signed in June 2024, continued to guide the EU and Member States' support to help Ukraine defend itself, resist destabilisation, and deter future aggression. This has been the basis for the contribution by the EU and Member States to robust and credible security guarantees for Ukraine, in the framework of the work of the Coalition of the Willing.

The European Union continued providing Ukraine and its people with very significant political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military, and diplomatic support. The EU's response continues to follow four main tracks:

- (i) **wide-range support** to Ukraine (overall EU assistance to Ukraine and its people by the EU and its Member States amounts to over **EUR 200 billion, including EUR 75.2 billion in military assistance**. In addition, in December 2025, the European Council agreed to provide a limited recourse loan to Ukraine of **EUR 90 billion** for 2026 and 2027 aimed to strengthen Ukraine's defence capabilities and ensure the continued functioning of the State, while also contributing to Ukraine's resilience and its closer integration with Europe's defence industrial base);
- (ii) **keeping pressure on Russia** (isolating and holding Russia to account, including through restrictive measures, with over 2 600 individuals and entities sanctioned. In addition, in May 2026, the EU adopted the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Special Tribunal, ratified the Convention establishing a Claims Commission for Ukraine and hosted a High-Level Meeting of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children);
- (iii) **support peace efforts** (in coordination with the Coalition of the Willing, in order to achieve a just and lasting peace in Ukraine); and
- (iv) **global outreach** (calling for a full and unconditional ceasefire, including through UN resolutions, addressing the global consequences of Russia's war of aggression, and holding Russia to account).

Extraordinary revenues from immobilised **Russian Central Bank assets** continued to be used in 2025 and 2026 to finance urgent deliveries for artillery ammunition and air defence to Ukraine, now totalling EUR 3.5 billion under four instalments including more than EUR 1.5 billion allocated to procurement in Ukraine. Work continues to implement the second and fourth instalment, with a fifth iteration currently under preparation. Through the ammunition initiative launched by the High Representative, the EU supplied Ukraine with more than two million rounds of large-calibre ammunition in 2025. 25 Member States and Norway (EUR 84.4 million in specific support) actively participated in the provision of ammunition to Ukraine under this initiative.

The EU's missions continued to provide steadfast support to Ukraine based on the country's evolving needs, as the Russian war of aggression entered its fourth year. The **EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) in support of Ukraine** will continue training Ukrainian soldiers as part of future security guarantees. With over 90,000 Ukrainian soldiers trained, EUMAM Ukraine plays a crucial role in enabling Ukrainian Armed Forces to defend their population and territory. In cooperation with other partners, including within the Coalition of the Willing, the Mission continues to expand its impact. The **EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform (EUAM) in Ukraine** remains an

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important element of overall EU support and will be an important pillar within the framework of security guarantees. In response to evolving Ukrainian support needs, the Mission broadened its activities to several key areas, such as countering hybrid threats and protecting critical infrastructure, veterans' reintegration and psychosocial support, and strengthening resilience of the civilian security sector. It provided advice on draft legislation and delivered training to nearly 7,000 Ukrainian counterparts. Moreover, the EU continues to support Ukraine in countering foreign information manipulation and interference (**FIMI**), increasing standardisation of monitoring and analysis, together with the Centre for Countering Disinformation and other relevant authorities in Ukraine.

The first EU-**Moldova** Summit (July 2025, Chisinau) reaffirmed the EU's commitment to Moldova's European path, following the formal launch of accession negotiations in June 2024. The bilateral screening of the *acquis* which had started in July 2024 continued throughout the year and was completed in September 2025. The implementation of the **Association Agreement** continued and political dialogue and cooperation across all areas advanced with the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Council, held on 4 June 2025. The **4th High-Level Political and Security Dialogue** between the EU and Moldova (November 2025, Brussels) showcased the deepening cooperation in the field of CFSP, as Moldova advances towards EU membership. The High Representative paid an official visit to Moldova on 7-8 May 2026.

Parliamentary elections in September 2025 confirmed the people's enduring support for the European future of the Republic of Moldova, providing a clear and strong mandate to continue its determined engagement towards EU membership. The elections took place in a context of relentless hybrid attacks by Russia and its proxies aimed at undermining Moldova's democratic institutions and process and ultimately derail its EU accession process through large-scale disinformation campaigns, vote-buying schemes, cyber-attacks, and training of violent provocateurs. The Moldovan authorities ensured the integrity of the elections, despite sustained external manipulation and pressure and showed the country's strong democratic resilience. The European Union provided short-term targeted assistance to strengthen the country's **resilience against hybrid threats**, notably with the deployment of Hybrid Rapid Response Teams, as well as in the framework of the European Union Partnership Mission (EUPM), through setting up new institutional bodies, and by improving inter-agency coordination. This was a tangible deliverable of the EU- Moldova Security and Defence Partnership signed in 2024.

The **EUPM Moldova** continued to provide strategic advice and operational support to strengthen Moldova's resilience against hybrid threats, including cybersecurity, protection of critical infrastructure, and countering FIMI. In 2025 and 2026, the mission supported development of coordinated crisis management structures and improved inter-agency cooperation across the Moldovan security sector. These efforts were particularly important in a context where cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and other forms of external interference have increased.

In 2025, the EU maintained its commitment to strengthening Moldova's defensive capabilities via the **European Peace Facility** (EPF). Two new EPF assistance measures, worth EUR 60 million, were approved during last year, bringing the total EPF allocations to Moldova to EUR 197 million. This places Moldova as the second largest beneficiary of EPF support after Ukraine.

The EU remained firm in its commitment to a comprehensive, peaceful, and sustainable settlement of the **Transnistria** conflict and supported continued dialogue between the sides, in view of further confidence-building and to avoid destabilisation.

A dedicated EU sanctions regime against those seeking to destabilise Moldova and undermine the country's sovereignty, democratic institutions, and the rule of law remains in place. Four rounds of listings have been adopted so far, the latest in July 2025, bringing the number of designations to a

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total of 23 individuals and 5 entities. The sanctions regime was rolled over for another year until 29 April 2027.

Due to continuous democratic backsliding in **Georgia**, the EU suspended direct assistance benefitting the authorities (including EPF assistance), increased support to civil society and independent media, and downgraded political contacts. As a result, there was no political dialogue between the EU and Georgia in the reporting period. Also, as in 2024, the EU-Georgia Human Rights Dialogue did not take place in 2025. Nonetheless, Georgia remained high on EU's agenda. The Foreign Affairs Council of July 2025 took stock of the situation in Georgia one year after the first EU measures had been introduced and discussed possible future measures to respond to the repression by the authorities, as well as initiatives to better support Georgia's civil society and independent media. Subsequent Foreign Affairs Council meetings also addressed ways to counter the blatant disinformation and verbal attacks against the EU, its Member States and their representatives spread by the Georgian authorities. Due to the continued and severe regression in the Fundamentals Cluster of the accession process (including democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights), as well as in Georgia's inability to uphold key reform commitments on the basis of which the EU granted it candidate status in 2023, Georgia's EU path remained halted. The European Commission concluded in its annual enlargement report that Georgia is a "candidate country in name only".

The European Union continued to urge the Georgian authorities to free all arbitrarily detained politicians, journalists, and activists, to repeal repressive legislation, adopt democratic, comprehensive, and sustainable reforms, in line with the core principles of European integration, and cease its aggressive narrative against the EU, the EU Ambassadors, and Head of Delegation as first steps towards re-engagement on the EU path. In March 2026, the European Commission suspended visa-free travel for Georgian holders of diplomatic, service, or official passports under the revised Visa Suspension Mechanism.

Georgia's alignment rate with the EU's CFSP remained low and reached 40% (as of October 2025), marking a significant decline from the 53% rate recorded a year earlier. Cases of non-alignment included statements and sanctions related to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as those related to Hong Kong, Syria, terrorism or LGBTIQI+ rights, among others. The re-export of common high priority and economically critical goods is still of concern. The number of direct flights to various destinations in Russia continued to increase significantly.

The EU continued its engagement in line with its Non-Recognition and Engagement Policy towards the occupied breakaway regions of **Abkhazia and South Ossetia** and continued to be involved in conflict resolution efforts, including through the work of the **EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia**, as well as the **EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM Georgia)**. The Geneva International Discussions, co-chaired by the EUSR, continued to take place regularly as the only international format dealing with the consequences of the 2008 Russia-Georgia war. EUMM Georgia continued its daily patrolling activities along the Administrative Boundary Lines between Georgia and South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Through its confidence-building activities, in particular the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism as well as the Hotline, the mission contributed to de-escalation of potential volatile situations and facilitated constructive dialogue.

The EU warmly welcomed the initialling of the Agreement on Peace and Establishment of Interstate Relations between **Armenia and Azerbaijan** and the signing of the Political Declaration by Prime Minister Pashinyan and President Aliyev in Washington D.C. on 8 August 2026. This major development for both, Armenia and Azerbaijan, paved the way to lasting, sustainable peace for both countries and the entire region, also thanks to years of EU efforts. In that context, the EU continued to support the mine clearance action activities in both, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and continued

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providing the much-needed support to help conflict-affected populations and improve the livelihoods of vulnerable people in both countries. The civilian **European Union Mission to Armenia (EUMA)**, which was launched in February 2023, continued its activities, observing and reporting on the situation on the ground, contributing to human security in the border areas, and to EU-supported normalisation efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Over the reporting period, relations with Armenia continued to significantly expand and strengthen. In the margins of the High Representative's visit to Armenia in June 2025, the inaugural **Security and Defence Consultations** took place on 30 June 2025 in Yerevan and the Framework Participation Agreement was signed, enabling Armenia's participation in EU crisis management missions and operations.

A new **Strategic Agenda for the EU-Armenia Partnership** was adopted in December 2025, marking a significant step forward in the deepening of cooperation and setting out short- and medium-term priorities across all sectors of cooperation, including in security and defence.

A second assistance measure for Armenia worth EUR 20 million under the **EPF** was adopted in January 2026 and will further enhance the resilience of Armenia and accelerate the interoperability of its Armed Forces in case of possible future participation of the country in international military missions and operations, including those deployed by the EU. The assistance measure builds on and complements the ongoing assistance measure launched in 2024 and worth EUR 10 million, consisting of a deployable tent camp, and scale it up to brigade-size. The 3rd EU-Armenia **Political and Security Dialogue** was held in February 2026 in Yerevan at Political Director's level. During the reporting period, the EU also launched a second advisory activity of the EU-funded EU Security Sector Governance and Reform Facility in Armenia, contributing to the implementation plan of the recently adopted National Security Strategy.

The first **EU-Armenia Summit** took place in Yerevan on 4-5 May 2026, reinforcing cooperation in the areas of connectivity, economic development, people-to-people contacts, as well as in security and defence. One of the Summit's deliverables was the establishment of the new **EU Partnership Mission for Armenia** (21 April 2026). Building on the Hybrid Risk Survey conducted in early 2026 and the work of the Hybrid Rapid Response Team deployed in April 2026, the mission will enhance the resilience of Armenia in the field of hybrid threats through the provision of strategic advice as well as operational-level advice and support to relevant security sector agencies, in line with a whole-of-government approach and in close coordination with other like-minded actors.

Azerbaijan remained an important partner for the European Union, in particular in the field of energy. The reporting period was characterised by the commitment of both sides to deepen their cooperation, particularly on trade, digital, and transport. Strengthening connectivity between the EU, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia continues to be in the EU's and Azerbaijan's shared strategic interest, as the EU remains open to discuss the establishment of a more structured and forward-looking partnership with Azerbaijan. The EU also continued cooperation with Azerbaijan to help diversify its economy, including through **Global Gateway**. A visit of the President of the European Council took place on 11 March 2026. The High Representative visited Baku on 5 May 2026 following up on her visit of April 2025. The EU thereby underscored the importance of the rule of law, as well as the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as the basis for the bilateral relationship. The 7th **EU-Azerbaijan Political and Security Dialogue** was held in Baku on 20 May 2026 at Political Directors' level.

Human rights violations and repressions continued in **Belarus** over the reporting period. However, there were several waves of releases of political prisoners, including Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Ales Bialatski, journalist Andrzej Poczobut, as well as opposition leaders Viktor Babaryka and Maria

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Kalesnikava. A large majority of those released were, however, forcibly deported. By the end of May 2026, there were approximately 830 political prisoners remaining in Belarus. The EU continued to raise human rights violations in international fora and to contribute to the international efforts to hold the perpetrators accountable. On 6 March 2026, the Consultative Group between the European Union and Belarusian democratic forces and civil society organisations was held for the 6th time, in Brussels.

The EU's efforts remained guided by its Support, Solidarity, and Sanctions policy, as set out in the Council Conclusions of 19 February 2024. A key aspect of this was the provision of financial assistance to Belarusian democratic forces and civil society, totalling EUR 200 million to date. Restrictive measures regarding the regime's the continuous support for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine were further expanded. In response to increasing hybrid attacks emanating from Belarus, in December 2025, the Council introduced a new criterion allowing the listing of individuals, entities, and bodies benefiting from, involved in, or facilitating actions or policies attributable to Belarus, which undermine or threaten democracy, the rule of law, stability, or security in the EU and its member states.

The EU continued to pursue a broad strategy of political, economic, military, and diplomatic pressure on **Russia** in response to its ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, while reducing its structural dependencies on Russia, especially in the energy sector. EU policy combined sustained support for Ukraine with efforts to weaken Russia's war-fighting capacity, reduce sanctions circumvention, counter hybrid threats, and maintain international isolation of Moscow. Russia continued to escalate its war against Ukraine and adapt its wartime economy for a prolonged conflict. The EU adopted additional sanctions packages targeting Russia's financial sector, military-industrial complex, energy revenues, shadow fleet operations, dual-use exports, actors involved in sanctions circumvention and individuals and entities linked to the Russian government, military structures and propaganda networks, and companies supporting the war effort. The sanctions imposed substantial long-term costs on the Russian economy, constraining Russia's ability to sustain its war, and demonstrating continued European unity and political resolve despite Russian expectations of Western fatigue. Russia equally increased destabilising activities against the EU and partner countries. The EU responded by applying tools at its disposal, including by imposing costs in form of restrictive measures under dedicated sanctions regimes. Along with like-minded partners, the EU successfully coordinated Russia's international condemnation and isolation. Russia, again, failed to secure a seat on the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and to regain seats on the governing councils of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The EU agreed to indefinitely freeze approximately EUR 210 billion of the Russian Central Bank's sovereign assets located within the bloc, permanently prohibiting the transfer of these immobilised funds back to Russia until the war ends and Moscow pays reparations. In parallel, the EU continued implementing mechanisms allowing extraordinary revenues and windfall profits generated by the immobilised assets to be channelled towards Ukraine's support, including military assistance, recovery, and reconstruction needs, in close coordination with G7 partners. The EU continued to support Russian civil society, human rights defenders, and independent media inside and outside Russia, while simultaneously condemning the Kremlin's deepening domestic repression and the continued targeting of opposition figures and activists.

In May 2025, the EU adopted an ambitious **Strategy for the Black Sea region** affected by security, economic, maritime, and environmental challenges due to Russia's war of aggression. The new strategic approach was confirmed with partner countries during the ministerial meeting on cross-regional security and connectivity in Luxemburg on 20 October 2025, which addressed regional security challenges, notably maritime security and freedom of navigation, as well as connectivity and resilience in the Black sea region.

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The **Eastern Partnership (EaP)** policy remained an efficient framework of cooperation, most notably for supporting youth, civil society, independent media, SMEs, and for promoting critical reforms in the rule of law, democratisation, and justice sectors. This regional framework has been crucial for the Belarusian and Georgian civil society organisations.

The EU continued to contribute to **cooperation in Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea** through the relevant formats of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC). At the Tallinn Ministerial meeting in May 2025, the Baltic Sea States committed to focus CBSS cooperation on political and security issues, in view of the increased threats in the Baltic Sea region (notably hybrid threats), the shadow fleet, and undersea cable infrastructure attacks.

The **Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)** remains a valuable platform for political exchanges and normative work despite the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The EU continues to actively support the effective implementation of the OSCE mandate and a comprehensive approach to security across all three dimensions. On peace mediation and dialogue facilitation, the EU held regular exchanges with the OSCE and continued to coordinate dialogue engagements, notably in Georgia and Kosovo. In March 2025, the seventh EU-OSCE dialogue on conflict prevention, peace mediation, and crisis management took place in Vienna, enabling both organisations to identify opportunities for further collaboration.

Relations between the EU and the countries of **Central Asia** continued to deepen in 2025 in a continuously difficult regional and international context. Challenges generated by Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, as well as the situations in Afghanistan and in Iran were the main security factors impacting the developing relationship. Following the first-ever **EU-Central Asia Summit** (3-4 April 2025, Samarkand), at which the relationship was elevated to a 'strategic partnership', both regions identified joint interests and translated them into concrete areas of cooperation, such as transport and digital connectivity, critical raw materials, and the nexus between water, energy, and climate change. The EU and Central Asia continued to advance in particular on the development of the **Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor**, a Global Gateway flagship project, and held the second Global Gateway Investors Forum for EU-Central Asia Transport Connectivity as well as the third EU-Central Asia Economic Forum in Tashkent, Uzbekistan (26-27 November 2025). Cooperation on security was enhanced with the first EU-Central Asia Dialogue on counterterrorism and violent extremism taking place on 10 July 2025 in Dushanbe. **Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreements** with the Central Asian countries are either in fully force (**Kazakhstan**), provisionally applied (**Uzbekistan**), signed (**the Kyrgyz Republic**), or initialled (**Tajikistan**). The EU, represented by its **Special Envoy on Sanctions**, and the Central Asian countries continued their work on ensuring compliance with the international sanctions regime against Russia and Belarus, reducing sanction circumvention activities on the territories of the Central Asian countries.

Middle East and North Africa

The situation in the Middle East remained a major EU foreign policy priority throughout 2025 and 2026. The situation in Gaza and the West Bank, the regional escalation linked to the US-Israeli-Iran conflict, as well as the situation in Lebanon were discussed at every Foreign Affairs Council and European Council meeting.

In July 2025, the High Representative reached a humanitarian understanding with Israel to increase aid to **Gaza**. However, in September 2025, as the situation continued to deteriorate, European Commission President von der Leyen proposed measures during her State of the Union speech to address the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. So far, measures on trade with Israel and its participation in the Horizon programme have not been adopted.

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Following the announcement of the **Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict (Gaza Peace Plan)** by US President Trump in September 2025, a fragile ceasefire has been in place since 10 October 2025. All remaining living and deceased hostages abducted during the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 were returned. In November 2025, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2803, endorsing the Gaza Peace Plan and authorising an International Stabilization Force (ISF) in Gaza. EU representatives participate in the US established Civil-Military Coordination Center (CMCC) in southern Israel to oversee the ceasefire and coordinate humanitarian and reconstruction efforts.

The EU maintains that a just and lasting peace can only be based on the two-state solution in accordance with international law. On 20 April 2026, the EU, represented by the High Representative, and Belgium co-hosted the **Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution**. The EU also co-convened the **Ad Hoc Liaison Committee** with Norway and Saudi Arabia to support Palestinian state-building and the implementation of the Gaza Peace Plan.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza remains catastrophic, with UN humanitarian flows below operational targets and Israel restricting access to essential items because of potential “dual use”. To address urgent needs, the EU confirmed EUR 124 million in humanitarian aid for Gaza and the West Bank for 2026, bringing total aid since 2023 to EUR 674 million. The EU strongly opposes Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and condemns growing settler violence against Palestinians. On 11 May 2026, EU Foreign Ministers agreed further sanctions against extremist Israeli settler organisations and Hamas leaders.

The EU’s EUR 1.6 billion Comprehensive Support Programme (2025–2027) includes direct budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority (PA), grants for economic recovery and resilience, support for the Palestinian private sector, and annual funding for UNRWA. A **Palestine Donor Group**, co-chaired by EU Commissioner Šuica and the Palestinian Prime Minister, met in Brussels on 20 November 2025 to support the PA reform agenda.

The **EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS)** and the **EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (EUBAM Rafah)** enhanced Palestinian authorities’ operational capacity following allocation of increased resources. EUBAM Rafah’s redeployment in early 2026 allowed for a partial reopening of the border between Gaza and Egypt, providing an important contribution to Gaza’s post-conflict stabilization. Meanwhile, EUPOL COPPS strengthened policing and criminal justice systems in the West Bank and also contributed to planning for Gaza’s stabilisation, in line with the relevant UN Resolution.

The High Representative and the EEAS have enabled the EU to react swiftly, decisively, and in a unified way to developments in and around **Iran**, starting with the brutal repression of peaceful demonstrations in the first days of 2026. On 9 January 2026, on behalf of the EU, the High Representative firmly condemned the use of violence, arbitrary detention, and intimidation tactics by security forces in the context of nationwide protests. In view of the gravity of the crackdown, the Council adopted new restrictive measures against perpetrators of internal repression and designated the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organisation under the Council Common Position on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism. In the UN context, the EU continued to strongly support the work of accountability mechanisms, including the Independent Fact-Finding Mission and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran.

Since the beginning of the **US-Israeli-Iran conflict** in February 2026, the High Representative has been in continuous contact with partners in the Middle East to express solidarity with affected countries, call for maximum restraint, urge all parties to comply with international humanitarian law and protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, as well as to ensure freedom of navigation and safe

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passage through the Strait of Hormuz. On 9 April 2026², the High Representative, on behalf of the EU, welcomed the ceasefire agreed by the US and Iran. The statement underlined the importance of diplomacy in addressing all outstanding issues and encouraged the parties to continue engaging in good faith towards a sustainable agreement on all matters of concern. In April, the Council decided to expand the Iran sanctions framework to enable the targeting of individuals and entities responsible for threatening freedom of navigation.

The EU strategic partnership with the countries of the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** continued on a positive trajectory with Foreign Ministers meeting in Kuwait for a Joint Council in October 2025, which produced a joint statement. A crucial point in EU-GCC relations came with the Iranian attacks in GCC countries, following the US-Israeli-Iran conflict. On 5 March, the High Representative convened an informal Foreign Affairs Council, in which all GCC Foreign Ministers participated and issued a joint statement condemning attacks by Iran. The meeting was followed by the High Representative's and EUSR di Maio's visits to the region. The annual Political Committee held on 20 May 2026 between MENA directors of the EU and GCC Foreign Ministries confirmed that the positions of the EU and the GCC are still close on many regional issues.

Throughout the past year, bilateral engagement with all six GCC partners has increased significantly through high-level engagement, regular political dialogue, senior officials' meetings, and human rights dialogues. A major development was the agreement to conclude bilateral and binding Strategic Partnership Agreements with all six GCC countries. In December 2025, negotiations with Qatar and the United Arab Emirates were launched. Since the military escalation in the Middle East on 28 February 2026, the EU and Gulf States have intensified their exchanges to support regional de-escalation, the restoration of freedom of navigation, and sustainable security for the region.

The EU continued to support **Iraq's** growing focus on economic development, while achieving notable progress in cooperation on migration, with returns and readmissions now taking place. It also reinforced its institutional engagement by completing the cycle of technical subcommittees under the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, along with the **4th EU-Iraq Cooperation Council**, co-chaired by the High Representative at Foreign Minister level. The **European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) in Iraq** maintained its support to the civilian aspects of Iraqi Security Sector Reform. Priorities for 2025 included supporting the process leading to the parliamentary elections on 11 November, including the deployment of an Elections Expert Mission, holding the 4th (ministerial) EU-Iraq Cooperation Council on 19 October in Luxembourg, and enhancing EU support for Iraqi repatriations from North-East Syria Daesh camps, which Iraq completed in February 2026. Additionally, the EU aimed to increase EUAM's engagement in the security sector, in coordination with like-minded partners (e.g., NATO Mission Iraq), following the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) withdrawal at the request of the Iraqi government. Regarding Iraq's voluntarily offer to host 5,704 ISIS prisoners transferred from North-East Syria to Iraqi secure detention facilities, the EU has offered technical assistance to Iraqi authorities to support identification and documentation.

In **Yemen**, building on the Council Conclusions of 20 May 2025, the EU continued to engage in support of the UN-led peace process, becoming the largest supporter to the office of the UN Special Envoy, while remaining a leading humanitarian and development donor with over EUR 1.9 billion since 2015. The EU continues to support the unity and territorial integrity of Yemen, tackling the Houthis' threats in the region, including their attacks against maritime shipping in the Red Sea.

² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/04/09/statement-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-ceasefire-agreed-by-the-united-states-and-iran/>

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The **European Union Naval Force Operation ASPIDES** is active in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden with a defensive mandate in a highly degraded regional environment. It successfully delivered close protection to over 640 vessels and advised on the safe transit of over a thousand more since its launch in February 2024. Its mandate was renewed until February 2027. Throughout the past year, the EU continued to support efforts to tackle arms proliferation in the region, becoming the largest donor to the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM) and supporting the Yemeni Coast Guard. The EU provided life-saving and sustained aid to the Yemenis, faced with one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.

After the fall of the Assad regime, bilateral relations between the EU and **Syria** gained positive momentum, based on increasing high-level engagement on both sides in 2026. On 23 June 2025, the Council approved new Conclusions on Syria affirming EU commitment to support a peaceful and inclusive transition to help build a better future for all Syrians. On 15 November 2025, the European Union co-organized the Day of Dialogue with the Syrian Transitional Government, a major civil society forum in Damascus.

In January, the Presidents of the European Council and European Commission visited Damascus and pledged a new package of EUR 620 million in support for 2026-2027. On 23-24 April, Interim President al-Sharaa participated in an informal European Council meeting in Cyprus and on 11 May 2026, the EU organised the first ever **EU-Syria High Level Political Dialogue (HLPD)** in Brussels, co-chaired by the High Representative and Syrian Foreign Minister Al-Shaibani. The ongoing transition in Syria has made progress on several fronts, including the implementation of the agreement with the Syrian Democratic Forces, concluded on 29 January. On 11 May, the EU terminated the partial suspension of the Cooperation Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Syrian Arab Republic and reinstated the full application of the Cooperation Agreement, marking an important step towards strengthening the bilateral relations between the EU and Syria.

In 2025, **Lebanon** has moved towards the consolidation of socio-economic, financial, and State reforms. For the first time, the government has committed to recover the monopoly of weapons across the country and proceed towards the disarmament of all non-state armed groups. The first Association Council since 2017 between the EU and Lebanon was held in December 2025, followed by a resumption of technical cooperation at the level of several subcommittees. The EU's engagement towards Lebanon was also illustrated by the visit of the Presidents of the European Commission and of the European Council in early January 2026. After the outbreak of armed conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, the High Representative undertook intensive diplomatic efforts to urge regional de-escalation, address humanitarian needs, and push for a sustainable ceasefire. These efforts also emphasised respect for Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the disarmament of Hezbollah. The EU disbursed more than EUR 100 million in humanitarian aid to address the needs of more than 1.2 million people displaced by the ongoing humanitarian crisis. The EU has scaled up its assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces via the EPF. Moreover, the EU is currently exploring options for engagement through CSDP actions. These would help the Lebanese State exercise its sovereignty over its whole territory, support Lebanese security institutions and contribute to the restoration of lasting peace and security in the country. The EU stands ready to contribute to the post-UNIFIL UN presence in Lebanon.

The EU continued deepening cooperation with **Jordan** under the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership of January 2025, including through the holding of the **first EU-Jordan Summit** in Amman on 8 January 2026. The **first EU-Jordan Security and Defence Dialogue** took place in Amman on 4 February 2026. Support to the modernisation of the Jordanian Armed Forces has amounted to EUR 55 million since 2023 (through three successive support packages adopted in 2023, 2024 and 2025). The latest EPF assistance measure adopted marked a qualitative step in the support

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channelled through the Facility, with a focus on strengthening Jordan's air defence and its contribution to the regional security umbrella.

The **first EU-Egypt Security and Defence Dialogue** was held in Cairo on 31 March 2026, co-chaired by Charles Fries, EEAS Deputy Secretary General for Peace, Security and Defence. The establishment of this Dialogue had been agreed at the **first EU-Egypt Leaders' Summit** in October 2025, marking a significant step in the implementation of the Strategic Comprehensive Partnership of March 2024. The delegations exchanged views on regional security developments and addressed areas for cooperation, including maritime security, water security, counterterrorism, cyber security, non-proliferation and disarmament, EU support through the EPF, and defence initiatives. The EU continued providing support to the Egyptian Armed Forces with deliveries of military equipment through the first EPF assistance measure adopted in 2024. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to the rules-based multilateral order and full respect of international law, including the UN Charter and international humanitarian law.

The EU is committed to a stable, secure, peaceful and sovereign **Libya**. As such, the EU is a supporter of UN-led efforts to reach a sustainable political solution in Libya, grounded in Libyan ownership and consensus. As part of an integrated approach, the EU has remained engaged also through CSDP actions, notably the **European Union Naval Force Operation IRINI** and **European Union Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM Libya)**.

The EU continued its engagement with **Tunisia**, including on the implementation and follow-up of the EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2023 and embedded in the broader institutional framework of the EU-Tunisia Association Agreement. The EU-Tunisia Association Council initially scheduled for October was eventually postponed at Tunisia's request. Activities with Tunisia were also discussed at EU-NATO Staff Talks on Defence and Security Capacity Building in April 2026 in order to ensure complementarity of efforts.

The **15th EU- Morocco Association Council** was held on 29 January 2026, reaffirming the strategic importance of the partnership and providing renewed political momentum for bilateral cooperation. This was further reinforced by the High Representative's first visit to Morocco on 16-17 April 2026. These high-level engagements confirmed the shared commitment of both sides to deepen cooperation across key strategic areas, including security and defence, and a common ambition to further strengthen the partnership.

The EU strengthened its engagement with **Algeria** at the political level through several telephone calls between the High Representative and Algerian Foreign Minister Attaf, as well as the visits to Algiers of Commissioner Jørgensen in February 2026 and Commissioner Šuica in May 2026. Algeria and the EU also resumed regular dialogues under the Association Agreement, including in key sectors such as energy, agriculture and fisheries, the economy, customs cooperation, and social affairs in March 2026.

To deepen cooperation and reinforce the EU's relations with its **Southern Mediterranean** partners, the European Commission and the High Representative adopted a **Joint Communication on the Pact for the Mediterranean** on 16 October 2025. The Pact was launched at ministerial level with the 10 Southern Mediterranean partner countries in November 2025, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration. On 17 April 2026, the first set of key initiatives to advance implementation was presented to representatives of EU Member States and the Southern Mediterranean in the form of an Action Plan.

The **Union for the Mediterranean Regional Forum 2025** took place in Barcelona on 28 November and reaffirmed the commitment to tackle shared challenges and deepen Euro-Mediterranean

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cooperation. The Forum also endorsed a new Strategic Vision for the Organisation, focused on connecting people, economies and countries. The Anna Lindh Foundation continued its activities to promote inter-cultural dialogue.

The 10th Political Dialogue between the Political and Security Committee of the European Union (PSC) and the League of Arab States (LAS) Permanent Representatives took place in Brussels on 4 November 2025, as part of the regular **EU–LAS Strategic Dialogue** established under the 2014 Athens Declaration. This was the first PSC-LAS Strategic Dialogue since June 2022.

Africa

2025 marked a pivotal year in **EU-AU (African Union) relations**, celebrating 25 years of strategic partnership while reinforcing shared commitments to peace, security, and multilateralism in an increasingly volatile geopolitical landscape. The **3rd EU-AU Ministerial Meeting** (Brussels, 21 May), and the **7th AU-EU Summit** (Luanda, 24–25 November) held under the theme “Promoting Peace and Prosperity Through Effective Multilateralism” demonstrated the partnership’s resilience and tangible progress. Both engagements, characterised by constructive dialogue and broad stakeholder involvement (including civil society, youth, and the private sector), sent a clear political signal in defence of international law. The EU showcased the depth and breadth of the partnership and the concrete potential it holds for the future. It demonstrated that Europe remains a predictable, reliable, and credible partner, implementing the commitments under the **Joint Vision for 2030** agreed at the 6th EU-AU Summit in February 2022 covering four priority areas: (i) prosperity; (ii) peace, security and governance; (iii) migration and mobility; and (iv) multilateralism:

- i) **Prosperity.** In an increasingly fragmented and competitive global environment, Africa and Europe need each other more than ever. Economic and trade partnerships can help Africa and its young population realise its growth and innovation potential. The Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package has already mobilised EUR 120 billion, well on track to reach the EUR 150 billion by 2027, while ensuring sustainable investments and avoiding unsustainable debt.
- ii) **Peace, security and governance.** Long-standing AU-EU cooperation on peace, security and governance is grounded in African-led solutions, spanning conflict prevention and mediation through to crisis response, alongside work on governance and human rights.
- iii) **Migration and mobility.** If well managed, in line with national needs and competences, migration and mobility can be an opportunity and a catalyst for economic, social, and human development in both origin and host states.
- iv) **Multilateralism.** Both the AU and the EU support effective multilateralism with the UN at its core, jointly underscoring respect for international law and cooperation in international fora.

The **16th Joint Consultative Meeting** between the PSC and the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) was held on 8 October 2025 in Brussels. The discussions, along with the resulting Joint Communiqué, underscored the shared commitment of both parties to deepen their security partnership and tackle mutual challenges. This meeting was preceded by the **8th EU-AU PSC Joint Retreat**, which focused on Peace Support Operations, maritime security, and hybrid threats. In addition, the **20th EU-AU Human Rights Dialogue** also took place in Brussels on 7 October 2025. The dialogue aimed to strengthen bilateral cooperation, enhance the capacity of human rights institutions, and address gaps in legislative implementation.

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The EU's role as a peace and security actor in Africa has taken place through continent-to-continent and bilateral partnerships, with a very strong presence of **civilian and military missions and operations** and around **EUR 1.2 billion in support through the EPF**. In Africa, the EPF has effectively supported the enhancement of African defence capabilities, as well as African-led Peace Support Operations (African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia, the Multinational Joint Task Force around Lake Chad).

The implementation of the **Samoa Agreement**, which brings together the EU, its Member States and 77 Members of the Organisation for African, Caribbean and Pacific State (OACPS), including 48 Sub-Saharan Countries, is advancing, with 23 partnership dialogues having taken place. Furthermore, the EU and OACPS members have strengthened their political cooperation with the adoption of two joint statements, one for the 4th UN Conference on Financing for Development, and the other on UN Day, reaffirming their commitment to uphold and promote the principles of the UN Charter.

Southern Africa and Indian Ocean

In a context of increased geopolitical competition, the EU has continued to deepen its engagement with Southern African and Indian Ocean countries. For **South Africa**, following the successful Ministerial meeting (February 2025) and Summit (March 2025), a Leaders Meeting between EU Presidents and South Africa's President (20 November 2025) led to the signing of the first **Clean Trade and Investment Partnership** as well as a memorandum of understanding for a **Strategic Partnership on Sustainable Minerals and Metals Value Chains**, both reaffirming the deepening and broadening of the EU-South Africa partnership. Ahead of the October Global Gateway forum, the European Union (Team Europe) unveiled a EUR 11.5 billion Global Gateway investment package to boost sustainable growth, green energy, and infrastructure in South Africa. The establishment of new high-level dialogues on political, peace, security, and defence issues is underway and will contribute to strengthening mutual understanding and aligning responses to geopolitical challenges, as well as crises and conflicts.

The Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs held, on behalf of the High Representative, the **7th EU-Angola Joint Way Forward Ministerial Meeting** on 26 February 2026 in Brussels, co-chaired by the Angolan Minister of Foreign Affairs. The discussions covered a broad spectrum of issues ranging from peace and security in Africa and Europe to support to multilateralism, investment, sustainable development, economic and trade cooperation, in particular in the context of the Lobito Corridor with strong convergence of views on peace, security, and multilateralism.

In **Mozambique**, the EU continued implementing an "integrated approach" to support the fight against violent extremism in Cabo Delgado, in particular with the **European Union Military Assistance Mission in Mozambique** (EUMAM in Mozambique) launched in September 2024. Mozambique's President, in a meeting with the High Representative in Brussels (March 2026), reaffirmed the high importance of EUMAM and, more generally, his commitment to strengthening the overall relationship and fulfilling the potential of mutual security and economic interests.

The EU deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to **Malawi's** general elections on 16 September 2026. The EU EOM noted that the effective and peaceful elections took place after a competitive campaign period and were followed by a smooth transfer of power, highlighting Malawians' commitment to electoral politics and respect for democratic principles.

The EU has followed closely the developments in **Madagascar** where popular protests led to the removal of President Rajoelina (October 2026). The EU will pursue an approach of positive but vigilant engagement towards the Malagasy 'Refoundation' government, paying particular attention

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to respect for human rights, the organisation of credible elections, and the pursuit of reforms that promote economic and social development in line with the Malagasy people's aspirations.

West Africa

West Africa is still affected by the protracted crisis of the **Central Sahel** countries **Burkina Faso**, **Mali**, and **Niger**. After the adaptation of EU instruments and actions in the Central Sahel, which followed the 2021-2023 coups d'état, the year 2025 saw efforts focused on the validation of a "Renewed Approach to the Sahel", which took place at the November 2025 Foreign Affairs Council. As one of the main priorities of this renewed approach, diplomatic and political engagement with the region was strengthened by the **EUSR for the Sahel**, the EEAS services, and Delegations. The EUSR visited the three countries several times, as well as Mauritania, Chad, and the coastal countries of West Africa. **EUCAP Sahel Mali** is the only remaining civilian CSDP presence in the region, following the expiration of the mandate for the EU's Regional Advisory and Coordination Cell for the Sahel on 31 January 2026. The EU autonomous sanction regime framework is still in place for Mali, and for Niger (for Niger, no individuals listed so far). The situation has also deteriorated in Burkina Faso, in particular on the security and humanitarian side, with the country joining Mali and Niger in a growing authoritarian turn of the transition.

The spill-over of insecurity towards the coastal countries of the **Gulf of Guinea** remains another regional priority, with attacks in North Benin and Togo continuing to increase. The partnership with these countries has been strengthened, notably through the **European Union Security and Defence Initiative** in the Gulf of Guinea (EUSDI GoG, covering Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo), and several EPF assistance measures adopted in 2025-2026, helping strengthen the armed forces of EUSDI-supported countries, as well as others (Mauritania, and Nigeria and Senegal to come). On 8 July 2025, the Council adopted the first assistance measure worth EUR 10 million under the EPF to support Senegal tackle the spill-over of insecurity from Central Sahel. A second assistance measure worth EUR 20 million under the EPF was adopted by the Council on 8 December 2025 to support the Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire. Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI) managed actions were instrumental in ensuring an integrated approach with non-kinetic programs related to human security and social cohesion. In 2025, the EU responded to emergency humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable populations in the region, with priority to forcibly displaced people as well as their host communities. On **Guinea**, leading up to and after the presidential election in December 2025, the EU progressively reengaged, whilst maintaining a cautious approach due to political and socio-economic tensions. Regarding **maritime security** in the Gulf of Guinea, the Coordinated Maritime Presences concept helped address the security challenges affecting freedom of navigation. It has contributed to reducing maritime security incidents and enhanced cooperation with coastal countries. The EU continued providing support to navies and military actors of coastal states. On 5 May 2026, the Council adopted an assistance measure under the EPF worth EUR 15 million in support of the Armed Forces of Senegal in the framework of the Yaoundé Architecture. On 8 July 2025, the Council adopted the first assistance measure worth EUR 12 million under the EPF to support Cabo Verde in the context of the Yaoundé Architecture. The objective is to strengthen the defence capacities of the Cabo Verdean Armed Forces to protect its sovereignty at sea and improve regional maritime security. During that period, the EUSDI GoG also trained some 1,500 police and gendarmerie officers and helped strengthen security forces' operational capabilities through concrete projects.

The EU continued to enhance its **bilateral partnerships with selected key strategic partners**, such as **Mauritania**, with several high-level missions or visits (Mauritanian President visit to Brussels, October 2025), and through a deepening partnership on security, migration (with a dedicated dialogue), as well as energy and infrastructure (Global Gateway flagships). With **Nigeria**, following contacts between the High Representative and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2025, the EU-

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Nigeria ministerial meeting took place in Abuja in March 2026, co-chaired by the High Representative, a few months after the launch of a formal peace, security, and defence dialogue in February 2026. The EU also continued to develop the relationship with **Senegal** (negotiations of a comprehensive and strategic partnership, launch of EPF assistance measures), **Ghana** (conclusion of a Security and Defence Partnership, the first one in Africa), **Côte d'Ivoire** (discussions on investment and trade), and **Cabo Verde** (ministerial meeting foreseen end of 2026).

The region is still facing worrying dynamics in terms of **governance, democracy and human rights**, illustrated by the political tensions in Benin (coup attempt in December 2025) or in Guinea-Bissau (coup in November 2025). In this context, the next elections and democratic trajectory in The Gambia will be closely followed, as well as the general elections in Nigeria in early 2027. The fragile situation in Liberia, and even more in Sierra Leone, will be monitored to support democratic reforms and avoid political tensions.

Hostile views towards the West are increasing, in a tense geopolitical environment affecting the entire region. This complex and sometimes hostile environment led the EU to adapt its overall political approach, and to work specifically on strategic communication and tackling disinformation and foreign information, manipulation and interference.

Central Africa and Great Lakes

In-depth engagement of the EU with Central Africa continued, with a view to protecting and promoting European values and interests, as well as to contributing to regional stability, security, better governance, and peace.

Faced with a new escalation of the conflict in the Eastern part of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** (DRC) through an offensive of the March 23 Movement (M23) armed group supported by Rwanda on the city of Uvira (South Kivu province) in early December 2025, the EU reacted by intensifying its diplomatic engagement at all levels, including through high-level outreach by the High Representative, Commissioner Lahbib, and the EUSR for the Great Lakes. Through various channels, the EU continued to condemn the violation of the DRC's territorial integrity, as well as the cooperation with armed groups and called on all parties to deescalate and implement the commitments made under different peace processes. At the same time, the EU reacted to the exacerbated humanitarian crisis by increasing its assistance and intensifying humanitarian advocacy in cooperation with EU Member States, notably during the Paris Conference on the Great Lakes in October 2025. A second EPF assistance measure worth EUR 10 million was adopted in 2025 to support and strengthen the resilience of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC).

The EU continued the implementation of the various strands of its **Great Lakes Strategy**, including via support to the regional and local initiatives to restore peace and security in the eastern part of the DRC as well as increasing incentives for peace through supporting regional integration and joint economic development.

In addition to swiftly transposing any applicable UN sanctions, the EU regularly reviewed and adapted its autonomous restrictive measures against human rights violators, conflict drivers, and exploiters in the DRC and Burundi.

The EU's two CSDP missions in the **Central African Republic** (CAR) continued to operate. The EU maintained precautionary measures to avoid its cooperation with the country authorities, including training and advice provided by the **European Union Training Mission (EUTM RCA)** and the **European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM RCA)**, being misused by Wagner-affiliated forces, while continuing to support the population and State institutions. At the request of the

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authorities, both missions continued to engage in education, technical and leadership development activities. EUTM RCA remained focussed on strategic advice and military education, notably through the training of officers and non-commissioned officers, thereby contributing to the long-term professionalisation of the CAR Armed Forces command structure. EUAM RCA continued to support the modernisation of the Central African Internal Security Forces and relevant ministries, including through assistance in the drafting of legislative and regulatory texts.

Following the end of the transition process in **Chad** in early 2025, the EU continued to support the maintenance of stability in the country, which is menaced by the fighting in Sudan, terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin, and instability emanating from Libya. Under the EPF, Chad already benefits of EU support in the context of its participation in the Multi-National Task Force against Boko Haram and G5 Sahel Joint Force. On 25 November 2025, the Council adopted the first bilateral assistance measure worth EUR 14,5 million to support the Chadian Armed Forces.

The EU also supported the transition process in **Gabon**, which was officially concluded in December 2025. Following a contested presidential election in **Cameroon** in October 2025, which triggered a violent post-electoral crisis, the EU encouraged all political actors to open a constructive political dialogue and preserve stability and national unity. In addition, the EU consistently encouraged a peaceful resolution of the crisis in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

East and Horn of Africa

The EU has steadily increased its engagement in the **Red Sea**, a vital maritime chokepoint for trade, energy, transport, and data links with Europe and beyond. To boost its role and create synergies across EU instruments, a **Red Sea Task Force** was established and will continue outreach in 2026 to partners in and around the Red Sea.

2026 marked 50 years of EU–**Kenya** diplomatic relations, highlighting a deep and strategic partnership. Cooperation was strengthened through the Strategic Dialogue, including through a visit to Brussels by Kenya’s President in June 2026, and continued implementation of the EU–Kenya Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), in force since 1 July 2024. Building on the first EPA Council Ministerial (May 2025), the second EU–Kenya Business Forum and the launch of the European Chamber of Commerce in Kenya, the EPA reinforced Kenya’s role as a key EU trade and investment hub in Eastern Africa, supporting private investment, sustainable growth and integration. The EU and Kenya also worked closely on multilateral issues, including the UN, and on regional peace and security, notably Somalia and the Horn of Africa/Great Lakes. Security and defence cooperation deepened via an annual Dialogue, notably on maritime security, counterterrorism and cybersecurity, supported by European Peace Facility assistance.

Sudan remained a top EU priority as the conflict, which has fuelled the world’s largest humanitarian, displacement, and hunger crisis and threatened wider regional instability, has entered its fourth year. Following Council Conclusions (October 2025), the EU continued to support ceasefire efforts, a civilian transition, humanitarian funding and accountability, including through diplomatic outreach and mediation support. On 15 April 2026, the EU co-chaired the Third International Sudan Conference in Berlin with Germany, France, the UK, the US, and the African Union mobilising political and humanitarian support. The EU backed international accountability mechanisms and adopted three sanction packages targeting individuals and entities linked to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) responsible for serious violations, including measures against the RSF Deputy Commander after atrocities in El Fasher (October 2025). The EU extended its Sudan sanctions regime to October 2026, including measures linked to the UN arms embargo on Darfur, and expanded humanitarian and development assistance, including additional pledges announced at the Berlin Conference.

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EU engagement with **Somalia** continued unabated. An EU-Somalia Partnership Dialogue in Mogadishu in May 2026 reviewed mutual commitments. On the security side, in light of continued financial challenges facing the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (**AUSSOM**), the EU approved a EUR 75 million contribution, reaffirming the EU as the mission's largest supporter and bringing total EU support to successive AU-led missions over the past two decades to nearly EUR 2.8 billion. With packages of support under the EPF that are currently being implemented, the EU continues to provide equipment, infrastructure, supplies, and services for the Somali National Army. Through its CSDP missions **EUCAP Somalia** and **EUTM Somalia**, the EU continued training and advice for Somali security forces, both military and police, and institutions. Operation **ATALANTA** remained active off the coast of Somalia to counter piracy and illicit trafficking and strengthen maritime security.

Ethiopia remained a key strategic EU partner. The EU strengthened ties through Structured Dialogue and high-level exchanges, supporting economic recovery, governance reforms and regional stability, and continued development cooperation in areas such as infrastructure, education, governance, and resilience. With enhanced cooperation with Member States, Ethiopia saw the lifting of the restrictive measures under Article 25a of the EU Visa Code (May 2026). Human rights engagement continued. Ethiopia sought stronger investment and trade ties; an EU-Ethiopia Business Forum in April 2026, with Commissioner Síkela, signalled EU readiness to take initial steps towards renewed financial engagement, including a possible resumption of budget support. Domestic and regional security challenges remained central to political exchanges.

In **South Sudan**, the EU continued to support the implementation of the 2018 Peace Agreement. Following renewed hostilities between signatories, the EU emphasised inclusive dialogue, a ceasefire, and a return to the peace process, including the unification of forces. The EU also continued public diplomacy and monitoring.

EU-**Eritrea** relations have been difficult, but both sides showed interest in renewed engagement. In 2026, discussions continued on strengthening cooperation in areas of mutual interest, including the Red Sea and regional issues. The EUSR for the Horn of Africa visited Asmara in March 2026, meeting several ministers for the first time. Potential areas of engagement include peace and stability (including regional security challenges), human rights, economic and trade relations, as well as regional development.

Djibouti remained a key strategic EU partner. In 2026, the EU continued to deepen cooperation on maritime security, Global Gateway projects, regional peace and development (including IGAD), migration, sustainability, governance, and development. On 25 July 2025, the Council adopted the first assistance measure worth EUR 10 million under the EPF, aimed at strengthening the defence capacities of Djibouti's navy. Djibouti is the seat of EU maritime CSDP missions **EUNAVFOR ASPIDES** and **ATALANTA**, supporting EU naval presence along the Bab el Mandeb route, linking the Red Sea and North-West Indian Ocean. The Blue Raman Global Gateway project is further strengthening connectivity between the EU, Africa, and Asia, including Djibouti. High-level engagement continued, and in 2026 the EU planned to sign a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) for ASPIDES, signalling a strong partnership.

Relations with **Tanzania** remained strained despite high-level engagement. The report of the Commission of Inquiry (April 2026) set up by President Samia Suluhu Hassan fell short on accountability regarding the violence, human right violations, and high number of deaths linked to the elections in October 2025, prompting a revision of international development cooperation.

2026 marked 60 years of EU-**Uganda** diplomatic relations. The 2026 elections fell short of expectations, and Uganda adopted a Sovereignty Act that could affect EU financial cooperation.

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Uganda continued supporting regional security through deployments to AUSSOM (financed by the EPF) and maintained a generous refugee policy, supported by the EU, hosting over 2 million refugees.

Asia-Pacific

The implementation of the 2021 EU Strategy for Cooperation in the **Indo-Pacific** continues to serve as the basis for raising the profile of the EU in the region. The High Representative hosted the **4th EU-Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum** in Brussels in November 2025. The Forum underlined the need for deeper cooperation in security, economic security, clean energy, digital governance, and climate resilience. The essential role of maritime security, free navigation, and diversified supply chains was emphasised, together with the importance of high-quality connectivity through initiatives such as Global Gateway.

This was a seminal year for EU-**India** relations: the Joint Communication on the new **EU-India Strategic Agenda**, adopted in September 2025 and endorsed by the Council in October, outlined the EU's ambition for enhancing relations with India to promote mutual benefits in economic growth, technology, security, defence, and global issues. The historical **16th Summit** in New Delhi in January 2026 marked an important step forward in the strategic partnership, confirming – inter alia through an agreement on the Joint Strategic Agenda – a shared determination to deepen cooperation on trade, investment, resilient supply chains, connectivity, as well as peace, security, and defence. The conclusion of the **Free Trade Agreement** negotiations and the signature of the **Security and Defence Partnership** gave concrete expression to that ambition. The first **EU-India Strategic Dialogue**, co-chaired by the High Representative and Indian External Affairs Minister, focused on deepening security, defence, technology, and maritime cooperation, and marked a major advancement in the partnership.

The EU-**Japan** Summit in July 2025 reaffirmed Japan among the EU's most important partners in the Indo-Pacific, resulting in key commitments, such as the establishment of a **Defence Industry Dialogue**, a formal dialogue on FIMI, the start of negotiations of a **Security of Information Agreement (SIA)**, and strengthened cooperation on maritime security. Formal negotiations on an SIA were launched in November 2025. The High Representative held the **3rd EU-Japan Strategic Dialogue** with Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs in March 2026. The first EU-Japan Defence Industry Dialogue took place in April 2026, and the second EU-Japan Security and Defence Dialogue in May 2026. Relations with the **Republic of Korea (RoK)** and the **EU-RoK Strategic Partnership** continued to be strengthened. The agreement on Korea's association to **Horizon Europe** was signed in July 2025. The High Representative held the **2nd Strategic Dialogue** with the RoK Minister of Foreign Affairs in Brussels in January 2026. The First EU-RoK **Security and Defence Dialogue** took place in November 2025 in Brussels. A second Security and Defence Dialogue took place on 15 May 2026 in Seoul. With each of the two countries, political consultations and Joint Committee meetings were held in February and March 2026.

New agreements with **Australia** set the course for enhanced strategic cooperation. The President of the European Commission visited Australia in March 2026, where she announced the conclusion of the negotiations for a bilateral **Free Trade Agreement**, the commencement of formal negotiations for Australia to associate with **Horizon Europe** and further joint work on critical minerals. The EU and Australia signed a **Security and Defence Partnership** in March 2026 and at the first higher-level **Security and Defence Dialogue** in May 2026 identified priority areas for deeper cooperation. **New Zealand** continued to be one of the most like-minded partners for the EU. New Zealand's Prime Minister visited Brussels in June 2025, where he met with the President of the European Commission. This was followed by a major **EU-New Zealand Business Summit** in November 2025 and the commencement of enhanced exchanges related to security and defence in May 2026. Joint Committee

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meetings, as well as trilateral consultations on the Pacific were held with each of the two countries in September 2025.

The European Union's engagement with the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** has also continued to gain strategic momentum, reflecting a shared commitment to deepening cooperation in an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape. In October 2025, the President of the European Council attended the ASEAN Summit as a guest of the Chair, underscoring the EU's dedication to high-level political dialogue and regional integration. A further demonstration of this partnership's dynamism came in November 2025, when ASEAN Member States participated in the Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum. On the sidelines of this event, the High Representative chaired a highly productive working lunch with ASEAN Foreign Ministers, reinforcing mutual priorities on security, trade, and sustainable development. These exchanges laid groundwork towards elevating EU-ASEAN relations to a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** by 2027—a landmark year marking the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two blocs. The EU warmly welcomed the historic accession of Timor-Leste as ASEAN's 11th Member State in October 2025, a development that further strengthens regional cohesion and expands opportunities for EU-ASEAN cooperation.

The EU maintained its multifaceted approach towards **China**, which contains elements of engagement, competition and rivalry. High-level engagement included the **EU-China Summit** and the **Strategic Dialogue**, both in July 2025. Support to Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine remained a matter of concern for the EU in its relations with China. In this regard, the EU adopted further export controls and sanctions targeting Chinese entities and individuals. The EU called on China to use its influence to bring a lasting and fair end to the war, in line with the UN Charter. The structural imbalances in the bilateral trade and economic relationship remained another central point of discussions. The EU repeatedly expressed its concerns about China's extensive export controls on rare earths that negatively affect EU companies. Constructive engagement on key global challenges, such as climate change and environment, continued throughout the year. The EU also repeatedly expressed concerns about the dangers of tensions across the Taiwan Strait, as well as in the South China Sea, calling for dialogue and restraint.

Relations with **Taiwan** continued to develop in line with the EU's One China Policy and the importance of Taiwan as an economic partner, with an emphasis on opposing any unilateral changes to the status quo. The EU expressed concerns about the erosion of fundamental freedoms and of autonomy in **Hong Kong**, speaking out notably on the conviction and sentencing of Jimmy Lai.

The EU continued to be a significant partner to the **Pacific Island Countries** through development, trade, and regular political engagement at various levels. Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, and Samoa ratified the Samoa Agreement (and its Pacific Protocol). Vanuatu is at an advanced stage of acceding to the **EU-Pacific EPA**, with the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Timor Leste at initial stages. **Partnership Dialogues** were held with Fiji and Timor Leste in November 2025, and with Papua New Guinea in February 2026. EU projects under the **NDICI-Global Europe and Global Gateway** progressed in their implementation in full alignment with the priorities of the **2050 Strategy of the Blue Pacific Continent** (economic development, climate change, oceans and environment, people, technology and connectivity, as well as peace and security). In general, Pacific Island Countries continued to be reliable partners of the EU in supporting the multilateral rules-based international system.

The EU remained engaged with **Pakistan**, acknowledging Pakistan's legitimate security concerns, encouraged dialogue and the de-escalation of tensions in the region, and continued cooperation on counterterrorism issues. The EU urged India and Pakistan to engage in dialogue and to de-escalate tensions following the military confrontation of May 2025. On the Afghanistan-Pakistan

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confrontation of October 2025, which intensified in March 2026, the EU called on both sides to engage in dialogue, restraint, respect for international law, and protection of civilians. The **7th EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue** provided an opportunity to review the full spectrum of cooperation and reaffirm commitments under the **Strategic Engagement Plan**, with focused discussions on trade relations under the GSP+ framework, human rights commitments, and non-proliferation efforts. Engagement was further sustained through the GSP+ monitoring mission. The EU commended Pakistan's constructive role in facilitating regional dialogues and conflict mediation initiatives, particularly between the US and Iran, that contribute to enhanced regional stability.

The EU has continued to strongly condemn the Taliban's systematic and systemic violations of human rights in **Afghanistan**, in particular the restrictions imposed on women and girls, including on their rights to education and employment. The EU sustains its principled humanitarian and basic needs support, addressing acute food insecurity, healthcare, and education needs to the Afghan people in a principled approach, supporting women and girls, without recognising the Taliban de-facto authorities. The EU continued to engage with the Taliban-appointed de facto authorities in line with the 2021 and 2023 Council Conclusions. The EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan continued engagement with regional partners.

Work on the upgrade of relations with the **Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam** continued, with the latter being adopted at the end of January 2026 during the visit of the European Council President in Hanoi. Regarding the border conflict between **Thailand and Cambodia**, which flared up in 2025, the EU offered support to the peace process, notably with humanitarian de-mining. The EU and Thailand held the inaugural Joint Committee under the **Partnership and Cooperation Agreement**. The EU continued to implement the decision on temporary and partial withdrawal of so-called 'Everything but Arms' trade preferences from Cambodia due to serious human rights concerns.

The EU finalised the negotiations on the **Partnership and Cooperation Agreement** with **Bangladesh**, initialling the text in April 2026, just two months into the new government's mandate. The EU supported the reform efforts of the Interim Government and offered concrete assistance for the democratic transition by fielding an Election Observation Mission to observe Parliamentary elections in February 2026. The EEAS also continued, with the European Commission services, to monitor respect for labour and wider human rights conditions linked to the preferential trade schemes benefiting several partners in South Asia, notably Bangladesh and **Sri Lanka**. The visit to Brussels by Prime Minister Tobgay of **Bhutan** in January 2026 for the **EU-Bhutan Investment Forum** (EU-funded) further enhanced EU-Bhutan relations.

Relations with **Mongolia** continued to develop under the EU-Mongolia **Partnership and Cooperation Agreement**, with a focus on support to democracy, human rights and rule of law, as well as climate change and the green transition.

Since the 2021 military coup, the EU has significantly scaled up its response providing vital aid to the people in **Myanmar**. The Council extended its targeted sanctions against those responsible for the coup and for the suppression of democracy, as well as against entities that provide financial and other support to the military regime. The EU continued to support ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus to address the Myanmar crisis and deepened its engagement with the National Unity Government and other anti-coup stakeholders.

Americas

The United States of America and Canada

The **United States of America** remain a key strategic partner for the EU. The EU's focus has been on engaging constructively with the US to foster cooperation on issues of common interest, including

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on creating the conditions for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine or implementing the Joint Statement on a United States-European Union framework on an agreement on reciprocal, fair, and balanced trade of 21 August 2025. Intense and regular contacts continued to take place between EU and US counterparts at all levels, both bilaterally and in other formats such as the G7. Regular EU-US dialogues have been conducted in a range of areas, including space, non-proliferation, arms control, consular, justice, and home affairs. In April 2026, the EU and the US signed a Memorandum of Understanding on a **Strategic Partnership on Critical Minerals** and agreed an **EU-US Critical Minerals Action Plan**. At the same time, the EU has maintained a firm approach when managing challenges in EU-US relations to defend EU interests, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and regulatory autonomy. In the second half of 2025 and early 2026 three successful visits by young US leaders have taken place in the context of the EU-US Emerging Leaders Programme.

Since the June 2025 Summit, relations with **Canada** continued to gain momentum on a very positive trajectory. The adoption of the EU-Canada **Security and Defence Partnership** facilitated the broadening of security and defence relations and the subsequent conclusion of a bilateral agreement with Canada under the **Security Action for Europe (SAFE) Agreement**. The EU and Canada have continued to cooperate closely on foreign and security policy issues. In November 2025, the High Representative and the Canadian Foreign Minister co-chaired the **Joint Ministerial Committee** to take stock of progress and give further strategic direction. Several EU-Canada dialogues, including on human rights, multilateralism, and Africa have also taken place. The participation of the Canadian Prime Minister in the **European Political Community** meeting in Yerevan in May 2026, the first non-European to do so, illustrates the continued deepening of relations. The participation of Canada's Foreign Minister in an exchange of views with the Foreign Affairs Council and her role as co-Chair of the High-Level Meeting of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children further underline Canada's cooperation with the EU. Lastly, the Canadian Prime Minister appointed a **Personal Representative to the EU**, while the European Commission appointed a **Special Envoy for the EU-Canada partnership**.

Latin America and the Caribbean

In a challenging regional geopolitical environment, the EU succeeded to organise another meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs with the **Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)** in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly. It also managed to keep the two-year rhythm of bi-regional engagement through the **4th EU-CELAC Summit**, which took place in Santa Marta, Colombia, on 9 November 2025. Leaders adopted a comprehensive Joint Declaration and launched two important initiatives: the **Alliance for Citizen Security** between the EU and 20 LAC countries and the Bi-regional **Pact on Care**. The first in-person meeting of the Pact took place on 4 May 2026 in Berlin, where participating countries agreed to deepen bi-regional cooperation to strengthen care systems and advance concrete joint workstreams.

The signature of the **EU-MERCOSUR Partnership Agreement** in January 2026 and the provisional application of its trade part on 1 May 2026 represents a crucial opportunity to strengthen political and economic ties. It is not just a trade deal – it is a strategic and political partnership that strengthens the EU's political autonomy, economic resilience and global influence and lays the foundation for trust and an institutional framework to foster cooperation on a wide range of issues.

On 22 May 2026, the **EU-Mexico Summit** was held in Mexico City. The Summit was a clear indication of the exceptional momentum in EU-Mexico relations with the signing of the **EU-Mexico Modernised Global Agreement (MGA)** and the **Interim Agreement on Trade (ITA)**, taking the bilateral relationship to the next level. The Summit was preceded by a **Strategic Dialogue** between the High Representative and the Mexican Foreign Minister, which underlined the importance and

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strength of the EU-Mexico strategic partnership. The EU and Mexico reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen political and economic relations, as well as cooperation through the implementation of the modernised agreement and engagement through new and existing dialogues, including on security and migration. Both sides also agreed to deepen cooperation in multilateral fora to promote effective multilateralism, uphold international law, and advance shared priorities, such as peace and security, human rights and equality, climate action, and the digital transition.

The **first EU-Central America Association Council** and the **first EU-Chile Joint Council and Trade Council** were held in Brussels in June and November 2025, respectively, both co-chaired by the High Representative. Moreover, the High Representative paid her first visit to the region, by visiting Brazil in September 2025. Many high-level EU political visits to Brazil and the holding of several sectoral dialogues in key areas of common interest reflect the dynamic relations with this strategic partner. The 9th **High-Level Political Dialogue between the EU and the Organisation of American States (OAS)**, held in Brussels in April 2026, confirmed renewed momentum in the EU-OAS relations. Bilateral consultations also took place at working level with Panama, Paraguay, El Salvador and Bolivia. In November 2025, Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Xavier Bettel travelled to El Salvador on behalf of the High Representative to explore ways to strengthen EU–El Salvador bilateral relations, including through the Global Gateway agenda and to discuss key issues, including the rule of law.

The EU continued to support the **EU-LAC International Foundation**, which organised activities involving civil society and other social actors from both regions and took forward the **EU-LAC Digital Alliance** launched in 2023, with policy dialogues on cybersecurity and secure connectivity infrastructure.

Strategic cooperation also continued at bilateral level. The EU followed through with the implementation of Memoranda of Understanding on energy and critical raw materials with Argentina, including through investments under the Global Gateway initiatives **with Argentina and Uruguay**. Work progressed towards negotiations of a Framework Participation Agreement with Argentina. Moreover, **Chile** participated in the **EUFOR Althea Operation** in Bosnia and Herzegovina, by contributing with five military personnel in the context of the EU-Chile Framework Participation Agreement.

The EU engaged with the new government of **Bolivia** through a Team Europe mission, bringing in Member States and European development finance institutions to explore future cooperation in areas such as critical raw materials, electricity interconnection, and renewable energy as part of the EU's Global Gateway Investment Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean. The EU continued to support **Colombia's** efforts to accelerate the implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement. The EU also continued the negotiation of a **Partnership and Cooperation Agreement** and the deployment of an Electoral Observation Mission for the country's 2026 parliamentary and presidential elections.

The EU played an important role in the support of democracy and electoral governance through **EU Electoral Observation Missions** for the general elections in **Ecuador** from December 2024 to April 2025, in **Bolivia** in August 2025, in **Guyana** in September 2025, in **Honduras** in November 2025, in **Peru** in 2026 and in **Colombia** in May 2026. The EU deployed an **Expert Electoral Mission** for **Suriname's** May 2026 and for **Costa Rica's** February 2026 general elections.

The EU accompanied key judicial processes in **Guatemala**. The sanctions regime was subsequently renewed in January 2026 for one year. On 20 May 2026, the visit by the President of the European Council to Guatemala underscored the growing EU–Guatemala partnership in defending democracy and strengthening multilateralism. In October 2025, in view of the situation in **Nicaragua**, the

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European Council renewed the EU's existing restrictive measures on 21 individuals and three entities responsible for serious human rights violations.

On **Venezuela**, the EU continued to work with all Venezuelans, regional, and international partners to promote dialogue and support a Venezuelan-led, democratic way out of the crisis. In January 2025, the EU adopted additional individual sanctions following Nicolás Maduro's continuation in power based on unverified electoral results. Throughout 2025, the EU upheld its humanitarian commitment with the Venezuelan people, supported all those upholding democratic values, and advocated for regional stability with full respect for international law, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. EU efforts to secure the release of political prisoners contributed to the return of EU citizens in arbitrary detention and will continue until all political prisoners regain their freedom. The EU continued to pursue its critical engagement towards **Cuba** under the EU-Cuba **Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement**, including by calling for tangible improvements on human rights, the release of political prisoners and greater openness of the economy. The EU-Cuba Joint Committee was held in June 2025.

The EU also continued strengthening its relationship with the **Caribbean**. In February 2025, the President of the European Commission visited Barbados to participate in the **CARICOM Summit**. Back-to-back with the 4th CELAC-EU Summit, a dedicated **EU-Caribbean Leaders** meeting took place. The Caribbean Leaders meeting underscored the region's growing strategic importance to the EU and reaffirmed a mutual commitment to deepening bi-regional partnerships through cooperation on climate resilience, digital transition, and social cohesion.

The ongoing deterioration of the security, political and humanitarian situation in **Haiti** is deeply concerning and continues to have significant implications for regional stability. Haiti continues to benefit from the EU's largest development portfolio in the Americas, complemented by targeted stabilisation measures, including support to the OAS for the construction of five Forward Operating Bases for use by the UN Security Council-authorized Gang Suppression Force and the Haitian National Police in their fight against the gangs.

EU Special Representatives (EUSRs)

Eleven Special Representatives provided the EU with an active political presence in key areas: four EUSRs in the European neighbourhood (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia), three on the African continent (Sahel, Horn of Africa, and Great Lakes), three in Asia and the wider Middle East (Central Asia, Middle East Peace Process, and the Gulf region), as well as one EUSR with a thematic mandate (Human Rights). Over the past year, under the leadership of the High Representative, EUSRs have played an active role in diffusing tensions and contributing to peace and stability. The EEAS and the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments continued to collaborate to strengthen the general handling of the instrument in the context of an effective and cost-efficient CFSP.

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(2) GLOBAL ISSUES

In 2025, the EEAS pursued two overarching objectives on the global agenda: shape a new economic foreign policy and deliver mutually beneficial partnerships.

The EEAS continued to play a central role in strengthening the EU's resilience, **economic security**, and geopolitical influence in a complex global environment. Building on the Joint Communication on Strengthening EU Economic Security, efforts were supported to identify, assess, and mitigate strategic risks, while contributing to the implementation of key EU autonomous instruments, including **Trade Defence Instruments** and the **Foreign Direct Investment Screening Mechanism**. It also supported the management of trade and investment relations with China and the United States. To safeguard the integrity of the EU financial system, the EU advanced multilateral cooperation on **anti-money laundering** and **counterterrorism financing**. The EEAS contributed to the regular revision of the EU list of high-risk third countries, including listings of the Russian Federation. In parallel, the EU promoted international cooperation on tax governance through engagement on the EU list of Non-Cooperative Jurisdictions for tax purposes.

The EEAS supported the South African **G20** Presidency's priorities on solidarity, equality, and sustainability, as well as the US Administration's emphasis on economic growth. It continued supporting the **OECD** work for designing economic and social reforms, continued to monitor **BRICS** dynamics, and continued engaging with multilateral development banks, the **European Investment Bank**, the **World Bank**, as well as the **International Monetary Fund**.

Advancing the EU's **digital diplomacy** agenda remained a major priority. The Joint Communication on an **International Digital Strategy** was adopted in June 2025 and endorsed at the Foreign Affairs Council in November 2025. The EEAS continued to work with EU Member States on the EEAS-led **Digital Diplomacy Network**, coordinating on policy issues such as multilateral initiatives, securing connectivity, and coordinating with partners. This has led to the deployment of the **EU Tech Business Offer**, aimed at fostering the adoption of secure connectivity and a human-centred digital transformation in partner nations, all while championing EU-developed technologies. The EU and the United States continued to work on the promotion of secure 5G Connectivity around the world. Moreover, the EEAS contributed to securing an ambitious outcome at the World Summit on the Information Society review process, where the UN General Assembly reaffirmed commitments to inclusive and rights-based digital governance.

The EU successfully organised the second **Global Gateway Forum** in October 2025, which brought together over 1,000 participants, including 12 Heads of State and Government. This occasion offered the High Representative the opportunity to underline the importance of connectivity to EU external action, and its potential to help build reliable and predictable **partnerships** around the world.

On **climate, energy, and environmental diplomacy**, the EEAS continued outreach to secure additional energy sector support for Ukraine, including through the **G7+** coordination group on Ukraine's energy. The EEAS advocated for ambitious climate action in bilateral dialogues with partners across the world, as well as in multilateral fora (including **COP 30**), in line with the Joint Communication of the High Representative and the European Commission on a **Global Climate and Energy Vision**. The EEAS promoted global initiatives, such as the Global Methane Pledge, as well as targets for renewable energy, energy efficiency, and efforts to transition away from fossil fuels. In April 2026, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted Council Conclusions on energy and climate diplomacy, to advance the EU's competitiveness, bolster security and reduce vulnerabilities. The EEAS also advocated for ambitious action on environment and the ocean. Throughout the year, the EEAS led the EU Climate Ambassadors Network, the Green Diplomacy Network and the Energy Diplomacy Group, as fora for informal discussions on clean transition matters with Member States'

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Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The EEAS worked to strengthen the coherence between the EU's internal and external policies by ensuring that external implications are considered at an early stage of policy development.

The Commission also adopted the **Global Health Resilience Initiative** in May 2026. The EEAS worked to reinforce the EU's cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO). The EEAS supported the June 2025 GAVI Summit, where the EU pledged more than EUR 2 billion for the 2026–2030 period.

Following the adoption of the **Pact on Migration and Asylum**, the EEAS intensified its engagement on the external dimension of migration policy. It supported migration dialogues and operational partnerships, Talent Partnerships, preparations for the first European Legal Gateway Office in India, and anti-smuggling initiatives. Moreover, it contributed to the development of Action Plans for the Central Mediterranean and Western Balkans routes, assisted in the creation of the first EU Visa Policy Strategy, and supported the organisation of the second Global Alliance against Migrant Smuggling. The EEAS also advanced the work on a new sanctions regime targeting migrant smugglers and associated organised crime networks. It also contributed to the implementation of the external dimension of the EU Drugs Strategy through dialogues with CELAC, Colombia, and China. Through its global network of EU Delegations, the EEAS supported daily outreach to partner countries on the EU's migration policy priorities, as well as the implementation of EU-funded initiatives for migration management and assistance along migratory routes. The EEAS also maintained its engagement in migration dialogues, particularly those under the Rabat and Khartoum Processes.

Following the July 2025 presentation of the European Commission's proposal of the next **Multiannual Financial Framework** for 2028–2034, the EEAS worked closely with the European Commission services, the Council and the European Parliament in the ensuing discussions. The exchanges highlighted the importance of the next Multiannual Financial Framework, including a EUR 200 billion allocation for the Global Europe instrument, which would strengthen the EU's capacity to act strategically and project its influence globally.

Values and Multilateral Relations

The EU pursued three overarching objectives on the global agenda and multilateral relations:

- i) A renewed, strategic, and political approach to the EU's multilateral engagement
- ii) Standing up for international law, accountability, human rights, values, and democracy
- iii) Promoting democracy in the world and defending EU electoral observation missions

The EU remained a strong and reliable defender of **effective multilateralism**, deploying considerable efforts to strengthen the rules-based international order with the UN at its core, and countering efforts to undermine it. At a moment when the global rules-based order is under strain, the EU renewed its commitment to multilateralism based on international law, including the UN Charter, recognising the intrinsic link between peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development. The EU remained a predictable, reliable, and credible partner, engaged both politically and financially, and committed to finding global solutions to common challenges, including through the implementation of the Pact for the Future. The EU has worked with partners, as well as with the UN and its agencies in driving forward its reform process – **the UN80 initiative** – to ensure that the UN remains effective, cost-efficient and responsive, with real impact on the ground. The EEAS and EU Delegations in UN hubs play an important role in ensuring a constructive and well-coordinated EU position on all aspects of the UN80 reform process.

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The EU remained active in supporting the UN Secretary-General's **New Agenda for Peace**, with particular emphasis on prevention, national strategies, and peace operations reform. These issues were successfully included in the Pact and further developed in the **2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review**, which provided a crucial opportunity to translate the Pact's commitments into concrete actions, with the EU fully committed to contributing to this process in substantial ways. The EU also sustained its engagement on other global priorities, including climate and environment, cybersecurity, and the responsible use of emerging technologies. The **annual EU-UN Strategic Dialogue on Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation** - led by the EEAS and the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) – took place in January 2026. The EU hosted a series of regional **climate security dialogues** between February 2025 and March 2026 in Brussels, East Africa (Kenya), the Middle East (Jordan), Central America (Panama), and West Africa (Cote d'Ivoire).

National Prevention Strategies were identified as cornerstones for advancing the aspirations of the Pact for the Future, as a first step the EU has successfully contributed to Mauritania's ongoing efforts in this area. The **EU-UN Partnership Roundtable: Beyond Crisis: Fostering Peace and Managing Global Risks** (4–5 November 2025) convened more than 200 practitioners from across the two systems to examine how broad policy objectives can be translated into operational results.

In relation to the **Council of Europe**, the EEAS, jointly with the European Commission services, coordinated work on accountability, notably regarding the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, as well as on the International Claims Commission. The Convention establishing the latter was signed by the High Representative and Commissioner McGrath on 16 December 2025 and ratified by the EU on 15 May at the Council of Europe Ministerial in Chisinau. The EU also formally announced its intention to join the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression Against Ukraine. It further took part in adopting the decision to establish the Enlarged Partial Agreement for the Tribunal on 15 May 2026.

The EU adopted the **European Democracy Shield** in November 2025, with the objective of protecting the information space and strengthening electoral integrity in EU Member States and in the EU neighbourhood. The EU continued to support the work of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), which provided vital support to pro-democracy activists, civil society, and independent media. Its flexible and demand-driven approach as well as its rapid-response grants, allowed the EED to quickly react to funding cuts and democratic openings, and to support democratic ecosystems in countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, and Syria. The EU maintained its strong support for democracy worldwide with a focus on reinforcing parliamentary capacities and fostering youth and women's participation. The Team Europe Democracy (TED) initiative brings together EU institutions, 15 Member States, and Switzerland as an observer for a coordinated strategic European response in support of democracy. TED provided targeted assistance for democratic reforms through 15 support engagements to EU Delegations and Member States in 11 partner countries across Africa, Asia, MENA, and Latin America.

The EU also reaffirmed its commitment to safeguarding electoral integrity through **election observation**, in response to growing concerns over democratic backsliding and authoritarian trends. In 2025, the EEAS deployed 17 missions: seven full-scale EOMs to Bolivia, Ecuador, Guyana, Honduras, Kosovo, Malawi, and the Philippines; three Election Expert Missions (to Kosovo, Iraq, and Suriname); and seven Election Follow-up Missions (to Colombia, Guatemala, Kenya, Lesotho, Maldives, Nigeria, and Timor Leste). Between January and May 2026, the EU deployed six missions, including EOMs, to Bangladesh, Colombia and Peru.

The EEAS remained a strong advocate for **human rights**, mainstreaming human rights in its external policies and working with the European Commission on the external dimension of the EU's renewed

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equality agenda, including the Roadmap for Women's Rights and the updated strategy on LGBTIQ+ equality, as well as and the new Civil Society strategy.

Furthermore, the EEAS advanced human rights in dialogues and consultations with a wide range of global partners. In 2025, the EU held 35 Human Rights Dialogues, including with the African Union and the ASEAN, alongside bilateral engagements with international partners. These dialogues served as platforms to press for accountability, tackle divergences, and reinforce cooperation in UN human rights fora. They enabled frank exchanges on fundamental freedoms, rule of law and justice – at home and abroad – maintaining equal commitment to civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Particular emphasis was placed on digital rights and online freedoms, labour rights, the protection of migrants and refugees, LGBTI rights, and combating transnational repression.

In November 2025, the 2nd EU Youth, Peace and Security Conference was convened in Brussels, gathering young peacebuilders from 86 countries, mostly in conflict affected regions. The Conference resulted in the adoption of a Joint Declaration and the creation of an active network of 600 young peacebuilders. Divided in regional sub-groups, the network serves as an incubator of project ideas and a platform for webinars on topics of interest to the participants (e.g. recruitment of young people by criminal organisations).

Moreover, the review³ of the EU framework on **Security Sector Reform**⁴ (SSR) was finalised, confirming its continued relevance while highlighting the need to adapt it to the increasingly complex geopolitical context. The review emphasised the political nature of SSR, the importance of strong national ownership, and the necessity of integrating EU instruments to deliver a coherent, flexible, and impactful EU approach focused on governance, human rights, and sustainable results.

Gender Equality and Women, Peace and Security

Amid growing global backlash, the EEAS continued to keep gender equality and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) high on the agenda of EU external action, driving coordination through the WPS Taskforce. WPS commitments were strongly integrated into all new Security and Defence Partnerships signed during the reporting period, and significant progress was made towards their operationalisation. In parallel, progress was made towards the update of the **EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security** and, jointly with the European Commission, the EEAS launched the work towards the **Gender Action Plan IV**. The EU also promoted WPS and gender equality in the G7, as well as in EU-NATO and EU-UN partnerships, including through co-hosting several events during the reporting period, engaging actively in global fora, and facilitating structured dialogue and regular engagement with civil society.

Promoting gender-responsive leadership (GRL) is one of the EU's key tools. Besides continuing with the regular GRL trainings for senior managers, in 2025, the EEAS developed a tailored GRL training for middle managers at the EEAS Headquarters. The EEAS continues to coordinate the **network of Gender Experts and Gender Focal Points**. The **Istanbul Task Force (ITF) Action Plan** on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention was adopted by the Secretary-General in May 2025, and implementation is being followed on quarterly basis.

³ JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT on the review of the implementation of the Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council - Elements for an EU-wide strategic framework to support security sector reform SWD(2025) 240 final (12116/25)

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016JC0031>

Equality and non-discrimination

The EEAS continued implementing the **EEAS Diversity and Inclusion Agenda**, with the **Ambassador for Equality** ensuring consistency between the internal and external dimensions. The EEAS continued to mainstream the six non-discrimination grounds in policy documents, such as Council Conclusions and Summit Declarations. The EEAS engaged broadly with civil society organisations representing groups at risk of discrimination and marginalisation from all regions of the world, including through the **European Union Visitor Programme (EUVP)** and the **26th EU-NGO Forum**. The EEAS cooperated constructively with the European Commission to deliver on comprehensive chapters within the **LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026-2030**, the **Anti-Racism Strategy 2026-2030**, and the **Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030**, which maintain intersectionality as a cross-cutting principle and contain concrete actions within their external relations chapters. In addition, the EEAS resumed convening the **informal group of LGBTIQ+ Envoys and Ambassadors**, chaired by the Ambassador for Equality. To further mainstream equality issues, the EEAS organised and hosted a panel discussion on intersectionality, equality and human rights during the **II Youth, Peace and Security Conference**, which brought together over 100 young peacebuilders from all regions.

Strategic Communications

Launching its **new Communication and Outreach Strategy** in early 2026, the EEAS achieved significant milestones in advancing EU communication objectives in 2025 and 2026, with a strong emphasis on campaigning and digital communication, where the focus on platform-native formats resulted in a threefold increase in engagements.

The EEAS strengthened the EU's communication and resilience efforts through targeted geographic campaigns and support to democratic processes. Furthermore, the EEAS fostered a more proactive approach in the fight against FIMI, in cooperation with EU Member States and through diverse partnerships countering FIMI and disinformation in different regions.

Public diplomacy and communication campaigns

The new multiannual EEAS Communication and Outreach Strategy included the launch of a first **global campaign** (on the occasion of Europe Day, 9 May 2026), putting the spotlight on the EU's offer to the world as a reliable partner.

The **'Life Under Occupation' campaign** in 2025 shared powerful human stories from Ukraine with audiences in Argentina, Mexico, and South Africa, reinforcing solidarity with Ukraine and countering Russian FIMI. In 2026, these efforts continued through activities exposing and countering Russian narratives related to its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Moreover, the EEAS led communication efforts for the **EU-Western Balkans Summit** in December 2025, generating broad regional media coverage through a Team Europe approach. It also launched a media literacy and AI training programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina's, supported commemorations of the 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide in Brussels, and supported the development of Albania's first National Strategy against Foreign Interference and Disinformation.

The EEAS continued communication on EU support for regional stability in the **MENA region**, including campaigns linked to the Pact for the Mediterranean and the EU response to regional crises, while strengthening outreach through the EU in Arabic channels. It organised journalist visits from Israel, Palestine, and Egypt to Brussels, and supported partners' capacity to counter FIMI, including through a dedicated MENA FIMI Roundtable.

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Recognising the importance of inclusive engagement, the ‘**Above the Noise**’ campaign reached more than 11 million young people in **Africa** through social media, podcasts, competitions, and offline events focused on migration, peace and security, multilateralism, and disinformation. The EEAS also strengthened the visibility of the EU as a reliable security and defence partner in the **Indo-Pacific**, including around new Security and Defence Partnerships with India and Australia.

The EU’s public diplomacy efforts included hosting 183 study visits and more than 4,500 visitors in the EEAS. In 2025, the High Representative held her first **Youth Policy Dialogue**. The EEAS annual **Open Day** event attracted 7,000 visitors in 2025 and 10,000 on 9 May 2026, as well as over 60 ambassadors of third countries.

From April to October 2025, the EU participated in the **World Expo** in Osaka. The EU pavilion was visited by more than half a million people, while over 100 EU events on climate action, sustainability, cybersecurity, and cutting-edge technology, among other issues, brought together almost 60,000 people, including government officials, thematic experts, artists, media and culture professionals, and general visitors. The cultural programme featured 16 cultural projects and over 50 activities, encompassing performances, exhibitions, film screenings, talks, and workshops. The programme included a special focus on Ukraine, with a multichannel contemporary art video installation in the Romanian Pavilion produced by the EEAS and endorsed by Ukraine’s official delegation visiting the Expo.

To strengthen information integrity globally, the EEAS organised **press visits to Brussels and Ukraine** and hosted the **Connecting Media Communities Event** in Brussels, bringing together media professionals and fact-checkers to support exchange of knowledge and experience in countering FIMI/disinformation.

Countering FIMI

In 2025 and 2026, the EU continued to step up its efforts to respond to FIMI, consolidating the EU’s position as **a global leader in this domain**. Foreign malign actors increasingly weaponize information to erode cohesion within the EU and beyond. To address the scale of the threat, the EU further developed its deterrence tools to detect and disrupt FIMI operations.

In March 2026, the High Representative hosted the annual **EEAS Counter-FIMI Conference**, which was attended by Montenegro’s Prime Minister. On this occasion, the High Representative presented the **4th EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats**. The report focuses on major threat actors such as China and Russia, exposing more than 500 FIMI incidents and more than 10,000 coordinated channels operating globally. The report also introduced the “**Deterrence Playbook**,” a new framework designed to counter FIMI threats by disrupting hostile actors’ infrastructure and increasing the costs of malicious activity. Building on the report, the EEAS launched the **FIMI Galaxy Explorer** in March 2026, the first interactive dashboard mapping the interconnected networks and actors behind FIMI attacks identified in 2025. Designed as a long-term resource, the platform is regularly updated and accessible to the public.

The **EUvsDisinfo platform** remained a key awareness-raising tool, reaching an audience of over 38 million with evidence-based analysis of disinformation campaigns, especially those originating from Russia, China, and other authoritarian actors. The EUvsDisinfo website is the world’s largest public database of pro-Kremlin disinformation cases, which counts 19,688 exposed and debunked disinformation cases.

The EEAS also contributed to strengthening the EU’s policy and regulatory toolbox, including through the expansion of **sanctions targeting FIMI actors and infrastructure**. In July 2025, the EU imposed economic sanctions on nine individuals and six entities responsible for Russia’s

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destabilising actions abroad, including FIMI. Further sanctions targeting individuals perpetrating FIMI followed in January, March, and April 2026.

The joint High Representative/ European Commission communication on the **European Democracy Shield** was adopted in November 2025, proposing key measures such as a European Centre for Democratic Resilience that will aim to improve situational awareness and the capacity to anticipate and detect FIMI threats.

Counter-FIMI cooperation is now included in most **new SDP agreements**. The EEAS continued to support **CSDP missions and operations** with analytical tools to detect, analyse, and respond to FIMI. In addition to analytical support and dedicated trainings, the EEAS strengthened strategic communication capabilities of CSDP missions and operations and started to provide dedicated support during crises.

The **G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM)** operationalised its Collective Response Framework, the development of which was led by the EEAS. The G7 RRM issued a collective statement on Hong Kong's arrest warrants in August 2025 and on Iranian transnational repression efforts and other malign activities in September. The G7 RRM also endorsed a common framework for open-source research and analysis called Information Manipulation Set (IMS). The IMS framework was developed by VIGINUM, the French agency responsible for countering foreign digital interference, and concurred upon with the EEAS. More so, to support Moldova ahead of their parliamentary elections, the G7 RRM monitored FIMI targeting the crucial event.

Finally, the EEAS continued reinforcing the **Rapid Alert System (RAS)**, supporting a shared situational awareness the development of standardised and interoperable methodologies.

Crisis Response Centre

In **2025**, the **EEAS Crisis Response Centre (CRC)** consolidated its capability to provide early warning and situational awareness through the EU Situation Room, supporting decision-making processes within the EEAS and information sharing with Member States. The CRC continued to be essential in ensuring the **security of EU staff and diplomats in EU Delegations**. During the reporting period, it deployed for the first time, in cooperation with Member States, staff from EU Member States Security Forces to EU Delegations as Close Protection Officers in high-risk countries and areas. CRC continued supporting the security of partners during their missions abroad, thus providing more than 410 Mission Security Advice reports to a total of 26 European Institutions, Agencies, and Member States. The CRC, in cooperation with EU Delegations in the world, also continued to play a key role in coordinating EU Member States' consular preparedness and response to ensure that EU citizens benefit from the **consular protection** they need, wherever they are in the world. EU Delegations in the Middle East and the Gulf, as well as the CRC itself, have been central in supporting Member States' consular actions during the recent Middle East crisis, including via the coordination of assisted departures and repatriations. The CRC continues to assist and promote EU Member States' consular preparedness, including by facilitating the development of EU Joint Consular Contingency Frameworks and the conduct of regular **consular crisis exercises** in Delegations in all regions.

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(3) PEACE, SECURITY, AND DEFENCE

Over the past year, the EU has significantly advanced the implementation of its **Defence Readiness agenda** against the backdrop of a rapidly changing and deteriorating strategic environment, shaped, among others, by Russia's continued war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as military escalation in the Middle East.

The presentation of **the Joint White Paper for European Defence Readiness 2030**, followed by **the Defence Readiness Roadmap 2030**, marked a major step forward in EU efforts towards a more ambitious, coherent, and integrated European defence posture encompassing capability, industrial, and partnership dimensions. Member States continued to increase defence expenditure and investment, with **defence spending** estimated to reach approximately EUR 381 billion in 2025, including more than EUR 130 billion in defence investment, and around EUR 17 billion dedicated to defence research and development. Increasing efforts were invested in capability development, industrial ramp-up, and joint procurement. Progress has been made under the Priority Capability Areas endorsed by EU leaders, notably through the establishment of Capability Coalitions led by Member States and supported by the High Representative, in particular through the European Defence Agency. The implementation of **EU instruments** such as Security Action for Europe (**SAFE**) and the European Defence Industry Programme (**EDIP**), alongside the European Defence Fund (**EDF**), the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (**ASAP**), and the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act (**EDIRPA**), provided concrete levers at EU level to translate the objectives of the Defence Readiness agenda into action.

Over the reporting period, the EEAS played an active role in the implementation of the EU's **Preparedness Union Strategy**. This contributed to align the EU's external action with preparedness objectives, notably through its engagement in multilateral fora, including NATO, and in bilateral partnerships. The EEAS continued to promote a joined-up crisis response model at EU level that would include civilian, military and diplomatic expertise. Lastly, the EEAS developed proposals for the European Council on how Article 42(7) TEU (mutual assistance clause) could be implemented.

The EU and Member States continued to make progress on the implementation of the **Strategic Compass for Security and Defence** across its four pillars: Act, Secure, Invest, and Partner. The High Representative issued the fourth annual progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Compass in 2026.

To remove remaining barriers for the seamless movement of military personnel and equipment across the EU, the **Military Mobility Package** was presented in November 2025. This ambitious initiative aims to strengthen military mobility as a core enabler of defence readiness and to achieve an EU-wide military mobility area by end 2027, establishing a binding framework to enable, facilitate, and accelerate transport of military troops and equipment across the Union. In parallel, efforts have continued in prioritising future investments in dual-use transport infrastructure, with 500 'hotspot' projects identified to close key gaps along the four priority military mobility corridors.

The EU continued to implement the 2023 Joint Communication on addressing **the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defence**, with a focus on operationalising climate security across all external action and mainstreaming climate and environment in EU conflict analysis.

Considering the intensification of **hybrid and cyber activities**, notably by Russia and its proxies, the EU has continued to make use of its EU Hybrid and Cyber Diplomacy Toolboxes to prevent, deter, and respond to such activities, including by using restrictive measures. Over the reported period, 32 individuals and 10 entities have been listed under the Russia destabilising activities sanctions regime.

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Three additional entities and two individuals responsible for cyber-attacks were listed under the EU cyber sanctions regime. The EU has also continued to act with determination through a strategic approach to counter the Russian Federation's hybrid threats and campaigns. Furthermore, the EU has published EU27 statements to condemn and attribute malicious behaviour, and increased cooperation with like-minded partners. The EU also deployed EU Hybrid Rapid Response Teams to Moldova and Armenia, feeding into structural efforts to strengthen these countries' democratic resilience.

During the reporting period, the EEAS has also continued efforts to support Member States in increasing their **cyber resilience and cyber defence** through the implementation of the 2022 EU Cyber Defence Policy and the work on establishing the EU Cyber Defence Coordination Centre. The second iteration of the EU Cyber Census was finalised in 2025 and its executive summary published.

The EU has shaped and actively contributed to the 2025 establishment of the **UN Global Mechanism**, a permanent UN platform aimed at implementing the UN framework for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace. On 25 October 2025, the EU has also signed the UN Convention against Cybercrime. The EU continued to actively engage in other multilateral, regional, bilateral, and multi-stakeholder settings, including by organising cross-regional dialogues.

The EU has enhanced third countries' **cyber resilience** through capacity-building projects, and by organising trainings and workshops. To strengthen the EU's partnerships, cyber dialogues with the United Kingdom, Ukraine, Japan, and Brazil were organised, and cyber and hybrid issues were also included on the agenda of regular security and defence consultations with other partners. Furthermore, the first strategic consultations on hybrid threats have been organised with the UK. The EU has also continued to deepen its exchanges and cooperation with NATO on cyber, hybrid threats, and resilience through Structured Dialogues and staff-to-staff engagements.

The EU continued to strengthen its dialogue and cooperation on security and defence with partners. It conducted more than **40 thematic, as well as security and defence dialogues** with bilateral and international partners. Furthermore, it continued establishing Security and Defence Partnerships with the key partners such as the UK and Canada.

The strategic **partnership with NATO was strengthened**, focusing on the close coordination on the support to Ukraine, a high-level and senior officials meetings, regular cross-briefings, and the conduct of the seven Structured Dialogues on military mobility, resilience, space, emerging and disruptive technologies, climate, security and defence, cyber and defence industry. In addition, joint meetings of the PSC and North Atlantic Council (NAC) were resumed allowing for high level exchanges on topics of common interest.

The implementation of the **EU-UN Strategic Partnership** achieved a significant milestone with the adoption of the new set of EU-UN Joint Priorities on Peace and Security for 2025-2028. These expand the Partnership's scope and establish a new overarching meeting structure with a Strategic Committee on Peace and Security, complemented by a staff-to-staff mechanism. The new Priorities are structured around two main clusters: field-based cooperation, as well as thematic and global cooperation on peace and security. The EEAS successfully conducted the annual **EU-UN Strategic Dialogue on conflict prevention and mediation**, focusing on the use of AI and digital tools, as well as climate security and strengthening women's participation in peace mediation.

The EU also reinforced its cooperation with the **African Union** in promoting peace and security across the African continent and held the second EU-AU Strategic Dialogue on Preventive Diplomacy and Peace Mediation. The EU also continued its collaboration with the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**, the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, the **GCC**, with the two editions of EU-GCC Regional Security Dialogue since 2024), as well as the

OSCE. The EEAS supported peace processes in more than 25 conflicts around the world and further supported peacebuilding by organising the first annual “Brussels Peace Week” draw and the 7th EU community of Practice on Peace Mediation.

In **counterterrorism** and the prevention and countering of violent extremism, the EU further consolidated its position as a global standard-setter, advocating for a human rights-centred, whole-of-society approach within multilateral frameworks. This included active engagement in the United Nations, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), which the EU co-chaired, and the Global Coalition Against Da’esh. The EU continued to promote the EU-led GCTF Brussels Memorandum of Good Practices on Oversight and Accountability in Counterterrorism and geographically maintained its focus on Africa, with two GCTF working groups (West and East Africa) supporting counterterrorism measures, such as countering and preventing Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), border management control, and countering terrorism financing in order to address the terrorism threat in the Continent.

Beyond this, the EU and Central Asian countries held their first Dialogue on Counterterrorism in July 2025, in Tajikistan. This helped strengthening the role of the EU as a security partner in a region which is crucial for EU security from terrorist threats.

The **global disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control** architecture continued to be under strain, as a consequence of Russia’s illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, China’s increased assertiveness and the deterioration of regional proliferation crises (e.g., Iran, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea). EU efforts throughout the year focused on upholding, supporting, and further advancing the relevant multilateral instruments, frameworks, and institutions, in coordination with like-minded partners. This included a strong positioning of the EU ahead of the 11th Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (New York, 27 April-22 May 2026), including the development of Council Conclusions. It also involved proactive participation in meetings in the frameworks of instruments such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, in the 80th United Nations General Assembly’s First Committee, or in processes on new technologies such as the third Summit on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (REAIM) (A Coruña – Spain, 11-12 September 2025).

Nearly all actions in the 2023 EU **Space** Strategy for Security and Defence have now been implemented, enhancing the resilience and protection of space systems and services in the EU. This includes actions being implemented that have become recurrent, such as the preparation of an annual classified space threat landscape analysis, contributing to overall strategic oversight. The EEAS has worked to reinforce the EU Satellite Centre (SatCen), stepping up the EU’s autonomous geospatial intelligence capacity, to support decision-making of the EU and its Member States. SatCen’s production of geospatial intelligence products and services continues to increase. Partnering for responsible behaviours in outer space remained a key priority, as well as building and maintaining bilateral space security relations, not only with like-minded partners but also with strategic competitors, most notably India, where an inaugural Space Security Dialogue took place in November 2025 in Brussels. In February 2026, the High Representative put forward a proposal to the European Council on strengthening the EU’s Space Threat Response Architecture to further improve the EU’s response to space threats in a changed space threat landscape.

In October 2025, the High Representative appointed an EEAS Shadow Fleet Coordinator to gather best practices, speed up enforcement, and strengthen EU actions against **Russia’s shadow fleet**. He chairs a task force of Member States’ Points of Contact on the shadow fleet and works in complementarity with the EU Sanctions Envoy. In February 2026, the EEAS circulated a ‘vademecum’ (overview) of best practices on tackling the shadow fleet to Member States, which is

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also intended to act as an encouragement for Member States to take assertive action against shadow fleet vessels, such as boarding and inspecting flagless and falsely flagged vessels in accordance with Art. 110 UNCLOS. In the reporting period, national authorities boarded and detained several shadow fleet vessels.

In November 2025, the High Representative chaired a Ministerial meeting with Indo-Pacific partners in Brussels on the protection of **critical maritime infrastructure**. This followed a series of events in the region on this topic in 2025, including a high-level seminar in the Philippines in July. Cooperation continued with the EU-India regional seminar on the protection of critical undersea infrastructure in Delhi in December 2025, as well as a peer-to-peer workshop on critical maritime infrastructure in Rome for all Indo-Pacific partners in April 2026.

In December 2025, the EU and its Member States adopted a Declaration on making full use of the International Law of the Sea Framework relating to threats from the shadow fleet and to the protection of critical undersea infrastructure. The Declaration includes, inter alia, the intention of negotiating pre-authorised boarding agreements with flag States of shadow fleet vessels, and of launching a broad initiative to develop new legally binding or non-binding tools at the international level for the protection of critical undersea infrastructure.

The EU has further improved its capacity to act by making **civilian and military CSDP missions** and operations more flexible, tailored to local needs, and serving the interests of the EU and its partners. It will be important to reinforce the effectiveness of these missions; further develop modular, scalable, and adaptable missions and operations; and further anchor impact evaluations within decision-making and review processes.

Work continues to strengthen the EU's operational capability. Further planning is conducted for the possible use of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity through regular live exercises and full enabling of command-and-control structures.

Civilian missions and EU Justice and Home Affairs agencies also stepped up their efforts to strengthen their cooperation, contributing to the external nexus of the EU's internal security. With the European Border and Coastguard Agency, Frontex, following the 2024 signing of the last working arrangement between EUAM Ukraine and Frontex, relevant negotiations started/proceeded with EUAM Iraq and EU SDL GoG. In view of first limited participation of civilian missions in Europol's EMPACT Operational Actions Plans (OAPs) in the EMPACT policy cycle 2022-2025, a new approach started under the new EMPACT policy cycle for civilian missions to participate or facilitate participation of their relevant host nation authorities in specific OAPs.

In addition to their specific roles relating to maritime security and freedom of navigation, since mid-2025, **EUNAVFOR ATALANTA**, **EUNAVFOR ASPIDES** and **EUNAVFOR MED IRINI** have contributed to countering shadow fleets. They collect and process intelligence in their respective areas of operation, which is then used to propose designations within EU sanctions regimes. During the reporting period, Operation ATALANTA protected 23 merchant vessels delivering food and aid, while Operation ASPIDES provided close protection to 246 merchant vessels while patrolling in the Red Sea. On average, Operation IRINI monitored about 30 shadow fleet vessels daily.

The EEAS stepped up preparation and foresight in the past year, introducing the **Integrated Advance Planning for CSDP**. Advance planning work, including on Contingency Operational Scenarios and Contingency Plans, will continue throughout 2026. Military **live exercises** have strengthened strategic cohesion and collaborative frameworks across EU entities, significantly advancing operational readiness.

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Almost three years after its adoption, the implementation of the political commitments and actionable deliverables within the new **Civilian CSDP Compact** of May 2023 advanced. In October 2025, the EEAS presented the second **Annual Compact Progress Report** to Member States. Implementation continued to focus on increasing the overall effectiveness of civilian CSDP missions. In February 2026, for the first time in years, the target of 70 % of seconded international staff in civilian missions was reached. This longstanding aim has been achieved thanks to joint CivOpsHQ and Member States efforts. A new policy on contracted staff is in force since September 2025. It reflects a collective ambition to further increase the share of seconded personnel in civilian CSDP missions. In July 2025, Member States approved the new **Security and Duty of Care** policy in civilian CSDP missions, replacing a previous version from 2006. Based on this new policy, CivOpsHQ carries out regular duty of care compliance visits and produces an annual report on Security and Duty of Care in Civilian CSDP Missions. In January 2026, CivOpsHQ finalised a **Comprehensive Strategy for a Safe and Inclusive Working Environment** in civilian CSDP missions.

Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) mechanisms have continued to be implemented in most civilian CSDP missions, as part of their risk management process, e.g. through HRDD Standard Operating Procedures, task forces, and human rights risk assessments in missions' projects. To operationalise the EU HRDD Policy, an implementation handbook was developed and shared with EU Delegations and CSDP missions and operations in June 2025. It provides further guidance and tools to support the relevant actors in exercising HRDD when providing security sector support to third parties.

The EUAM in Ukraine addresses a broad scope of security challenges, responding to evolving support needs on the ground. Newer missions, such as those in Moldova and Armenia, have become more lightweight, modular, and scalable. The impact evaluation system has gained momentum, delivering evaluations of EUAM Iraq and EUMM Georgia (2026), and is expected to provide added value for the further development of missions. Conducted by a functionally independent team of evaluation experts seconded by Member States, the evaluations focus on assessing the missions' operational impact, and as such provide lessons for broader EU policy discussions on civilian CSDP. Furthermore, building on past efforts, the EU has developed a **Knowledge Management Policy and Toolbox** for the EU's peace, security and defence structures, including CSDP missions and operations. This initiative sets a clear direction, aiming to turn experience into operational impact, with the goal to capture lessons better, share insights, and ultimately enable faster, more informed decision-making across the EU system.

On Climate, Peace and Security, the EU hosted a series of regional Climate Security Dialogues between February 2025 and March 2026 in Brussels, East Africa (Kenya), the Middle East (Jordan), Central America (Panama), and West Africa (Cote d'Ivoire). Another regional dialogue will take place in East Asia in September 2026. Furthermore, the EU has included climate and environmental security as a topic in several Security and Defense Partnerships. It has enhanced cooperation and exchanges on climate security with the UN.

The EU has continued to strengthen its **approach to cultural heritage in conflict and crisis contexts**, in line with the EU Concept⁵ and Council Conclusions⁶ that recognise its importance as a strategic component of peace, security, and resilience. This is evident in Ukraine and in other contexts, with cultural heritage considerations increasingly factored into broader stabilisation and

⁵ [Concept on Cultural heritage in conflicts and crises. A component for peace and security in European Union's external action \(9962/21\)](#)

⁶ [Council Conclusions on EU Approach to Cultural Heritage in conflicts and crises \(9837/21\)](#)

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security efforts. Within the Common Security and Defence Policy, several civilian CSDP missions have integrated cultural heritage protection into their support to the rule of law, border management, and support to national authorities, while also contributing to countering illicit trafficking of cultural goods fostering closer cooperation between the EU and local law enforcement actors.

In the current, highly volatile geopolitical landscape, five years after its creation, the **European Peace Facility** has become an even more critical instrument. It is a tool allowing to address pressing security needs of the EU's partners and enhance the EU's credibility as a dependable security provider. Its implementation is now increasingly guided by a strategic focus on maximising impact in contexts where it can most effectively strengthen both partner and EU security. This includes measures that contribute to a strong and secure neighbourhood, essential to the security and defence of Europe, to strengthening maritime security, to combating terrorism and addressing threats from non-state actors and to reinforcing key partnerships.

The EUR 90 billion Ukraine Support loan, a limited recourse loan designed to help meet Ukraine's needs for 2026 and 2027, was agreed by the European Council in December 2025 and is now under implementation. The first payment is expected in June. It will help provide much needed support to meet Ukraine's most urgent military needs.

(4) PRIORITIES FOR 2026

Europe and Central Asia

On the **Arctic**, the expectation is for continued posturing in global security rivalry to spill over to key locations. The vulnerabilities from climate change will likely cause major damage and open up easier access to Arctic resources. The EU will continue implementing the objectives of the EU Arctic Policy⁷ with a view to reinforcing cohesion and collaboration with relevant Arctic states and observers and like-minded partners. Work is ongoing on strengthening cooperation with the **non-EU Western Europe** partners; it is essential to further a values-based geopolitical engagement, including in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and cooperation on security and defence.

Looking ahead, EU enlargement will remain a central part of the EU's agenda with the **Western Balkans**. This includes encouraging partners to implement the necessary reforms, particularly on the rule of law and to maintain a clear strategic orientation to facilitate progress on their EU path. Work will continue to increase CFSP/CSDP cooperation with the Western Balkans, including countering hybrid threats, cyber-attacks and FIMI, providing further EPF support and gradually involving Western Balkans partners in EU cooperation frameworks. The EU will continue to facilitate the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, including through advancing the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement and all other Dialogue commitments, while supporting regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations, and reconciliation across the Western Balkans.

On **Türkiye**, the EU's overarching priority in 2026 will be shaped by continuous efforts to developing a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship while maintaining de-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean. The EU will pursue the objective to advance the bilateral agenda by continuing to operationalise the November 2023 Joint Communication on the state of play of EU-Türkiye relations, along the approach defined by the April 2024 European Council conclusions. The EU will also engage with Türkiye on key foreign policy issues, especially in the neighbourhood but also beyond. Against the background of a shifting geopolitical context, Türkiye's role in the Black Sea, Syria, the wider Middle East, South Caucasus, Central Asia, Africa, as well as its potential contribution to strengthening of European security, also on the context of its role as NATO ally, present opportunities for stronger engagement while also keeping in mind that efforts will have to be continued to bridge the differences and address existing challenges in EU-Türkiye relations.

In 2026, the situation in the **Eastern Mediterranean** will continue to be shaped by the interaction of different factors, likely generating multifaceted interdependencies and maintaining a complex landscape. The European Council has repeatedly underlined that security and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean, is in the EU's strategic interest. In this context, EU relevant actions in the region will continue with the aim to defend its interests and those of its Member States, sustain de-escalation, and uphold regional stability by incentivising partners in the region to engage in cooperative frameworks and partnerships.

The next EU-UK Summit will be an opportunity to explore further avenues to enhance EU-UK dialogue and cooperation on shared objectives in foreign policy, peace, security and defence.

The EU will continue to provide unwavering support to **Ukraine**, including efforts towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. Continuing and increasing military support to Ukraine will remain a key priority, to strengthen the capabilities of the Ukrainian armed forces. With EU accession as the ultimate EU security commitment, and building on existing support, the EU will continue

⁷<https://www.ecas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Joint%20Communication%20on%20a%20stronger%20EU%20engagement%20for%20a%20peaceful%20C%20sustainable%20and%20prosperous%20Arctic.pdf.pdf>

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supporting Ukraine in the context of peace talks and to deter acts of aggression in the future. The EU will continue to provide Ukraine with regular and predictable financial support and increase outreach to global partners to broaden the international support for Ukraine.

Ahead of the second EU-**Moldova** Summit in June 2026, the EU should remain steadfast in backing Moldova's reform efforts as it progresses toward EU membership. The EU should continue to use the opportunities offered by the SDP established with Moldova, as well as sustain and expand its security and defence cooperation to strengthen Moldova's resilience, using all relevant instruments, such as the EUPM and defence support under the European Peace Facility. The EU should maintain its support and commitment to a comprehensive, peaceful, and sustainable settlement of the Transnistria conflict.

In response to the democratic backsliding caused by the **Georgian** authorities, the EU should maintain its principled position that progress on the European path remains contingent upon democratic reforms and respect for fundamental rights. It should maintain its active role in conflict resolution, including through the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, as well as through the EUMM in Georgia.

The EU should support the ongoing peace process between **Armenia** and **Azerbaijan** and yield its support to further enhance regional connectivity. Building on the first successful EU-Armenia Summit and adoption of a Strategic Agenda for the EU-Armenia Partnership, the EU should further intensify its partnership with Armenia in all areas, including security and defence. The EU should also engage comprehensively with Azerbaijan across shared priorities, such as energy and transport, while continuing to address the human rights situation, and work towards the adoption of Partnership Priorities and the advancement of negotiations for a new bilateral agreement.

The EU should continue to support democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in **Belarus**, including by pursuing accountability measures and supporting relevant initiatives in multilateral fora. It should uphold its dual-track strategy, combining pressure on the regime, including through sanctions, with sustained support for Belarusian civil society and independent media. The overarching objective – democratisation, strengthened people-to-people exchanges, and strategic communication – must stay central to the EU's future engagement with the Belarusian people.

Looking ahead, the EU will remain focused on maintaining pressure on **Russia** through additional sanctions and stricter enforcement against circumvention aimed at limiting Russia's ability to finance and sustain its war effort, support to Ukraine and other partners, and strengthening Europe's own security and resilience. Particular attention will also be placed on countering Russian destabilising activities against both the EU and its partners, including cyberattacks, sabotage, disinformation, and interference. The EU will also step up efforts to isolate Russia on the international area, including in international organisations, and to counter Russian narratives and influence in third countries and regions affected by the Russian aggression, especially in Africa.

In both bilateral and regional cooperation formats, the EEAS will continue **supporting candidate countries** in their accession reforms efforts and will keep promoting resilience, stability and the rule of law in the **Eastern neighbourhood region**. The first year of implementation of **the Black Sea Strategy** will prioritise concrete regional projects of geopolitical importance, such as the Black Sea Maritime Security Hub and the Connectivity Agenda. The EEAS will also support sharing of EU Member States' expertise among European Seas basins facing similar threats and challenges, most notably between the Baltic and the Black Seas. The EEAS will continue working in regional and multilateral formats in the Eastern neighbourhood to promote peace and security, sustainable development, people-to-people cooperation and energy security aspects, addressing all consequences of Russia's war of aggression.

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Building on the political momentum created at the **EU-Central Asia Summit in April 2025**, the EU should continue to strengthen its ties with Central Asia, especially in the **identified key areas of cooperation**, e.g. connectivity, transport and supply chains diversification (notably through the development of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor), critical raw materials, security, as well as climate and green transition. These efforts are to be supported by the work of the EUSR for Central Asia.

Middle East and North Africa

The unstable situation in the Middle East is likely to keep the region at the top of the EU's foreign policy agenda in 2026, alongside Ukraine. The EU will seek to reinforce its role by mobilising its political, humanitarian, cooperation, security and defence tools. The implementation of the first iteration of the **Action Plan of the Pact for the Mediterranean** will continue and the **EU-Southern Neighbourhood Ministerial** will take stock of the progress in the autumn.

The EU will seek to build on the first **EU-Syria HLPD** of May 2026, while working towards the perspective of an **EU-Syria Association Agreement**. However, much remains to be done for a successful and inclusive transition, the consolidation of State institutions, progress on transitional justice, national reconciliation and the establishment of a pluralistic civic space in Syria. Building on the outcomes of the HLPD, the EU will continue to deepen cooperation with Syria in a number of areas, including the political transition process, transitional justice, socio-economic recovery and reconstruction, security, migration, and the reintegration of Syria in the Euro-Mediterranean space in order to make full use of existing processes and organisations, such as the Union for the Mediterranean and the Pact for the Mediterranean.

The EU's priority in **Lebanon** will be to continue supporting the Lebanese State in safeguarding the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity and laying the groundwork for lasting stability, including through a possible CSDP engagement.

The situation in the **Gulf** threatens regional security, as well as global economic stability, thereby affecting EU interests. The European Union will therefore support all diplomatic efforts to ease tensions and secure **lasting peace in the region**. This includes safeguarding freedom of navigation and safe transit in the **Strait of Hormuz**, as well as addressing the broader range of long-standing security concerns with Iran. In doing so, the EU will take full account of its strategic interests and coordinate closely with partners. Meanwhile, the EU will continue to support the fundamental aspiration of the people of **Iran** for a future where their human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected, protected and fulfilled.

On the Gulf, the EU will continue to engage to deliver on all the pillars of the Joint Communication on a "**Strategic Partnership with the Gulf**". The EU will continue to launch and advance negotiations for bilateral Strategic Partnership Agreements. The second EU-GCC Summit will confirm the strong engagement against the backdrop of the current geopolitical situation.

The EU will seek to consolidate and deepen its **partnerships across North Africa**, building on the momentum generated by high-level engagements with Egypt, Morocco and Algeria, the ongoing implementation of the EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding, and sustained efforts toward a political solution in Libya. Advancing cooperation on regional security will remain priorities, in line with the EU's broader strategic framework for the Mediterranean.

Africa

The EU will continue to strengthen and deepen EU-Africa relations, focusing on the continued implementation of the "Joint Vision for 2030" from the 6th **AU-EU Summit** and the commitments of

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the Joint Declaration from the 7th AU-EU Summit, alongside the implementation of the Samoa Agreement. A new Follow-Up Mechanism will facilitate the continuous involvement of Member States on both sides and allow for better monitoring of the shared commitments, discussion of topics of mutual interest, and the countering of FIMI. An AU–EU Senior Officials Meeting will convene later this year to take stock of the progress made. The EU is committed to strengthening the multilateral dimension of the EU–Africa partnership and to engaging with African partners on the reform of the international financial architecture. The EU will continue to support the AU in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Looking ahead, the EU will further strengthen its engagement with its partners in **Southern Africa**, notably through: (i) holding the Joint Cooperation Council with South Africa, the main forum to take stock of the overall relationship; holding the annual Ministerial meeting with South Africa, which will give further impetus to EU-South Africa cooperation; (ii) holding the first consultations on the situation in Cabo Delgado with Mozambique, a testimony of the EU’s engagement for stability in Northern Mozambique; (iii) the holding of the EU-SADC senior officials meeting, which would aim to deepen trade, investment and security dialogue and cooperation with this important regional organisation; (iv) the deployment of an observation mission to the August 2026 general elections in Zambia; and (v) the holding of regular partnership dialogues under the Samoa agreement.

In **West Africa**, the EEAS is planning an EOM to The Gambia in late 2026 and an Election Expert Mission (EEM) to Nigeria in January 2027. A new EUSR for the Sahel will be appointed in the coming months. The political and security situation in **Central Sahel** countries may worsen, adding challenges to the current EU engagement. Terrorist spillover towards coastal countries may remain a concern, as may organised crime and drug trafficking, including through a maritime security dimension. In this context, several countries will continue to benefit from the EPF and other CFSP/CSDP instruments. Nigeria’s role could become even more important in this regard, building on the successful EU–Nigeria ministerial meeting in March 2026. Natural resources will persist in attracting external players, justifying possible EU investment in governance in these areas. Migration and mobility management will remain key trends in the region.

The EU will continue to strengthen and deepen its relations with the countries of **Central Africa** on the basis of shared interests and equal partnerships. With regard to the **Great Lakes** region and the conflict in eastern DRC, the EU will continue its active diplomatic engagement, increase humanitarian advocacy and support, as well as continue to support the ongoing peace processes and the implementation of the commitments made. The EU’s two CSDP missions in the CAR will undergo a strategic review.

Through the EPF, the EU continues to prioritise stability and security in the **East and Horn of Africa**, including support for the AUSSOM, maritime security in Djibouti, the Kenya Defence Forces, and the strengthening of security partnerships with regional actors. Building on our intensified efforts in mediation and conflict prevention, including through the work of the EUSR for the Horn of Africa, the EU will deepen engagement on multilateral issues of common concern with countries in the region, such as Ethiopia. The EU will also step up its engagement in the Red Sea, seeking to integrate its various instruments, including naval missions such as EUNAVFOR ASPIDES and Operation ATALANTA, into a more cohesive approach. This will be complemented by efforts to strengthen regional structures and foster greater cooperation among littoral states. Looking ahead, the EU will closely follow Ethiopia’s general elections and democratic trajectory in June 2026, the planned elections in South Sudan in December 2026, and the general elections in Kenya in August 2027.

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Asia-Pacific

Looking ahead, 2027 will mark a pivotal moment in this partnership, as the EU and ASEAN will convene a **Commemorative Summit** in Singapore to celebrate five decades of cooperation. The Summit should serve as the platform to formalise the upgrade to a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**. The **25th ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting** provided an opportunity to align priorities, address global challenges, and accelerate preparations for the 2027 upgrade, reaffirming both regions' commitment to a rules-based international order and multilateral solutions. The EU and ASEAN remain firmly engaged in fostering a stable, predictable and reliable partnership – one that delivers for our people in every area that counts.

The EU will focus on the implementation of the **Joint Strategic Agenda with India**, including through further high-level engagement, such as the **Strategic Dialogue** and **Trade and Technology Council**.

The EU seeks to hold bilateral Summits with the **Republic of Korea** and **Japan** in 2026 and will continue to cooperate closely on current geopolitical and economic challenges – bilaterally and multilaterally in the UN and G7/G20. The EU will continue the implementation of the **SDPs** established with both countries, respectively.

The EU will continue to deepen its partnerships with **Australia** and **New Zealand**, two of its most like-minded partners in defending the rules-based order and promoting regional security and stability. The **SDP** with Australia, signed in March 2026, will facilitate cooperation in areas including FIMI, cyber, hybrid threats as well as maritime security. Economic security objectives will be pursued through signing and concluding the **Free Trade Agreement** with Australia, expanding exchanges in research and innovation through association to Horizon and through linking up companies working in the critical minerals sector. Enhanced exchanges in the area of security and defence will continue with New Zealand. The **Free Trade Agreement** with New Zealand and its association with Horizon will develop further actions aimed at economic prosperity.

The EU will continue to engage in constructive dialogue with **China** to manage a crucial relationship for the EU. The EU's priorities remain to address Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, to ensure a mutually beneficial trade and economic relationship, to avoid weaponisation of economic interdependence and to advance collaboration on global challenges.

The EU will continue with its support for the reform process in **Bangladesh** and will seek to sign the **Partnership and Cooperation Agreement** in the near future.

The EU will further intensify its partnership with the **Pacific Island Countries**, taking full advantage of the Pacific Protocol of the Samoa Agreement. The EU is seeking strategic-partner status at the **Pacific Island Forum (PIF)** and will participate at political level at the PIF Leaders meeting in Palau in August-September 2026.

The EU will continue to work closely with **Pakistan** to address shared security challenges, including tensions with Afghanistan, while supporting sustainable economic development through initiatives such as **Global Gateway** to strengthen climate resilience and promote inclusive growth. The EU will also encourage continued progress on Pakistan's international obligations, particularly regarding safe migration management and human rights protection.

On **Afghanistan**, the EU will continue to prioritise humanitarian and basic needs assistance, advocacy for women's and girls' rights, and support for the UN-led Doha process, while working with regional partners to mitigate security risks, including terrorist threats and migration concerns.

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Americas

The EU will continue to take a pragmatic approach to its relations with the **United States of America**, balancing cooperation and the defence of EU interests and values when necessary. The focus of the EU's engagement with **Canada** will be on the delivery of the commitments taken at the 2025 Summit and on preparing an even more ambitious agenda ahead of the next Summit.

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the **EU and CELAC** will hold their annual meeting in New York in September where they will review bi-regional cooperation.

The organisation of an **EU-Brazil Summit** and the **provisional application of the EU-MERCOSUR Partnership Agreement** will be crucial opportunities for EU-LAC relations in 2026. The negotiations of a **Partnership Cooperation Agreement** with **Colombia** and a **Framework Participation Agreement** for the participation in EU crisis management missions and operations with **Argentina**, as well as the conclusion of agreements on police and judicial cooperation with several countries in the region are also important milestones for 2026. In **Venezuela**, the EU will continue to support the reform process.

Global

The EEAS will prioritise actions to strengthen the EU's capacity to address political and geoeconomic challenges. It will work towards stronger alignment between policy and communication activities, including in the High Representative and European Commission initiatives, as well as improved coordination across EU institutions and Member States.

The EEAS will concentrate on reinforcing the EU's role as a reliable global actor in response to the fragmented geopolitical environment. In this context, it will further support the implementation of the Joint Communication on Strengthening EU Economic Security, RESource EU, Trade Defence Instruments, and the Foreign Direct Investment Screening Mechanism. A central focus will also be placed on building new partnerships with third countries and on deepening the existing ones, thus positioning the EU as a reliable partner and bridgebuilder on issues ranging from economic security and competitiveness, to migration, climate, energy, and digital transformation. The EEAS will support the implementation of the International Digital Strategy, the 2026 Council Conclusions on energy and climate diplomacy, and strengthen the role of EU Delegations in advancing the EU's foreign agenda globally. The EEAS will continue working to support the rollout of strategic connectivity corridors through the Global Gateway Strategy to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes that strengthen economic security, competitiveness, and supply chain resilience while advancing sustainable development. The EEAS will also continue to promote ambitious external action financing under the future Multiannual Financial Framework.

At the same time, unwavering political, economic, and energy support to Ukraine will be a priority, while intensifying pressure on Russia through sanctions, anti-money laundering, and counterterrorism financing measures, as well as coordinated outreach with international partners, including within the G7+ framework.

The EEAS will continue to monitor BRICS developments and share updates with EU Member States.

Values and Multilateral Relations

The EEAS will continue to promote a **renewed, strategic, and political approach to the EU's multilateral engagement** at a time of geopolitical turmoil and growing global challenges to project the EU as a global actor and protect and project its values and interests. As a principled and credible actor, the EU will remain steadfast in its commitment to international law, effective multilateralism,

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and the rules-based international order, with the United Nations at its core, and will continue to work with others that share its concern of the need to restore respect for international law, including international human rights law, humanitarian law, and the sovereign equality of States. Advancing and defending multilateralism as a collective endeavour that enables shared and jointly built solutions will remain at the centre of the EEAS's efforts.

The **EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy** will be renewed beyond 2027. Building on this proven compass for EU external action on human rights and democracy, the next Action Plan aims to ensure continuity and reaffirm the EU's commitment to respect and protect human rights, as well as promote democracy. The EU will further work to protect to accountability efforts, not least regarding Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and support for the International Criminal Court. At the Human Rights Council, the EU will support the establishment of a new International Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan, answering the call for accountability for the people of Afghanistan.

The EU will continue to strengthen its engagement with all regions of the world to **advance democracy**. It will support efforts to build transparent and accountable democratic institutions and processes and foster inclusive and meaningful democratic participation. The EU will continue to promote credible, transparent, and inclusive electoral processes through **election observation** and electoral assistance. The EU remains firmly committed to upholding democratic principles and values, and to supporting independent and pluralistic media, as well as civil society.

Equality and non-discrimination

The EEAS will continue to proactively work towards the equality of all human beings through an intersectional and rights-based approach. Given the recognised political importance of equality issues and the gender equality and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in the CFSP, the EEAS will continue to advance related commitments in multilateral and intergovernmental political fora. In particular, the upcoming update of the **EU Action Plan on WPS (2028–2034)** and, jointly with the European Commission, the development of the new **Gender Action Plan IV (2028–2034)** will set out priorities and initiatives across EU external action for the coming years. The EEAS will pursue these objectives through political and policy dialogues, by working with all EEAS services to implement the EU's equality commitments across all policies and actions and reinforcing internal procedures and institutional capacities, including by mandatory Gender Responsive Leadership training for all EEAS managers. Security and defence partnerships will constitute a key instrument in this regard through the joint operationalization of WPS language.

The EEAS will continue implementing the EEAS Agenda for Diversity and Inclusion (2023-2027) as an important framework for promoting equality, fundamental rights, and the non-discrimination for all. Additionally, the EEAS will implement the actions outlined in the external chapters of the LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026-2030, the Anti-Racism Strategy 2026-2030, and the Gender Equality Strategy (2026-2030).

Strategic Communications

The EEAS will continue to strengthen EU narratives through global and regional communication campaigns, while fostering its proactive approach to countering FIMI, in cooperation with EU Member States and like-minded partners.

Russian and Chinese FIMI activity is likely to further intensify in 2026, including rising funding for FIMI as part of the budget increase for state-controlled media and proxies. At the same time, the development of artificial intelligence tools will lower the cost of FIMI, while extending their scale and scope considerably.

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Elections are expected to remain key targets for Russian FIMI, both in the EU and its neighbourhood, particularly in the context of EU accession, as well as support for Ukraine and efforts to strengthen EU defence readiness.

The EU will continue supporting Member States, neighbouring countries, and priority regions through bilateral cooperation and multilateral mechanisms to provide the support necessary to safeguard its democratic institutions and processes and protect EU policies. Currently, the EEAS is preparing to scale up EU counter-FIMI and StratCom support to Montenegro, responding to requests by the Montenegrin government for building institutional capacity in view of Montenegro's path to EU accession. The EEAS will also continue to strengthen cooperation with and support to Ukraine on counter-FIMI and strategic communication, through campaigns addressing the myth of Russian invincibility in its war of aggression against Ukraine.

Crisis Response Centre

EU external action today operates in an environment of a permanent, overlapping and deeply interconnected emergencies. The CRC will continue to work towards enhancing its ability to anticipate and prepare for crises by integrating new tools and technologies, while contributing to the implementation of the Preparedness Union Strategy and the organisation of **EU Integrated Resolve (PACE) exercises**. The EU's crisis response architecture must evolve continuously and systematically connect situational awareness, foresight, and anticipation.

Peace, Security, and Defence

The EU will continue to bolster tailored, mutually beneficial **peace, security and defence partnerships** across the full spectrum of CSDP with key countries and international organisations. These include SDPs, balancing engagement with closest partners to protect Europe and global outreach to safeguard a rules-based international order and address common security threats. It will also further explore where the EU can support **peace mediation** and dialogue processes.

For the coming period, the EU will prioritise the implementation of the **Defence Readiness** agenda, including fostering collaborative development of full-spectrum capabilities across all operational domains with a view to closing critical capability gaps across the nine Priority Capability Areas. Efforts will continue to strengthen the role of the European Defence Agency, deepen mutually beneficial defence and industrial cooperation with Ukraine, and mobilise additional defence funding, including through the European Investment Bank.

Work on **flagship proposals** of strategic importance, such as the European Drone Defence Initiative, the European Air Shield, the European Space Shield, and the Eastern Flank Watch, is expected to intensify in the coming period.

Lessons learned from the **Strategic Compass** implementation will feed in the upcoming **European Security Strategy** which aims to respond to today's rapidly changing security environment.

2026 will be a defining year for European sovereignty and the EU's global security posture. In a context of increasing competition and conflict amid an evolving threat landscape that will be accelerated by emerging technologies, it is essential for the EU to promote responsible State behaviour, deter and respond to malicious behaviour, strengthen global partnerships and enhance the resilience of the EU's partners. In close cooperation with Member States, the European Commission services, and international partners, the EEAS will focus on increased **accountability of hybrid and cyber threat actors**. In response to such malicious activities, the EU should advance work on the implementation of the UN framework of responsible State behaviour in cyberspace, continue to make

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use of its hybrid and cyber diplomacy toolboxes, bolster cyber defence capabilities, as well as deepen and widen hybrid and cyber partnerships worldwide

On **Counterterrorism**, the EU is engaged in the negotiations that are taking place in the UN framework, to **review the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy**. Here, coordinating a common EU position will be key. Moreover, the EEAS is working in favour of mainstreaming gender and a human rights approach, advocating for inclusion of civil society. Geographically, the EU will maintain its focus on Africa, Iraq, and Syria, while strengthening its dialogue with the United States, NATO, and partners in the Gulf, Central and South Asia.

The EU will continue to defend and, where possible, strengthen the multilateral framework for **disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control**. It will work to protect, strengthen, implement, and universalise the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regime, regarding both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, and including multilateral export control regimes. The EU will actively engage in the run-up to and at the 7th Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (Geneva, 16-20 November 2026), including with regard to Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems. Likewise, the EU will continue to engage in international processes on the responsible military use of Artificial Intelligence, such as REAIM. The EU will continue to intensify its formal dialogues and informal consultations on non-proliferation and disarmament issues with like-minded partners and key actors. It will also carry on promoting cross-cutting priorities, such as supporting and advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women across the whole realm of non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as the participation of the youth.

In terms of **space security**, a new Earth Observation Governmental Service is currently being considered among Member States and relevant stakeholders. This will further enhance decision-making autonomy, complement national and commercial assets, and provide a secure, reliable, timely, persistent, and targeted satellite sensing imagery service to Member States' governmental users. Preparatory work began on a European Space Shield, aimed to reinforce the defence capabilities of Member States, as well as to secure the resilience and protection of space assets and services in response to an increasingly hostile threat environment. Work was initiated to establish a coherent framework for integrating space-based capabilities and services into planning and conduct of EU military CSDP missions and operations.

To crack down on Russia's **shadow fleet**, in line with the Declaration of the EU and of its Member States of December 2025 on making full use of the International Law of the Sea Framework relating to threats from the shadow fleet and to the protection of critical undersea infrastructure, the EEAS will seek to negotiate pre-authorised boarding agreements with flag States of listed vessels. These agreements will also allow the boarding of vessels suspected of causing damage to critical maritime infrastructure such as submarine cables.

In addition, the EEAS will develop a structured initiative to enhance cooperation on the protection of **critical maritime infrastructure** among partners in Europe, in the Indo-Pacific and beyond, as set out by the High Representative at the EU-Indo-Pacific Ministerial meeting of November 2025. It will also explore possible international non-binding tools in this area.

The issue of **veterans in Ukraine** has been discussed in the Foreign Affairs Council and PSC in March and April 2026. The EU recognises that veterans will play a crucial role in Ukraine's recovery and that support to veterans should become an integral component of Ukraine's reconstruction. To this end, the EU plans to actively support Ukraine's veteran reintegration through targeted programmes and the continued engagement of EUAM Ukraine, in close coordination with Ukraine's Ministry of Veterans Affairs.

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On impact evaluations, in 2026, in addition to the impact evaluation of EUAM Iraq and EUMM Georgia, there will be an impact evaluation of the CSDP Mission in Moldova, as well as one covering the EPF Assistance Measures in the Republic of Moldova.

On Climate, Peace and Security, the EEAS will support an ambitious outcome of the COP 31 on climate change and the 2026 United Nations Water Conference. The EEAS will continue work on implementing the climate/environment-security nexus, including a focus on water, strengthen partnerships on climate security, including in the context of SDPs, engage with partners like the UN and regional organisations, and integrate climate security in stabilisation efforts as well as in the work of CSDP missions and operations. The EEAS will further strengthen the EU's energy security and the external dimension of the EU Green Deal.

During the final year of the **Compact implementation**, a number of commitments and deliverables must be pursued with renewed focus, in order to achieve full implementation by mid-2027. Among the most critical challenges ahead are the continued development and availability of civilian capabilities at the Member State level, as well as the need to strengthen burden-sharing across Member States.

In addition to commitments and deliverables outlined in the Compact, the EEAS is currently reviewing the 2021 **Mission Model Structure**, which guides the organisational design of civilian CSDP missions. The revision reflects recent shifts in the operational context and revised mandates of civilian CSDP missions, the recognition that missions need to be more flexible and adaptive, the inconsistencies observed in applying the current guidelines, and the practical experience gained over the last five years. Once finalised, a new Mission Model Structure will provide a clear and consistent framework for current and future civilian CSDP missions, while also allowing for enough flexibility to adapt missions to their mandates and to the environments they operate in.