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**NOTE**

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From: Political and Security Committee  
To: Permanent Representatives Committee  
Subject: CFSP Report – Our priorities in 2019

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1. The Inter-Institutional Agreement (IIA) of 2 December 2013, part II, point E, paragraph 25, provides that each year, the High Representative shall consult the European Parliament on a forward-looking document which will set out the main aspects and basic choices of the CFSP.
2. The Political and Security Committee discussed the draft CFSP Report on 8 and 9 October 2019 and reached broad agreement on the text.
3. One Delegation has a reservation on the first sentence in paragraph 180 (p. 82).
4. The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to approve the draft CFSP Report, with a view to forwarding it to the Council for endorsement.

**CFSP Report – Our Priorities in 2019<sup>1</sup>**

**(1) INTRODUCTION**

1. In an international environment increasingly characterised by geo-political and geo-economic competition and contestation, the European Union (EU) will intensify efforts in 2019 to protect our interests and values, while also acting as a reliable international partner aiming to enhance the rule-based multilateral order and address global challenges.
2. Together with Member States and in close cooperation with the Commission and the European Parliament, the High Representative supported by the EEAS, will continue to show leadership and enhance greater coherence of the internal and external dimensions of the EU policy.
3. The EU will continue to build on the achievements of the EU Global Strategy. The past three years since the launch of the Global Strategy have demonstrated that our shared commitment has led to concrete progress turning the strategy from vision into action with notable improvements in responding to the new challenges such as hybrid threats.
4. The EU will remain committed to stepping up our efforts, to operationalising our commitment to uphold international norms and agreements, to working to find multilateralist solutions to new global realities and to reforming multilateral organisations to make them fit for purpose. The EU will continue to strengthen global networks of partnerships and build coalitions issue by issue in support of key global frameworks such as the Paris Agreement on Climate change or the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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<sup>1</sup> This report should be read in conjunction with agreed Council and European Council Conclusions.

5. By addressing Europe's current and future security and defence needs, the EU is enhancing its capacity to act as a security provider, its strategic autonomy and its ability to cooperate with partners. In doing so we will be able to build on a number of achievements, ranging from military mobility and countering hybrid threats, to coherence among defence initiatives, cooperation with the UN and EU-NATO cooperation and the Civilian CSDP Compact.
6. We will also continue to use the whole breadth of tools at our disposal to maintain a leading role on the international scene, including but not limited to the preservation of the JCPOA as an integral part of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture, to contribute to a political solution to the conflict in and around Ukraine and to the conflicts in Syria and Yemen as well as to contribute to the Middle East Peace Process, to facilitate progress on the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, pursuing our mediation efforts in Venezuela, supporting stabilisation in the Sahel as well as in Libya, and responding to migration challenges.
7. Our neighbourhood to the South and East will also remain a major priority focusing on our efforts to continue to strengthen state, economic and societal resilience and to address crisis situations in an integrated way.
8. We continue to make steady progress in the area of strategic communication, including countering disinformation and public diplomacy. A new approach, focusing on the added value of strategic communications in accomplishing the EU's foreign policy priorities, has become embedded in our policy making.
9. The following report touches upon progress made by the EU and the Member States in all strands of foreign policy, covering the wide range of relations and files important to the EU's external action, as also supported by Member States.
10. In order to fully reflect the coherence of the EU's overall external action this report includes, when appropriate, references to non CFSP/CSDP policies and instruments.

11. The Council discussed the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)'s effectiveness, coherence, consistence and unity in the meeting of the Foreign Ministers in June 2019 and exchanged views on practical ideas in this regard and decided to revert to the matter in light of the priorities set out in the Strategic Agenda of the Union adopted by the European Council in June 2019. In this regard, the Commission provided input in line with the State of the Union speech 2018 of President Juncker and with the relevant Treaty provisions.

## **(2) GEOGRAPHICAL**

### **Europe and Central Asia**

#### *Non-EU Western European countries*

12. The EU has excellent relations with all its non-EU Western European neighbours. Cooperation covers a wide range of issues from foreign policy to climate change. Western European partners are active supporters of a multilateral rules-based system. They contribute to several of the EU's CSDP missions and participate in projects and programmes of the European Defence Agency. Regular informal political dialogues take place on many issues of common interest, and relations have been further strengthened in recent years with the Holy See.
13. As regards Switzerland, negotiations on an institutional framework for the complex system of existing agreements were concluded in 2018 and Switzerland is to take the needed decisions to sign the agreement. The EU aims at concluding negotiations on the key elements of Association Agreement(s) with Andorra, Monaco and San Marino during the tenure of the current Commission, with the aim to ensure their future participation in the EU's internal market, negotiations on the annexes to the Agreement(s) including aspects related to acquis take-over will have to continue.

14. The Council reaffirms its commitment to enlargement, which remains a key policy of the EU. The Council reiterates the EU's unequivocal support to the European perspective of the **Western Balkans**. The Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association processes, with their support for reforms and good neighbourly relations, as well as with the established fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits represent a strategic investment in peace, democracy, prosperity, security and stability in Europe. The EU remains committed to the European perspective of the region and supporting EU-oriented reforms and projects, in particular focusing on further strengthening the rule of law and good governance, protecting fundamental rights and fostering reconciliation, good neighbourly relations and inclusive regional cooperation, while promoting socioeconomic development and mitigating risks to stability from political polarisation and divisive rhetoric.

15. In 2018 Member States together with the Western Balkans reaffirmed their unequivocal support for the European perspective of the region. In 2019, the overall priority remains to take forward this perspective in order to enhance the region's resilience and thus, in line with the Global Strategy, contributing to the security of the EU itself. To pursue this shared interest, the EU will continue to strengthen and intensify its engagement with the Western Balkans, at all levels, building on the Commission's Western Balkans' Strategy and Action Plan adopted in February 2018 and in line with **the Sofia Declaration** and Sofia Priority Agenda issued in May 2018 and with the Council Conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process of June 2018 and June 2019. The EU will continue to implement concrete measures for enhanced cooperation on strengthening rule of law and good governance, transport links, energy security, digital economy, business climate and opportunities for youth, as well as on addressing common security challenges and migration. During 2018, the EU strongly supported the negotiations under UN auspices that on 17 June 2018 led to the signature of the Prespa Agreement between Athens and Skopje. On 15 February 2019, the EU was formally notified by the Republic of North Macedonia of its new name, following the entry into force of the Prespa Agreement. This, together with the agreement between Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia on the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness, and Cooperation, sets a strong example for others in the region. Good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation remain essential elements of the Enlargement Process as well as of the Stabilisation and Association Process. The EU recalls the importance of implementing bilateral agreements, including the Prespa Agreement and the Treaty on Good Neighbourly Relations with Bulgaria.

16. Throughout 2019, attention focuses on addressing the following political stability and security factors: supporting work on the **normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo**<sup>2</sup> through EU facilitation of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, aiming for a comprehensive legally binding agreement that will address all outstanding issues in accordance with international law and EU acquis and contribute to regional stability, so that that the parties can advance on their respective European paths; in **Albania** and in the **Republic of North Macedonia**, continued and intensified engagement for further progress on key reforms, recalling that the Council will revert to the issue with a view to reaching clear and substantive decisions by the Council no later than October 2019 on the Commission recommendations to open accession negotiations; facilitating political dialogue and supporting continued reforms in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, following the publication of the Commission's Opinion on the country's application for the EU membership, on which the Council will revert later this year, and encouraging to proceed with the government formation; deepening co-operation with **Serbia** on foreign and security policy to further reinforce its orientation towards shared EU values and interests, with a focus on strengthening alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy declarations and Council Decisions and supporting **Montenegro's** and **Serbia's** reform agendas, particularly in the rule of law area, so that they can both progress on their EU accession path and maintain their stance as solid security partners. Maintaining the integrity of the visa-free regime with the Western Balkans remain a priority. Completing the Kosovo visa liberalisation process will also be under consideration.

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<sup>2</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) and the Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

17. The EU is continuously strengthening and expanding dialogue with the Western Balkans on **deepening cooperation on foreign policy and defence issues** and progressive alignment with the EU's foreign policy, notably on issues such as restrictive measures and tackling hybrid threats.. This is done notably through regular EU-Western Balkans political dialogue, increasing capacity-building support on cyber-security and cyber-crime and will further engage in capacity building measures to enhance resilience in areas related to countering hybrid threats. The EU will continue to promote cooperation on counter-terrorism, fight against organised crime and border security, including through implementation of the Integrated Internal Security Governance Initiative, with further deployment of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and finalise bilateral arrangements to implement the EU Western Balkans Joint Action Plan on counterterrorism and countering violent extremism. The EU appreciates the contributions of the Western Balkan countries to CSDP missions.
18. The EU will continue **its public diplomacy and strategic communication actions** in coordination with Member States and national authorities, developing and communicating positive narratives in and about the Western Balkans and will strengthen its capacity to address disinformation. The work of the EEAS StratCom Western Balkans Task Force remains crucial in this regard.

19. Following the mandate extension of the **EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX)** in Kosovo until June 2020, the Mission completed a reconfiguration period in which it aligned its structure in accordance with the new mandate, took all necessary steps to reach operational capability and downsized staff to meet the new authorised strength. Under its new mandate, the Mission focuses on correctional services and trial monitoring as well as some residual executive support functions, while the Mission's operational support to the implementation of EU-facilitated Dialogue agreements will gradually be transferred to the EU Special Representative's Office once the conditions are met. The EU Office in Kosovo continues to be reinforced to assume a greater role in assisting rule of law development, in particular for law enforcement agencies. The next Strategic Review of EULEX Kosovo will take place this year. The Specialist Chambers in The Hague stand ready to conduct proceedings on the basis of the prosecution conducted by the Specialist Prosecutor Office, which has intensified its investigation over the last months. An EU Election Observation Mission was deployed in Kosovo to assess the conduct of the early parliamentary elections on 6 October.
20. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the **EU military operation EUFOR Althea** continues to make an important contribution to stability and security in the country. Following the Strategic Review of EUFOR ALTHEA in 2017, the individual training activities of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina were phased out. EUFOR refocused on its core mandate to support the BiH authorities to maintain a Safe and Secure Environment (SASE). To this end it continues to deploy its intelligence capabilities. The second Strategic Review of 2019 confirmed this direction.

21. To continue to address issues regarding **migration**, close coordination and cooperation with the countries of the region will need to continue throughout 2019, including continuous protection and assistance to those in need, follow up of assistance provided to manage borders, improve reception capacities and fight smuggling networks signing and entry into force of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency status agreements and deployment of EUROPOL Liaison Officers, as for Albania. Continuous monitoring in particular through EU Agencies is a priority. Cooperation with, and support for, partners in the Western Balkans region remain key. In particular the EU should continue working with its partners to exchange information on migratory flows, avoid loss of life, prevent irregular migration, increase the capacities for border protection and improve return and readmission procedures.

### *Turkey*

22. **Turkey** remains a candidate country and a key partner in many areas. The EU reaffirms the importance it attaches to relations with Turkey and remains committed to maintaining an open and frank dialogue to address common challenges and to cooperate in essential areas of joint interest such as migration, counter-terrorism the economy and trade. The meeting of the EU-Turkey Association Council in March 2019 provided an opportunity to take stock of the state of EU-Turkey relations. The EU values the comprehensive and regular EU-Turkey political dialogue, which allows for reviewing a broad range of issues pertaining to EU-Turkey relations. It is crucial that dialogue and cooperation on foreign policy is enhanced and the persistent negative trend of alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy declarations and Council decisions is reversed as a matter of priority. In this respect, political dialogues on foreign policy issues with Turkey (Africa, Asia, Middle East/North Africa, Russia/Eastern Europe/Central Asia, Western Balkans, CSDP) have continued. The EU-Turkey counter-terrorism dialogue also remains important. In light of Turkey's continued and new illegal drilling activities, the Council decided in July 2019 not to hold the Association Council and further meetings of the EU-Turkey high level dialogues for the time being.

23. The EU stresses the importance of continued cooperation with Turkey on migration and the reaffirmation of its commitment to the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016. It commends Turkey's ongoing significant efforts in hosting and addressing the needs of almost 4 millions refugees. Continued implementation of the Statement which aims at keeping the irregular migration influx under control and preventing loss of life at sea is in the interest of both sides and remains crucial with a view to bringing irregular migration to a halt. In light of increased flows of refugees/ migrants from Turkey, vigilance on all existing and emerging routes should be maintained. The external migration policy of the Union and its Member States, based, in particular, on control of the external borders, the fight against smugglers and cooperation with countries of origin and transit, as well as reinforced management of the common borders with the EU continues to be a priority. The European Union will continue to abide by its commitments, notably to provide support to refugees in Turkey currently through the second tranche of €3 billion of the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey launched in June 2018, on top of the first tranche of €3 billion. Furthermore, the EU-Turkey Readmission agreement should be fully and effectively implemented in a non-discriminatory manner towards all Member States and existing bilateral readmission agreements and provisions in similar agreements and arrangements with EU Member States should be adequately implemented. Regarding the visa liberalisation process, emphasis is put on the full and effective implementation of the visa road-map vis-à-vis all Member States. Cooperation in the area of justice and home affairs with all EU Member States remains essential.
24. The EU commends Turkey's ongoing significant efforts in hosting of almost four million refugees and highlights that the EU and Turkey have worked together to address the most critical needs of refugees and host communities in Turkey. The EU, together with Member States, has committed to assisting Turkey in dealing with this challenge, notably through the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey, managing a total of €6 billion in two tranches.

25. The EU recalls its conclusions of July 2016 which strongly condemned the 15 July coup attempt and expressed solidarity with the Turkish people and full support for the democratic institutions of Turkey, the EU has repeatedly expressed serious concern about the disproportionate scale and scope of measures taken by the authorities in its aftermath. The EU noted with grave concern that a number of these measures in practice remain in place, recalled the international standards and the obligations to which Turkey has subscribed and committed itself, and called on Turkey to urgently reverse all these negative trends.
26. The EU remains especially concerned about the continuing and deeply worrying backsliding in the areas of the rule of law and fundamental rights including freedom of expression. The ongoing deterioration of the independence and functioning of the judiciary cannot be condoned nor can the continuing restrictions, detentions, imprisonments and other measures against people exercising their fundamental rights and freedoms. The EU took positive note of the reconvening of the Reform Action Group and noted the adoption of the Justice Reform Strategy, which need to be followed up by determined and concrete steps. Turkey should also strengthen its cooperation with the Council of Europe and its relevant bodies and institutions, address their key recommendations and implement all judgements of the European Court of Human Rights in line with Article 46 of the ECHR. The EU recalled the crucial importance of free, fair and transparent elections and welcomed the high turnout at the 2019 municipal elections. The EU expressed also serious concern about the respect for the legality and the integrity of the electoral process in particular against the backdrop of decisions taken by the Supreme Election Council regarding the March 2019 elections in Istanbul. Local elections in the Istanbul metropolitan district were re-run on 23 June 2019.

27. The EU has taken note of the Turkish government's stated commitment to EU accession. This however, needs to be matched by corresponding measures and reforms by Turkish authorities. As noted by the Council on 26 June 2018 and repeated on 18 June 2019, Turkey continues to move further away from the European Union. Turkey's accession negotiations have therefore effectively come to a standstill and no further chapters can be considered for opening or closing and no further work towards the modernisation of the EU-Turkey Customs Union is foreseen.
28. The EU continues to expect Turkey to unequivocally commit to good neighbourly relations, international agreements and to the peaceful settlement of disputes having recourse, if necessary to the International Court of Justice. Turkey must avoid threats and actions that damage good neighbourly relations, normalise its relations with all Member States including the Republic of Cyprus and respect the sovereignty of all EU Member States over their territorial sea and airspace as well as all their sovereign rights including inter alia the right to enter into bilateral agreements and, including the right to explore and exploit natural resources in accordance with EU and International Law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

29. In this respect, the EU has expressed serious concerns over Turkey's current illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean and deplored that Turkey has not yet responded to the EU's repeated calls to cease such activities and launched a second drilling operation northeast of Cyprus within Cypriot territorial waters. The EU called again on Turkey to refrain from such actions, act in a spirit of good neighbourliness and respect the sovereignty and sovereign rights of Cyprus in accordance with international law. Furthermore, the EU underlined the serious immediate negative impact that such illegal actions have across the range of EU-Turkey relations and on 15 July 2019 the Council took a number of political and financial measures in response (suspend negotiations on the Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement and agreed not to hold the Association Council and further meetings of the EU-Turkey high level dialogues for the time being). The Council endorsed the Commission's proposal to reduce the pre-accession assistance to Turkey for 2020 and invited the European Investment Bank to review its lending activities in Turkey. The Council also invited the High Representative and the Commission to continue work on options for targeted measures in light of Turkey's continued drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. It continues to closely monitor developments and will revert to this issue as appropriate.
30. The EU remains fully committed to a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem. In this regard, the EU has recalled that it remains crucial that Turkey commits and actively contributes to such a settlement, including its external aspects, within the UN framework, in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions and in line with the principles on which the EU is founded and the *acquis*.
31. In addition, the EU, as stated in its conclusions of 11 December 2006 and 18 June 2019 as well as in the declaration of 21 September 2005, has called on Turkey to fulfil its obligations under the Negotiating Framework, including the full, non-discriminatory implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement towards all Member States. The EU has also called on Turkey to stop blocking the accession of Member States to international organisations and mechanisms and reiterated that recognition of all Member States is essential.

32. The EU encourages Turkey's role in effective multilateralism, a core priority of the EU Global Strategy and notes that Turkey remains actively engaged in regional initiatives.

### *Eastern Partnership*

33. Since 2009, the Eastern Partnership has provided a solid foundation to further deepen cooperation, both at bilateral and multilateral levels, including through a broad range of Agreements and other instruments such as Partnership Priorities, and allowed us to achieve important accomplishments.
34. In line with the principles of inclusivity and differentiation, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) provides a framework for each partner to develop relations with the EU according to their level of ambition and specific objectives. In 2019, the Eastern Partnership celebrated its 10-year anniversary marked by dedicated high-level conference on 14 May, bringing together key actors, which have shaped the Eastern Partnership policy over the last decade. The conference confirmed the success of the Partnership in achieving concrete results for citizens, but also recognised the remained challenges. To reflect on the future strategic direction of the Eastern Partnership, a broad and inclusive structured consultation process has been launched involving a wide range of stakeholders in view of preparing long-term policy objectives in line with the European Council request. This consultation will contribute to the future of the Eastern Partnership post-2020 policy framework and its results will be presented in time to ensure substantive and timely preparations for of the next Eastern Partnership summit.

35. The implementation of the 20 Deliverables for 2020 agenda continued. Progress on reforms has been recorded in all areas, notably on economy, digital, transport, connectivity, energy, mobility and youth, while challenges remain in the areas of governance, judicial reforms, anti-corruption, human rights, Rule of Law, media freedom, gender equality and civil society. As regards strategic communication, the EU will maintain its efforts to ensure greater visibility, counter disinformation and support the local media landscape. In the area of cooperation on foreign policy, security and defence, the EU appreciates the contributions of the Partner countries to CSDP missions and operations, and not only will continue providing regional training programmes in this field but also will enhance cooperation on CSDP matters.

*Eastern Partnership – bilateral relations*

36. The EU remains fully committed to the political association and economic integration with **Georgia**. It welcomed Georgia's commitment to a successful implementation of the Association Agreement, including its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. The EU welcomes the holding of the high-level meeting of the Georgian government with members of the European Commission on 21 November 2018, during which areas of future cooperation were agreed. The second EU-Georgia Strategic Security Dialogue was held in Brussels on 23 October 2018. A hybrid risk survey has been launched with Georgia, with follow up foreseen in the course of 2019.

37. The EU remains firm in its support for Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognised border. It is committed to conflict resolution and its policy of non-recognition and engagement with the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, using all instruments at its disposal, including the activities of the EU Special Representatives for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia and the **EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM)**. Through its monitoring and reporting about developments along the Administrative Boundary Lines between Tbilisi Administered Territory and the breakaway regions, EUMM Georgia continues to deliver against all four core tasks of its mandate, namely monitoring, analysing and reporting on stabilisation and normalisation, contributing to confidence building and to informing EU policy. Through its Incident Prevention -Mechanism, regular meetings between EUMM, the UN, the OSCE, Georgia, Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia take place to discuss and resolve specific issues and incidents. A "hotline" telephone system is attached to the Mechanism, which has proven to be a way to quickly establish common understanding of events and de-escalate possible tensions. The Mechanism also plays an important role of providing unbiased and objective information. The EU welcomes the "Peace Initiative: A Step to a Better Future" adopted by Georgia that aims at promoting trade exchanges and mobility between and education opportunities in the breakaway regions and Tbilisi administrative territory. The EU stands ready to support its implementation. Georgia has also moved to being an active contributor to EU CSDP efforts and contributes personnel to the EU Training Missions in Central African Republic and Mali.

38. Following the Parliamentary elections of 24 February 2019 in the **Republic of Moldova**, the new government was installed in a peaceful transfer of power in early June 2019, which ended a period of political instability. The new government has stated clearly its commitment to a faithful implementation of the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agreement, including its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with a view to tackling the structural problems the Republic of Moldova has been facing, notably in the area of the rule of law and serious shortcomings in the justice system. The EU remains committed to support the government's reform agenda and stepping up its outreach to citizens of the Republic of Moldova while maintaining the set conditionalities on financial assistance and vigilance concerning the political developments.
39. The EU also remains committed to supporting the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally-recognised border and a special status for the Transnistria region. The EU remains engaged in a peaceful Transnistrian **settlement process** through its participation in the 5+2 talks and by continuing to support confidence building measures and the **EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM)**.

40. The Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine benefit from **a visa free regime** with Schengen countries, since April 2014, March 2017 and June 2017 respectively which continues to have a positive effect on people to people, business and trade contacts. The European Commission published the second report assessing the implementation of the visa liberalisation benchmarks in December 2018. The report assessed that overall all countries continue to fulfil the benchmarks. The report concluded that the Republic of Moldova needed to take immediate actions to address irregular migration challenges and especially to ensure the fulfilment of the anti-corruption benchmark. The report concluded that Georgia took action to address the challenge of unfounded asylum applications, but that further immediate action is required. The report concluded that Ukraine needs to take immediate action to ensure the continuous fulfilment of the anti-corruption benchmark, as well as to address irregular migration challenges. The Commission continuously monitors the implementation of these actions.

41. In 2018 the EU has maintained its united position vis-à-vis Russia's military intervention, its illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula and the conflict in and around eastern Ukraine. The EU reaffirms its resolute support for **Ukraine's** independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognised borders. The EU will remain fully committed to the policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of **Crimea** and the City of Sevastopol by Russia, including through restrictive measures. The EU condemns the ongoing militarisation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia and the deterioration of the human rights situation there, calling for full compliance with international human rights standards in the peninsula. As the tensions in the **Azov Sea** area continue after the capture by Russia of a Ukrainian crew and their vessels at the Kerch Strait on 25 November 2018, the EU will continue calling on Russia to respect the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea decision of 25 May 2019, to unconditionally return the vessels seized on 24 November 2018 and to ensure an unhindered and free passage through the Kerch Strait to and from the Azov Sea area, in accordance with international law. The EU agreed on further restrictive measures as a response to the escalation, and the Commission presented a package of concrete support measures to the Sea of Azov region at the EU-Ukraine Summit on 8 July 2019. The EU also expects that all parties will build on the momentum created by the exchange of prisoners between Russia and Ukraine, on 7 September 2019.

42. On the conflict in eastern Ukraine, the EU remains a strong supporter of the negotiating efforts of the Normandy 4, the Trilateral Contact Group and the OSCE, continuing to urge for a resumption of negotiating efforts with a view to the implementation of the Minsk Agreements and for measures aimed at rebuilding confidence among the parties as well as for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, aimed at a sustainable and peaceful resolution of the conflict based on respect for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, to avoid any further isolation of those living in areas not currently under the control of the government. The EU expressed its utmost concern about the Russian presidential decree of 24 April, enabling the simplified issuing of passports in certain areas of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which runs counter to the spirit and the objectives of the Minsk agreements and stands ready to consider further options, including non-recognition of Russian passports in close coordination with its international partners. Whilst already supporting substantially the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in eastern Ukraine whose extension of mandate it welcomed, the EU stands ready to provide more support once the conditions on the ground allow.

43. The EU remained committed to support, including through financial assistance, Ukraine in its substantial reforms efforts, in line with the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement/Deep and Comprehensive Free trade Area. As stated at their summit of 8 July 2019, EU and Ukraine share common values of democracy, rule of law, respect for international law and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, as well as gender equality. As a follow-up to the EU-Ukraine Summit of 9 July 2018, the EU-Ukraine Association Council agreed to continue the dialogue on Ukraine's initiative to deepen cooperation in fields such as energy, justice and home affairs, customs and digital economy, within the framework of the Association Agreement. While important reform steps have been already taken, the EU will continue to attach importance to reform areas where more efforts are needed in areas such as anti-corruption, including the issue of decriminalization of the illicit enrichment offence, rule of law, maintaining macro-financial stability, privatisation, and energy, including unbundling of Naftogaz. The Support Group for Ukraine continues to play a crucial role in the coordination of the EU and its Member States' assistance to foster reform processes in Ukraine.

44. The **EU Advisory Mission to Ukraine (EUAM)** has been playing a key role in supporting the Ukrainian authorities towards a sustainable reform of the civilian security sector through strategic advice and practical support in order to achieve civilian security services that are efficient, accountable, and enjoy the trust of the public. The opening of a third regional presence of EUAM in Odessa in 2018 helped Ukraine's efforts to streamline and unify reform efforts throughout the country. Following the Strategic Review of EUAM delivered in December 2018, the mandate of the Mission has been extended for two years until May 2021. Under the extended mandate the Mission will continue implementing the EU's Integrated Approach together with the EU Delegation, Commission services and other actors, maintaining the focus on strategic advice at central level in combination with operational support. EUAM will enhance the delivery of its activities in accordance with its mandate in the governmental controlled areas in the east and the south-east of the country. While a landmark bill on the reform of the security sector was adopted in June 2018, introducing the principle of parliamentary scrutiny over the security apparatus, the next important step would be a meaningful reform of the Security Service of Ukraine into a modern Security Service operating in accordance with European principles. EUAM Ukraine remains ready to assist Ukraine in these important tasks in coherence with its mandate.
45. 2019 was a key electoral year in Ukraine with Presidential (March-April) and snap parliamentary (July) elections. The EU has expressed its appreciation for the strong attachment to democracy and the rule of law that the people of Ukraine have demonstrated throughout the Presidential and parliamentary electoral process, considering it a major achievement in the complex political, economic and security environment, against the backdrop of continuous challenges to Ukraine's territorial integrity. The EU will continue to closely follow the political developments and the reform process in Ukraine, stressing the importance of free, fair, democratic and competitive elections. In line with international standards, the EU and Ukraine agreed on the need to further cooperate in tackling cyber and hybrid threats for the benefit of the security of their citizens, and on the importance of responding to disinformation and election meddling.

46. For Eastern Partners whose relations with the EU are not based on an Association Agreement – **Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus** –, different models of cooperation are being elaborated based on the revised ENP. The EU and **Armenia** signed a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) on 24 November 2017 and Partnership Priorities on 21 February 2018. Following the mass peaceful protests in spring 2018 (the so-called “Velvet revolution”) which brought democratic change in the country the EU’s engagement with the new Armenian government focused on deepening democratic, social and economic reforms. An ambitious CEPA Implementation Roadmap was adopted by Armenia in June 2019. The EU is a key reform partner of Armenia, supporting the country’s resilience, security and prosperity built on democracy, human rights, rule of law and sustainable economic development and connectivity, including within the ongoing implementation of CEPA.
47. The EU welcomes the recent intensification of its relations with **Azerbaijan**. Partnership Priorities were signed on 28 September 2018 and cooperation has focused on energy and transport connectivity as well as the development of human capital, economic diversification and regional development. The negotiations of a new bilateral agreement with Azerbaijan are well advanced. This new agreement will create a solid basis for cooperation by going beyond the provisions of the 1996 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The first EU-Azerbaijan Security Dialogue took place in Baku on 30 October 2018.
48. The EU welcomes the recent developments towards the peaceful settlement of the **Nagorno-Karabakh** conflict. The European Union looks forward to the implementation of the Vienna agreement to develop measures in the humanitarian field, as well as of the agreement on measures to prepare the populations for peace, reached by the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers in Paris on 16 January 2019. The EU stands ready to support these efforts. The EU will continue to support the mediation work of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, including through the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, as well as through civil society confidence-building measures across the conflict divide.

49. The EU's relations with **Belarus** remained one of critical engagement and continued to develop in line with the Council Conclusions of February 2016. The EU remains committed to the swift finalisation of negotiations on the EU-Belarus Partnership Priorities. The negotiations of the Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements were finalised in March 2019 and both agreements are expected to be signed in due course. On 25 February 2019 the Council decided to prolong the remaining restrictive measures against Belarus for one year, until 28 February 2020 due to lack of improvement of the human rights situation in Belarus.

### *Russia*

50. Managing the relationship with the **Russian Federation** during 2019 will continue to represent a key strategic challenge for the European Union. The EU's policy towards Russia continues to be guided by the five principles (implementation of the Minsk agreements as the key condition for any substantial change in the EU's stance towards Russia, strengthening relations with Eastern partners and other neighbours, strengthening internal EU resilience, the possibility of selective engagement with Russia on issues of interest to the EU, and the need to engage in people-to-people contacts and support Russian civil society). The balanced and effective implementation of the five principles is in line with the implementation of the Global Strategy and ensures a united EU approach. All three of the EU's regimes of restrictive measures (travel ban/asset freeze on individuals and entities; measures related to the annexation of the Crimean peninsula; and economic measures) are subject to a regular review, and remain linked to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

51. The EU's relations with Russia in 2019 will continue to be dominated by Russia's violation of international law in and around Ukraine, including the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula and Russia's actions in destabilising the situation in eastern Ukraine. The EU will remain fully committed to the policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. In view of the use of force by the Russian Federation that led to the detention of Ukrainian servicemen and the seizure of vessels on 25 November 2018 in the Kerch Strait, which constituted a violation of international law as well as of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, the Council adopted restrictive measures against eight individuals. Further four Russian individuals were designated under the new regime of **restrictive measures against the use and proliferation of chemical weapons** created on 15 October 2018 and the European Council in March 2019 welcomed the important work accomplished and called for further enhanced coordinated efforts to address the internal and external aspects of disinformation. In line with European Council conclusions of 22 March 2018, the EU will also continue to strengthen its resilience to disinformation, Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear-related risks and bolster its capabilities to address hybrid threats, including in the areas of cyber, strategic communication, and counterintelligence. The EU fully supports UNSC resolution 2166 concerning the downing of flight MH-17 and calls on Russia to accept its responsibility and to fully cooperate with all efforts to establish truth, justice and accountability.
52. At the same time, the EU remains committed to continue selective engagement on international crises, global and other issues that are in the interest of the EU. The EU will also continue to express its serious concern regarding human rights, rule of law and democracy in Russia, in particular as regards measures that restrict fundamental freedoms and restrictions imposed to curtail an independent civil society in Russia. The importance of the role of the Council of Europe is recalled in this context. The EU will maintain and enhance its support for people-to-people contacts and Russian civil society as an indispensable element of our relations with Russia.

53. Positive developments in Central Asia and a new momentum in regional cooperation have created new opportunities for EU engagement in the region. The 14<sup>th</sup> **EU-Central Asia ministerial** meeting of 23 November 2018 provided an occasion to discuss these new dynamics and the key orientations of the **new EU Strategy** on Central Asia adopted in May 2019. This new strategy, updating the previous one from 2007, aims to forge a stronger, modern and non-exclusive partnership with the countries of Central Asia so that the region develops as a more prosperous, resilient and closely interconnected economic and political space. The implementation of the new Strategy, was discussed at the 15<sup>th</sup> EU-Central ministerial meeting which took place in the Kyrgyz Republic in July 2019.
54. The EU is actively promoting **regional cooperation**, in particular in the rule of law, education, water and environment, as well as **connectivity** in the Euro-Asian context. Established structures for dialogue such as the annual EU-Central Asia High-Level Political and Security Dialogue, which met in May 2019 in Brussels, are particularly useful to promote a regional approach to common challenges, including in the area of security. Central Asia plays a key importance in the fight against terrorism and organised crime, in particular in view of its strategic location and vicinity to Afghanistan. In this regard, a counterterrorism expert with regional responsibility for Central Asia is being deployed to the EU Delegation in Kyrgyzstan in summer 2019. The EU is supporting the **OSCE's** role in the region, in its three dimensions, and is closely cooperating with the UN and its agencies active in Central Asia.

55. The EU is conducting with each Central Asian partner a number of **bilateral dialogues**, including in the field of human rights, reinforced under a new generation of **Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (EPCA)**. The first agreement was signed in 2015 with **Kazakhstan**, which continues to play an important role in promoting regional cooperation, with a particular emphasis on promoting peace, stability and security. Negotiations of an EPCA with the **Kyrgyz Republic**, where the EU continues to support reforms and democratic processes, have been finalised in June 2019 and text agreement was initialled on 6 July 2019. Negotiations of an EPCA with **Uzbekistan** were launched end of 2018 and are continuing in 2019. Uzbekistan's opening and modernisation efforts have created room for a wider and deeper relation with the EU, as well as for enhanced regional and international cooperation. **Tajikistan** hosted in May 2018 a regional high-level conference on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. On 17 May it hosted a second such conference in Dushanbe on countering terrorism and its financing. In July 2019 an establishment agreement for the future full-fledged EU Delegation to **Ashgabat** in Turkmenistan, was signed with the aim to play an important role in connecting Asia, the Caucasus and Europe, as well as in the field of environment, including in the Aral Sea context.

## *Regional Cooperation Fora*

56. In line with the EU priorities in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the EU will continue to support the strengthening of the Organisation as a platform for political dialogue on all security related issues, especially aiming at finding a sustainable political solution to protracted conflicts and to crises, including the conflict in and around eastern Ukraine. The EU will make further use of the framework for cooperation with the OSCE, as set up by the letters exchanged between the European Commission, the European External Action Service, and the OSCE's Secretariat, autonomous institutions as well as field operations in June 2018. In December 2018 during the first high-level meeting, which discussed ways to improve the cooperation across all OSCE dimensions and geographic areas, the EU and OSCE agreed on concrete sets of deliverables to be implemented in the nearest future. The OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and full implementation of the existing commitments in all three dimensions will remain key for the EU's approach to the organisation.
57. The EU is committed to advancing and contributing to well-functioning regional cooperation architectures along its external borders, with a maximum of synergies and a minimum of unnecessary overlap.

58. The EU's contribution to the **regional cooperation in the Black Sea** will continue to be implemented following the FAC Council Conclusions of 17<sup>th</sup> June 2019, while taking stock of the Black Sea Synergy initiative and its most recent review's Conclusions (the Joint Staff Working Document "Black Sea Synergy: review of a regional cooperation initiative – period 2015-2018", issued in March 2019). The respect for international law, including the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including freedom of navigation, as well as EU policy decisions and its non-recognition policy on the illegal annexation of Crimea will remain fundamental to the EU's approach to regional cooperation in the Black Sea area. Further guiding and supporting the development and implementation of the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda and of the Common Maritime Agenda, both for the Black Sea, adopted in Bucharest on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019, are at the core of the efforts. Enhanced regional cooperation to achieve blue growth and to protect for the environment will be pursued. Achieving 'good environmental status' for the Black Sea by 2020 remains a key EU goal, considering also the impact on human health. Fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is crucial for the Black Sea. Enhanced multilateral cooperation at regional level on fisheries governance is also required as it is a pillar for sustainability of fisheries and the development of aquaculture. The "bridging role of the Black Sea basin" mentioned by the Europe-Asia Connectivity Strategy will be developed as well. Further efforts will be devoted to strengthening the regional cooperation in the areas of education, culture and tourism as well as energy and transport. Links between the Black Sea Synergy and other EU policies and strategies relevant for the region will be pursued adequately. In particular, fostering interlinks with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region remains key for further developing the connectivity elements. Cooperation between EU and the main regional and international organisations active in the Black Sea, in particular the Organization for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, will continue. Promoting dialogue and more coherence between various EU neighbouring sea-basins approaches will be encouraged.

59. Developments in and around the **Arctic** continue to draw considerable interest. The EU's response to the challenges and opportunities in the Arctic will continue to be guided by the 2016 Joint Communication on An Integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic, as well as the EU Global Strategy. Climate change and environmental transformations from the melting of ice on land and at sea as well as the thawing of permafrost are at the centre of the attention for scientists and in particular for inhabitants of the Arctic. These transformations generate strong interest in connectivity and access routes with a view to enhanced exploitation of Arctic resources, leading to raised geo-economic and geo-political attention to Arctic matters. The EU will aim to maintain the balance between precaution and preservation, as compared to the use and development of the Arctic in close cooperation with Arctic states, local authorities and inhabitants, including the full involvement of indigenous peoples. EU Arctic Member States, observers and closely associated partners will be essential interlocutors. The EU will continue to be engaged both at local and regional level; in Arctic-specific forums (including the Arctic Council, the Barents-Euro Arctic Council and the Northern Dimension policy); and in other multilateral forums whose decisions affect the Arctic, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, science and research projects as well as maritime bodies addressing key challenges for the world's oceans. Arctic matters will be raised with key partners in the context of Strategic Dialogues, Summits and bilateral ministerial meetings as and when relevant.
60. The EU will continue to encourage and support the existing vibrant regional cooperation architecture in Northern Europe through the **Northern Dimension** policy, in frame of its membership of and participation in the work of regional councils and through cross-border and transnational cooperation programs. Links with other EU policies and objectives relevant for the region, such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, will be pursued, with a particular focus on people-to-people relations, the environment and connectivity.

## **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)**

61. The European Union will remain fully committed to achieving a lasting solution to the **Syrian** conflict. The war in Syria has entered its ninth year and resulted in the continuous fragmentation of the country, more than 400.000 dead, half of its population (11 million people) displaced inside and outside Syria and two out of three Syrians depending on foreign aid for their everyday survival. Only a political solution based on the full implementation of UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communique would allow lasting stability and peace in Syria, paving the way for the return of refugees and preventing a resurgence of radicalism. The EU remains committed to unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.
  
62. In line with the objectives of its strategy on Syria, the European Union will enhance its support for the UN-led political process in Geneva, focusing in particular on the creation of the constitutional committee, on support for the Syrian opposition and its office in Geneva, and on work to enhance international dialogue on Syria. The EU will continue to support the resilience of the Syrian people and work with Syria's civil society to promote human rights, women empowerment, peace-building and dialogue across communities. It will continue to support civil documentation, housing and land property rights and justice and accountability, which are necessary conditions for any future national reconciliation process. The EU and its Member States remain fully committed to preventing impunity and will seek to explore possibilities of concerted action in the pursuit of justice for violation of international law committed in the Syrian conflict. The EU will continue to consider further restrictive measures against Syria as long as the repression continues. The European Union will also continue its work in support of the efforts of the Global Coalition against Da'esh to stabilise the areas in North-Eastern Syria and consolidate the military victory against the terrorist organisation.
  
63. The European Union considers that the only sustainable solution for Syrian IDPs and refugees is returning to their homes but that present conditions do not allow these returns to take place in a safe, voluntary and dignified manner in line with international law. The European Union will continue to work with UNHCR to provide support until such conditions are met.

64. The European Union and the United Nations co-chaired the third Brussels Conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region" on 12-14 March 2019. The conference reaffirmed the international community's support for UN-led efforts towards achieving sustainable peace in Syria. It succeeded in mobilising €8.3 billion for 2019-2020 and beyond (including €6.2 billion for 2019 alone) in pledges for the Syrian people and for neighbouring countries and communities hosting Syrian refugees, which exceeded the levels registered during the first two Brussels Conferences. The EU provided around two thirds of the pledges and remains by far the largest donor for addressing the consequences of the Syria crisis, with a consolidated total of around €17 billion mobilised since the beginning of the crisis in 2011 (all figures include contributions from EU institutions and member States). The EU also recalled at the Conference that it will not finance reconstruction in Syria until a political transition is firmly underway.
65. The EU remained at the forefront of the assistance to Syrian refugees and host communities through the activities of the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis that supports 1.9 million Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons in neighbouring countries, as well as host communities in the region. In 2018, its total budget reached a volume of EUR 1.65 billion for the provision of basic education and child protection, better access to healthcare, water and wastewater services, as well as support to resilience, economic opportunities and social inclusion and protection. Inside Syria, assistance scaled up in the field of protection and area-based approaches aimed at protecting the space for local civil society and for social cohesion, mostly through livelihoods. EU assistance must benefit the population in Syria and avoid benefits accruing to the Syrian regime that would legitimise its national and local governance. The EU will not engage in early recovery/stabilisation efforts in any part of Syria that could support social and demographic engineering

66. The EU has supported the efforts of the Global Coalition against Da'esh and several Member States have contributed to the security of Iraq and the training of its armed and security forces. Drawing on the 2018 EU Strategy for **Iraq** and the EU-Iraq Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the EU will work with the new Government to help it deliver on the commitments it made at the Kuwait Conference for Reconstruction in February 2018 co-chaired by the HR/VP. Following the military defeat of Da'esh, the core objective is to ensure a smooth and effective transition from ongoing critical stabilisation tasks to Government policies responsive to major reconstruction needs and to the economic, financial and social reform challenges that Iraq is facing. As in the past, the EU will encourage the Government to pursue an inclusive approach centred on Iraqi citizens so as to address the root-causes of the crisis. The EU continues to support the Iraqi federal government's efforts to address the critical stabilisation, reconciliation and reconstruction challenges. The EU fully supports the work being carried out by the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) and cooperation with the Iraqi authorities on the collection and analysis of evidence in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2379. The EU seeks to adopt an integrated approach that places Iraqi citizens at its centre and addresses the root causes of the crisis. The EU intends to achieve this by sustaining work with Iraq across a wide range of policy areas, notably through its substantial development assistance and by strengthening the rule of law through the EU Advisory Mission in support of civilian Security Sector Reform in Iraq (EUAM Iraq, launched in November 2017 and extended until April 2020) and focusing on the implementation of the Iraqi National Security Strategy. Strengthening cooperation on migration is an integral part of the EU's comprehensive engagement with Iraq.

67. The Mission provides advice and expertise to the Iraqi authorities at strategic level to identify and define requirements for a coherent implementation of the civilian aspects of security sector reform and associated plans. The Mission reached its full operational capability in March 2018 and Member States prolonged its mandate until 16 April 2020, confirming an ambitious but scalable increase from 36 to 70 international staff. The new mandate encompasses areas such as the implementation of a comprehensive strategy on countering terrorism and organised crime, with specific reference to border management and financial crime.
68. Despite current constraints affecting **intra-GCC relations**, the EU will remain actively engaged in fostering dialogue and co-operation with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), while continuing to strengthen bilateral relations with GCC Member States. The EU will also continue to work with all parties in support of Kuwaiti mediation efforts in order to de-escalate tensions.
69. In **Yemen**, through the use of diplomatic and crisis-response tools, the EU will continue to support the efforts of the UN Special Envoy to achieve a sustainable and inclusive political solution to the current conflict. This includes EU support to the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) and to the UN Peace Support Facility, or specific assistance to the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement. The EU will also remain mobilised as a top humanitarian donor in response to the massive humanitarian needs caused by the conflict and will seek to engage with all sides towards providing aid to communities in need on all sides of the frontlines, in accordance with their needs and in line with humanitarian principles. The EU will complement these interventions by reinforcing its ongoing actions to promote local governance, reinforce the ability of local authorities to deliver basic services and enhance the resilience of economic actors.

The EU will continue building on the implementation of ENP Partnership Priorities with Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon to further enhance co-operation in all fields of common interest. The EU will also continue to support Jordan and Lebanon in tackling the consequences of the Syria crisis and to foster stability and economic development in both countries in line with commitments taken at successive international conferences. Concerning security issues, the Integrated Border Management programme in Jordan reflects important developments over the year with the re-opening of border crossings with Iraq and Syria while in Lebanon, a rule of law, security and counter-terrorism programme was launched. In Egypt, the EU will continue to support the implementation of the G20 Compact with Africa initiative. With Israel, the EU will continue to work based on the Association Agreement and the bilateral ENP Action Plan in force since 2005. Co-operation in the fields of research and innovation as well as education continue to be a particular success. The EU continues also to work with the Palestinian Authority (PA) to build up the institutions of a future democratic, independent and viable Palestinian State, and to implement the Interim Association Agreement as well as the bilateral ENP Action Plan.

70. While the **Middle East peace process** remains stalled, the EU continues to believe that serious efforts must be made towards a resumption of meaningful negotiations aimed at a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation and resolves all final status issues in order to end the conflict. The EU will continue to work to that end with its partners, the Israelis and the Palestinians, with regional actors, such as Jordan and Egypt, and with partners within the Middle East Quartet; the EUSR for MEPP will continue to play a pivotal role in this regard.

71. The situation in the **occupied Palestinian territory** has continued to deteriorate with no prospect of a clear political horizon. Violence, including terrorist attacks, and unrest have increased in 2018 in the West Bank and in Jerusalem. While acknowledging Israel's legitimate right to safeguard the security of the Israeli people, the EU has stated publicly that it expects the Israeli authorities to adhere strictly to the principles of necessity and proportionality in its use of force and to take steps against the increasing settler violence. The EU has firmly condemned all acts of violence, terrorism, and incitement to hatred and violence, which are fundamentally incompatible with advancing a peaceful two-state solution.
72. The return of the Palestinian Authority to the Gaza strip is needed to durably improve the conditions and the humanitarian situation. The West Bank and Gaza are still not united under one single and legitimate Palestinian Authority. The EU will continue to call on all Palestinian factions to work together to address the needs of the Palestinian population. As in previous years, the EU will continue to support the *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East* (UNRWA), both politically and financially, and support humanitarian access to all donors. UNRWA is crucial for the stability and security of the region and for the viability of the two-state solution. The Agency's operations and programmes contribute to the work against radicalisation and the increase of extremism, in particular in Gaza.

73. The EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS) continues to assist the Palestinian Authority in building the institutions of a future State of Palestine in the areas of policing and criminal justice. The mandate of the EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (EUBAM RAFAH), currently located in Tel Aviv is to provide a third-party presence at the Rafah Crossing Point on the basis of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA) as part of the confidence-building measures between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. On stand-by since 2007 when Hamas took power in the Gaza strip, the Mission is still providing capacity building to the Palestinian border agency and maintains its readiness to redeploy to Rafah, once conditions allow. Both missions' mandates expired in June 2019. Given the evolution of the diplomatic and political environment during 2018, Member States wished to confirm their commitment to the two-state solution and extended, based on strategic reviews presented in March 2019, EUBAM Rafah's and EUPOL COPPS' mandate until 30 June 2020 (with another year extension envisaged in principle).
74. Recalling that settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two state solution impossible, the EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context. Regarding the Golan Heights, the EU has reiterated its position that, in line with international law and UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 497, the European Union does not recognise Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights. In addition, the European Council in December 2017 reiterated its firm commitment to the two state solution and that, in this context, the EU position on Jerusalem remains unchanged.
75. The EU remains committed to the internationally agreed parameters for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on international law, relevant UN resolutions including UNSC Resolution 1860 and 2334 and previous agreements. The EU has stated publicly that, to be successful, any peace plan should recognise these internationally agreed parameters.

76. As reflected in the EU Global Strategy, the EU is committed to reinforcing relations with Maghreb, its closest Southern neighbour.
77. With **Morocco**, building upon the 2008 Advanced Status, the EU reaffirms its ambition to give their strategic, multidimensional and privileged relationship a new impetus that is up to the mutual expectations by developing a true Euro-Moroccan partnership for shared prosperity reflecting the commonality of views, interests and opportunities on development co-operation issues, including on migration and security, as well as major international and regional challenges.
78. The EU will further deepen its Privileged Partnership with **Tunisia**, notably through implementing the comprehensive approach to support democratic transition and economic transformation reflected in the Strategic Priorities for 2018-2020 adopted in May 2018, and it will continue developing the joint reflection of the future of the partnership in view of bringing Tunisia closer to the EU.
79. With **Algeria**, pending current political developments, the EU will pursue the implementation on the common Partnership Priorities as well as the ongoing co-operation on regional security and stability, in full respect of the provisions of the Association Agreement.
80. The EU underlines the importance of fostering intraregional cooperation in the Maghreb region. As regards Western Sahara, the EU supports a solution in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions, and in particular resolution 2468 (30 April 2019).

81. Established at the Valletta Summit on Migration in November 2015, the EU Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF) for Africa complements the long-standing and comprehensive partnership that the European Union and Africa enjoy together and provides a swift, effective and coordinated response to a major migration and the forced displacement crisis in Africa unfolded after 2015. A total of 28 programmes for € 659,2 million has been approved so far for the North of Africa window of the EUTF for Africa and focuses on the following four priorities for actions in the region: (i) support to improved migration governance, (ii) support to labour migration and mobility, (iii) protection of vulnerable migrants, voluntary return and sustainable reintegration (including through support to municipalities), and (iv) integrated border management. Despite difficult conditions on the ground, the North of Africa window of the EUTF for Africa has delivering significant results in support to the migration crisis in the region.
82. In **Libya**, the EU continues to support the UN-led mediation process and the efforts by UNSG Special Representative Ghassan Salame to restore confidence, achieve a cessation of hostilities, promote inclusive dialogue and create the conditions for the resumption of the UN led political process in order to bring about an inclusive political solution to the crisis. It will actively pursue its efforts to ensure that the international community is united behind UN-led efforts, including in the framework of the Libya Quartet. In the current circumstances, the EU urges all parties to undertake all necessary precautions to protect the civilian population in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian laws. The EU will continue to advocate for a full and comprehensive cessation of hostilities, demanding that all Libyan parties commit to a permanent and durable ceasefire, in the belief that only a political solution can ensure Libya's stability. In this context, the EU will continue to call on all UN Member States to fully respect their obligations to contribute to Libya's peace and stability, respect the arms embargo, safeguard Libya's oil resources and protect its infrastructure in full compliance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The EU will also continue to accompany the Libyan people throughout the transition process through its ambitious co-operation programme.

83. The EU will continue its action along the Central Mediterranean route, as a follow up to the Joint Communication adopted by the Commission and the High Representative and the Malta Declaration in order to stem irregular migration flows across the Central Mediterranean and avoid further loss of lives at sea, in the desert, and in the hands of traffickers. EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA is part of the EU's comprehensive approach to migration and it complements other EU action, which includes regional cooperation, policies on migration and asylum, humanitarian aid, diplomatic action, conflict prevention and crisis management. This operation has played a decisive role in the gradual return to stability in the Central Mediterranean since its launch in 2015. Its multi-faceted mandate, combining the disruption of human and arms trafficking, broad surveillance activities, notably in relation to oil smuggling, but also training and monitoring of the Libyan Navy coastguard (LNCG), including on refugee law and non-refoulement, has allowed the EU to offer a significant contribution to the improvement of overall maritime security off the Coast of Libya. EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA has so far contributed to the apprehension of 151 suspected smugglers and traffickers and has neutralised some 551 assets. It has also contributed to the saving of thousands of lives in the Mediterranean. Since the launch of training as an additional task in September 2016, EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA has also been able to train more than 355 personnel of the Libyan Navy coastguard, both at sea and in Member States' facilities. The establishment of a Crime Information Cell (CIC) within the operation in July 2018, aiming to enhance cooperation between law enforcement and the military, has since demonstrated its benefits in terms of broader situational awareness for both Justice and Home Affairs agencies and EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA itself. The mandate of the operation was extended for 6 months, until 31 March 2020. While temporarily suspending naval assets, work continues on a solution related to disembarkation in the broader context of the follow-up to the June 2018 European Council conclusions, in the appropriate forum. Since then, the CIC has been temporarily hosted at EUROPOL Headquarters. The Operation retains aerial assets allowing continued monitoring of the area and a shared situational awareness, while further pursuing training efforts in support to the LNCG.

84. The mandates of the European Union Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM Libya) and the EU Liaison and Planning Cell (EULPC) were also reviewed in the summer of 2018 and their mandates were extended until 30 June 2020. The EULPC provides security and military information and analysis to EU actors in Brussels and in theatre, as well as contributes to UN's situational awareness and planning. As regards EUBAM Libya, in December 2018, the Council mandated the Mission to actively support the Libyan authorities in their efforts to disrupt organised criminal networks involved notably in smuggling migrants, human trafficking and terrorism. To achieve these objectives, the mission supports the Libyan authorities in the areas of border management, law enforcement and criminal justice. The mission was able to move its HQ back to Tripoli in the beginning of 2019 where 20 mission members were permanently residing. Due to the deterioration of the political and security situation in April 2019, personnel were temporarily relocated to Tunis. On 15<sup>th</sup> of September EUBAM Libya started to return to Tripoli and reassumed its activities in Libya.

85. Since 2014, the EU has mobilised €450 million on migration-related projects in Libya, €355 million under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and €90 million as bilateral assistance, as well as €100 million contribution to the EUTF via the Asylum, Migration and Integration FUND (AMIF). Through the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, the EU is actively working to provide protection and assistance for those in need, enhance the resilience of local population in municipalities and support to integrated border management in Libya. With EU funding the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) provide direct emergency assistance to migrants and refugees at disembarkation points, inside and outside detention centres or in host communities. This includes medical assistance or the distribution of basic items and hygiene kits. Support is also aimed at the stabilisation of host communities through socio-economic development at municipal level in order to better integrate migrants, internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees. Over 1,7 million people have improved access to basic services and 22 social infrastructure sites have been rehabilitated, out of which the full renovation of Atia Kasher General hospital, which serves more than 80,000 people in the area. All projects are implemented by international partners such as UN agencies or by EU Member States.
86. With a view to stepping up assistance, the **European Union, the African Union and the United Nations** have set up a joint Task Force to accelerate voluntary humanitarian returns for migrants and evacuation of refugees out of Libya in view of their resettlement, as well as co-operation with countries of origin. Through the joint efforts of IOM, UNHCR and African Consulates, more than 45,000 people have been able to voluntarily return home with reintegration support, while more than 4,300 persons have been evacuated out of Libya with a view to their resettlement. With a view to providing a safe and dignified alternative to detention centres, the Gathering and Departure Facility (GDF) in Tripoli supported by the EUTF and implemented by UNHCR is now hosting 919 people of concern. The situation in Libya for migrants and refugees has further seriously deteriorated following the bombing of the Tajoura detention centre on 2 July in which for the first time since the onset of the Libyan conflict a migrant centre was targeted resulting in a high number of casualties.

87. In 2019, the joint EU-**Egypt** Partnership Priorities 2017-2020 will continue to provide the political framework for a more strategic engagement in all priority areas including socio-economic reforms, energy, research, governance, human rights, migration, counterterrorism and foreign policy. The 8<sup>th</sup> Association Council of 20 December 2018 noted the importance of the partnership between the EU and Egypt for the stability, security and prosperity of the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa. Further cooperation, including within regional fora, will aim to contribute to conflict resolution, peace-building as well as tackling broader political and economic challenges of common concern.
88. On the regional side, the EU will continue to consolidate its cooperation with the **League of Arab States (LAS)**, notably building on the results of the first ever EU-LAS Summit held in Sharm El-Sheikh in February 2019. The EU will work together with the LAS to defend the global rules-based order and enhance the cooperation on dealing with international security crises and terrorism, fighting climate change and mass population displacement, as well as ensuring sustainable growth and investment.
89. The EU remains committed to promoting regional cooperation, stability and integration in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean, while acknowledging it's role as a suitable framework for a comprehensive dialogue on issues closely related to the goal of building an area of peace, stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean, such as security, migration, governance, development, environment and climate action.

## Iran

90. As was the case in 2018, during 2019 the EU will continue its work with Iran and other parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with the aim of preserving the nuclear agreement. As the culmination of 12 years of diplomacy facilitated by the EU, and following unanimous endorsement by the UN Security Council through Resolution 2231, the JCPOA continues to be crucial for the security of the European Union, the region, and the entire world. The IAEA confirmed in consecutive reports that Iran was complying with its commitments under the JCPOA. However, Iran started to reduce the implementation of its commitments in July 2019. Given the mandate flowing from UNSCR 2231, the EU and the High Representative continue to coordinate the implementation of the agreement and chair the meetings of the Joint Commission.
91. In February 2019 Council Conclusions on Iran, EU Foreign Ministers confirmed that the EU remains committed to the continued full and effective implementation of the JCPOA in all its aspects, as long as Iran continues to respect its commitments under the deal. The Council supports a balanced, comprehensive approach with Iran, including dialogue, with a view to addressing all issues of concern, critical when there are divergences and cooperative when there is mutual interest. The Conclusions also address issues of concern outside the JCPOA, notably Iran's role in the region, including the provision of military, financial and political support to non-state actors in countries such as Syria and Lebanon, its ballistic missile programme, in particular ballistic missile launches that are inconsistent with UN Security Council resolution 2231, and the human rights situation.

92. As the lifting of nuclear-related sanctions leading to the normalisation of trade and economic relations with Iran constitutes an essential part of the agreement, the EU continues to deeply regret the re-imposition of sanctions by the United States, following the latter's withdrawal from the JCPOA. Iran's economic situation continued to severely deteriorate in 2019. On 8 May 2019 President Rouhani announced Iran's official reaction, confirming that Iran would cease to comply with parts of its nuclear obligations in case it did not receive sufficient economic compensation from the remaining JCPOA participants. The EU reacted with concern and stressed that it would remain committed to the continued full and effective implementation of all parts of the JCPOA as long as Iran would abide by its nuclear commitments. The EU also recalled the independent role of the IAEA as the sole entity tasked with the verification of the nuclear deal with Iran.
93. The EU has worked, together with its Member States and international partners, on avenues to preserve the JCPOA, as a key element of the international non-proliferation architecture, and to protect the interests of businesses and investors who – acting in good faith based on commitments made by the international community and endorsed by the Security Council – are choosing to do legitimate business with Iran. In this regard, the EU welcomed the registration as a private entity on 31 January 2019 of INSTEX SAS (Instrument for Supporting Trade Exchanges), a Special Purpose Vehicle by France, Germany and the United Kingdom as initial shareholders. The Special Purpose Vehicle will support European economic operators engaged in legitimate trade with Iran, in accordance with EU law and with UN Security Council resolution 2231. The EU also supports the E3 efforts to further develop INSTEX which is already operational, in close coordination with the Iranian authorities and welcomes countries from the European Economic Area as new shareholders. INSTEX, as private entity, could also be open, at a later stage, to economic operators from third countries.

94. In the context of the EU's balanced and comprehensive approach, the EU chaired a number of meetings with Iran on regional issues, seeking concrete and constructive outcomes, such as on the situation in Yemen. The most recent of these meetings was held on 18 March 2019. As regional tensions were on the rise in May 2019, the EU has called upon all parties in the region to use constraint and refrain from actions which could lead to an escalation of tensions.
95. As the implementation of the JCPOA has enabled the establishment of a regular EU-Iran High Level Dialogue, most recently held on 26 November 2018 and following the April 2016 Joint Statement of HR/VP and Foreign Minister of Iran, the EU and Iran continue to progress on concrete projects of cooperation in a number of areas, including trade, SME's and the economy, energy, nuclear safety, environment and climate change, migration, refugees and humanitarian issues, education and research. The EU and Member States also provided humanitarian assistance in response to the severe floods in April 2019. Discussions continue on human rights, also following encouraging developments as regards the significant reduction in drug-related executions in Iran during 2018 following the entering into force of a decision in October 2017 to amend Iran's anti-narcotics law. The EU also continued its civil nuclear cooperation with Iran particularly in the field of nuclear safety and regulatory support, but also as regards nuclear projects, including the Arak Modernisation Project.
96. Some ongoing concerns are addressed through sanctions which include designation of Iranian individuals and entities, such as those announced on 9 January 2019 in response to hostile activities that Iran allegedly conducted on the territory of several Member States. In addition, as regards proliferation, a number of sectoral measures are still in place including: an arms embargo, sanctions related to missile technology, restrictions on certain nuclear-related transfers and activities, and provisions concerning certain metals and software which are subject to an authorisation regime. EU restrictive measures vis-à-vis Iran include the provisions of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

## Africa

97. The EU continues to build on the outcome of the Abidjan Summit of 2017 with the aim of further strengthening its partnership with Africa, along the four strategic priorities jointly identified in the Summit declaration.

### I. Continental level

98. Among many new initiatives and continued actions, 2018 was marked by two fundamental dynamics, the first one being the signature in May of a **Memorandum of Understanding on Peace, Security and Governance** between the European Union and the African Union, and the second the launching by President Juncker in September of a **new Africa–Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs**: taking our partnership for investment and jobs to the next level.

99. On Peace, Security and Governance, following the consultations held in the margins of the AU-EU ministerial meeting in January 2019, high level meetings will be organised in 2019 to follow up these shared commitments and steer the **implementation of the MoU**.

100. The African Peace Facility (APF) remains the main financial tool for implementing the AU-EU cooperation and it has been financed for a total envelope of more than EUR 2.7 billion since 2004. A new action programme covering the period 2019-2020 is currently under discussion. Under the overall objective of “reducing the incidence, duration and intensity of conflicts in Africa”, the Action Programme 2019-2020 amounting to over € 800 million will allow for a continuation of support to conflict prevention and early response, operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture in line with **Council Conclusions of January 2019 on APSA (Africa Peace and Security Architecture)**, and substantial and predictable funding to African-led Peace Support Operations (PSOs).

101. Altogether, over the last months, **bilateral relations in Africa experienced a positive trend**, with the relaunching of many "Article 8" political dialogues after long delays, as was the case in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Chad, Kenya, Guinea, Eritrea and Zimbabwe. Relations with DRC and Tanzania went through a difficult phase, for which further efforts on all sides will be required in order to restore prior levels of working relations. Also, the increasing number of disinformation campaigns on African soil, including aiming at deterring EU influence will require more attention and better response from EU Headquarters and delegations.
102. On Economic and Development cooperation, the new **Africa-Europe Alliance on Sustainable Investment and Jobs** puts job creation as the key target and investments – both African and European - as the main vehicle. It builds on four interconnected strands of action that have been mainstreamed into our political dialogues with African partners and through financial instruments: 1) de-risking investments, 2) strengthening the business and investment climate, 3) creating integrated markets for Africa and the EU and 4) developing the skills to match labour market demands. The External Investment Plan – the Alliance's financial backbone - is on its way too, with an objective to deliver 44 billion in investment. The Africa-Europe Alliance and the External Investment Plan have guided an important part of our cooperation with partner countries to stimulate job creation, growth and investment. All available instruments – including budget support, blending of grants and loans and guarantees are being used to maximise the developmental impact of this approach.

103. **The High Level Forum Africa-Europe 2018** held in December 2018 in Vienna focussed on unlocking the potential of the digital economy for Africa and Europe to create jobs, skills and economic development for youth, with an emphasis on exploiting the full potential of the digital transformation of the economy, This meeting marked also the first meeting of the EU-AU Digital Economy Task Force (DETF), with the final report presented at the Digital Assembly 2019 in Bucharest. The EU will also continue to support the G20 Compact for Africa initiative. **Business events** have been co-organized by the EU all over the continent, such as those in Togo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde and Ethiopia. Because trade is also a foundation of development, peace and security, the EU firmly supports the implementation of the **African Continental Free Trade Agreement (CFTA)** and the signature of **Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA)**, for which almost all African partners are now on board, and with interim agreements finalized with Ghana and Ivory Coast. The EU will continue its discussions with Nigeria and Tanzania in order to finalize the West Africa and East African Community EPAs.

104. Although progress on return and reintegration remains slow, cooperation over **migration** has increased and shows positive achievements. **The 2018 Valletta Senior Officials Meeting** took place on 14-15 November in Addis Ababa, 3 years after the 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration in Malta. 75 countries from Africa and Europe together with 27 delegations from UN Agencies, African Regional Economic Communities, and civil society organizations are still on board. A significant evolution since the Valletta Summit has been the enhanced role of the African Union institutions, based on the Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP). The AU policy basis today is much better articulated than it was in 2015: the African Union Policy Framework on Migration (2018-2030) deploys a combination of policy guidelines in which the JVAP may easily be reflected. On the EU side, the main EU priorities for Africa on migration are already integrated in our actions and policies. The Senior Officials Meeting also decided to update the JVAP to reflect delivery to date and to acknowledge recent policy developments. The regional dialogues on migration – the **Khartoum and Rabat Processes** – have been tasked to undertake the JVAP update and remain instrumental in achieving progress under the JVAP by ensuring regional ownership. Cooperation between the European Union and the African Union will remain an important element of our relationship, further efforts will be developed to promote dialogue on migration and mobility at continental level.
105. Progress is also being made on establishing the **Continent-to-Continent Dialogue on Migration**. In line with selected Valletta priorities, the EU and AU agreed to focus the dialogue during 2019 on i) Remittances and Diaspora Investment; ii) Information and intelligence sharing to strengthen the fight against trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants; and iii) Sustainable reintegration of migrants for 2019. Work is currently ongoing on setting up a second meeting in Brussels to discuss the way forward within these three areas, which will also be reflection in the EU-AU Action plan under preparation.

106. An AU-EU Technical Workshop on Sustainable Reintegration took place on 27-28 November 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Organised in the context of **the AU-EU-UN Taskforce** on the situation of migrants in Libya, the event aimed to facilitate exchange of good practices, identify challenges and lessons learned and seek opportunities to foster sustainable reintegration of migrants returning to their countries of origin on the African continent. Recommendations and good practices from the workshop that will directly inform the contents of Return, Readmission and Reintegration Guidelines for Africa will be developed by the African Union.
107. At country level, the EU has been active in supporting the implementation of the JVAP. In this regard, the Joint Communiqué of the EU-AU Foreign Affairs Ministers of 21-22 January 2019 welcomed the work done by the EU Trust Fund (EUTF), intended to address the main challenges of the JVAP, and encouraged to continue monitoring the results and improving the implementation of its five pillars, as well as the effectiveness of the JVAP. The EU has also managed to secure Standards of Procedures on returns and readmission with some countries, notably in West Africa, and negotiations are ongoing with a couple of other African partners. Support has also been provided through AMIF funded Regional Development and Protection Programmes to provide protection mechanisms for refugees and migrants.

108. 4) These dynamics culminated at the beginning of 2019 with the organization in Brussels of the **first annual meeting of EU-AU Ministers for Foreign Affairs** (21-22 January) which served to take stock of the implementation of the decisions taken at the Summit in Abidjan in 2017 and to chart the way forward. In line with the Abidjan declaration, the meeting was organized around three large themes: (1) economics, trade, investment and economic integration; (2) peace, security and governance; and (3) multilateralism, strengthening cooperation in support of a rule based global order. The need to work closely together was underlined throughout, as well as the fact that the African and the European continents share common challenges. There was also widespread agreement on the need to continue focussing on youth, in particular as regards employment, education and skills development, especially for young women and girls; and the need to work collectively on the digital agenda. A joint AU-EU Communiqué was agreed, stating that the next Ministerial meeting should be held in Africa before the end of 2019.

109. Following these developments, 2019 is a year of ever **closer cooperation with the AU and its Member States**, both on the strengthened implementation of the Abidjan Declaration: this includes the finalisation of the Abidjan Action Plan whose actions directly address all the strategic priorities in the Abidjan Declaration - and which are already in advanced stages of implementation - and looking into the future of the partnership in the run up to the next Summit, planned for 2020. The EU will work closely with both the Egyptian Chairmanship and the African Union Commission, and in a trilateral cooperation together with the African Union and the United Nations. The EU will also continue engaging with civil society organisations and youth representatives as important partners in the Africa-EU Partnership.

110. **Post-Cotonou negotiations** started in autumn 2018. Their outcome should not only be a new framework for Europe and ACP relations, it should also provide the basis for how we want to shape the world together, based on joint values and the principle of multilateralism. The new agreement should consist of a common ACP foundation with three regional partnerships for the African (sub-Saharan), Caribbean and Pacific regions. The common (EU ACP) foundation should spell out the key objectives and principles, whilst the center of gravity of EU political engagement with ACP partners is intended to shift towards the three regional partnerships. Meetings of the Chief negotiators will take place in early autumn to take stock of the negotiations. In order to avoid duplicate structures, the EU Africa partnership should build on, reinforce and upgrade the existing Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). AU-EU Heads of State and Government Summits, jointly organized with the AU, should provide the political steering for the Africa partnership under Post-Cotonou. The EU will continue to make efforts to finalize the Post-Cotonou negotiations in full congruence with any ideas for the future of the Africa-EU Continent to Continent partnership. The current agreement will expire in early 2020.

## II) Subregional approach

111. In **West Africa**, in the light of the Council Conclusions of June 2018 on Sahel/Mali - and taking into account the deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel - the EU has further adjusted and operationalised its integrated approach to the region and G5 Sahel with the focus on the security and development nexus and on the most affected vulnerable areas. **The High Level Conference on Sahel** of 23 February 2018, the **EU-G5 Sahel Ministerial meeting** on 18 June 2018 and the **FAC-Defence in presence of G5 ministers** on 14 May 2019 paved the way, supported and helped accelerating the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, including the human rights compliance framework and the police component. They also addressed governance, security and development in the region, with renewed commitments from G5 Member States and institutions. The EU-G5 Ministerial in July (Ouagadougou) aimed at taking stock of achievements and identify the next steps. EU efforts also benefit from the regionalisation of the CSDP presence in the field and the support of the EU Special Representative for the Sahel.

112. Regarding **CSDP, regionalization of the missions** in the Sahel has been a key priority: it provides the EU with the means for a real integrated approach in developing its actions on security and defence in this region. With feedback from the field at the local and regional levels, the EU will be able to identify better the actions needed - and those that are more effective. This approach includes a network of security and defence experts in Delegations in order to substantially increase field analysis and provision of advice to G5 Sahel partners. The CSDP missions to Mali (EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Mali) and Niger (EUCAP Sahel Niger) are being adapted to better support the G5 Sahel in order to tackle the security challenges the region is facing. Almost 880 counsellors, trainers and administrators work with Sahelian defence and internal security forces to build up local capacities. The CSDP regionalisation process has entered into its second phase of implementation, with the setting up of a Regional Advisory and Coordination Cell (RACC) in Nouakchott and Bamako, where the G5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat is located. Without prejudice to their core mandate, EUCAP Sahel Mali, EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Niger will also contribute, through advisory and training activities, to strengthening the national capacities of the G5 Sahel countries, to support cross-border cooperation and to support regional cooperation structures and the capacity and ownership of the G5 Sahel countries to address the security challenges in the region. Within this framework, the EU is also providing an important support to the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force and its related Police Component. In this regard, the EU is also working on the concrete identification of strategic objectives from the security and defence perspective in order to ensure the stabilisation of the region. In addition, as clearly showed by recent tragic events, the International Humanitarian Law (IHLW) modules delivered to the Malian Armed Forces by EUTM Mali remain of crucial importance. In addition, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa has further contributed to the GAR-SI SAHEL Project which, with the technical backing of several MS, supports the creation, training and equipment of gendarmerie units in G5 Sahel countries for border management and the fight against organised crime, including terrorism.

113. On 22 May 2018, the EU co-hosted in Brussels the **International Conference for The Gambia**, which confirmed strong international political and economic support to the country, as the EU announced €140 million of additional funds, within a total pledge of €1.45 billion in support of the National Development Plan. Together with other EU services, the EEAS has pursued an intensive political dialogue with The Gambia at all levels to accompany the democratic transition since the change of regime in early 2017, supporting the country's authorities in a wide range of reform efforts.
114. The EU supported the legislative elections in **Guinea-Bissau**, which, although postponed, took place in a peaceful and orderly manner on 10 March 2019, marking a step forward towards the implementation of the 2016 Conakry Agreement and stabilisation of the situation in the country. The EU deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) in **Senegal**, where incumbent President Macky Sall won an absolute majority of votes in the first round with record voter participation. Another EOM was deployed in **Nigeria**, where the incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari also won, albeit through a more contested process which led to several violence incidents. Through its public and also more private positioning, the EU has accompanied these electoral processes, always in coordination with African partners, and especially **ECOWAS**. A constructive ministerial meeting was organized with ECOWAS in November 2018, confirming convergence of views on the main challenges ahead, including demography, growth, job creation and migration but also on country situations such as Togo, Guinea Bissau and Mali and regional dynamics in Sahel and around Lac Chad. In December 2018, the EU and Cabo Verde held their 10th Ministerial meeting, further strengthening the EU-Cabo Verde Special Partnership.

115. The grave situation in **the Lake Chad basin** calls for continued support. Since 2015, the EU has financed the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) under the African Peace Facility (55M€), covering daily allowances for officers, ground mobility assets (62 vehicles), medical level 3 services, communications equipment, air mobility assets, Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance capacities, infrastructures, petrol-oil and lubricants as well as a Command-Control-Communication information system. An additional APF envelop of €60M is foreseen under the 2019-2020 APF action programme. In 2019, a more in depth reflection will also be carried out in order to improve the EU integrated approach to the region.
116. The rise of insecurity in the **Gulf of Guinea** over recent years has also led the EU to keep the region under close scrutiny and both the EU and the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) states have pursued their shared efforts to protect legal activities and fight against illegal and illicit ones. Full achievement of EU strategy needs further sustained ownership from the countries of the region, the building of national capabilities, strengthening synergies and complementarity of actions of all actors, including the private sector. Additionally, the EU Strategy on the Gulf of Guinea will in the future be given a wider contextualization, including migration, economic growth, employment and environmental issues. Some of the lessons learned from the Gulf of Guinea experience will also be valuable for policymaking in other regions such as the Western Indian Ocean.
117. 2) In 2018, the Council adopted several conclusions on **East Africa**, notably on the Horn of Africa and Red Sea, on Ethiopia and Sudan. They reflected on the openings for possible reconciliation and economic integration in the region triggered by political reforms in Ethiopia and the notable Ethiopia and Eritrea peace agreement. The EU has since then held informal talks with Foreign Ministers of IGAD member countries in Brussels (January 2019) on regional issues and organized high level visits to the region in spring 2019 to convey a message of support to reforms and regional cohesion, which complemented the continuing action of EU Special Representative to the Horn of Africa.

118. Ethiopia has witnessed significant political and economic reforms that have gained a new impetus. The EU high level visit to Addis Ababa (February 2019) for meetings with Prime Minister Abiy and the first **EU-Ethiopia** Strategic Engagement Ministerial served to lend support to these reforms and the Government's endeavours to create jobs, boost the economy and open the political space. The EU-Ethiopia Business Event organized in Brussels in May was part of the EU's commitment to support these reforms.
119. After the rapprochement between **Eritrea** and Ethiopia the HOMs held their first "Article 8" Political Dialogue with the Government of Eritrea on 20 March. The Government is concentrating on re-establishing strong ties with the countries in the region, whilst internal reforms are less likely to happen in the short run.
120. In line with Council Conclusions on **Sudan** of November 2018, the first EU's phased engagement dialogue took place in March 2019 in Khartoum, with a strong emphasis on human rights and democracy, in the context of a deteriorating situation. Shortly after, President Bashir was ousted from power. In line with the EU 28 Statement of 17 April, following the establishment of a civilian-led government in September, the EU is ready to actively support the country politically and economically during the transition phase, before future democratic elections.
121. In the Council Conclusions on **South Sudan** of April 2018 the EU defined priority issues for its engagement with the country. The EU consistently urged all South Sudanese parties to participate in the peace process and create conditions for sustainable and lasting peace and stability. Partial progress has been made on the September 2018 peace agreement but many important issues are delayed. The EU keeps supporting the oversight and monitoring mechanisms of the peace process and to reconciliation initiatives through non-state actors while also supporting political and technical efforts to address roots causes of the conflict.
122. Following the forced departure of the EU Head of Delegation and the declaration of the HR/VP on behalf of the EU, the EU carries a review of its bilateral relations with **Tanzania**.

123. In 2018, the EU invested heavily in **Somalia's** state-building through the integrated approach organising in May the **Brussels Security Conference** where the Somali-owned security Transition Plan was internationally agreed. The EU co-hosted with the Federal Government of Somalia and Sweden, the **Somalia Partnership Forum (July 2018)** where Somalia made several reform commitments on political inclusivity, security sector reform and economic recovery. During the second part of 2018 there was progress on economic reforms but the stand-off between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States hindered political and security reform. As a result of the expulsion of UN SRSG Haysom in January 2019, the international community, led by the EU, joined forces to convey clear and firm messages to the Federal Government of Somalia on respect for the UN and multilateralism and on human rights, and urged intensified efforts to overcome the differences between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States and to deliver concretely on reform commitments.
124. In the autumn of 2018, the EU decided to adopt a more transactional approach both to the AU/Troop Contributing Countries in **AMISOM** and to the Federal Government of Somali, by linking African Peace Facility support to compliance with certain political and technical benchmarks. At the "Article 8" Political Dialogue (March 2019), a road map of priorities to be delivered by Somalia in 2019 was agreed. AMISOM has been supported by the EU since 2007 and its transformation and draw-down to adapt to the new context remains critical to support a successful transition of the national security to the Somali security forces. Coordinated international support for its transition to Somali security forces beyond 2019 will be paramount to the return of security in the whole country.

125. Off the Horn of Africa, EUNAVFOR Operation ATALANTA continues to very effectively counter piracy, while on land the Somalia Training Mission (EUTM Somalia) is developing the capacity of the Somali National Army. EUCAP Somalia is a civilian mission focused on Somali maritime civilian law-enforcement and contributing also to broader Police development in the country. Further enhancement of the EU's engagement in the security sector in Somalia is being implemented in order to empower National structures in the framework of the transition plan implemented by the Federal Government of Somalia. AMISOM has been supported by the EU since 2007 and its transformation and draw-down to adapt to the new context remains critical to support a successful transition to the Somali security forces. Coordinated international support for this process beyond 2019 will be paramount to the restoration of security and stability in the whole country.
126. In the **Great Lakes region**, the EU, current chair of the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region, will continue to use the instruments at its disposal to support international efforts to resolve the crisis in **Burundi**, in compliance with the Arusha Agreement and taking into account the planned elections in 2020. In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, the EU closely followed up the electoral process, and, on the basis of political developments, will strive to re-launch development activities as well as support efforts aimed at bringing stability and peace, particularly in the Kasais and in the east of the country, and efforts for reforms and changes announced by the Congolese government for the benefit of the population, taking into account the dynamics in the broader Great Lakes region.
127. With regards to open conflicts, in the **Central African Republic** the EU was actively engaged, in close coordination with regional and international partners, in supporting the process leading to the signature of a Peace Agreement; on that basis, the EU will increase its support to consolidate progress and foster stabilisation, peace and reconciliation. Preparatory work is ongoing for the launching of a new civilian CSDP mission in CAR.

128. The EU CSDP Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) is demonstrating the strong EU commitment to contribute to the restoration of peace and stability in the country, notably through supporting capacity building of the armed forces and the ongoing Defence Reform Process. This contribution is highly welcomed by the UN and the CAR authorities. Upon request of President Touadera for more support from the EU to the CAR internal security forces, the EU has extended the mandate of EUTM to advisory activities in the field of civilian-military interoperability.
129. The EU will continue to work together with regional and international partners on **democratic consolidation, promotion and protection of human rights** and to **prevent further violence** in the more fragile countries, such as the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, the **Central African Republic** and **Cameroon**. In **Burundi** and **Gabon** where our political dialogue has been strained, increased investment in the long term consolidation of rule of law and democratic governance will continue to be needed.
130. 4) In 2018 the EU held a Ministerial Political Dialogue with **the Southern Africa Development Community/SADC**, allowing a comprehensive review of the positions taken by the two sides on international political issues, and reviewing their practical co-operation in a number of fields such as election observation, peace and security, migration and infrastructure. SADC expressed its ambition to work more closely with the EU on emerging global challenges, including at multilateral level. The EU contribution to peace and security in Africa was underlined in the ministerial meeting. The EU also pursued dialogue with SADC at Presidency and Chair level, covering the situation in DRC, the stabilization of Lesotho, and the transition in Zimbabwe. In 2019, similar discussions will continue but will also cover issues such as the ongoing political tension in Comoros. EU-SADC dialogues also allowed both sides to explain their own key policies, notably on migration.

131. Five years since the last Summit, the **7<sup>th</sup> EU-South Africa Summit took place on 15 November 2018** in Brussels, allowing the two sides to reconnect at Leaders' level and brought a sense of renewal to EU-South Africa relations. A joint summit statement was successfully concluded, emphasising the importance of multilateralism, the rules-based international order and including references on bilateral trade impediments, the WTO, Iran, Human Rights as well as on the Chemical Weapons Convention. Global challenges, including the international aspects of migration, were also discussed. After the electoral victory of President Ramaphosa in May, the EU will follow up on the Summit conclusions with SA new cabinet
132. In 2018-2019, the EU implemented a number of actions under the **EU-Angola Joint Way Forward partnership**, notably in support to a national integrated maritime strategy, the organisation of a joint workshop on migration, people in movement and minorities, and the alignment of the EDF annual action plan with new priorities. The EU also held dialogues with ministers in Luanda on Human Rights, leading to the creation of an EU-Angola joint working group on human rights, and on decentralisation and trade. In parallel, preparatory work continued in view of the ministerial meeting held on 11 March 2019 involving European Commission services and a technical mission of senior officials from Luanda. The objective was to broaden and deepen the dialogue and partnership with the new Angolan leadership.
133. In **Zimbabwe**, following the resignation of President Mugabe and the entry in office of a new leadership - and in line with Council Conclusions of January 2018 - an Election Observation Mission was deployed to follow the electoral process in 2018. Violence that occurred in the aftermath of the elections and repression by national forces led to a stalemate in the situation of the country and its relations with the international community. The EU will nevertheless keep pressing for political and economic reforms, notably during an article 8 dialogue session in June.

## Americas

134. The transatlantic relationship remains vital in addressing global challenges. Our strategic partnership with the **United States**, based on shared values and interests, is vital to maintaining a rules-based international order. The EU will continue working strategically with the U.S. Administration and Congress, taking forward our common work in areas of mutual interest (Russia/Ukraine, Western Balkans, Venezuela, Syria, Yemen, DPRK). The EU will continue to engage with the U.S. in the search for cooperative solutions to global challenges such as counter-terrorism, cyber-security, non-proliferation, arms control, disarmament, energy, climate change and migration. The EU-U.S. Energy Council, which took place in July 2018, confirmed a commitment to work together on energy-related issues. The EU will also strengthen people-to-people relations through expanded visits and exchanges on both sides of the Atlantic.
135. EU-U.S. bilateral cooperation in security and defence is of strategic importance to transatlantic security, complementing and mutually reinforcing the EU-NATO cooperation. Strengthening the defence capabilities of EU Member States through EU cooperation on security and defense also enhances the capabilities potentially available to NATO; for those Member States concerned, it contributes to Trans-Atlantic burden-sharing. The EU and the U.S. have developed and are expanding excellent bilateral military-to-military cooperation, for example in Africa, through information exchanges as well as strategic and tactical cooperation on the ground. The annual CSDP Symposium in Washington constitutes a solid basis for EU-U.S. engagement in the area of security and defence. We also continue consultations with the aim of launching a dedicated EU-U.S. security and defence dialogue.

136. The strategic partnership between the EU and **Canada** is based on shared common values, a long history of close cooperation and strong people-to-people ties. In 2018 the partnership saw progress in the implementation of the EU-Canada Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). The Joint Ministerial Committee, held in November 2018, gave a boost to promoting multilateralism and strengthening rules-based international order. Both sides also committed to further cooperation in the area of democracy and human rights, security, climate change, energy, and the oceans. Science and innovation also featured high as a particularly important area for enhanced cooperation. In September 2018, the HRVP Mogherini and Foreign Minister Freeland held in Canada the first Women Foreign Ministers Meeting, putting the spotlight on women's political participation and economic empowerment. The meeting showed the joint determination of Canada and the EU to advance gender equality and women's contributions to peace and security, strengthening of the rules-based international order and the resilience of democratic processes. Close cooperation took place on many pressing international humanitarian crises and peace and security challenges, including in Russia and Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Iran, DPRK and Mali, Venezuela and Myanmar/Burma.
137. Canadian contributions to EU CSDP Missions (EUPOL COPPS, EUAM Ukraine, EUCAP Sahel Mali), as well as the annual bilateral security and defence dialogue and the EU Security and Defence symposia in Ottawa, constitute further important elements of our strategic partnership. The EU and Canada will continue their close cooperation also in the framework of G7 and G20. An EU-Canada Summit took place on 17-18 July 2019.

138. The EU will continue to strengthen its strategic partnership with **Latin America** and the Caribbean at bilateral, sub-regional and regional level. A Joint Communication by the High Representative and the European Commission was published in April 2019, setting out a vision for relations between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean in the next 10 years. Together with the Council Conclusions adopted in May, it provides a robust policy framework for the EU strategic engagement with this region over the coming years, privileging the development of four partnerships, for prosperity, democracy, resilience and a rules-based order.
139. 2019 will also bring a **post-Cotonou framework**, which will provide an important new impulse to the future of EU-Caribbean relations, also through the EU-Caribbean Protocol. The new agreement should provide for a mutually beneficial political partnership, as well as identify joint priority areas for future cooperation.
140. The EU-**Cuba** Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) creates a strong enabling framework to engage with Cuba; implementation continued in 2018, including through several high-level meetings and formal dialogues. In 2019 we will complete the first cycle of dialogues and meetings of the governing bodies of the Agreement, enhance cooperation and joint action on global matters and in multilateral forums. We are stepping up our efforts to support political and economic reforms, promote democracy and human rights, so improving the lives of Cuban people.
141. Formal political dialogue with **Haiti** resumed in January 2018. Amid the continued social and political crisis in the country, the EU will intensify support the involvement and commitment of the authorities in necessary reforms, with a view to the next electoral cycle.. The EU will also support improved governance and human rights as well as sustainable and inclusive development.

142. **Mexico** is one of two strategic partners in Latin America, and the EU is committed to concluding the modernisation of the EU-Mexico Global Agreement as soon as possible. The new agreement will provide a comprehensive and up-to-date framework for our relations. Negotiations on modernisation of the Global Agreement reached very advanced stages during 2018 and should be completed in 2019 with a view to signature in 2020. A High Level Political Dialogue between the EU and Mexico continues to take place on an annual basis.
143. Pending entry into force of the **EU-Central American Association Agreement**, of which the trade pillar is already provisionally applied, the EU continued to enhance cooperation and intensify relations under the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA). To this end, an EU-Central America Joint Sub-Committee in Brussels should be an important step toward closer political and trade relations, supporting inclusive and sustainable development. Bilateral relations with all six Central American countries should continue to intensify.
144. In **Nicaragua** the EU took principled action in reacting rapidly to the crisis which started in April 2018. The EU has since deployed extensive activity aimed at contributing to a peaceful and negotiated solution to the crisis through a results oriented national dialogue whilst reinforcing support for civil society. In 2019 the EU will continue to monitor closely the situation and stands ready to use all its instruments to ensure the implementation of the 29 March agreement on citizen's political rights and guarantees, as well as the constructive engagement of the Nicaraguan authorities, including with possible support for electoral reforms that should lead to democratic elections and a solution which responds to legitimate aspirations of Nicaraguan people.

145. In **Guatemala**, after the electoral process of 2019, the EU will focus its efforts on supporting strengthening the rule of law, as well as the fight against corruption and impunity.
146. The EU stated that the presidential elections of May 2018 in **Venezuela** were neither credible nor transparent and that the new mandate of President Maduro was therefore not legitimate. The EU has imposed targeted individual sanctions against persons responsible for human rights violations and/or for undermining the rule of law. The EU continues to urge for full respect for the prerogatives of the National Assembly and has taken an active role in the establishment of an International Contact Group (ICG) aimed at supporting the creation of a political process that can lead to the peaceful restoration of democracy, rule of law and human rights through new free and democratic presidential elections. The ICG also has been supporting the Norwegian mediation effort and greater humanitarian space to allow badly needed assistance to the increasing number of people affected by the severe humanitarian crisis. The ongoing crisis in Venezuela has led to an unprecedented exodus of over 4 million people. In parallel, the EU has substantially stepped up its financial support to address the most urgent needs of Venezuelans affected by the crisis (shortages of food and medicines, etc.).
147. Meanwhile, the EU has remained fully committed to supporting – politically as well as financially – implementation of the peace agreement with the FARC in **Colombia**, in particular through the work of Special Envoy Eamon Gilmore. At the same time, it has been looking at ways to expand its partnership with Colombia to new areas that correspond to common priorities, such as the fight against climate change.
148. Relations with **Peru** have continued to develop, both through the various sectoral dialogues that are feeding into the bilateral High-Level Dialogue and through an intensification of exchanges on foreign policy issues of common interest, such as the Venezuela crisis where Peru is playing a key role as the driving force of the Lima Group. Relations with **Ecuador** have gained new traction thanks to the implementation of the trade agreement and the intensification of dialogue with the country's authorities.

149. A historic achievement after 20 years of on and off negotiations was the agreement in principle on 28 June 2019 on the trade part of the **EU-MERCOSUR** Association Agreement, the political and cooperation part being virtually agreed since June 2018. Subject to final approval by the EU and Member States, where applicable, this agreement has the objective to constitute the basis for a renewed political and strategic partnership between both regions. Its geopolitical importance goes beyond Europe and Mercosur as a showcase of the commitment from the two regions to political cooperation and free and fair trade as well as to the international legal framework regarding global issues such as Environment or Human Rights. It aims at providing a platform to further modernise and diversify Mercosur Member countries' economies, anchoring important political and economic reforms, and, as a positive side effect, consolidating Mercosur as a regional integration project, contributing to strengthen integration processes in Latin America. For Mercosur it would be the first major agreement signed and for the EU, completing the network of agreements with the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The EU relations with the Pacific Alliance have continued to develop and have received a new drive through the commitment to strengthen them.
150. The strategic partnership with **Brazil** remains an important framework through which both partners are seeking to define joint responses to global challenges as well as to develop new areas of cooperation. In 2018 the EU worked closely with **Argentina** during its first G20-Presidency and dialogue has been developing, taking advantage of the like-mindedness between the two partners. In 2019, the EU is planning to support **Chile** in the preparation of the COP25. In the next few months, the EU also expects to conclude negotiations for a modernised Association Agreement with Chile started in November 2017.

## Asia-Pacific

151. Since the July 2016 EU Strategy and Council conclusions, which remain a guiding policy framework for EU's engagement with **China**, a new Joint Communication (JC) on "EU-China – a strategic outlook" was presented by the High Representative and the Commission in March 2019 as a response to a growing appreciation in Europe that the balance of challenges and opportunities presented by China has shifted. In March 2019, the European Council had an exchange of view on overall relations with China in a global context.
152. The JC stated that China can no longer be regarded as a developing country. It is a key global actor and leading technological power. China is simultaneously, in different policy areas, a cooperation partner with whom the EU has closely aligned objectives, a negotiating partner with whom the EU needs to find a balance of interests, an economic competitor in the pursuit of technological leadership and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance. China's economic power and political influence have grown with unprecedented scale and speed, reflecting its ambitions to become a leading global power. Its increasing presence in the world, including in Europe, should be accompanied by greater responsibilities for upholding the rules-based international order, as well as greater reciprocity, non-discrimination, and openness of its system. China's publicly stated reform ambitions should translate into policies or actions commensurate with its role and responsibility.
153. The JC also called for the more robust application of existing bilateral agreements and financial instruments with China; WTO reform in particular on industrial subsidies and forced technological transfers; and the more rapid conclusion of outstanding bilateral investment, geographical indications and aviation safety agreements. The JC has also called for the adoption of the International Procurement Instrument; the publication of guidelines on the participation of foreign bidders and goods in the EU procurement market; an assessment how to fill existing gaps in EU law on distortive effects of foreign state ownership and state financing in the internal market; safeguards against potential serious security implications for critical digital infrastructure, including 5G networks; and the swift implementation of the foreign direct investment screening regulation.

154. The EU and China concluded the 21st Summit on 9 April 2019 with a Joint Statement protecting key principles as regards support to multilateralism. The two parties also committed to cooperate on global challenges and selected foreign policy issues, including on Iran/JCPOA, Afghanistan, DPRK, Venezuela, and maritime security. Important commitments were secured on trade and economic issues, in particular on progressing on ongoing bilateral negotiations on a comprehensive investment agreement and on a GI protection agreement and on support for the rules-based multilateral trading system, commitment to discuss industrial subsidies in the context of WTO reform and adherence to the GPA. The EU is committed to achieve a more balanced and reciprocal relationship with China, notably in following up to ensure China delivers on these commitments.
155. China is a strategic partner of the EU in addressing global and international challenges. The EU will remain committed to engaging with China in upholding the Rules based international system, including inter alia respecting UNCLOS. The EU expects China, as a member of the United Nations Security Council and a beneficiary of the multilateral system, to support all three UN pillars, namely Human Rights, Peace and Security and Development as well as effective global climate action. The EU will encourage China to bear a greater share of the burden of global responsibilities and continue to seek positive engagement to jointly advance on SDG implementation. As China has the capacity and responsibility to play an important role in addressing regional security challenges, the EU aims to deepen its engagement with China on peace and security - building on the positive cooperation on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action for Iran - in places such as Afghanistan, the Middle East, Africa, the Korean Peninsula and Myanmar.
156. The EU confirms the EU's "One China" policy and will continue to support the full application of the Basic Law and the "One Country, Two Systems" principle in both Hong Kong and Macao. The EU confirms its commitment to continuing to develop its relations with Taiwan and to supporting the shared values underpinning its system of governance. The EU will actively support the constructive development of cross-Strait relations as part of the peaceful development of the Asia-Pacific region"

157. In **Mongolia**, focus will remain on implementing the EU-Mongolia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement's priority areas of cooperation: the modernization of its public administration, promoting investment to increase connectivity, development of light industry and support to SME's for the diversification of her economy. The newly opened EU Delegation in Ulaanbaatar has started to support concrete action and prepare activities to mark the 30th Anniversary of diplomatic relations.
158. The EU continues to deepen its relations with its strategic partners, **Japan** and the **Republic of Korea** (ROK). Their important security and stability challenges have direct and indirect implications for the EU. The EU remains fully committed to implementing its Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Japan. The coordination of sector policy dialogues between the EU and Japan will improve through the SPA's Joint Committee in areas such as security and defence and connectivity, where the EU aims to move towards a partnership with Japan on cooperation in third countries.
159. The EU-ROK Framework Participation Agreement allows for joint crisis management operations. The EU welcomes the ROK's participation in the EU's counter-piracy efforts in the Indian Ocean and off the Horn of Africa, notably in the EUNAVFOR operation.
160. The EU will continue to closely monitor developments on the Korean Peninsula, while standing ready to support potential further diplomatic efforts leading to a peaceful solution, in consultation with key partners. The EU's focus will remain on ensuring the full implementation of the existing UN Security Council Resolutions on the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea** by all countries, aimed at achieving the goal of complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation while continuing to implement the policy of “critical engagement” and, when need be, taking appropriate measures regarding the DPRK in terms of its nuclear and other Weapons of Mass Destruction, ballistic missile programmes and human rights. At the same time, the EU will contribute to enhancing the implementation of the current DPRK sanctions regime.

161. Relations with **ASEAN** acquired a new quality and depth. In August 2018, The High Representative attended the annual EU-ASEAN- Post-Ministerial Conference with ASEAN Foreign Ministers in Singapore as well as the 25th ASEAN Regional Forum. The informal EU-ASEAN Leaders' Meeting – the first since 2014 – took place in Brussels in October 2018, demonstrating strong common interest in deepening EU-ASEAN cooperation and building on increasingly successful economic relations towards a reinforced partnership encompassing a broad agenda on connectivity and security. There was a broad concurrence of views notably on the importance of effective, rules-based multilateralism. Both sides agreed in principle at the January 2019 EU-ASEAN-Ministerial Meeting to upgrade relations to a strategic partnership subject to details and timing to be worked out. They also agreed to deepen cooperation including in the security field. The EEAS began preparations to apply for observer status in certain ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting–Plus processes in the forum's Expert Working Groups.
162. The Foreign Affairs Council adopted conclusions on **Myanmar** on 28 February and 10 December 2018 focusing on key issues such as ending violence, the need for humanitarian access, cooperation with all relevant UN mandates, the necessity of addressing the root causes of the crisis and the preparation of conditions for the safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to their places of origin. The EU continued its balanced approach of constructive engagement with the civilian government on the basis of an ambitious development agenda, support for peace and the democratisation process while maintaining political pressure and targeted restrictive measures with a view to promote accountability.

163. In February 2018, the EU Foreign Affairs Council adopted Conclusions on **Cambodia** in which it expressed concerns about political developments there and the continuing deterioration of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. The EU launched a procedure for temporary withdrawal of trade preferences under the Everything But Arms scheme which involves an enhanced engagement process with the Cambodian Government. In the same year, the EU signed three important agreements with **Singapore**, notably the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the Free Trade Agreement and the Investment Protection Agreement. These agreements will significantly upgrade the bilateral EU-Singapore relationship and further strengthen the EU's presence in South East Asia. Moreover in 2018 the EU signed the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreement and agreed the Rules of Procedure of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Vietnam. On 30 June 2019, the EU and **Vietnam** signed the Free Trade Agreement and the Investment Protection Agreement in Hanoi. On 1 March 2018, the EU-**Philippines** PCA entered into force and it is intended that the EU-**Malaysia** PCA will be signed by the end of 2019.

164. As regards South Asia, the EU will put into action the EU Strategy on **India** adopted by the Council in December 2018, working with India seeking jointly to promote peace and security, effective multilateralism and to strengthen the rules-based global order. Cooperation will be further enhanced on counter-terrorism, radicalisation, cyber security, hybrid threats, maritime security, non-proliferation and disarmament. Military-to-military relations will continue to be developed. The EU will pursue regular exchanges and coordination particularly on Iran/JCPOA, Afghanistan, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. As regards **Bangladesh**, cooperation focused on humanitarian and development assistance addressing the Rohingya refugee crisis and the security situation in the refugee camps. The EU agreed with Bangladesh on Standard Operating Procedures for the return of irregular migrants residing in the EU Member States and will continue engaging with Bangladesh on countering terrorism, violent extremism and radicalisation. The EU will continue to work with **Sri Lanka** to promote democracy, respect of human rights as well as accountability and reconciliation. In the **Maldives**, the EU contributes through regional and thematic programmes to addressing climate change. Political dialogue with the new government focusses on good governance.

165. The 2017 EU-**Afghanistan** Strategy as well as the 2018 Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (CAPD) with Afghanistan and the 2016 EU-Afghanistan Joint Way Forward on migration issues (JWF) will be the focus for the EU's work in Afghanistan. The EU High Representative took a major step forward for peace in Afghanistan at the Geneva Ministerial Conference of November 2018 by presenting a 5 point plan: 1) helping the government making the peace process more inclusive; 2) supporting post-conflict reforms, including Security Sector Reform; 3) providing incentives for the reintegration of ex-combatants; 4) having the EU as a guarantor of the peace process; and 5) supporting cross-border trade and infrastructure as well as regional connectivity. This approach was endorsed by the Foreign Affairs Council on 8 April 2019. In March 2019 HRVP visited Kabul. The visit underlined the EU's strong commitment to support an Afghan led and Afghan owned peace process. By supporting three core functions of the Afghan State (security and democracy, economic growth and jobs, basic social services) EU development cooperation contributes to the necessary foundation for the ongoing peace efforts. In addition to the political support to the start of a peace process, the EU is helping to alleviate the current humanitarian crisis, with over €200 million of assistance since 2014.
166. The new EU-**Pakistan** Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP) was signed on 25 June 2019. The SEP aims at strengthening cooperation in the fields of Peace and Security; Democracy, Rule of Law, Good Governance, and Human Rights; Migration and Mobility including the effective implementation of the EU-Pakistan Readmission Agreement; Trade and Investment; Sustainable Development, including Energy, Education and Culture, and Science and Technology. In March 2019 HRVP visited Pakistan to discuss cooperation between the EU and Pakistan, as well as regional developments. The High Representative/Vice-President co-chaired the 4th EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, together with her counterpart Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi.

167. The EU envisages raising the EU's profile and presence in the Pacific as part of its strategic reflection on EU-ACP relations after 2020, by concluding a new post-Cotonou agreement with a dedicated pillar on EU-Pacific relations. The EU is also negotiating free trade agreements with **Australia** and **New Zealand** while implementing Framework Agreements with both countries. The EU will carry on its security dialogues with Australia and New Zealand and work with them on facilitating their possible participation in EU-led crisis operations via their respective Framework Participation Agreements.
168. The **Joint Communication Connecting Europe and Asia** of 19 September 2018 and related Council Conclusions of 15 October 2018 have started to be implemented. The EU strategy calls for better and more sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based connectivity for Europe and Asia in the fields of transport, energy, digital and people-to-people, working hand-in-hand with Member States and the private sector, paving the way for increased investment there as part of the EU's 2021-27 Multiannual Financial Framework. A new EEAS Ambassador-at-Large for Connectivity has been appointed to lead the effort.
169. The EU will continue to promote actions aimed at enhancing security co-operation in and with Asia following the adoption of Council Conclusions by the Foreign Affairs Council in May 2018. Pilot security co-operation partnerships are being developed with selected Asian countries in the priority areas of counter-terrorism, cyber-security, maritime security and crisis management. The signature of a Framework Participation Agreement for CSDP missions with Vietnam is envisaged before the end of 2019.

170. The 12th **ASEM** (Asia-Europe) Summit took place in Brussels on 18-19 October 2018. The leaders dealt with a number of common global challenges - climate change, SDGs, non-proliferation, certain regional issues, migration, terrorism, gender equality, effective multilateralism and the rules-based international order. In the field of connectivity, ASEM partners built on the agreed ASEM Sustainable Connectivity Definition and discussed the ASEM Inventory as well as an EU-led project on the ASEM Sustainable Connectivity Portal. ASEM partners agreed on the Tangible Areas of Cooperation in the Field of Connectivity and to task the Senior Officials' Group to continue the work on connectivity started by the ASEM pathfinder Group on Connectivity. Additionally, the ASEM Culture Ministers' met in Sofia on 1-2 March 2018, followed by the ASEM Finance Ministers' Meeting in Sofia on 26 April 2018. ASEM Education ministers met in Bucharest on 15-16 May 2019. By the end of the year, the ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting will take place in Madrid on 15-16 December and a meeting of the Transport Ministers will take place on 11-12 December, in Budapest.

### (3) GLOBAL ISSUES

171. In line with its Global Strategy and with the Council conclusions on EU action to strengthen rules-based multilateralism of June 2019, the EU will continue to **promote effective multilateralism and human rights**. The EU will continue to support reform of the UN and other multilateral bodies, to ensure that multilateralism delivers for citizens, in tackling today's complex challenges and conflicts. The EU-UN Partnership is stronger than ever as was reaffirmed by the joint high-level EU-UN press statement in September 2018. The EU will continue to support implementation of the UN Secretary-General's reforms and his determination to ensure that the UN delivers across all pillars: peace and security, development and human rights. The EU will support and shape UN action to integrate conflict prevention, governance and the rule of law, development, human rights, respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in tackling the challenges of sustaining peace. At a time when multilateralism is being challenged, the EU will build bridges in support for multilateralism and will seek to build new cross-regional partnerships and alliances. The EU will diversify and strengthen its partnerships in order to secure solutions to common challenges, including by working with other regional organisations. Trilateral AU-EU-UN cooperation will be deepened. In view of the challenges to the international rules based order, the EU will strengthen its capacity for effective public diplomacy on how multilateralism delivers for citizens, not least in view of the 75th anniversary of the UN in 2020.
172. 2019 is critical year for **climate action and sustainable development** at United Nations level. The UN Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit in September was an essential opportunity to mobilise political will to raise global ambition for the Paris Agreement goals and to demonstrate transformative action. The EU worked with partners to make substantive and positive contributions to the Summit and to renew and strengthen the international community's commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) with the aim of pushing further convergence – at both domestic and multilateral levels- between the Sustainable Development Goals and the climate agenda

173. The EU also reaffirms its steadfast commitment to the Paris Agreement as the essential multilateral framework governing global action to deal with climate change. As regards the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the EU is already leading by example by turning its own ambitious commitments for 2030 into concrete action and legislation. The EU is ready to communicate or update its NDC by 2020, as agreed in Paris. Likewise, the EU is determined to help raise global ambition and lead the way on accelerated climate action on all fronts.
174. The EU is convinced that climate change and environment degradation acts as a threat multiplier and increasingly as a threat in its own right, with serious implications for peace and security across the globe. The EU is stepping up its work to confront direct and indirect climate-related threats, chiefly affecting those in fragile and vulnerable situations least able to respond or adapt to climate change. On top of mitigation and adaptation, resilience building, food and nutrition security, disaster risk reduction, conflict prevention and sustainable development, are all basic pillars of climate change risk management. Integrating a security perspective within all of these processes, while ensuring inclusive participation, is fundamental in order to alleviate the destabilising impacts of climate change and its negative impact on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
175. To support all of these efforts, we will reinforce our **EU Climate Diplomacy**, working through multiple policy communities and the full range of regional and sub-regional actors, with strengthened strategic communication to better project and promote the EU's high level of ambition and commitment.
176. Population and economic growth, combined with unsustainable production and consumption patterns are putting growing pressure on the Planet's ecosystems and finite resources. Urgent action is needed to address these global challenges and shift to climate-neutral green economies. The EU will continue to lead and intends to scale up international mobilisation against the unprecedented decline of biodiversity and ecosystems, in particular by promoting an ambitious global post-2020 agenda on biodiversity, to be adopted in Kunming in 2020 .

177. The EU will continue to support the implementation of **2030 Agenda** and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in partner countries. The new European Consensus on development, adopted in 2017, provides the EU common framework for development cooperation, in line with the 2030 Agenda. A Joint Synthesis Report, setting out a summary of how the EU and its Member States are supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda across the world, through their development cooperation, was prepared ahead of the UN 2019 High Level Political Forum. As for the EU's longer term vision for the implementation of the SDGs in Europe and the world, the reflection paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030', published in January put forward scenarios to stimulate the discussion on how to follow up on the SDGs within the EU and through external action. The subsequent Council Conclusions adopted in April welcome the Reflection Paper and call on the EU to build upon its accomplishments and become a "trailblazer" for sustainable development at the global level, in partnership with the UN, through reaffirmed and enhanced multilateralism and shared values. The EU also contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with the European External Investment Plan (EIP), which leverages investment in partner countries and enhances private sector development in Africa and the Neighbourhood. The EIP promotes inclusive growth, job creation and sustainable development, thereby tackling some of the root causes of irregular migration. As highlighted in the European Consensus on Development, working better together through joint programming is also key to delivering on the 2030 Agenda, by bringing together the EU and its Member States' resources and capacities and increasing their collective impact.

178. While the number of detected irregular border crossings into the EU has been brought down by 95% from its peak in October 2015, some **migration** flows warrant sustained attention as part of a comprehensive approach to migration which combines more effective control of the EU's external borders, the internal aspects and increased external action, including returns. In 2019 migration will continue to be a major priority for the EU in our relationship with key third countries of origin and transit, ensuring it remains embedded in our overall relations with these countries.

179. The EU reaffirms its commitment to a comprehensive and geographically balanced external approach on migration that is in line with our principles and values and fully respects international law and EU and national competences. This approach aims to save lives, prevent irregular migration and address its root causes, ensure adequate protection for those in need, fight against smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings and offer legal migration channels while fully respecting national competencies.
180. [The EU emphasises that no country can address migration and forced displacement on its own, whether in Europe or elsewhere in the world.] The EU is working with partners – countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as international organizations – to jointly address these challenges, including in the framework of the UN. The EU will continue to pursue its comprehensive approach to migration and forced displacement, including to address irregular migration, through the building of effective, sustainable and tailor-made partnerships and closer cooperation between humanitarian and development actors as well as with civil society, aiming at harnessing and strengthening the resilience and self-reliance of both the host communities and forcibly displaced, including internally displaced persons.
181. The fight against people-smuggling networks is being stepped up by intensifying work with third countries on investigating, apprehending and prosecuting smugglers, with a view to preventing people from embarking on perilous journeys. Within the framework of the Civilian CSDP Compact, further appropriate ways to enhance operational cooperation between civilian CSDP missions and JHA agencies are being explored.

182. The EU will continue to underline the importance of compliance with international refugee law including the principle of non-refoulement, the upholding of human rights law, and the obligation to protect people from trafficking in human beings and human rights violations. Providing a contribution to international burden- and responsibility sharing to meet the protection needs of refugees and asylum seekers will remain a priority, including by providing significant support to key refugee hosting countries. A more coordinated and comprehensive response to current protection challenges will be further promoted, as well as solutions providing safe and legal access to international protection and addressing the root causes of forced displacement.

183. Against a background of negative trends in human rights across the world, the EU will continue to lead as a global actor in the protection and promotion of **human rights**. The EU continues to be strongly engaged in multilateral human rights fora and promoting human rights in its bilateral relations. Better partnering with governmental and non-governmental actors – including civil society and private sector among others – is critical to the EU's continued effectiveness in protecting and promoting human rights, as, for instance, in the case of the establishment of an accountability mechanism on Myanmar. Another key achievement was the successful launch and delivery of the Good Human Rights Stories Initiative underlining the importance of reclaiming the human rights narrative worldwide. The EUSR for Human Rights has uplifted the political engagement and visibility of human rights policy and remains a key actor of political action. Supporting democracy worldwide will continue to be a high priority for 2019.

The deployment of EU Election Observation Missions (EOMs) in agreed priority countries will remain a flagship tool. Moving towards a more comprehensive approach to supporting democracies, the promotion of the effective implementation of EU EOM recommendations will be enhanced, notably through the deployment of an increased number of Election Follow-up Missions. The EU will also reinforce its efforts contributing to enabling environments for citizen participation in partner countries by focusing as well on challenges and opportunities related to digital technologies; and continue supporting representative and participatory democracy; political pluralism; transparency and accountability of institutions. The EU will continue to pay particular attention to the specific risks faced by women, indigenous human rights defenders and other human rights defenders in vulnerable situations, including the LGBTI human rights defenders. The EU will also continue to promote and protect freedom of religion or belief, the free exercise of which contributes to democracy, development, peace and stability, and to condemn persecution of and discrimination against persons belonging to religious minorities across the world, and the abuse of blasphemy laws. Looking ahead, the new Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy - which will run from 2020 to 2024 - will outline strategic and focused priorities which will help to reinforce the EU's role as a global player. The ambition is to map out an innovative Action Plan reflecting today's global landscape.

184. The EU continued to place **gender equality**, the full enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls and their empowerment at the centre of the EU's internal and external policy and action. In this spirit, the EU stepped up efforts and increased dedicated funding to end all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls. The 2018 implementation report of the EU Gender Action Plan II for the period 2016-2020 acknowledges progress made to date, confirming the leading role that the EU is playing in supporting international initiatives to promote women's and girls' full enjoyment of all human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The strategic partnership with the UN, other multilateral organisations and civil society as crucial partners in the implementation of these initiatives confirms the seriousness of the EU's commitment and support to effective multilateralism and a rules-based global order. 2018 was a decisive year to translate the vision behind the Spotlight Initiative into a reality in partner countries. The EU's approach has proven effective also at contributing achieving all Sustainable Development Goals and targets by 2030, with girls' and women's rights at the core of the 2030 Agenda. The EU stands ready to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2020 as a pivotal year for the accelerated realisation of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, everywhere.

The EU remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the outcomes of their review conferences and remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in this context. Having that in mind, the EU reaffirms its commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. The EU further stresses the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and health-care services.

185. Throughout 2018, the EU further implemented the revised **EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child** in relations with partner countries which promotes a systems-strengthening approach while identifying all the necessary measures, structures and actors which need to be in place to protect, promote and fulfil the rights of all children. The EU will continue to implement the Guidelines to ensure that all children are reached effectively by EU policies and actions, including those in the most vulnerable and marginalized situations, such as children in conflicts and in fragile situations, children without parental care, children living in poverty, internally displaced, migrant and refugee children, unaccompanied children, children with disabilities, children deprived of liberty or in contact with the law, children deprived of education and forced to work, and to protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect and violence, including harmful norms and practices. In 2019 the EU will observe the 30th Anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, an opportunity to reaffirm EU commitment to protect and promote the rights of all children, as rights' holders, in external human rights policy, and to ensure the respect for the best interests of the child in all policies affecting children.

186. The EU promotes synergies and the need for coherence between the **Women, Peace and Security (WPS)** agenda and other relevant UN and EU policy frameworks including the EU Global Strategy, the 2030 Agenda, the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, as well as other EU strategies, guidelines, action plans, tools and financing instruments. To enhance the role the EU plays in this matter, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted Council Conclusions on Women, Peace and Security in December 2018 and welcomed the new EU Strategic Approach on this topic. In 2019, drawing on strong cooperation with the UN and other partners, the EU prepared an Action Plan for the effective implementation of the EU Strategic Approach to WPS which emphasises the importance of women's leadership and meaningful and equitable participation in all aspects of peace and security and in all areas of policy decision-making and programming. It fully engages men and boys as positive agents for change, including the need to address and transform gender stereotypes and help reconsider such deep-rooted perceptions in societies. In crisis management the EU Strategic Approach to WPS will inform women's full and meaningful participation in CSDP missions and operations at all levels, including in senior/leadership positions. It will further guide the on-going efforts to enhance the implementation of the CSDP gender mainstreaming policies.
187. The EU will continue to promote youth voice, agency and leadership in peacebuilding at national, regional and global level. The EU will continue to directly engage with young peacebuilders and their organisations. The EU will be working together with the United Nations and the African Union to accelerate the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda, including in view of the UN Secretary-General's upcoming report on the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda as well as the African Union's Youth for Peace Africa Programme. The EU will remain involved in the follow-up to the First International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes.

188. The EU will continue in 2019 to advance with the implementation of the EU **Economic Diplomacy** (EED) Guidelines updating the EED Priorities and Action Plans already agreed in 2018 for 107 third countries and further expanding the number of third countries covered. The EED initiatives are aimed at pursuing strategic EU economic interests, fostering jobs and growth in Europe as well as in our partner countries and they benefit from the close involvement of the EU Member States, the European Investment Bank and EU business organisations. The results achieved so far from the practical implementation of the EED and the evolution of the international relations in general indicate that the political dimension of economic diplomacy merits more attention. The EED will continue to pursue increasing efficiency first, in protecting the interests of EU companies and of EU citizens from arbitrary unilateral actions and distorting and discriminating states' interventions to markets and, second, in advancing overall the EU economic interests abroad.

189. **Energy Diplomacy** increasingly focuses on the geopolitical impact of the global energy transition. The changing role of fossil fuels tests existing trade and economic models, potentially upsetting regional and global balances, while new technologies may create resource security concerns and/or new dependencies. At the same time the EU has been among the first to recognize the challenge of climate change and the opportunities of the energy transition. Climate change acts as a ‘threat multiplier’, contributing to global instability and large-scale migration flows. Conversely, sustainable energy investments in partner countries create opportunities for pioneering European and local industries, which EU action seeks to maximize. In this framework, energy diplomacy will also need to increasingly support efforts to seize the significant growth potential and economic opportunities in related relevant policy areas, including industrial, research or trade policies and also striving to unlock the financial sector's full potentials. Within this broadly changing environment the EU will also continue to engage in tackling traditional energy security challenges: completing diversification efforts, safeguarding the sovereign right of Member States to explore and develop their natural resources, engaging partners to ensure the integrity and sustainability of our internal market, and supporting the strategic efforts of countries within our neighbourhood engaged in difficult reform processes. In this context, the EU has an interest to align trade and climate objectives, to ensure environmental sustainability to strengthen global energy markets through multilateral governance, engage with partners to set and promote global standards to improve the functioning and transparency of markets - including the liquidity of growing global Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) market - and expand the use of sustainable energy sources and energy efficiency technologies to deliver on its climate and energy policies for 2030 and beyond. Moreover, giving the EU recognizes the importance of sustainable energy for development and global stability in our international cooperation and development by avoiding further locking-in in fossil fuel based investments and enabling universal access to energy and combatting climate change through enhanced use of renewable energy solutions. The EU also remains committed to the promotion and continuous improvement of the highest standards of nuclear safety in third countries.

190. Following the Council Conclusions on EU **Water Diplomacy** adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council in November 2018, the EU will implement a new approach to water in a world which reflects increasing new challenges (such as climate change or growing water insecurity) and the impact on EU water diplomacy of both the UN 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The Council Conclusions recognize that water insecurity has the potential to affect international peace and security and underline that EU water diplomacy should engage proactively in transboundary water cooperation and in strengthening water governance. They recall the EU's commitment to the progressive realization of the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda (SDG6). As set out in the Council Conclusions, the EU will give full consideration to the importance of water in the programming of future financial cooperation with partner countries.
191. In 2018, the EU made an outreach to more than 60 countries of Africa, Middle East, Asia and Latin America to promote global membership to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Water Convention. The overall objective of this outreach was to underscore the EU's belief in the shared value of international agreements on global water cooperation in order to foster development and peace in a context of increasing tensions over water. Chad has been the first non UNECE country to join the Water Convention, and Senegal has followed. Other African countries, Lebanon and Iraq are also taking steps for the accession to this international legal instrument which promotes international water governance. The EU will continue supporting interested countries in the accession process.
192. In 2019, the EU will continue to be at the forefront of international cooperation to improve **oceans governance** and maritime multilateralism, promote maritime security and confidence-building measures, reduce pressures on oceans and strengthen international ocean research. The EU will engage actively in the elaboration of a new legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) and will promote the 2019 Our Ocean Conference to be hosted by Norway.

193. In order to strengthen **international environmental law**, the EU and its Member States supported the adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 72/277 "Towards a Global Pact for the Environment" on 10 May 2018. All the EU Member States co-sponsored the resolution which supports the establishment of an ad hoc open-ended working group to consider a report by the UN Secretary-General; to discuss options to address gaps in international environmental law and related instruments; and, if appropriate, to make recommendations to the UN General Assembly.

#### **(4) CSDP AND CRISIS RESPONSE**

194. Since the last CFSP Report, important steps have been taken to enhance the EU's preventative action and pursuing the development of EU instruments and capacity in the field of security and defence in order to respond to ever increasing challenges. The EU presently deploys ten civilian CSDP missions and six military CSDP operations across three continents in which around 4.500 men and women are currently deployed. It expresses its appreciation for the work carried out by all the civilian and military personnel participating in them. In 2019, MS have provided four EU Battlegroups as the Union's rapid reaction capability. Throughout its conflict prevention and crisis management action, the EU has continued to pursue an integrated approach with closer engagement between Commission and the High Representative in the coordinated deployment of their instruments. CSDP missions and operations have been reviewed and adapted as required to the changing circumstances of the crises they are contributing to address. Work in the Sahel region, and ongoing efforts to improve EU support, including through the regionalisation of CSDP engagement, to the G5 Sahel deserves special mention. In addition, the EU has continued increasing its resilience, as well as that of Partner Countries, and that of its Member States, and refining its toolbox, to address hybrid threats, in particular in the fields of strategic communications and cyber, including countering disinformation.

## **Conflict prevention and Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crisis**

195. A first implementation report on implementation of conflict prevention actions was presented. Progress was also registered in developing horizon scanning tools. In 2019, the aim is to propose a mechanism for a network of senior level conflict prevention focal points within the EU and Member States; further increase conflict expertise within the EU institutions; and finalise new guidance on conflict analysis as part of ongoing efforts to improve prevention capacity. The EU conflict Early Warning System will further focus on early action.
196. As a tangible follow-up to the 2017 issues paper defining parameters for a concept of stabilisation, the EU launched stabilisation actions under article 28 of the Treaty on the European Union in Mali and Yemen and is currently considering additional follow-up particularly on the aspects related to knowledge management. In 2018 the humanitarian development nexus was expanded to include the peacebuilding dimension. In 2019, the EU will further elaborate how this influences cooperation between political/ peace actors, development and humanitarian aid in the field. The EU's partnership with the UN has been strengthened in the area of conflict prevention. In 2019, this dialogue will be further extended to cover stabilisation as well as more specific fields of intervention, notably Security Sector Reform (SSR), Rule of Law and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR). Finally, reflection is also ongoing on how the EU can strengthen conflict sensitivity under the next Multi-annual Financial Framework.

## Security and Defence

197. The implementation of the Global Strategy in the area of security and defence continues to be a priority in 2019. In November 2016, the Council had agreed to a new level of ambition in the area of security and defence, including different EU initiatives to implement this level of ambition. By addressing Europe's current and future security and defence needs, the EU is enhancing its capacity to act as a security provider, its strategic autonomy and its ability to cooperate with partners. The Council calls for further strategic reflection on these matters with the aim of taking more responsibility for European security with partners wherever possible and alone when necessary, in the pursuit of EU values and interests. This would require inter alia a shared assessment of threats and challenges, ensuring adequate resources in line with PESCO commitments thereby increasing the capacity and capabilities needed to implement EU decisions effectively and coherently, as well as a more integrated, sustainable, innovative and competitive European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) throughout the Union, which remains open for cooperation. The Council reiterates, in line with its November 2017 conclusions, that this will also strengthen our collective efforts, in particular also in the context of the transatlantic relationship, and will enhance the European contribution to a rules-based global order with the UN at its core and to Euro-Atlantic security.
198. Indeed, the EU level of ambition in security and defence is driving EU capability development, based on a review of the priority areas of civilian CSDP missions and of required defence capabilities and priorities set out through the Capability Development Plan. Cooperation in the area of security and defence and strengthening civilian CSDP will be of key importance to fulfilling this ambition. In November 2018, the Council welcomed the substantive progress made over the past two years and underlined that by addressing Europe's current and future security needs, the EU will enhance its capacity to act as a security provider and its strategic autonomy as well as its ability to cooperate with partners.

199. 2018 has confirmed the EU-UN's mutual commitment to cooperation on peacekeeping and crisis management as eight priority areas were jointly defined for reinforcing this strategic partnership in the three coming years. The 2019-2021 UN-EU priorities on peace operations and crisis management were for the first time endorsed by EU Member States in Council Conclusions in September 2018 specifically addressing the UN-EU partnership in this area, and a joint press statement was issued in connection with President Tusk's participation in a high-level event hosted by the UN Secretary-General on Action for Peacekeeping in New York on 25 September 2018. New priority areas include Women, Peace and Security, conflict prevention and transitions. On the ground, cooperation between UN and EU missions and operations has continued, notably in the Central African Republic, Somalia, Mali (including on the G5 Sahel Joint Force), Libya, Iraq and Western Balkans. Progress can be noted in terms of more effective cooperation thanks to more systematic exchanges of information, increasingly clearly delineated roles, and with the rolling out of the Capacity Building in support of Security and Development (CBSD). EU and UN missions and operations have also increased cooperation on logistics and support, with the finalisation of local technical agreements and MoUs.
200. Work has continued on the implementation of the two Joint Declarations signed by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of NATO in Warsaw on 8 July 2016 and in Brussels in July 2018 respectively. The fourth progress report submitted jointly by the High Representative/Vice President/Head of Agency and the Secretary General of NATO on the implementation of the common set of proposals (a total of 74 actions), highlighting key achievements, including in the areas of political dialogue, military mobility, countering hybrid threats, parallel and coordinated exercises as well as defence capabilities.

201. The **Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD)** Trial Run was completed at the end of 2018, with a report (with recommendations) presented to Defence Ministers in November. Taking into account lessons identified, the Council agreed to launch the CARD as a standing activity, starting with the first full cycle in 2019/2020, with a view to providing further guidance on collaborative opportunities and a detailed assessment of the European capability landscape. Based on Member States' full engagement, the CARD exercise will further contribute to promote cooperation and investment in defence capabilities. The coherence of output between the CARD, as well as the Capability Development Plan, and respective NATO processes, such as the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP), has been and will continue to be ensured where requirements overlap and while recognising the different nature of the two organisations and their respective responsibilities.

202. The Council formally established the **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)** in December 2017, following the joint notification signed by 25 Member States who thus undertook a set of more binding commitments between one another, based on articles 42.6 and 46 TEU and Protocol 10 of the Treaties. As an initiative that will contribute to fulfilling the EU's level of ambition, including with a view to the most demanding missions and operations, PESCO aims to assist the participating Member States (pMS) to develop new capabilities and thus the EU's capacity to act as a security provider, and enhance their operational availability. The institutional framework of PESCO is almost finalised, with work still continuing on the adoption by the Council of a Decision on the general conditions under which third State could exceptionally be invited to participate in PESCO projects. 34 PESCO projects have been launched so far (17 in 2017 and 17 in 2018) and pMS have presented further proposals for a third wave of projects to be agreed on by Defence Ministers/the Council in November 2019. In line with the PESCO implementation roadmap, the High Representative presented in March 2019 the first Annual Report on PESCO implementation, including an assessment of the updated National Implementation Plans (NIPs) communicated by the participating Member States (pMS). On that basis, in May 2019 the Council adopted a Recommendation assessing the progress made by pMS to fulfil commitments undertaken in the framework of PESCO. Further work was carried out by the PESCO secretariat to identify lessons from the project cycle in 2018.

203. Progress was also made on developing the **European Defence Fund** aimed at fostering the global competitiveness, efficiency and innovation capacity of the European defence technological and industrial base throughout the Union. Regarding activities under the current Multiannual Financial Framework, implementation of the Preparatory Action on defence research continued, with five running projects and preparations for the work-programme 2019 and related calls. Furthermore, the regulation on the establishment of the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (2018-2019) was adopted in July 2018, followed by the preparation and adoption in March 2019 of the work programme in consultation with the Member States as well as with the EDA and the EEAS, with a view to funding projects as soon as possible in 2019. Regarding the future Multiannual Financial Framework, in November 2018 the Council adopted a partial general approach on the June Commission proposal for a Regulation on the European Defence Fund 2021-2027, paving the way for an agreement with the European Parliament, which was reached in trilogue in February 2019, without prejudice to the overall agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework.

204. Efforts have intensified to ensure **coherence and mutual reinforcement among EU initiatives** (CARD, PESCO, European Defence Fund) aimed at fostering defence cooperation and thus contributing to achieving the EU level of ambition on security and defence. In May 2019, the High Representative/Vice President/Head of the Agency delivered her report on coherence among the EU defence initiatives. It was welcomed by the Council, which called for continuous efforts, to further increase synergies among EU defence initiatives, based on an inclusive process involving all EU Member States, and to ensure that these initiatives, while being distinct and having different legal bases, are consistent and mutually reinforcing, drawing also on the close coordination between the supporting institutions and bodies at EU level (EEAS; Commission, EDA).

205. The EU welcomes the positive impact of the **Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)** in its command and control of the EU's three military training missions and underlines the relevance of the MPCC, set up in June 2017 as a permanent planning and conduct capability at the military strategic level in Brussels for these missions, in accordance with the principle of avoiding unnecessary duplication with NATO. The Joint Support Coordination Cell (JSCC) helps to reinforce civilian/military synergies and coordination between the MPCC and its civilian counterpart, the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC). In November 2018, the Council agreed to reinforce the MPCC's mandate in order to be capable, by the end of 2020, to also command one limited executive operation of battlegroup-size.
206. As part of the security and defence agenda, progress has been made on **military mobility** at the EU level with the further implementation of the EU Action Plan of March 2018, as well as in the framework of PESCO and EU-NATO cooperation as outlined in the relevant European Council and Council Conclusions. As a starting point, the Council adopted in November 2018 the Military Requirements for Military Mobility within and beyond the EU, which allowed for analysing the civilian parameters for transport infrastructure under the Trans-European network for transport (TEN-T). The gap analysis of May 2019 was followed by an update of the military requirements as adopted by the Council on 15 July 2019 on the technical and geographical parameters. These documents have laid the groundwork for the definition of the dual-use transport infrastructure requirements, expected by the end of 2019. Further progress was achieved in the other areas of the Action Plan as well, including customs, VAT exemption, cross-border movement permissions etc. The first Progress Report on the Action Plan by the High Representative and the European Commission was submitted to the Council and the European Parliament on 3 June 2019. Regarding a coherent, coordinated and close EU-NATO cooperation on military mobility related issues, as part of the framework of the implementation of the Joint Declarations, a Structured Dialogue at staff-to-staff level was established between the two organizations with focused discussions and cooperation.

207. The **Civilian CSDP Compact** of November 2018, adopted in the form of "Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the establishment of a Civilian CSDP Compact", is a landmark in the process to strengthen the civilian dimension of CSDP. The Compact encompasses 22 political commitments by the Member States to undertake a number of actions. Its main objective is to make civilian CSDP more capable, by having Member States committing to develop the necessary capabilities to deploy their staff; more effective, responsive and flexible in providing an EU response; and more joined up with other EU instruments such as JHA agencies and with partners. The Compact calls for its full implementation by early summer 2023 at the latest, including through National Implementation Plans by the Member States and a joint EEAS/Commission Action Plan which was presented in spring 2019. **Countering hybrid threats** is primarily a national responsibility but the EU is assisting Member States to strengthen their resilience against threats of hybrid nature. The implementation of the 2016 Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats represents the backbone of the effort. In response to the Salisbury attack, the 2018 Joint Communication on increasing resilience and bolstering capabilities to address hybrid threats has added further tasks in the areas of situational awareness, CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Threats), strategic communication, cyber security and counter-intelligence. The EU will continue coordinated efforts to combat the immediate and long-term threats posed by disinformation, as an integral part of strengthening the EU's resilience against hybrid threats. The EU conducted several exercises and policy discussions based on hybrid scenarios, thus testing EU crisis management mechanisms' ability to cope with such complex events.

The EU Hybrid Exercise Multi-Layer 2018 (Parallel and Coordinated Exercise with NATO/PACE) in 2018 was a landmark event in this regard and the largest exercise ever undertaken by the EU, with more than one thousand persons involved, EEAS, 16 Commission DGs and 8 EU Agencies participation and activation of many of the EU crisis response mechanism under overall Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) coordination. In this regard, drawing upon the lessons learned from the pilot implementation of the PACE concept, the Council also encourages an enhanced exchange of unclassified and classified information in future PACE exercises as a first step for the exchange of information in real crisis situations. As part of the 22 actions of the 2016 Joint Framework, the Helsinki Centre of Excellence has been set up by Finland and provides valuable contributions to the EU's activities in countering hybrid challenges and EU-NATO cooperation. The EU also takes part in the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism and the Australian Initiative on countering foreign interference. A new permanent Horizontal Working Party on enhancing resilience and countering hybrid threats has been established in July 2019. The importance of the topic has been confirmed with the adoption of 20 June 2019 European Council Conclusions.

208. Following the adoption of the implementing guidelines for the Framework for a **Joint EU Diplomatic Response to Malicious Cyber Activities**, EU Member States have on various occasions expressed their wish to continuously improve the EU's ability to diplomatically respond to malicious cyber activities, including by organising "cyber diplomacy toolbox" table-top exercises. On 28 March 2019 EU Member States have agreed on a joint diplomatic response, including the 12 April 2019 High representative declaration on behalf of the EU stressing the need to respect the rules-based order in cyberspace, urging actors to stop undertaking malicious cyber-activities, including the theft of intellectual property, and calling on all partners to strengthen international cooperation to promote security and stability in cyberspace. On 17 May 2019, the Council established a framework which allows the EU to impose targeted restrictive measures to deter and respond to cyber-attacks, which constitute an external threat to the EU or its Member States.

209. In 2018 the EU and its Member States updated the **EU Cyber Defence Policy Framework** (2018 update) to further develop EU cyber defence policy by taking into account relevant developments in other policy areas and the implementation of the EU Cyber Defence Policy Framework since 2014. Therefore we will continue working on the implementation of this framework in supporting the development of Member States' cyber defence capabilities, enhancing the protection of CSDP communication and information systems, promoting of civil-military cooperation, in research and technology, improving education, training and exercises opportunities, and also in enhancing cooperation with relevant international partners, particularly by putting forward EU–NATO cooperation on cyber security and defence.

210. In light of the current political and security environment, cooperation with partners, notably the United Nations, NATO, the OSCE and the African Union, is of particular importance. With regard to EU-NATO cooperation, as a follow-up to the Warsaw Joint Declaration, implementation of the 74 common actions continues in full swing, as confirmed by the progress reports of 2018 and 2019, which highlighted the main achievements in all areas of cooperation, including countering hybrid threats, cyber defence, military mobility and capacity-building of partners. In its conclusions the Council welcomed progress made in implementation. The second Joint Declaration signed by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of NATO in July 2018 Brussels gave a new impetus to EU-NATO cooperation and highlighted the importance of implementation with the overall objective of building a true organisation to organisation relationship. EU-NATO cooperation continues to take place in accordance with the key guiding principles as reaffirmed by the Council: openness and transparency in full respect of the decision-making autonomy and procedures of both organisations, inclusiveness and reciprocity without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of any Member State.

## International Security

211. Beyond these more operational issues, the EU has continued to pursue an ambitious international security agenda, both in multilateral fora, as well as in cooperation with partners. The fight against terrorism, leadership in the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, maritime security, hybrid and cyber security are key areas of EU engagement.
212. The EU's external action on countering terrorism contributes to the priority objective of strengthening the Union's internal security. Therefore, the strategic and policy continuum between EU's internal and external security will be further reinforced to enhance the effectiveness of counter-terrorism actions across the board.
213. Strengthening international cooperation in counter-terrorism and the prevention and countering of violent extremism with partner countries in the Western Balkans, the Middle East, North Africa, Turkey, the Gulf, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa is a key priority, underpinned by the deployment of counterterrorism experts in 18 EU Delegations.
214. Cooperation between Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations and EU Justice and Home Affairs Agencies is being further promoted, in full respect of the missions' mandates. Enhancing linkages between military and law enforcement actors for counter terrorism purposes is being further examined. The EU is further strengthening international cooperation with key strategic partners, including the United States, Canada and Australia; and with key regional and multilateral partners such as the United Nations, NATO, the Global Counterterrorism Forum, the Financial Action Task Force and other regional organisations where relevant including the OSCE, the African Union, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the League of Arab States). Efforts continued with a view to expanding and strengthening the network of counter-terrorism experts in EU Delegations.

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

216. In 2018 we supported effective multilateralism in the field of **non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms export control**. In this field the core thrust of the EU action in 2018, has addressed preparations for and EU engagement in review conferences, notably through Council Conclusions on an EU position on combatting the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, in light of the Third Review Conference to review the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on SALW in June 2018 and the process leading to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in 2020. Other important conferences will bring together the states parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty and the Arms Trade Treaty, respectively. In 2018 the EU continued to support the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) with a view to the full and effective implementation and the universalisation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). On 16 April 2018, the Council adopted Conclusions reiterating the EU's strong support to chemical disarmament and non-proliferation and laying down the EU position on the Fourth Review Conference of the CWC. The EU welcomed the adoption of OPCW Decision dated 27 June 2018 on "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use" and provided political and financial support to its implementation in the framework of relevant EU Council Decisions. The EU continued firmly supporting the OPCW operations in Syria, in particular by extending the implementation period of Decision 2017/2303/CFSP for the provision of satellite imagery to the OPCW. In October 2018, the Council established autonomous and horizontal EU sanctions against the use and the proliferation of chemical weapons contributing thereby to the upholding of the global norm against the use of such weapons. The EU will demonstrate its continued support to key international instruments in the global non – proliferation and disarmament architecture and to multilateral export control regimes such as the Australia Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement and other such instruments.

Throughout 2018 the EU continued to promote the early entry into force and universality of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); hence, we welcomed the CTBT ratification by Thailand in 2018 and by Zimbabwe in February 2019. On 26 February 2018 the Council adopted Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/298 on Union support for the activities of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO in order to strengthen its monitoring and verification capabilities. A Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Treaty will be held in New York during the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly in September 2019. At the invitation of the Group of the Friends of the CTBT the HRVP participated in the Ninth Ministerial Meeting held in New York on 27 September 2018 where she delivered an agreed EU statement. The EU also recalls its support for the membership of all EU Member States in all export control regimes. The EU will continue to actively support the work of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV). With a view to making further progress on advancing common ground on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), the EU continues in 2019 to actively support the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) at the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).

217. In November 2018, the Council adopted the EU Strategy against Illicit Firearms, Small Arms & Light Weapons and their Ammunition. The Council also adopted new Decisions on the implementation of the new Strategy with a view to support the fight against the illicit trade in small arms in the Member States of the League of Arab States, in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the Western Balkans. As the new EU Strategy includes gender sensitivity among its guiding principles the Council adopted Decision in support of gender mainstreamed policies, programmes and actions in the fight against small arms trafficking and misuse. In 2019 the Council will prepare Conclusions on an EU position for the fourth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

218. In January 2018 the Council Working Party on Conventional Arms Exports (COARM) began its review of the implementation of EU Common Position 2008/944 in accordance with the Council Conclusions of July 2015. The review is expected to be completed in autumn 2019.
219. The EU reaffirms its longstanding commitment to verifiable and effective treaty-based nuclear arms control and disarmament. Bearing in mind the severe and increasingly volatile security environment, the EU stresses the need to preserve and further advance general arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes and calls for further progress on all aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation to enhance global security. The viability and effectiveness of arms control, disarmament and proliferation agreements require that those agreements be fully complied with and enforced. In this context, the EU highlighted the importance of the **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty**. On 14 July 2019 the High Representative issued a Declaration on behalf of the EU strongly urging the Russian Federation to effectively address the serious concerns repeatedly expressed about the development, flight testing and deployment of its ground-based missile system 9M729 and the serious concerns this has raised about non-compliance with the INF Treaty. The EU encourages the preservation of the INF Treaty achievements and, taking into account the special responsibility of the States that possess the largest nuclear arsenals, would welcome early and active dialogue between the US and Russia on the future of the New START Treaty post-2021, and on other arms control arrangements.
220. In addition to the work advanced on cyber in the context of the cyber diplomacy toolbox and on cyber-defence, following the resumption of **United Nations (UN) processes on cyber issues, the EU reaffirm its commitment to continue to build on the achievements of the previous UN Groups of Governmental Experts**, including the applicability of existing international law in cyberspace. The EU recognises the role of the UN in further developing norms for responsible state behaviour in cyberspace and will continue to work in this direction in multilateral and in bilateral discussions.

221. The restrictive measures policy is a strong enforcement tool at the service of EU security interests. The EU has continued to use **restrictive measures** in a targeted manner against third countries, individuals, entities and groups as a tool to pursue its foreign and security policy objectives in accordance with the principles of UN Charter and of the CFSP. In 2018, in addition to the more than 30 autonomous sanctions regimes the EU has in place, the EU adopted a new regime of restrictive measures as part of the EU's efforts to counter the proliferation and use of chemical weapons which poses a serious threat to international security. In 2019, the EU will continue to implement relevant UN Security Council decisions on sanctions and review and maintain its EU autonomous sanctions regimes in compliance with international and EU law. It will work together with international partners to maximise the effectiveness and impact of sanctions while seeking to avoid any unintended consequences they may have.
222. While consular protection remains a national competence, the EU made good progress in promoting consular cooperation and crisis preparedness with particular reference to the Council Directive 2015/637 of 20 April 2015 on facilitating consular protection for unrepresented citizens of the EU in third countries. **The Joint EU Consular Crisis Preparedness Frameworks (JFWs)** have become a key tool to enhance coordination and effectiveness of a joint consular crisis response and they have already ensured effective coordinated consular assistance to an increasing number of unrepresented EU citizens. In this regard, the network of **more than 120 Consular Correspondents in the EU Delegations** has played a supporting role to help EU Member States in several consular crisis responses worldwide. The IT-tool **Consular On-Line platform CoOL, with more than 500 registered users**, is still providing a valuable sharing platform with EU Member States Crisis Centres and was successfully activated in many consular crises.

The close cooperation with the European Commission Union Civil Protection Mechanism and **expanding collaboration and dialogue with like-minded countries:** US, Canada , Australia and in future with New Zealand and further enhance the added value the EU can bring in view of the increased demand of consular protection due to the international mobility and fast growing number of EU citizens/tourists who become affected by emergency events. In the same vein, work continued the liaison with the Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations Coordination Group (NCG), composed by civilian and military planners from various countries, established to coordinate a multinational response in case of the massive evacuation and relocation of civilians threatened in a third country to a place of safety. Other areas of work included consular démarches; mostly on family issues, prison/detention conditions and access to justice issues, and exercises on consular crisis response.

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