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Delegations will find enclosed the Report of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the Council "CFSP Report - Our priorities in 2020", as endorsed by the Council on 15 January 2021.

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

“CFSP Report – Our Priorities in 2020¹”

This report covers events up to 1 September 2020.

(A) INTRODUCTION

1. Over the last decade, Europe has gone through successive crises: the financial crisis, the euro crisis – as the consequence of the first – and then the refugee and migration crisis. In parallel, the world around us has been getting more complex, more competitive and more dangerous, whereas climate change is an existential threat to humanity and biodiversity across all countries and regions, and requires an urgent collective response. Now Europe, with the rest of the world, faces the COVID-19 pandemic. It poses a new, unprecedented challenge but it has also accelerated trends which were already present before.
2. A number of Asian countries are emerging as increasingly important - in economic, security, and technological terms. The systemic rivalry between the US and China is increasing. The European Union (EU) should follow and promote its own interests and values, work closely in particular with countries and organisations that share universal values and avoid being instrumentalised by any actor.
3. Adapting to this more competitive world, the EU will have to redouble its efforts to protect and promote the rules-based multilateral order with the United Nations (UN) at its core. The demand for multilateral cooperation is more urgent than ever, but supply is falling behind. The EU will work with like-minded partners, including the US, to help strengthen multilateralism.

¹ This report should be read in conjunction with Council and European Council Conclusions which remain sources of EU agreed language and positions.

4. The world is becoming more digital, but also more state-driven. The key questions will be: who will control the digital networks? And who will have the necessary critical mass of skills, investments and technology to set the rules and standards? It is vital that the EU assumes a leading global role on technological competition and claims leadership on the rules of the global digital future.
5. Globalisation is under pressure. A more strategic approach is needed to managing vulnerabilities and dependencies, health being a prominent example, but also on economy, security and defence and protecting critical functions. We need to avoid sliding into protectionism while strengthening resilience, including the resilience of global supply chains, and the capacity to act autonomously.
6. The world risks becoming less free, less prosperous, more unequal and more fragmented. Democracy, respect for the universality of human rights and the rule of law – the EU political model – are being contested. Some are not shy in exploiting these dynamics. In the digital domain and elsewhere, there is an ongoing battle of narratives. The EU must defend its model and the universal values which underpin it, including through fighting disinformation from wherever it comes.
7. To face all these challenges we need to implement the agreed EU Level of Ambition in the context of the EU Global Strategy. We need to support effective multilateralism. According to the Council Conclusions of June 2020, we need to enhance our strategic autonomy and our ability to cooperate with partners in order to safeguard our values and interests. We need to promote a greener, sustainable and socially inclusive recovery. However, we also need to act based on global solidarity, because the big issues of the times require global and collective responses.

8. EU ambitions are only credible if they are backed with a sense of shared ownership and responsibility among Member States and institutions, working together according to respective competences. In addition we need the resources to be effective. An EU foreign policy that gets results needs us all to invest in it, politically and financially.

(B) GEOGRAPHICAL

Europe and Central Asia

Non-EU Western European countries

9. The EU has very close relations with non-EU Western European countries, based on shared values and interests including promoting effective multilateralism and a rules-based global order. As likeminded partners, these countries generally support EU foreign policy positions and objectives including in international organisations and cooperate on global issues such as the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, irregular migration or security. There is regular informal political dialogue on CSFP/CSDP matters and on issues such as for instance sanctions and human rights, with some of these countries. Relations with Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are mainly conducted within the framework of the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement. The close partnership between the EU and the EEA EFTA States is the best guarantee of long-term shared economic prosperity and stability, and of a construction of a Europe based on peace, democracy, the rule of law and human rights. As regards Switzerland, negotiations on an Institutional Framework Agreement were concluded in 2018.

This agreement sets out crucial horizontal rules and procedures applying to existing and future agreements that allow Switzerland to participate in the EU internal market. These rules (such as a “dynamic” takeover of the EU acquis by Switzerland, disciplines on State aid and an effective dispute settlement mechanism) are commensurate to the ambitious, strategic and structured relationship that the EU and Switzerland deserve. Furthermore, it is the only key to deepen our relationships, as any future agreement depend on it, while current access risks eroding as upcoming updates of existing agreements may not take place. Switzerland is still to take the needed decisions to sign the agreement, and is expected to move forward on this rapidly. Finally, since 2015, the EU pursues Association Agreement(s) negotiations with Andorra, Monaco and San Marino. While taking duly into account “the particular situation of these small-sized countries” (as per the Treaty), the aim of this Association Agreement(s) would be to allow their participation in the EU's internal market in accordance with the EU principles and disciplines that ensure the integrity of the internal market. The EU and the Holy See are further strengthening their relations including in the context of the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the relations in 2020.

Western Balkans

10. In 2020, Member States, notably through the Council's decision in its conclusions of March 2020 to open accession negotiations with Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia, the appointment of an EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues, and together with the Western Balkans through the Zagreb Summit on 6 May 2020, reaffirmed their **unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans region**. In line with the Zagreb Summit Declaration, the overall priority of the EU in 2020 is to intensify further its engagement at all levels to support the region’s political, economic and social transformation. In this regard, the EU will continue to support constructive initiatives and structures, which reinforce inclusive regional cooperation. The EU will continue to enhance the region's resilience, contributing to the security of the EU itself. Cooperation and support between the EU and the Western Balkans during the pandemic goes far beyond what any other partner has provided to the region, and deserves public acknowledgement. This should continue in the future, including throughout the recovery phase.

11. The Stabilisation and Association process as well as the Enlargement process, which remains a key policy of the European Union, with their support for reforms and good neighbourly relations, including with EU Member States, 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, and protecting fundamental rights. The EU recalls the importance of achieving tangible results and of implementing in good faith bilateral agreements, including the Prespa Agreement and the Treaty on Good Neighbourly Relations with Bulgaria as part of the enlargement process.
12. Throughout 2020, the EU has focused on addressing the political stability and security factors, and will continue to do so through EU facilitation of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, aiming for a comprehensive legally binding agreement on the **normalisation of relations** which addresses all outstanding issues in accordance with international law and the EU acquis and contributes to regional stability. The EU will continue to deepen cooperation with **Serbia** on foreign and security policy, with a focus on strengthening alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. The EU will continue **its public diplomacy and strategic communication actions** in co-ordination with Member States and Western Balkan authorities and on addressing disinformation.
13. Regarding the **Republic of Albania** and the **Republic of North Macedonia**, acknowledging the progress achieved, the Council decided to open accession negotiations. The first intergovernmental conferences should be convened as soon as possible after the adoption of the negotiating frameworks by the Council in line with the conditions set out in the Council Conclusions of March 2020.

14. The EU continued supporting **Montenegro's** and **Serbia's** reform efforts, particularly in the rule of law area, so that they can both progress faster on their EU accession paths. Facilitating political dialogue and supporting continued reforms in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** should be a key priority. Completing the **Kosovo*** visa liberalisation process will also be under consideration.
15. The EU will continue to strengthen and expand cooperation with Western Balkan partners on foreign policy and security and defence issues including progressive alignment with the EU's foreign policy. This will be done notably through regular EU-Western Balkans political dialogues and capacity-building measures. The EU will continue to promote cooperation on hybrid threats, counter-terrorism, preventing radicalisation and violent extremism, the fight against organised crime, border security, illicit firearms and stockpiles of weapons. The EU appreciates the significant contributions of the Western Balkan partners to CSDP missions and operations around the world. CSDP tools continue to be deployed in the region. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU military operation, EUFOR Althea, will continue to make an important contribution to stability and security. The second Strategic Review of 2019 confirmed the need to focus the Operation on its core mandate to support the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities in their responsibility to maintain a safe and secure environment, and the next review, to be delivered in 2021, will consider possible further adjustments, depending on assessment of developments in the security situation.
16. The EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) in Kosovo will continue to focus on trial monitoring, supporting rule of law institutions, residual operational functions, and technical support to the implementation of EU-facilitated Dialogue agreements.

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

17. To address issues regarding migration and mobility, close coordination and cooperation will need to continue, including on the prevention of illegal migration and secondary movements, protection and assistance to those in need, following up of assistance to improving border management and protection as well as reception capacities, enhancing support in return, in readmission, fighting smuggling and human trafficking networks, signing and implementation of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency status agreements and deployment of EUROPOL liaison officers. The June 2020 JHA Council Conclusions called for continued support to the Western Balkans to achieve a more efficient migration policy and border management, further improve their asylum systems and enhance cooperation on readmission and return, effectively combat organised crime, terrorism and violent extremism, as well as to boost their ability to address the spread of disinformation and fake news and to respond to possible cyber-attacks and hybrid threats.

Turkey

18. Turkey remains a candidate country and a partner in many areas. 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. In its conclusions of 18 June 2019, the Council had noted that Turkey continues to move further away from the European Union, and the 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 modernization of the EU – Turkey Customs Union is foreseen.

19. In 2020, the European Council decided to, provided constructive efforts to stop illegal activities vis-à-vis Greece and Cyprus are sustained, launch a positive political EU-Turkey agenda with a specific emphasis on the modernisation of the Customs Union and trade facilitation, people to people contacts, High level dialogues, continued cooperation on migration issues, in line with the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement. The offer of a positive EU-Turkey agenda remains on the table, provided Turkey shows readiness to promote a genuine partnership with the Union and its Member States and to resolve differences through dialogue and in accordance with international law. Such an agenda could cover the areas of the economy and trade, people to people contacts, High level dialogues and continued cooperation on migration issues. The European Council stresses the importance of keeping channels of communication between the EU and Turkey open. The EU will also be prepared to continue providing financial assistance to Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey and to cooperate on the responsible management of migration flows towards all Member States and on stepping up efforts in the fight against migrant smuggler networks.
20. The EU reaffirms the importance it attaches to relations with Turkey and remains committed to maintaining an open and frank dialogue to address challenges and to cooperate in areas of joint interest including migration, refugee protection, counter terrorism, economy and trade. The EU has a strategic interest in a stable and secure environment in Eastern Mediterranean and in the development of a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with Turkey. Pursuing dialogue in good faith and abstaining from unilateral actions which run counter to the EU interests and violate international law, the sovereignty and the sovereign rights of EU Member States is an absolute requirement in this regard. All differences must be resolved through peaceful dialogue and in accordance with international law.

21. The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated how the EU and its partners can tackle common challenges together. The EU has immediately taken measures in the context of the EU Solidarity Fund, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance and the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, to support Turkey's response. Support to tackle the COVID-19 emergency will continue.
22. Turkey's foreign policy has been increasingly colliding with the EU priorities under the Common Foreign and Security Policy notably on the security of the whole region. The EU values the conduct of comprehensive EU-Turkey dialogues on foreign policy issues, which, once resumed, should contribute to reversing the persistent negative trend of Turkey's non-alignment with the positions of the EU on the Common Foreign and Security Policy. The EU-Turkey counter-terrorism dialogue also remains important. In July 2019, the Council decided not to hold the Association Council and further meetings of the EU-Turkey high level dialogues for the time being.
23. Continued cooperation on migration remains important. Nevertheless, the March 2020 unprecedented situation at the EU external borders with Turkey was not acceptable. While acknowledging the increased migratory burden and risks Turkey is facing on its territory and the substantial efforts it has made in hosting more than 4 million migrants and refugees, the EU reiterated its serious concern over the situation at the Greek-Turkish border and strongly rejected Turkey's use of migratory pressure for political purposes. Furthermore, the EU underlined that migrants should not be encouraged to attempt illegal crossings and called on the Turkish government and all actors and organisations on the ground to relay this message and counter the dissemination of false information.

Turkey should implement fully the provisions of the 2016 Joint Statement with regard to all Member States. This Statement produces tangible results, including by supporting Turkey's significant efforts in hosting migrants and refugees. Reinforced management of the common borders with the EU continues to be a priority. Pending the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement vis-à-vis all Member States, existing bilateral readmission agreements and provisions in similar agreements and arrangements with EU Member States, should be adequately implemented. Cooperation in the area of justice and home affairs with all EU Member States remains essential. Both the EU and Turkey stand to benefit from the continuation of this cooperation and commitment. The EU continued to provide significant humanitarian assistance to vulnerable refugees in Turkey also beyond the Facility for Refugees in Turkey. Following their meeting with the President of Turkey on 9 March 2020, the European Council President and the Commission President tasked the High Representative to, together with his Turkish counterpart, take stock of the implementation of the Statement.

24. While recalling its conclusions of July 2016, which strongly condemned the 15 July 2016 coup attempt and expressed solidarity with the Turkish people and full support for the democratic institutions of Turkey, the EU has repeatedly voiced serious concern about the disproportionate scale and scope of measures taken by the authorities in its aftermath and notes that a number of these measures remain in place. Despite the lifting of the state of emergency, the deeply worrying backsliding continued in the areas of rule of law, democracy 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 journalists, academics, members of political parties, including parliamentarians, human rights defenders, social media users, and others exercising their fundamental rights and freedoms. Forceful dismissals of elected mayors in the southeast and their replacement by government-appointed trustees as well as arrests of local representatives remain a source of great concern. Turkey should also step up its cooperation with the Council of Europe and its relevant bodies and institutions, address their key recommendations and implement all judgements of the European Court of Human Rights in line with Article 46 of the ECHR. The EU recalled the international standards and the obligations to which Turkey has subscribed and committed itself and called on Turkey urgently to reverse these negative trends.
25. The EU expressed regrets over the Turkish decision to change the Hagia Sophia's status as a museum. The Turkish Authorities should reverse their decision which impacts the monument's universal character, acknowledged by UNESCO, as a World Heritage Monument.

26. The EU has recalled and reaffirmed its position as clearly defined by previous relevant Council and European Council conclusions on Turkey's continued illegal activities in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea. The EU has repeatedly stated that it stands in full solidarity with Cyprus and Greece. A framework of restrictive measures in response to Turkey's unauthorized drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean has been put in place. The EU has also condemned the escalation of Turkey's violations of Greek and Cypriot national airspace, including overflights of inhabited areas, and territorial sea, in violation of international law. Concrete steps towards creating an environment conducive to dialogue are essential. Turkish conduct regrettably goes in the opposite direction. The EU continues to closely monitor developments and will revert accordingly and take decisions as appropriate. The EU expects 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 and to normalise its relations with all Member States, including the Republic of Cyprus. The Council, welcoming the invitation by the Government of Cyprus to negotiate with Turkey, has noted that delimitation of exclusive economic zones and continental shelf should be addressed through dialogue and negotiation in good faith, in full respect of international law and in accordance with the principle of good neighbourly relations. Turkey must 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 explore and exploit natural resources, in accordance with EU and international law, including UNCLOS. The Memorandum of Understanding on the delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas between Turkey and the Government of National Accord of Libya in the Mediterranean Sea infringes upon the sovereign rights of third States, does not comply with the Law of the Sea and cannot produce any legal consequences for third States.

27. Turkey should avoid making threats and taking actions that damage good neighbourly relations. It should instead respect the international law, including the law of the sea, and in particular the sovereignty of all EU Member States over their territorial sea as well as all their sovereign rights in their maritime zones, including those generated by islands, as well as refrain from violating the sovereignty of EU Member States over their air space. All members of the international community must abide by these principles and should refrain from any actions undermining regional stability and security.
28. The EU condemns Turkey's unilateral steps in Varosha and calls for full respect of UN Security Council Resolutions 550 and 789. It supports the speedy resumption of negotiations, under the auspices of the UN, and remains fully committed to a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem, within the UN framework and in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and in line with the principles on which the EU is founded. It expects the same of Turkey.
29. The EU has repeatedly called on Turkey in relevant Council conclusions and declarations, including in its conclusions of 18 June 2019 and in its declaration of 21 September 2005, 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. Recognition of all Member States remains essential.

30. The EU and Turkey have a strong interest in an improvement of their relations through a dialogue, which is intended to create an environment of trust. Abstaining from unilateral actions in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Aegean Sea and beyond is a requirement to allow the dialogue to advance. Reversing the existing negative trends remains a fundamental prerequisite for improvement across the range of EU-Turkey relations. The EU remains committed to defending its interests and those of its Member States as well as to upholding regional stability. The European Council had decided that, in case of renewed unilateral actions or provocations in breach of international law, the EU will use all the instruments and the options at its disposal, including in accordance with Article 29 TEU and Article 215 TFEU, in order to defend its interests and those of its Member States. In this respect, the European Council later invited the Council to adopt additional listings based on its Decision of 11 November 2019 concerning restrictive measures in view of Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean and invited the High Representative and the Commission to submit a report on the state of play concerning the EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations and on instruments and options on how to proceed, including on the extension of the scope of the above-mentioned decision.

Eastern Partnership (EaP) - Multilateral

31. Since 2009, reaffirming the joint commitment to building a common area of shared democracy, prosperity and stability, the Eastern Partnership has provided an ambitious, flexible and inclusive framework for cooperation between Member States and Partner Countries jointly to tackle common and global challenges in a wide range of areas. In line with the principles of inclusiveness and differentiation, it has allowed to strengthen and deepen the bilateral and multilateral relations with each of the six Eastern partners (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine).

It has advanced on agreed objectives, supporting sustainable reform processes and offering close political association and economic integration with the EU and tangible impact on people's lives. The "20 deliverables for 2020" agenda agreed at the 2017 Summit has proved to be a useful result-oriented implementation framework, to be kept in the future. The Council reaffirms the strategic importance it attaches to the Eastern Partnership, as a specific regional dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The Council reaffirms the joint commitment to building a common area of shared democracy, prosperity and stability. It is anchored in our shared commitment to a rules based international order, international law, including territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty, as also stated in the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the OSCE Charter of Paris, as well as fundamental values, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals, including rights of persons belonging to minorities, democracy, the rule of law, good governance, and gender equality, as well as in sustainable development and market economy. The Council also highlights that in the current unprecedented situation caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, solidarity and cooperation with international partners, including in the Eastern Partnership is essential. Following a broad and inclusive structured consultation process conducted in 2019, the Joint Communication on the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020: "Reinforcing resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all" was adopted on 18 March 2020. In its Conclusions of 11 May 2020, the Council noted with appreciation the Joint Communication, which identified new challenges and opportunities in the Eastern Partnership region, embracing the twin digital and ecological transformations, and reaffirmed the need for a renewed commitment to the fundamentals of the partnership, in particular good governance and democratic institutions, rule of law, successful anti-corruption policies, fight against organised crime and respect of human rights and security.

Strengthening resilience will be one of the key goals, through five broad policy objectives in line with Commission priorities, as well as addressing the emergence of health as an important area for cooperation in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Launched together with Member States as part as Team Europe, the EU has put forward a support package to help partner countries tackle the crisis, particularly in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on human lives, employment and economies.

32. Strategic communication will remain a key task, in order to promote the visibility and benefits of cooperation between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries, not least in the wake of growing disinformation. In the area of cooperation on foreign policy, security and defence, the EU values the importance of enhancing, where appropriate, security dialogues and the cooperation in the area of CSDP and welcomes in this regard the Eastern partners' (Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine) valuable contribution to CSDP missions and operations and will continue providing regional training programmes in this field.
33. The Eastern Partnership Summit in 2021 is expected to endorse the long-term policy objectives of the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020 based on the Joint Communication, the Council Conclusions adopted on 11 May 2020, and further input of Member States and partner countries.

34. 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 Organization to safeguard the European security order and ensure compliance with the Helsinki Final Act and Paris Charter and other core OSCE principles, especially aiming at finding a sustainable political solution to protracted conflicts and to crises, including the conflict in and around eastern Ukraine. The EU and OSCE will continue to use the framework for cooperation set up by the letters exchanged between the European Commission, the European External Action Service and the OSCE in June 2018, where tangible progress has already been achieved across all OSCE dimensions and geographic areas. Considering the May 2020 high-level VTC exchange, the EU and OSCE will also promote a multilateral approach to address the short and medium term consequences of the COVID-19 crisis also at OSCE countries level, the climate-security nexus and will strengthen existing cooperation. 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.

35. The EU's commitment to the **Black Sea regional cooperation** will be pursued by implementing the 17 June 2019 Council Conclusions, with the Black Sea Synergy as its core element and including Green Deal strands. Furthermore, supporting and implementing the Common Maritime Agenda and the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea, adopted in Bucharest on 21 May 2019, remain essential. Enhancing regional and cross border cooperation, building confidence, boosting multilateralism, supporting civil society, improving connectivity (by developing the "bridging role of the Black Sea basin") and strategic communication will be of utmost importance. These actions will deliver tangible results for the citizens by strengthening the resilience of societies concerned, development of sustainable blue economy and alleviating COVID-19 pandemic impact. The respect for international law, including the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), including freedom of navigation, as well as EU policy decisions and its non-recognition policy on the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol will remain fundamental when applying the EU's approach to regional cooperation in the Black Sea.
36. The EU will continue to support substantially the existing regional cooperation architecture in Northern Europe through the **Northern Dimension (ND)** policy. Funding and participation will continue in the work of ND partnerships, regional councils and through cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes. Links with other EU policies and objectives relevant for the region, such as the EU Arctic policy and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, will be pursued, with a particular focus on people-to-people relations, health, climate change, the environment, and connectivity.

37. The **Arctic** regions continue to draw considerable economic, environmental and security interest globally. The High Representative, together with the Commission, is conducting internal and external consultations regarding a possible update of the EU Arctic policy, taking into account the conclusions adopted by the Council on 9 December 2019. Climate change and increase of temperatures across the Arctic lead to an acceleration of the melting of ice on land and at sea as well as thawing of permafrost. Increased access to resources located in Arctic regions has led to new and major investors' interest. The local, social impact and demographic shifts may be dramatic, though not uniform, across the Arctic. The safety and security implications of increased activity will also require thorough analysis. The EU will continue to increase its visibility inter alia through the Special Envoy for Arctic matters in cooperation with the Commission, Member States, and the European Parliament.

38. The EU reaffirmed its resolute support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognised borders. The EU remains committed to supporting **Ukraine's** reforms as well as to strengthening the political association and economic integration of Ukraine with the EU, in line with the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). The EU recalled the need to ensure the respect for rights already exercised of persons belonging to national minorities as enshrined in UN and Council of Europe conventions and related protocols. As regards the law on state language and the law on education, the EU underlines the need to fully implement the recommendations of the Venice Commission on the law on education. The EU and Ukraine agreed on the need further to cooperate in tackling cyber and hybrid threats. The EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) Ukraine continues the strategic advice and practical support in order to achieve civilian security services that are efficient, accountable, and enjoy the trust of the public. EUAM is enhancing its activities in the southeast of the country, notably through the opening of its field office in Mariupol. The EU reaffirmed its resolute support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognised borders. The EU will remain fully committed to its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures. The EU condemns the ongoing militarisation of illegally annexed Crimea and Sevastopol by Russia and calls for full compliance with international human rights standards there. The EU remains a strong supporter of the negotiating efforts of the Normandy Format, the Trilateral Contact Group and the OSCE with a view to the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements by all sides while underlining the responsibility of the Russian Federation in this regard. Following a Russian presidential decree enabling the simplified issuing of passports in certain areas of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the European Commission and the EEAS issued guidance on how to handle visa applications lodged by residents of these non-government controlled areas of Ukraine.

The EU welcomed the mutual release of prisoners and stands ready to support further implementation of the measures agreed in the Normandy Summit in December 2019. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic should not be allowed to have a negative impact on the conflict resolution efforts. The EU will continue to call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility in this regard and use its considerable influence over the armed formations that it backs to allow unconditioned access to the non-government controlled areas for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) and humanitarian actors.

39. The EU remains fully committed to its 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 remains firm in its support for Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The EU remains fully committed to conflict resolution and its policy of non-recognition and engagement in Georgia, using all instruments at its disposal through an integrated approach, including through the activities of the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia and the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM). The EU also stands ready to support the implementations of Georgia's peace initiative "A Step to a Better Future" that aims at promoting trade exchanges, mobility and education opportunities across dividing lines.

40. The EU also remains committed to its political association and economic integration with the Republic of **Moldova** focused on implementing reforms based on the Association Agreement with a view to delivering tangible benefits to the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. The EU encouraged the Republic of Moldova to continue efforts aimed, as a matter of priority, at consolidating the rule of law, advancing the reform of the judiciary, supporting civil society and the independence of mass-media, promoting steady economic development, fighting corruption and supporting good governance, as well as tackling issues of persons belonging to national minorities. Cooperation with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova will continue to address the socio-economic and other implications of the COVID-19 pandemic in a sustainable manner. The EU also continues to support a comprehensive, peaceful and sustainable settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, within the 5+2 format, based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders with a special status for Transnistria.
41. The EU's engagement with **Armenia** focuses on deepening democratic, social, and economic reforms based on the 2017 Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and on the 2018 Partnership Priorities. At the EU-Armenia Partnership Committee in December 2019, the EU expressed appreciation for the objectives achieved so far under the Roadmap for CEPA implementation adopted by the Armenian government. The EU will continue 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.

42. The EU continues its cooperation with **Azerbaijan** in the framework of the Partnership Priorities of 2018. The conclusion of a new ambitious agreement with Azerbaijan reflecting the current scope of cooperation remains the top priority in our relations. The dialogue in the area of security continued with the second EU-Azerbaijan Security Dialogue that took place in December 2019 in Baku.
43. The EU continues to closely follow the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process and support the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, including through the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia. With respect to the way forward, the EU expects the sides to follow up on the joint statements of the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the Co-Chairs of 30 January and 21 April 2020. The European Union calls for strict observation of the ceasefire, devoting energy and resources to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and meaningful engagement in the Co-Chairs-led negotiations. The EU stands ready to further support civil society confidence-building measures across the conflict divide.

44. The EU continued its relationship with **Belarus** in line with the Council Conclusions of February 2016. The 2019 November Parliamentary elections in Belarus did not meet important international standards for democratic elections, and the EU called on Belarusian authorities to resume work on a comprehensive electoral reform. On 17 February 2020 the Council decided to prolong the remaining restrictive measures against Belarus for one year, until 28 February 2021, due to lack of improvement of the human rights situation in Belarus, including continued application of the death penalty. In line with the EU commitment to support people to people contacts and civil society, on 1 July 2020, the EU-Belarus visa facilitation and readmission agreements entered into force. However, following the clear falsification of 2020 Presidential election results and the subsequent crackdown on peaceful protesters, the EU-Belarus relations seriously deteriorated. The EU sent a strong signal by not recognizing the results and qualifying Alexander Lukashenko's inauguration as lacking any democratic legitimacy and by announcing targeted sanctions against individuals involved in violence, repression and the falsification of election results. The EU stressed its support to the Belarusian population in their desire for democratic change. The EU called on the Belarusian authorities to stop the disproportionate and unacceptable violence against peaceful protesters, to release those detained And to engage in an inclusive national dialogue with broader society, in particular the Coordination Council.

45. Managing the relationship with the Russian Federation during 2020 continues to represent a key strategic challenge for the European Union and was discussed by EU Foreign Ministers at several instances. The EU's policy towards Russia continues to be guided by the five principles as unanimously agreed and reaffirmed by the EU Foreign Ministers on several occasions. The Minsk agreements have so far not been implemented, which would be a key condition for any substantial change in the EU's stance towards Russia. The balanced, effective and comprehensive implementation of the five principles is ensured by a united EU approach.
46. The EU's relations with Russia in 2020 have continued 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, cyber attacks and the poisoning of Alexei Navalny with a nerve agent. 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. The economic measures remain linked to the full implementation of the Minsk agreements.
47. In March 2019, the European Council 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 has continued to take measures 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 counter-intelligence. The EU fully supports UNSC Resolution (UNSCR) 2166 on the downing of flight MH-17 and calls on Russia to accept its responsibility and to cooperate fully with all efforts to establish truth, justice, and accountability. The start of the criminal trial on 9 March 2020 marked an important milestone towards establishing the truth and achieving justice for the victims and their next of kin, and holding those responsible to account for the downing of the flight MH-17.

48. At the same time, within the scope of the five guiding principles, the EU will continue its selective engagement on international crises, global and other issues that are in the interest of the EU. The EU will continue to express its serious concern and take practical steps regarding human rights, the 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 EU will maintain and enhance its support for people-to-people contacts and Russian civil society as an indispensable element of its relations with Russia. The importance of the role of the Council of Europe and the OSCE, as well as the commitments and obligations of all their members, are recalled.

49. The EU strategy on Central Asia adopted in June 2019 guided EU engagement in the region throughout the year. The EU took forward the negotiation of new-generation Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (EPCAs) with Central Asian states, which have provided a strong vehicle to forge more modern and diversified partnerships and promote cooperation and regulatory convergence in areas, which are particularly relevant to the reform processes underway in the region. The EPCA with **Kazakhstan** came into force in March 2020. The EPCA with **Kyrgyzstan** initialled in July 2019 in Bishkek was prepared to allow for signature in the first half of 2021. Significant progress was achieved in the ongoing EPCA negotiations with **Uzbekistan**. Negotiating directives for an EPCA with **Tajikistan** were prepared by the EEAS and DG TRADE. In July 2019, the EU opened a full-fledged Delegation in **Turkmenistan**. The EU actively promoted regional cooperation, in particular in the areas of rule of law and governance, the role of civil society, human rights and gender equality, law enforcement and the fight against transnational crime, incl. countering narcotics, border management, education, water and environment, disaster risk reduction, as well as sustainable connectivity and trade development in the region. The 16th EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting to be held in November 2020 will provide a key opportunity to set out the contribution which the EU can make to post-COVID-19 economic recovery in the region as well as discuss priorities for EU cooperation in the post-2020 budget cycle.

Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

50. To explore ways to reinforce the partnership with our **Southern Neighbourhood**, in this year of the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona process, the European Council will hold a strategic discussion on the Southern Neighbourhood, this region of strategic importance for the EU.
51. The European Union remains committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of **Syria** and to achieving a lasting solution to the Syrian conflict: Only a political solution based on the full implementation of UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué will allow lasting stability and peace. The European Union continues therefore to support the UN-led political process in Geneva. The European Union continues also to support the Global Coalition against Da'esh to stabilise North East Syria and consolidate the military victory against the terrorist organisation and calls upon the regime's allies, notably Russia, to use its influence to ensure that the Syrian regime fully engages in this UNSC-mandated process. In the Council conclusions of October 2019 on North East Syria, the Council condemned Turkey's military action which seriously undermines the stability and the security of the whole region, resulting in more civilians suffering and further displacement and severely hindering access to humanitarian assistance. The Syrian conflict is now in its tenth year and it is still marked by persistent violations and abuses of international law, including abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, by all parties, particularly by the Syrian regime and its allies. The EU and its Member States remain committed to preventing impunity and pursuing justice for violations of international law committed in the Syrian conflict.
52. The European Union considers that the only sustainable solution for Syrian internally displaced persons (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 continues to work with UNHCR to provide support until such conditions are met. The EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis continues to support 1.9m Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons in neighbouring countries, as well as host communities in the region.

53. The European Union and the United Nations co-chaired the fourth Brussels Conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region" on 30 June 2020. The conference reaffirmed the international community's support for UN-led efforts towards achieving sustainable peace in Syria and permitted the reaffirmation of EU policy on sanctions, non-normalisation, and returns. The EU recalled that it will not finance reconstruction in Syria until a political transition is firmly under way. Fifty-two countries and 24 international organisations and agencies participated, together raising a total of €6.9 billion (\$7.7 billion) in response to the crisis. The European Union and its Member States remain the leading donors.
54. The EU will 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. Further progress was achieved in cooperation with both countries on security issues, with the EU contributing to the integrated border management, prevention of violent extremism, counterterrorism, and aviation security. In Lebanon, the EU continued to deliver on its pledge made during the Rome II Conference to support the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces in March 2018. Furthermore, the EU has reacted rapidly to a devastating explosion in Beirut harbour on 4 August 2020. It provided substantial emergency assistance, while supporting calls for the Lebanese Government to urgently undertake financial, economic, and political reforms, which the EU stands ready to support. In June 2019, Jordan signed a Framework Participation Agreement with the EU (first country in the MENA region), based on which it will contribute to EU CSDP missions and operations.

55. **Egypt** remains a key partner on many regional issues such as the Middle East Peace Process, Libya, and the Eastern Mediterranean. At the bilateral level, the EU will continue the implementation of the joint Partnership Priorities with Egypt, in full respect of the provisions of the Association Agreement, including those on human rights and the role of civil society and underlines the importance of preserving the conditionality of EU assistance as set out in the relevant standard human rights clause while continuing the dialogue with Egypt. In September 2019, the EU and Egypt, as co-chairs of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) East Africa Working Group (EAWG), organised a side-event on countering the financing of terrorism in the margins of the GCTF Ministerial in New York.
56. Continuing to draw on the 2018 EU Strategy for **Iraq**, the EU-Iraq Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and the Council Conclusions on Iraq of 15 July 2019, in light of the decision of the extraordinary Foreign Affairs Council of 10 January 2020 to step up engagement with Iraq in support of its sovereignty, the EU is committed to working closely with the new Iraqi Government on the urgently needed reforms; as demanded by domestic mass protests since October 2019, in order to strengthen the country's institutions and to build an inclusive, prosperous and stable Iraq at peace with its neighbours. As in the past, the EU will continue to encourage the Government of Iraq to speed up the implementation of the reconstruction agenda and deliver on its commitments undertaken at the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq in February 2018. In this regard, the EU will continue to support with all the instruments and policies at its disposal the government's efforts, including in fighting corruption, building institutional capacity, improving governance, preparing for early elections scheduled for 6 June 2021, and supporting socio-economic reforms aiming at diversifying the vulnerable oil-dependent economy. The EU will also remain committed to responding to the ongoing and pressing humanitarian needs resulting from years of conflict, widespread internal displacement and disrupted access to social services. Strengthening cooperation on migration, including on readmission, remains an integral part of the EU's comprehensive engagement with Iraq.

57. The EU is contributing to strengthening the rule of law and support of Civilian Security Sector Reform in Iraq, including through the CSDP EU Advisory Mission, EUAM Iraq, with a focus on the implementation of the Iraqi National Security Strategy. For this, the Mission continues to provide strategic advice and expertise to the Iraqi authorities. On 7 April 2020, the Council agreed to extend the mandate of EUAM Iraq for a period of two years until 30 April 2022.
58. 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. The EU continues to work with the Iraqi Authorities to ensure that the EU and its Member States can maintain their efforts to this end, in full respect of Iraqi sovereignty and of the Iraqi Constitution.
59. On a region-to-region level, despite the enduring rift among the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** countries, the EU remained active, inter alia through renewed support efforts for an intra-GCC settlement, notably in support of continued mediation efforts led by Kuwait. A first meeting of the EU-GCC Joint Cooperation Committee took place in June 2020 following a gap of nearly three years, since November 2017.

60. In light of this situation and while pursuing partnership efforts at regional level with the GCC, the EU continued to work in parallel to consolidate its bilateral relations with all GCC countries. In this endeavour, Senior Officials Meetings were held with Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, while the Council authorized the signature of a Cooperation Arrangement between the EEAS and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain. Contacts with this aim were also established with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The **opening of a new EU Delegation in July 2019 in Kuwait**, also responsible for EU relations with Qatar, further reinforced the EU strategic presence in the region.
61. Deepening the EU's dialogue and cooperation with the Gulf countries on global challenges, including in the context of the postponed Dubai EXPO 2020, will remain vital especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Building on the mandate given to the High Representative by the Foreign Affairs Council in January 2020, the EU will also continue to work with all parties to contribute to de-escalation and dialogue efforts in the Gulf region.
62. The EU continued its support for a resumption of UN-led peace negotiations in **Yemen**. In 2019, the EU pursued its diplomatic engagement with the parties to the conflict and other relevant stakeholders. It stepped up its cooperation with the Office of the UN Special Envoy, assisting in promoting confidence-building measures, funding "track II" dialogues, sponsoring peace-building initiatives and rebuilding critical state institutions. This also included continued EU support for the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM). Moreover, the EU worked to ensure that its substantial involvement in areas such as food security, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, and rural development could build on humanitarian interventions.
63. The EU will reinforce the bilateral dialogue with **Oman** in order to support its positive role in seeking peaceful solutions to conflicts in the region.

64. With regard to the **Middle East Peace Process** (MEPP), the EU remains committed to a negotiated and viable two-state solution that takes into account the legitimate aspirations of both the Palestinians and the Israelis, respecting all relevant UN resolutions and internationally agreed parameters, including UNSC Resolutions 1860 and 2334 and previous agreements. 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, that ends the occupation and resolves all final status issues in order to end the conflict.
65. The EU urges both sides to demonstrate, through policies and actions, a genuine commitment to the two-state solution as the only realistic way 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.
66. From the EU's perspective, the initiative put forward by the United States in January 2020 provided an occasion to re-launch the urgently needed efforts towards a negotiated and viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The European Union studied the proposals on the basis of the EU's established position, including the need to respect all relevant UN resolutions and the internationally agreed parameters.

67. The EU also welcomed the announcements on the normalisation of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates in August 2020 and acknowledged the constructive role played by the US in this respect. The EU believes that these developments represent a positive contribution to peace and stability in the Middle East. In the EU's view, a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict requires a regional inclusive approach and engagement with both parties.
68. On the ground, 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 continued in the West Bank, in Jerusalem and in and around Gaza. While recalling Israel's right to defend its legitimate security interests, the EU has stated publicly that it expects the Israeli authorities to meet fully their obligations under International Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) 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.
69. Recalling that settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace, and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible, the EU also reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context. The EU reiterates that any annexations would constitute a serious violation of international law. 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.

70. The EU calls for all parties to take swift steps to produce a fundamental change to the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure and a full opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. Recent rocket fire by militant groups is unacceptable and underlines again the danger of escalation. All stakeholders must commit to non-violence and peace. 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 to support humanitarian access to all donors. UNRWA provides essential aid to vulnerable populations affected by the dire humanitarian situation and 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.
71. 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, it maintains its readiness to redeploy to Rafah, once conditions allow. In April 2020, Member States agreed to an extension of the mandates for both EUBAM Rafah and EUPOL COPPS for one year, until 30 June 2021.

72. 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 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.
73. A stable and prosperous **Maghreb** is a key priority for the EU in view of its proximity to Europe and its bridging position with Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the interdependence in terms of economy/trade, security, and migration.
74. The Joint EU-**Morocco** Political Declaration, endorsed by the Association Council held in June 2019, signalled a renewed dynamic of the long-standing and deep partnership. The EU reaffirms its commitment to build a solid and ambitious partnership with Morocco and will focus on the implementation of the key strategic areas and horizontal axes identified therein for cooperation.
75. The EU, through the deployment of an Electoral Observation Mission (EOM), supported the 2019 Presidential and legislative elections in **Tunisia**, an important step in the democratic transition of the country. The EU intends further to deepen its partnership with Tunisia and will continue to provide a strong support to Tunisia and its Government notably in their reform plan, which the current pandemic has made more urgent and more challenging.

76. Following a year of domestic political change in **Algeria**, the EU will pursue the relaunch of its cooperation with the new President and Government, in view of supporting the Algerian-led process of political and economic reforms, in full respect of the provisions of the Association Agreement.
77. In **Libya**, following the Berlin Conference on Libya in January 2020 endorsed by the subsequent UN Security Council Resolution 2510 (2020), the EU has engaged to support the UN-led Berlin process that aims at restoring peace and stability across Libya. In line with the commitments made by participants to the Berlin Conference, the EU has repeatedly called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and urged all the relevant Libyan parties and international actors to refrain from military action that could further exacerbate the conflict. The EU has also repeatedly called on all the Libyan parties to return to political negotiations under the UN-led 5+5 military talks to agree on a total ceasefire and resume the UN-facilitated intra-Libyan dialogue, paving the way to completing the Libyan transition. The EU has strongly called on all the UN Member States to respect their international obligations and compliance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, in particular respecting and upholding the arms embargo, safeguarding Libya's oil resources and infrastructure, discontinuing the influx of foreign fighters throughout Libya and refraining from destabilising actions that could further deteriorate the already fragile situation in the country. The EU has contributed through concrete actions to the implementation of the Berlin Conference conclusions by launching the new military operation in the Mediterranean Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI, which aims to implement the UN arms embargo, and through the strategic use of sanctions. The EU has also supported various mediation and stabilisation actions through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace.

78. 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 worked together with the LAS also in the framework of the EU-LAS Ministerial meetings and the EU PSC-LAS Permanent Representatives political dialogue to defend the global rules-based order and enhance the cooperation on dealing with international security crises and terrorism, addressing climate change and mass population displacement, as well as ensuring sustainable growth and investment. The strategic dialogue between the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and the European External Action Service discussed the fields of conflict prevention, early warning and crisis management, counter-terrorism, transnational organised crime and migration, non-proliferation and arms control.
79. The EU remains committed to promoting regional cooperation, dialogue, and integration in the framework of the **Union for the Mediterranean**, with the aim of contributing to peace, stability, and prosperity in the Mediterranean region.

Iran

80. In line with the February 2019 Council Conclusions on **Iran**, the EU continues to pursue a balanced, comprehensive policy approach towards Iran. This includes a dialogue that aims at addressing all issues of concern, being 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.

81. The EU remains committed to work towards the full and comprehensive implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. 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 a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture and critical for regional stability and international security. In 2020, the EU will continue its work with Iran, the remaining participants to the JCPOA, and the international community with the aim of preserving the nuclear agreement. Following the withdrawal of the US from the JCPOA in 2018 and the subsequent re-imposition of US sanctions, both of which the EU has strongly regretted, Iran continued to comply with its commitments under the JCPOA for 14 months, as confirmed by consecutive reports of the IAEA. In July 2019, Iran started to reduce gradually the implementation of its commitments. This is of deep concern, and the EU has urged Iran to reverse all measures inconsistent with the JCPOA and to go back to full compliance. Full and prompt cooperation with the IAEA remains crucial. As coordinator of the JCPOA Joint Commission, the High Representative continues to be in close contact with all the JCPOA participants in view of finding a diplomatic way forward and to preserve the JCPOA.

82. The EU continues to implement its commitments under the JCPOA, including in terms of lifting of nuclear-related economic and financial sanctions with the aim of normalising trade and economic relations with Iran. The EU is providing economic operators with comprehensive updated information on EU sanctions lifting under the JCPOA. The EU welcomed the registration of INSTEX SAS (Instrument for Supporting Trade Exchanges) on 31 January 2019 by France, Germany, and the United Kingdom as initial shareholders to support European economic operators engaged in legitimate trade with Iran, in accordance with EU law and with the UN Security Council resolution 2231. The EU equally welcomed the successful completion of INSTEX first transaction in March 2020 and the joining as shareholders of four new European countries (Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway). INSTEX, as private entity, could also be open, at a later stage, to economic operators from third countries.
83. 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 summer 2019 and January 2020, the EU has called upon all parties in the region to use constraint and refrain from actions that could lead to a very dangerous escalation of tensions. The High Representative received a strong mandate from the EU foreign ministers to carry out all necessary diplomatic efforts to contribute to the de-escalation in the region, to support political dialogue, and to promote a political regional solution. As the implementation of the JCPOA has enabled the establishment of a regular EU-Iran High Level Dialogue, the EU and Iran continue to progress on concrete projects of cooperation in a number of areas, including trade, SMEs and the economy, energy, nuclear safety, environment and climate change, migration, refugees and humanitarian issues, education, and research.

84. The EU continues to address the human rights situation in Iran, including urging the Iranian authorities to respect the fundamental human rights of Iranian citizens. During 2019, the European Union and its Member States were particularly dismayed by the authorities' response to protests in Iran that began in November 2019, and which resulted in a statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU. The EU has also continued engaging Iran regarding the situation of detained dual nationals, as well as urging Iran that all prisoners are kept in safe and hygienic conditions. There have also been encouraging developments as regards the significant reduction in drug-related executions in Iran during 2018 and 2019 following the entering into force of a decision in October 2017 to amend Iran's anti-narcotics law.
85. 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, sanctions to address serious human rights violations in Iran are maintained. 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 that are subject to an authorisation regime. EU restrictive measures vis-à-vis Iran include the provisions of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

Africa

86. Relations with African partners are of a high priority for the EU. This year was announced to be pivotal for taking EU-African Union (AU) relations to the next level and establishing a partnership between equals based on mutual interests. While continuing implementing the outcomes of the AU-EU Summit in Abidjan in 2017, proposals have also been made for the rethinking and scaling up of the EU-Africa Partnership, in view of the next EU-AU Summit. In parallel, negotiations on a post-Cotonou Partnership agreement with ACP countries have continued their course.
87. In February 2020, the **10th EU-AU Commission-to-Commission** meeting was held at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, with a part of the meeting chaired by the High Representative and dedicated to peace and security (pillar 3 of the Abidjan declaration) and another one to migration and mobility (pillar 4). In all priority areas, the two sides reiterated their commitment to support multilateralism as an effective modality in addressing global challenges. The meeting was a critical building block of an enhanced partnership.

88. The **Joint Communication** of the Commission and the High Representative “Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa” was adopted on 9 March 2020. The Joint Communication sets out ideas to intensify cooperation with Africa. It proposes a comprehensive framework for future partnership to enable both sides to achieve their common goals and to tackle global challenges. As a response to new, changing realities, the proposal for a strategy introduces a specific focus on five key areas: green transition; digital transformation; sustainable growth and jobs; peace and governance; and migration and mobility. On 30 June **Council Conclusions** reaffirmed that the EU is determined to strengthen its relationship with African states and the African Union and highlighted the importance of working towards a joint strategy based on common objectives, shared interests and common values. The Conclusions also highlighted the EU’s commitment to stepping up an open and inclusive exchange with citizens, civil society, diaspora, young people, the private sector, and top-level thinkers and decision-makers from both continents on their interests and expectations for the future partnership. They reiterated the importance of working with African authorities towards the adoption of joint, ambitious and concrete initiatives that will make the EU-AU Summit a milestone on the path to a deeper and stronger partnership, living up to European and African aspirations. The Conclusions called for a closer partnership with Africa notably on multilateralism, peace, security and stability, sustainable and inclusive development, including a human dimension, and sustainable economic growth. They provide us with a politically endorsed framework and basis for agreeing joint priorities with the African side.
89. On **Peace, Security and Governance**, following the consultations held in the margins of the EU-AU ministerial meeting in January 2019, two high-level meetings have since been organised respectively in Addis Ababa in July 2019 and March 2020. These high level meetings were opportunities to follow up on the shared commitments and steer the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Peace, Security and Governance signed in May 2018.

90. The **African Peace Facility (APF)** remains the main financial tool for implementing AU-EU cooperation in support to peace and has reached a total envelope of more than €3,5 billion since 2004. A new action programme covering the period 2019-2020 was approved by the Council in 2019 and extended until end of June 2021. Under the overall objective of “reducing the incidence, duration and intensity of conflicts in Africa”, the 2019-2021 Action Programme, amounting to €913 million, will allow for a continuation of support to conflict prevention, early response, conflict management, and the operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture, as well as substantial and predictable funding to African-led Peace Support Operations (PSOs) and initiatives. A European Peace Facility is under negotiation in the Council and should also encompass part of the current scope of the African Peace Facility, when established.
91. The 15th **EU-AU Human Rights Dialogue** took place in October 2019 in Banjul, The Gambia. The Dialogue was co-chaired by AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Minata Cessouma Samate and the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Eamon Gilmore. The issues discussed were recent human rights developments in Africa and in Europe; transitional justice, human rights promotion and protection, human rights monitoring and reporting; death penalty, torture and ill treatment; business and human rights; and cooperation on electoral observation as well as follow-up to election observation missions’ recommendations.

92. The negotiations on a new **Post-Cotonou Partnership** agreement started in autumn 2018 and are intended to be finalised as soon as possible. The new agreement will provide the framework for future EU-ACP relations, it will also provide the basis for how the EU and the ACP want to cooperate at international level, based on joint values and the principle of multilateralism. The new agreement will consist of a common EU-ACP foundation with three regional pillars for the (sub-Saharan) African, Caribbean and Pacific region, respectively. The common EU-ACP foundation will spell out the key objectives, values, principles and strategic priorities of this partnership whilst the three regional protocols, which will be the centre of gravity of the agreement, will adjust this relation to regional priorities, interest and integration processes. As defined in the negotiation mandate, it is crucial to ensure coherence between the Post-Cotonou Africa Pillar and the EU-AU partnership. The AU-EU will need to provide political steering for the Africa pillar under Post-Cotonou as well. The term of the current Cotonou agreement has been extended until the end of 2020 in order to give sufficient time for the finalisation of negotiations and the signature of the new agreement.
93. A partnership on **migration and mobility** is proposed as part of the Joint Communication “Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa”, with the goal of addressing mobility and all aspects of migration through a balanced, coherent and comprehensive approach. A key element emphasised is to ensure that migration and mobility is embedded in a balanced manner in the overall partnership at all levels. Strengthened EU-Africa cooperation is needed to tackle the root causes of forced displacement and irregular migration, to enhance protection capacities in the region, to prevent irregular migration, to fight migrant smuggling and human trafficking networks, to facilitate readmission, return and reintegration, to ensure international protection, and, in full respect of national competences, to use legal pathways of migration.

94. On the external aspects of migration, the regional dialogues– the Khartoum and Rabat Processes – completed their consultations and submitted recommendations for updating to their respective steering committees. A joint “Rabat/Khartoum processes” steering committee will endorse the update soon, followed by submission to a larger senior officials meeting, proposed for the first quarter of 2021.
95. Progress is being made on establishing the Continent-to-Continent Migration and Mobility Dialogue (C2CMMD), which will pay particular attention to strengthened political dialogue i.a. on the priorities laid out in the JVAP: (i) development benefits of migration, in particular remittances and diaspora; (ii) legal pathways for migration and mobility; (iii) protection and asylum; (iv) fight against irregular migration, including smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings; (v) return, readmission, and sustainable reintegration; and (vi) research, data and knowledge management. Collaboration on specific actions for political dialogue and cooperation identified within these areas is moving forward between the EU and the AU.
96. At country level, the EU has been active in supporting the implementation of the Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP), and is in the process of updating the JVAP database to ensure diffusion can be made at the beginning of 2021. Attention is being paid in particular to root causes of irregular migration and the challenges of smuggling and trafficking, supporting and working together with countries of origin and transit. The EU has also continued discussions with a number of countries on either establishing or implementing arrangements and agreements on returns and readmission, notably in West Africa and the Horn of Africa.

97. The EEAS, in collaboration with Commission services and the European Investment Bank, continued to undertake **European Economic Diplomacy** (EED) activities across all regions of Africa, and has now held dedicated EED meetings at the political level with over 30 countries, with the members of the Customs Unions EAC and Southern African Customs Union (SACU), including with the private sector and business-related institutions. EED in 2020 will need to accommodate its priorities to the specific characteristics of the economic recovery from COVID-19 and to projecting the economic aspects of the External Dimension of the Green Deal.

West Africa

98. In **West Africa**, in the light of the Council Conclusions of June 2018 and of May 2019 on Sahel/Mali, and in response to the continuous deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel, the EU has further adjusted and operationalised its integrated approach to the region and G5 Sahel. The EU will continue to work towards greater responsibility of G5 Sahel partners, based on reciprocal commitment and increased mobilisation of regional and international actors.

99. The EU has been involved in the preparation and implementation of the Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel (P3S), following the G7 Summit in Biarritz in August 2019 and of the International **Coalition for the Sahel**, following the Summit between France and the G5 Sahel Countries in Pau in January 2020. The high-level meeting organised by the EU with G5 Sahel Heads of States on 28 April 2020 provided a key opportunity to keep the Sahel high in the international agenda and reaffirm EU's support to the region. During the meeting, the EU announced an additional €194 million to support security, stability and resilience in the most vulnerable areas and €449 million to address socio-economic and sanitary impact of COVID-19 on the Sahel region. The discussion and the joint declaration between the members of the European Council and the Heads of States of the G5 Sahel, adopted on this occasion, stated important principles to develop and to capitalise on in the coming months. As a follow up to this meeting, which formally launched the P3S and the Coalition for the Sahel, on 12 June 2020 a ministerial conference on mobilisation brought together foreign ministers and high-ranking representatives from over 40 countries and international organisations. Further impetus was provided during the G5 Sahel Summit organised in Nouakchott on 30 June 2020, which was attended by France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the President of the European Council, the UN, and the AU. The High Representative also announced his intention to review and adjust the EU Sahel Strategy (adopted in 2011) in light of the recent developments.

100. The CSDP action in the Sahel has been further strengthened as a major element of the EU's integrated approach in the region. The regionalisation process of CSDP has increased cooperation and coordination with international actors such as the UN, the AU, ECOWAS, G5 Sahel, and also with EU Member States involved in the region through ongoing initiatives such as the P3S and the coalition for Sahel. The CSDP missions in the Sahel (EUTM Mali, EUCAP Sahel Mali, and EUCAP Sahel Niger) have continued to support Sahelian security forces in the development of their capacities. 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. Following the coup in Mali on 18 August 2020, EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Mali have temporarily suspended some of their activities in support of the Malian security and defence forces. They will resume as soon as conditions allow.
101. The deteriorating security situation in the Sahel, in particular in Burkina Faso, has had spill-over effects in the wider West Africa region, which has resulted in a reinforced engagement of **ECOWAS** on regional security issues. An Extraordinary ECOWAS Summit on Terrorism on 14 September 2019, followed by a Priority Action Plan amounting to USD2.3 billion adopted in December 2019, demonstrate this reinforced engagement. The EU is supporting several priorities of the Plan, notably in the field of exchange of information and intelligence. Support to individual countries neighbouring the Sahel (Ghana, Togo, Benin) in counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation has been mobilised at their request. The EU hosted the joint visit of the Ministers for National Security and Defence of Ghana in October 2019.

102. The period of the report saw a dense **electoral calendar in West Africa**. In Guinea, a highly contested double vote (legislative elections and referendum on a new constitution allowing a third mandate to the current President) took place in early 2020, despite the boycott by the opposition and protests by civil society. The EU expressed its support to ECOWAS and OIF's initiatives to call for a credible and transparent process and called on the political actors to show responsibility in the light of challenges **Guinea** is facing. Serious irregularities were reported, amid casualties, violent incidents and arrests. The EU also supported dialogue in the difficult contexts of the Presidential elections in **Togo** in February 2020, which brought President Faure Gnassingbé's fourth mandate, and Legislative elections in **Mali** in March and April 2020, which took place under difficult security conditions, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.
103. Like other international partners and African stakeholders, the EU has firmly condemned the coup that occurred in Mali on 18 August and has reached out to ECOWAS, the UN and the G5 Sahel to ensure the best possible coordination as the situation remained volatile. The EU supports a civilian-led transition.
104. The EU continued to accompany **Guinea Bissau** in its political transition, notably by supporting the electoral process. Within the P5 Group (AU, ECOWAS, UN, CPLP, EU), the EU supports institutional strengthening and the sustainable development of the country, as well as the ECOWAS-led mediation efforts currently aiming at the appointment of a consensual, constitutional government. A government headed by PM Nuno Nabiam had its governing programme approved by a majority in the National Assembly on 29 June 2020.

105. Diplomatic relations with **Benin** deteriorated in the context of tension building up since the parliamentary elections in April 2019, when the EU, like other members of the international community, pointed out the non-inclusiveness of the elections, leading also to the cancellation of the planned EU Electoral Expert Mission. The Beninese side declared the EU Ambassador persona non grata in November 2019 and the EU reciprocated the measure in December 2019. Following a phone call between the High Representative and the Beninese Minister of Foreign Affairs in March 2020, the EU is now re-engaging with Benin in view of an "Article 8" political dialogue meeting to be held in the autumn 2020 when a new EU Ambassador has been appointed and deployed.
106. The EU is also revisiting its high-level engagement with **Nigeria**, a pivotal country of strategic importance for Africa and the EU and a key partner in the new comprehensive strategy with Africa. The 7th EU-Nigeria Ministerial Dialogue is envisaged for the autumn 2020. Dialogue at ministerial level has not taken place for more than 3 years, due to stalled negotiations on a readmission agreement.
107. Against the backdrop of a fall in incidents, but a rise in kidnappings of seafarers, steady progress has been made in supporting the **regional Yaoundé Architecture to fight crime at sea**, as well as taking the first steps in exploring how the EU might better coordinate the maritime presence of its Member States on the high seas in the region. Of note has been the passing of anti-piracy legislation in Nigeria – a critical state in the anti-piracy struggle – and the training of prosecutors in this area. Following the High Representative’s statement on Coordinated Maritime Presences at the end of August 2019 and the proposal to launch a pilot in the Gulf of Guinea, practical work on an implementation plan has taken place on which the shipping industry will be consulted in the coming months.

108. Council conclusions adopted in December 2019 (Sudan) and April 2020 (South Sudan) reflect the opportunities triggered by the **historic political transition** occurring in the region and the need to pursue peace efforts in the region. On this basis, and building on past engagement, the EU has held informal talks with Foreign Ministers of IGAD member countries in Sudan (February 2020) on regional issues and the Red Sea and organised high level visits to the region in February 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.
109. Since the signature of the power-sharing agreement of the Constitutional Declaration in August 2019, witnessed by the EU, **Sudan** has embarked on a complex 3-year political transition. In line with the Council Conclusions adopted in December 2019, the EU has played an active role in supporting and consolidating the political transition in Sudan and in accompanying the country on its path of political and economic reforms. The EU has been at the forefront of the international Friends of Sudan initiative, with regular meetings bringing together major donors and IFIs since spring 2019, including in Brussels in July. In November, Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok visited Brussels in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council, while the High Representative paid a visit to Sudan in February 2020 reconfirming the EU's strong political and economic support to the ongoing civilian-led transition. The EU co-hosted with Sudan, Germany and the UN a virtual, ministerial-level Sudan Partnership Conference on 25 June 2020, raising \$1.8 billion in support of Sudan's transition and up to \$400 million pre-arrears clearance grant from the World Bank.

110. In the Council Conclusions on **South Sudan** of April 2020, the EU reaffirmed 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, notably the formation of the transition government in February 2020, but many important issues are still delayed due to a political deadlock. The dire humanitarian situation as well as the widespread violations of human rights in the country are of serious concern. The EU is involved in the oversight and monitoring mechanisms of the peace process and keeps supporting political and technical efforts to address roots causes of the conflict.
111. **EU-Ethiopia** relations have intensified with EU high-level visits to Addis Ababa (December 2019 and February 2020) for meetings with President Sahle-Work and Prime Minister Abiy, while the first set of sectoral dialogues within the framework of the EU-Ethiopia Strategic Engagement was finalized in May 2019. The EU stepped up its support to political reforms with a “democratic package” to contribute to the preparation of the next general elections, together with the decision to deploy an Election Observation Mission. In the field of economic reforms, the EU also increased its commitment with the signature of four agreements worth €170 million in December 2019.
112. Following the peace declaration in 2018 between **Eritrea and Ethiopia**, the European Union has started to implement the dual track approach with political dialogue meetings in May and November 2019 and three high level encounters focused on Human Rights in 2019 (May, September) and February 2020. The EU is supportive of peace efforts in the region.

113. The EU has continued strengthening relations with **Kenya** through several contacts at presidential and ministerial level, notably a visit of the High Representative to Nairobi in May 2019, and a succession of visits of Commissioners, who carried coordinated messages on cooperation on bilateral and global issues of common interest, notably security, sustainable development, digitalisation, climate change, and addressing mobility and all aspects of migration. The EU has been supporting President Kenyatta's fight against corruption and following closely the prospects for political reform, notably through the progress of the Building Bridges Initiative. Against the background of continued Al-Shabaab attacks in Kenya, relations with Somalia were further strained by developments around the two countries' maritime border dispute or the discord over the newly elected, Kenya-backed President of the Jubaland federal state in Somalia. The EU worked with Member States to deliver common messages with a view to ease the situation.
114. The EU continued to invest heavily in **Somalia's** state-building through the integrated approach. The Somalia Partnership Forum in October 2019, to which the EU and its Member States actively participated, acknowledged significant progress on economic reform, and some positive developments on the security front despite an evolution of the threat posed notably by Al-Shabaab. It further recognised, however, that concrete delivery on agreed benchmarks under the Mutual Accountability Framework must continue, particularly relating to inclusive politics for the upcoming elections 2020/2021. As a result of the progress of the reform commitments towards economic recovery, the EU has supported Somalia to make further positive progress on economic reforms and to reach HIPC decision point in March 2020, which in turn is expected to have a positive impact on stabilisation.

115. The EU pursued its approach towards both the **AU/AMISOM** and to the Federal Government of Somalia – adopted by PSC in autumn 2018 – linking its financial support to the compliance with benchmarks stemming from the UNSC mandate for AMISOM and the road map of priorities to be delivered by Somalia as agreed at the “Article 8” Political Dialogue (March 2019). While AMISOM’s continuous transformation/draw-down remains a critical part of a successful transition of the national security to the Somali security forces, the latter’s build-up needs acceleration. Thus, in late 2019, the EU mobilised €20 million for a complementary package of non-lethal equipment for Somali security forces working alongside AMISOM. The EU keeps supporting a close coordination between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States (FMS) as well as with international partners, paramount to foster a longer-term security set-up for Somalia, as the country continues its transition to take the lead over its security.
116. The EU continued to provide capacity-building support to Somali security forces through its CSDP missions: EUTM Somalia has been providing advice, mentoring and training to the Somali National Army (SNA); EUCAP Somalia continued advising on the development of Coast Guard and maritime policing functions, complemented with support to broader police development. The Missions have also been advising the SNA and Somali Police Force in support of ongoing transition security operations in Lower Shabelle; EU maritime operation ATALANTA has been instrumental in suppressing and deterring piracy off the coast of Somalia. The EU’s CSDP engagement remains relevant to both build up the capacities of Somali security forces for a smooth transition from AMISOM to Somali security responsibilities, and to suppress and deter piracy and enhance maritime security in the Horn of Africa, an area crucial for the EU’s interests. The 2020 holistic Strategic Review of three CSDP actions, launched at the end of 2019, provides an opportunity for the Member States to re-assess and re-adjust the CSDP engagement in Somalia/Horn of Africa, ensuring the implementation of the integrated approach.

117. Following the declaration of the High Representative on behalf of the EU of November 2018, the EU carried out and concluded a review of its bilateral relations with Tanzania. Formal diplomatic relations have been fully restored but full-fledged political dialogue has not yet resumed.

Central Africa

118. In the **Great Lakes region**, the political transition in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** enabled the EU to re-engage with the authorities and to reflect on/launch additional actions in particular to support the reform agenda announced by the Congolese government, as well as the stabilisation of the country as stated in the Council conclusions of December 2019. The deterioration of the security situation in Eastern DRC will require a close monitoring, including with the view to potential EU support to the stabilisation process in the region, taking into account the dynamics in the broader Great Lakes region. In **Burundi**, the presidential, legislative and local elections in May 2020 dominated the agenda and might lead to redefining the relations between the EU and Burundi.

119. In the **Central African Republic** the EU continued to be actively engaged, mobilizing all its instruments, in close coordination with regional and international partners, in supporting the implementation of the Political Peace and Reconciliation Agreement as well as the democratization and stabilisation process. The preparation of the December 2020 elections, benefiting from an important EU financial support, will require a close monitoring by the EU in a context of growing political tensions. On the CSDP side, the EU CSDP Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) further demonstrated 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. The Council States decided to extend EUTM for another two years. At the request of the CAR authorities, the EU has also reinforced its presence and support to the CAR internal security forces with the launch of the EU civilian CSDP Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUAM RCA). In **Cameroon**, the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions further continued, despite some facilitations attempts and the organisation of a National Dialogue. The EU will continue to promote dialogue as the best way to identify sustainable solutions to the crisis.
120. The situation in the **Lake Chad Basin** region further deteriorated, with a reported increase of human rights violations. This situation will require close monitoring and careful approach by the EU, in coordination with its international and regional partners.
121. In the region, the EU will continue to work together with regional and international partners on democratic consolidation and governance, promotion and protection of the rule of law and human rights in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Gabon or Chad.

122. In the **Southern Africa and Indian Ocean** region, the signing of the peace agreement between the **Government of Mozambique and RENAMO** in Maputo in August 2019, in the presence of the High Representative, was an important political milestone. This event, which followed a cessation of hostilities agreement, allowed the EU to join regional and international partners in demonstrating political support to a historic step forward in resolving a conflict that has devastated Mozambique and held back its development since the late 1970s. The Maputo Agreement was also an opportunity for the EU to underline its support for critical actions and reforms needed to support the effective implementation of the Agreement. At the invitation of Mozambique, the EU sent an Electoral Observation Mission to the October elections.
123. Council conclusions adopted in April 2020 called for dialogue in Mozambique and for urgent action from the authorities as regards the concerning developing insurgency centred on **Cabo Delgado** province. Following Mozambican request for EU support to the High Representative, the EU has replied positively and remains open to discuss with the Mozambican Government any possible forms of support going forward. The EU will continue to offer its support to Mozambique and encourage efforts to improve intelligence and operational cooperation with neighbouring countries, to tackle effectively the insurgence with full respect for the rule of law, and to research and address the root causes.
124. In November 2019, the EU held senior-level consultations on political, security, and human rights issues with **South Africa**, within the framework of the EU-South Africa strategic partnership. The two meetings – Political and Security Dialogue Forum and Human Rights Dialogue – allowed for in-depth exchange of views with the objective of identifying possible areas for closer coordination in view of the EU-South Africa Ministerial meeting on 14 July 2020, as well as in the context of South Africa’s non-permanent UNSC membership and 2020 chairmanship of the African Union. Both sides showed interest to cooperate closely on preventive diplomacy, mediation and post-conflict development of political processes, as well as to continue to work closely at multilateral level. As regards human rights, cooperation in the area of women’s empowerment/gender equality in the run up to the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 20th Anniversary of UNSCR 1325 was identified as the most promising area for coordinated action in 2020.

125. The EU stood ready to support the transition in **Zimbabwe**, but the government did not seize the opportunity to implement the reforms needed to turn the economy around and to restore confidence in the political system. Council Conclusions adopted in February 2020 underlined EU substantial support to Zimbabweans to address the unfolding humanitarian crisis and called on the government to accelerate the implementation of reforms and to uphold human rights, democracy, governance and the rule of law in compliance with Zimbabwe's constitution.
126. In October 2019, the EU held a Senior Officials' Meeting with **SADC**, chaired by Tanzania, in Brussels. This allowed a review of political and security priorities in the region, with the EU expressing its concern over the need for political and reform progress in Lesotho, in DRC, Zimbabwe and Comoros. Both sides were also able to reiterate their strong commitment to making a success of the Maputo Peace Agreement in Mozambique. Political transition in Lesotho was achieved in 2020.
127. In 2020, the EU and **Angola** have taken further steps in jointly addressing regional challenges and deepening relations between the EU and Angola, especially in the economic and trade fields. There is an ongoing scoping exercise on the accession of Angola to the EU-SADC EPA and on a possible Investment Facilitation Agreement between Angola and the EU. Both sides agreed to explore the possibility of establishing a partnership in the area of security and defence, including maritime security.

Asia-Pacific

128. The EU adopted a more realistic, robust and multifaceted approach towards China . In light of the shifting global political and strategic environment due to the impact of COVID-19 and China's growing influence and assertiveness, we have continued developing this approach further in the past few months. Our objectives include building a more balanced relationship with China and increasing reciprocity across all sectors. The July 2016 EU Strategy and Council conclusions, as well as the Joint Communication from 2019, provide the guiding policy framework for the EU's engagement with China.
129. China remains a fundamental trade and economic partner for the EU, as well as an indispensable partner at global level. Following the successful EU-China Summit in April 2019, progress has been made on a number of issues: aviation agreements signed in May, Geographical Indications Agreement initialled in November 2019, China's revised WTO Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) offer, but more efforts are needed from China to implement the Summit commitments. The EU also seeks an ambitious outcome in the negotiations on a bilateral agreement on investment. In terms of multilateral issues, China remains an important cooperation partner on global challenges such as climate change, Paris Agreement implementation, and sustainable development goals, whereas the EU-China Dialogue on Drugs will be launched as soon as the Covid-19 pandemic permits. There was an acceleration of EU-China discussions on foreign policy in 2019, although concrete cooperation, except on Iran/Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), remained limited. At the same time, as stated in the Joint Communication by the High Representative and the Commission of March 2019, China remains simultaneously, in different policy areas, a cooperation partner with whom the EU has closely aligned interests, a negotiating partner with whom the EU needs to find a balance of interests, an economic competitor, as seen from its pursuit of technological leadership, and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance.

130. The bilateral agenda this year includes the EU-China Summit on 22 June 2020 (VTC) and an EU Leaders' meeting with President Xi Jinping. The EU-China Leaders' Meeting, originally envisioned to take place during the German Council presidency, is planned for spring 2021 in Brussels. The EU aims to address at these meetings key bilateral issues and to progress in the implementation of past commitments such as improving bilateral market access, the signature of the Agreement on Geographical Indications, and agreeing a new EU-China Strategic Agenda for Cooperation 2025. Climate change, cooperation on and with Africa, as well as regional security challenges should also be discussed. Human rights, especially the situation of human rights defenders and Xinjiang, and the situation in Hong Kong were raised during the Summit VTC and remain high on the EU agenda.
131. The EU maintains its "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. In this regard, the EU expressed its grave concern regarding China's adoption on 30 June 2020 of a national security law on Hong Kong, which is not in conformity with its international commitments (Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984) and the Hong Kong Basic Law. It adopted a set of measures through Council conclusions in July 2020.
132. While maintaining its "One China" policy, the EU continues to develop its relations and further cooperation with Taiwan, supporting its system of governance based on shared values. The EU closely follows cross-Strait developments as part of the peaceful development of the Asia-Pacific region.
133. 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 SMEs for the diversification of the economy. The newly opened European Cooperation Chamber of Commerce and Industry (8 November 2019) is supporting the efforts of the EU Delegation in Ulaanbaatar to enhance European investment in and trade with Mongolia.

134. The EU will continue to deepen its relations with its strategic partners, **Japan** and the **Republic of Korea** (ROK). Leaders' meetings focusing on the COVID-19 response took place with Japan and ROK in May and June 2020 respectively. The EU remains fully committed to implementing its Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Japan, as well as the EU-ROK Framework Agreement and Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The coordination of sector policy dialogues between the EU and Japan takes place through the SPA's Joint Committee in areas such as security and defence and connectivity, where the EU has established a partnership with Japan on cooperation in third countries.
135. The important security challenges of Japan and ROK have direct and indirect implications for the EU. In 2020, the EU will continue its dialogues and strengthen practical cooperation on security-related issues with both Japan and ROK. The European Commission received a mandate to start negotiations with Japan of an Agreement between the European Union and Japan for the transfer and use of Passenger Name Record (PNR) data to prevent and combat terrorism and other serious transnational crime.
136. The EU-ROK Framework Participation Agreement allows for Korean participation in CSDP missions and 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 ATALANTA. In line with the Council Conclusions, the EU's pilot project on security cooperation in and with Asia will also see project activities developed with both countries in the areas of crisis management, cyber security, maritime security and counterterrorism. EU will continue to encourage an increased involvement of ROK in CSDP missions and operations.

137. In relation to the Korean Peninsula, the EU will continue to closely monitor developments 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, cyber attacks and human rights. At the same time, the EU will contribute to enhancing the implementation of the current DPRK sanctions regime.
138. Relations with the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** continued to advance following the biennial EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Brussels in 2019. Work continues to operationalise the ministerial agreement in principle to establish an EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership. Meanwhile, the EU has given additional priority to key areas of cooperation with ASEAN from cybersecurity to connectivity. The EU will continue to seek to further its engagement with the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting structures. The EU aims to extend its co-chairing roles of the ASEAN Regional Forum inter-sessional meetings responsible for maritime security and counterterrorism, subject to ARF agreement, once face-to-face engagement in the ARF structures is again possible. We continue to promote enhanced involvement by ASEAN member states in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy activities. The EU will continue to support efforts in strengthening connectivity between ASEAN and the EU, based on economic, fiscal, environmental sustainability, market mechanisms and agreed international rules, norms and standards. The EU will continue efforts to establish the agreed working group between the EU and relevant ASEAN member states to address issues relating to palm oil. The EU continues to welcome the role played by **Singapore** as coordinator for ASEAN relations until summer 2021, including by hosting the EU-ASEAN Ministerial meeting in 2020. Following the EU-ASEAN Ministerial videoconference on COVID-19 in March 2020, both sides will work together with the WHO and the broader international community to strengthen cooperation and mitigate the adverse public health, economic and social impact of the pandemic.

139. With **Myanmar** the EU will continue its balanced approach of constructive engagement with the government, supporting the country's transition to a full civilian system, by its zero-quota zero-tariff "Everything But Arms" (EBA) market access arrangement for Myanmar's products, by promoting an ambitious development agenda, and by supporting the country's peace and democratisation process, while maintaining political pressure and targeted restrictive measures with a view to promote accountability for the perpetrators of gross human rights violations. The EU also engaged with the Myanmar authorities to create conditions for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees (in particular the Rohingya), notably by implementing the recommendations of the Annan Commission for Rakhine State and through its enhanced engagement on the EBA, aiming to accelerate human and labour rights reforms. In April 2020, the EU renewed its enhanced arms embargo and targeted sanctions until 30 April 2021.
140. The Framework Participation Agreement (FPA) with **Vietnam** entered into force on 1 May 2020, making Vietnam the second partner country in Asia to sign such an FPA with the EU, after the Republic of Korea, and the first in ASEAN. Governing the participation of Vietnam in EU-led civilian and military crisis management operations, this agreement is a significant step forward in implementing the Council Conclusions on enhanced EU security cooperation in and with Asia and demonstrates both parties' commitment to a rules-based multilateral approach to international peace and security, and to effectively implementing their defence and security cooperation partnership. The EU and Vietnam are now working together to establish Vietnam's first contribution to a CSDP mission. Pilot cooperation projects in crisis management, maritime security, cyber security and counterterrorism will be developed. This 14th year of EU-Vietnamese relations also saw on 1 August 2020 the entry into force of the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement.

141. The EU will continue to give priority to relations with **Indonesia** and to harness further opportunities for a closer partnership on promoting multilateralism with the country, notably during its (and Vietnam's) membership of the UN Security Council. A key priority with both countries in 2020 is also the implementation of pilot cooperation projects to advance shared security interests including in the areas of maritime security, cybersecurity, and counterterrorism.
142. The EU will continue to take steps towards broadening its engagement with **Thailand**, following the Conclusions adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) in October 2019, in which it underlined the appropriateness of taking such steps, including on issues of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic pluralism, by preparing for the timely signature of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA).
143. In 2019, discussions continued on the PCA with **Malaysia**, following the formation of a new government. We aim to sign the PCA by the end of 2020. The EU is also advancing implementation of the PCA with the **Philippines**, notably with the convening of the first meeting of its Joint Committee in January 2020. The EU looks forward to the role of the Philippines as the coordinator for ASEAN relations as of the summer 2021.
144. Due to the serious deterioration of democracy and human rights in **Cambodia**, the Commission launched, in February 2019, the procedure for a temporary withdrawal of the trade preferences granted to Cambodia under the "Everything But Arms" scheme. A decision on such a partial withdrawal was taken by the Commission on 12 February 2020 and took effect on 12 August 2020. The EU will continue to monitor the situation closely.

145. As regards **South Asia**, the EU has started implementing 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. In line with the Council Conclusions on enhanced EU security cooperation in and with Asia, practical cooperation on security-related issues continued to be reinforced in particular in the areas of counter-terrorism, radicalisation, cyber security, hybrid threats, maritime security, non-proliferation, and disarmament. Project activities in the framework of the pilot project will take place in a number of these areas. Military-to-military exchanges will build on the positive experiences of 2019 including the port visit of a French destroyer to Mumbai in January 2019, which was supported by the EU, and continue to develop as areas of common interest in the Indian Ocean. The EU-India Summit took place on 15 July 2020. Leaders adopted a joint statement affirming their commitment to strengthen the EU-India strategic partnership, the EU-India Roadmap 2025, as well as a joint declaration on resource efficiency and circular economy. The EU will pursue regular exchanges and coordination, particularly on Iran/JCPOA, Afghanistan, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The EU will continue to work with **Sri Lanka** to promote democracy, human rights, accountability and reconciliation as well as counter-terrorism and maritime security. In the **Maldives**, cooperation with the EU covers counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism. The political dialogue with the new government also focuses on good governance, judicial reform and climate change. **Bangladesh** is by far the biggest beneficiary of the EU GSP "Everything But Arms" preferential trade regime, which provides duty-free, quota-free access to the EU market for its exports (worth approximately €18 billion per year). The EU continued its EBA enhanced engagement with Bangladesh, aiming to accelerate human and labour rights reforms in Bangladesh.

146. In 2019, two years passed since the massive influx of approximately 750,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh. The Rohingya crisis became a mid- to long-term challenge, requiring funding and support for health services, justice, and education in the world's most populous refugee camp in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh (approximately 1 million inhabitants). The EU and its Member States were the second biggest contributors to the UN Joint Response Plan in 2019, providing humanitarian and development support to the Rohingya and the host communities in Bangladesh. The EU worked to keep the crisis on the international agenda and to create the conditions for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees, including at the UN (42nd session of the Human Rights Council, 74th UNGA).
147. 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) continue to provide the political framework of the EU's relations with Afghanistan. Throughout 2019, the EU worked to promote peace and stability, by supporting the preliminary steps of the upcoming peace process. The EU also became the main political and technical international supporter of the September 2019 Presidential Elections. This parallel track of promoting peace while defending the democratic institutions and fundamental values of all Afghan citizens, which was endorsed by the Foreign Affairs Council on 8 April 2019, will carry on in 2020, under the political guidance of the High Representative and new Council Conclusions adopted in May 2020. In 2020 the EU will take initiatives to ensure international donors speak with one voice when it comes to defending the gains of the last 19 years in Afghanistan (in particular fundamental rights of women and persons belonging to minorities), in the peace negotiations. The EU will support the preparations of the 2020 Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan, scheduled for November 2020 in Geneva. 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. Without genuine commitment on effectively enhancing governance, strengthening institutions and combating corruption, EU support will be reconsidered. In addition to the political support to the start of a peace process, the EU is helping to reinforce Afghanistan's battle against corruption and its capacity to better tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and to address its socio-economic impact, with over €117 million of assistance.

148. EU-**Pakistan** relations continued to develop in 2020. In June, the third round of EU-Pakistan Staff Talks took place in Brussels with discussions on policy developments and cooperation in areas such as security and defence, maritime security and border management. The main priority for 2020 is the holding of the first ever EU-Pakistan Security Dialogue, established by the EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP) signed in June 2019 by then High Representative Mogherini and Foreign Minister Qureshi.
149. The conclusion of a new post-Cotonou agreement with a dedicated pillar on EU-Pacific relations will continue to raise the profile and presence of the EU in the **Pacific**. 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. In this context, one Australian advisor joined the EU Advisory Mission in Iraq in June 2019 to support security sector reform in this country. The European Commission received a mandate for opening negotiations with New Zealand on an agreement between the European Union and New Zealand on the exchange of personal data between the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL) and the New Zealand authorities competent for fighting serious crime and terrorism-
150. The EU continued to implement the 2018 **Joint Communication on Connecting Europe and Asia** and the related Council Conclusions. 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. It could play an important role in support of the restoration and promotion of regional connectivity in many parts of Asia, disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In September 2019, the EU and Japan launched a Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure.

151. The EU will continue to promote actions aimed at enhancing **security cooperation** in and with Asia following the adoption of Council Conclusions by the Foreign Affairs Council in May 2018. Pilot security cooperation partnerships are being developed with selected Asian countries in the priority areas of counter-terrorism, cyber-security, maritime security, and crisis management.
152. The 14th **ASEM** (Asia-Europe) Foreign Ministers' Meeting took place in Madrid on 15-16 December 2019. The Ministers dealt with a number of wide ranging common global challenges, such as improving the effectiveness of multilateralism and the rules-based international order, climate change, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Asia-Europe connectivity, as well as a focus on the most pressing foreign policy issues of the day.
153. The 13th ASEM summit at Heads of Government level, originally to be held in Phnom Penh in November 2020, has been delayed into 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In September 2020, the Cambodian Chair and the four ASEM13 regional coordinators (EU, Germany, Singapore, Russia) issued a statement on policies and actions being taken by ASEM partners to tackle COVID-19.

Americas

154. The transatlantic relationship with the **United States of America** remains a cornerstone of the EU's foreign and security policy. As underlined in the first visit of High Representative Borrell to Washington, on 6-7 February 2020, the EU remains fully committed to the transatlantic partnership, stands firmly behind the rules-based international order, and is ready to continue working with present and future US governments in addressing the key global challenges of our times.
155. The Foreign Affairs Council videoconference of Foreign Ministers with the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, on 15 June 2020, gave rise to a positive and encouraging discussion pointing to a number of converging assessments that could be a basis for further cooperation. Looking ahead, the key areas to follow-up include: (i) the EU-US dialogue on China and its role on the world stage; (ii) continued good contacts on the Eastern Neighbourhood; (iii) US engagement with Russia to discuss strategic security issues; and (iv) converging views on Libya.
156. Over the reporting period, the EU has taken forward its cooperation with the US administration and Congress on countries and regions of interest, including Russia/Ukraine, China, DPRK, Western Balkans, Africa, Syria, Libya, and the Middle East.
157. Security and defence remains a top priority, and the EU continues to engage with the US on counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, disarmament and arms export control, tackling disinformation and hybrid threats, advancing security at home, and projecting security globally. The EU will continue advocating for a dedicated EU-US security and defence dialogue.

158. The EU will also strive to find cooperative solutions with the US in addressing global developments, including COVID-19, innovation, trade, digital technologies including artificial intelligence, cyber security, climate change and renewable energy. The launch of new people-to-people initiatives, such as for instance expanding visits and exchanges across the Atlantic, will support the overarching goal of keeping the partnership strong and deeply rooted.
159. Following provisional application of the EU-**Canada** Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), the 17th EU-Canada Summit took place in Montreal in July 2019. This gave impetus to comprehensive cooperation, spanning the promotion of shared values, climate policies, digital innovation including AI, Women Peace and Security, as well as cooperation on hybrid threats.
160. Canada is a close strategic partner of the EU and an essential ally for the EU in promoting political priorities relating to climate change, the digital agenda, the global trading system and making the economy work for all. A shared commitment to rules-based international order, human rights and democracy is at the core of the relationship, underpinning cooperation on priorities such as Russia, Ukraine, China, Syria, Iraq, Iran, DPRK, Mali, and Venezuela.
161. Canadian contributions to CSDP Missions (EUPOL COPPS, EUAM Ukraine, EUCAP Sahel Mali), as well as the annual security and defence dialogue and the EU Security and Defence symposia in Ottawa, constitute important elements of our strategic partnership.

162. The EU and Canada plan regular meetings, with conversations between Prime Minister Trudeau, President of the European Commission von der Leyen, and President of the European Council Michel. After the ministerial meeting on 8 September, a full Joint Ministerial Committee and Leaders' Summit is planned for 2021, once conditions allow.
163. Across the **Caribbean**, the new post-Cotonou framework, currently under negotiation, will provide an important 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.
164. The EU-**Cuba** Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) continued implementation in 2019, including through several high-level meetings and formal dialogues. Sectoral dialogues were launched on the environment, climate change, and energy. In 2020, efforts continue to support political and economic reforms, including for democracy and human rights, through the next phase of cooperation.
165. There was no formal political dialogue with **Haiti** in 2019, due to the very serious political, social, and economic crisis. Nonetheless, the EU continues to work with the authorities on the necessary reforms. At the same time, the EU supports civil society and continues to encourage a frank and inclusive national dialogue.
166. High-level engagement with Mexico was particularly intense at the end of 2019 and continued throughout 2020: the Joint Committee meeting of the agreement and preparation for the annual high-level political dialogue focused, among other issues, on strengthening the strategic partnership. The EU is committed to complete the modernisation of the EU-Mexico Global Agreement and to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date framework for our relations. The High Level Dialogue on Human Rights was held in July 2020. A High-Level Dialogue on Climate Change, the High Level Dialogue on Justice and Security, the Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committee meeting, and a High Level Political Dialogue are scheduled in the autumn 2020.

167. The EU continued to enhance cooperation and intensify relations with **Central America** under the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA), hosting the 3rd Joint Committee in June 2020. The trade pillar of the EU-Central America Association Agreement is already being provisionally applied, pending full ratification.
168. The EU continued its principled policy towards **Nicaragua**, adopted since the ongoing political crisis began in April 2018. Given the continuation of repression and the lack of progress on reforms, in October 2019 the EU adopted a framework for restrictive measures, leading to subsequent assets freeze and travel bans for six individuals in spring 2020. The EU will continue to monitor the political, social and security situation.
169. In **Honduras**, the EU deployed an electoral follow-up mission to assess progress on the recommendations made by the 2017 EU Electoral Observation Mission. In line with those recommendations, the EU has been providing support for the modernisation of the Civil Registry, an institution that will play a key role in the new electoral cycle in 2021. The EU followed the unsuccessful negotiations for renewal of the Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH).
170. In **El Salvador**, the EU deployed an electoral follow-up mission to assess progress on the recommendations made by the 2018 (legislative and municipal elections) and 2019 (Presidential elections) Electoral Observation Missions. Continued monitoring and follow-up of these recommendations will be important in the run-up towards the legislative and municipal elections in 2021.

171. The EU maintained its consistent policy towards the crisis in **Venezuela**. This combined creating space for a democratic, political solution with calibrated pressure through the adoption of restrictive measures against persons responsible for human rights violations and/or for undermining the rule of law. Through the International Contact Group and the Special Adviser on Venezuela, the EU sought to mobilise the international community in support of an agreed path to find a peaceful solution for the political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and to hold free and fair presidential and legislative elections. On 28-29 October 2019, the EU organised an International Solidarity Conference on the Venezuelan migration and refugee crisis, together with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). On 26 May 2020, the EU and the Spanish Government convened the International Donors' Conference with the support of the UNHCR and the IOM.
172. The EU strengthened its close, long-standing ties with Colombia, building on its political and financial support to the implementation of the peace agreement with the FARC, in particular through the work of Special Envoy Eamon Gilmore and the EU Trust Fund. The Special Envoy visited Colombia in February and – also in his capacity as EUSR for Human Rights – subsequently held frequent (virtual) meetings with key stakeholder throughout the period also to discuss the increasing violence in the country. This was also a key issue on the agenda of the annual EU-Colombia Human Rights Dialogue on 30 July 2020 (held in virtual format), co-chaired by the EUSR. The EU has also been looking at ways to strengthen new areas corresponding to common priorities, such as the fight against climate change and illicit drugs (two ad hoc consultations were held in December 2019 and May 2020), with the perspective of establishing a dedicated bilateral political framework. The entry into force of the Framework Participation Agreement on 1 March 2020 represented a milestone in the establishment of closer security and defence ties.

173. The EU's relationship with Brazil continued to be driven by enhancing the Strategic Partnership, seeking to define joint responses to global challenges and advance dialogue and cooperation in areas of mutual interest at bilateral, regional, and multilateral level.
174. The EU continued to work closely with **Argentina** on a bilateral basis and in international fora. As a member of MERCOSUR, the relation of the EU with Argentina could also, subject to final approval by the EU and its member states, widely benefit from the new EU-Mercosur Association Agreement.
175. Relations with **Peru** continued to develop through dialogue on issues of common interest. An EU election mission observed the 26 January 2020 early parliamentary elections in Peru, the first ones to be held separately from the presidential elections.
176. In **Bolivia**, the EU (with the UN and Spain), under the lead of the Bishop's conference, played an important role in mediation, following the annulled elections of 20 October 2019. This led to an agreement on new elections in 2020 and to the selection of new Electoral Court Judges based on a compromise between relevant actors. The EU will continue to support the electoral process and will send a reinforced Electoral Expert Mission for the 18 October General Elections.
177. From October 2019, **Chile** experienced unprecedented public unrest due to socio-economic grievances. The EU demonstrated its support for Chile, while inviting to respect human rights under all circumstances. Throughout this period, the EU continued to support Chile in its efforts to build a stronger and more inclusive country. Negotiations for a modernised Association Agreement, which started in 2017, continued.

178. Following agreement in principle, on 28 June 2019, on the trade part of the EU-MERCOSUR Association Agreement, negotiations concluded on the Political Dialogue and Cooperation pillar on 19 May 2020. Subject to final approval by the EU and its member states, the agreement could constitute the basis for 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.
179. The EU has revitalised its relations with the **OAS**, including through a high-level Political Dialogue on 12 December 2019 in Washington DC. This confirmed broad alignment in areas where the EU and the OAS work together: human rights, democracy (electoral observation), good governance (fight against corruption), and citizen security. The EU confirmed its support for the Inter-American Human Rights system, including through its financial support for the work of the Commission and the Court.
180. The EU welcomed Mexico's taking on the Presidency of **CELAC** for 2020. Following the inauguration, bringing together ministers from across the Caribbean and Latin America in Mexico City, contacts are ongoing about renewing EU political dialogue with the region as a whole.
181. On 25 September 2019, the EU and the countries of the **Pacific Alliance** (Colombia, Peru, Mexico and Chile) signed a Joint Declaration at Ministerial level. This confirmed interest on both sides in deepening ties in areas of common interest, as well as strengthening political dialogue, regional cooperation, and developing mutually beneficial activities.

(C) GLOBAL ISSUES

182. Despite being hit hard by the **COVID-19** pandemic, the EU has promptly put in place several initiatives to counter the worst immediate disruptions caused by the spread of the virus, to protect its citizens and interests around the world, fruitfully cooperating with partners in order to provide support to those worst hit. In Europe, the EU has been cooperating with the UK during the first months of 2020 on external aspects of COVID-19 crisis management, such as consular coordination on repatriation of citizens, in full respect of the provisions of the Withdrawal Agreement. To support the Western Balkans to address immediate needs and the socio-economic impact, the EU swiftly mobilised a package of over €3.3 billion and included them in some of its own response mechanisms.
183. In the Middle East, Iran has been one of the worst affected countries in the region by the COVID-19 virus. Responding to the grave humanitarian situation in the country, the EU provided timely and substantial support, including protective gear, medicines, and testing material. The European Union is particularly concerned about the possible implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on Syria's socio-economic situation. The pandemic has further aggravated the conditions of millions of IDPs and negatively affected the already vulnerable population, namely women, children, and the elderly. The EU has echoed the UN Special Envoy for Syria's call for a nation-wide ceasefire and release of detainees, to support the measures taken to counter the pandemic and to protect the already struggling population. As part of the efforts in the global fight against the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the European Union has recalled that its sanctions in place regarding Syria are designed to avoid impeding the supply of humanitarian assistance. The EU will continue to make sure that life-saving equipment reaches those in need in Syria. Member States can make use of existing humanitarian exceptions, where applicable, if difficulties do occur. Steps have been taken in response to misinformation on EU sanctions vis-à-vis Syria, including by developing new guidance for economic operators.

184. EU relations with the Americas in 2020 will be conditioned by the fallout from the unfolding crisis caused by COVID-19. At the time of writing, the EU had already reoriented a substantial part of its bilateral cooperation toward supporting those worst affected, with further decisive action in preparation as part of “Team Europe”. The EU is also an active participant in the Ministerial Coordination Group on COVID-19, established by Canada.
185. COVID-19 arrived in Africa in early March 2020, but the COVID-19-induced global economic downturn affected Africa already in February. Beyond an immediate financial response in support to Africa, the EU has led the efforts to develop a coherent multilaterally coordinated response to the crisis. The EU supported the G20 initiative to put a moratorium on bilateral public debt payments until the end of 2020 and supports further debate at the international level on possible debt relief. It further supported the UNSG call for a universal ceasefire, taking over the AU’s theme for 2020 on “silencing the guns”. The EU was also an early supporter of the WHO Global preparedness and support plan and called for universal access to COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics, taking a leadership role during the Coronavirus Global Response online pledging event on 4 May 2020, where it pledged €1.4 billion.
186. Politically, COVID-19 confirmed the importance of establishing a durable partnership with Africa. The continent demonstrated good resilience despite fragilities, but this will likely come at a tremendous cost. The EU played a leading role in the international response in support to Africa. On 8 April 2020, the EU presented a global COVID-19 response strategy, adopted the next day with Member State contributions in the FAC as the Team Europe response to the COVID-19 crisis: the strategy mobilises over €20 billion of existing EU and Member State funding for reallocation and, where possible, accelerated disbursement to support the immediate humanitarian needs, to strengthen the resilience of the national health systems, and to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the crisis. One third of those funds will be directed to Africa and at least one-quarter (over €5 billion) will support Sub-Saharan Africa. This support is carefully prepared and monitored to ensure that it does not only respond to immediate needs, but that it also reinforces governance and human rights.

187. As the airspace was rapidly closing down, the EU helped organise, in close coordination with and support of Member States' efforts, a worldwide consular repatriation operation for stranded EU citizens abroad. For Africa, this meant helping more than 50.000 European citizens return to Europe, a demanding task in often challenging circumstances.
188. The magnitude of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic requires the EU to operate at all levels. The EU can play an important stabilising role both at home, with a strong recovery, and abroad, notably through keeping open trade channels and leveraging its financial firepower and support to global finance and investment. The EU can exercise leadership and use its political and economic assets to try to play a bridging role to help moderate geo-political tensions and avoid destabilising repercussions, whether multilaterally (e.g. at the WHO) or on the ground (e.g. in Africa). Partnerships and cooperation with like-minded countries, but also with new or less like-minded partners, have to be enhanced across the board, to promote global public goods as well as multilateralism based on solidarity, human rights, and the rules-based international order.
189. Overall, the biggest short to medium term needs relate to stimulating economic recovery more than to health-related assistance. The pandemic has affected the highly connected economic powerhouses along the China-Europe-US axis, which concentrate most of the world's trade/economic flows, while threatening negative repercussions in other regions of the world. Measures to halt the spread of the virus have exposed vulnerabilities and imbalances in global supply chains and their potentially destabilising effects for the world order.
190. Following the political agreement on a Team Europe approach for the EU global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus is now to deliver effectively on the close to €36 billion EU and Member States' financial commitments on the ground (emergency humanitarian response, strengthening health systems and research capacities, and addressing socio-economic consequences).

191. Engagement and support should be consolidated in the EU's neighbourhood and beyond, notably in Africa, without neglecting other regions as the COVID-19 spread evolves. The EU must also continue to promote a coordinated global response through the multilateral system and to help de-escalate geopolitical tensions, promoting narratives of solidarity and respect for human rights and democracy as core values to be upheld in fighting the pandemic.
192. 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. The recurrence coincides with the unprecedented challenge for the current global order and international peace and security that is the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU will continue its efforts to implement the 2019 Council conclusions on EU action to strengthen rules-based **multilateralism** with the UN at its core. In doing so, it will actively seek to strengthen and diversify its network of partnerships and enhance cross-regional cooperation, in order to promote multilateral responses to global challenges. The EU will in particular seek to lead a comprehensive and coordinated global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, together with the United Nations, international financial institutions, the G7 and G20. The EU will rally behind the UN Secretary-General's efforts to coordinate a UN-wide response, and aims to lead by example in showing solidarity and supporting partners across the world.
193. The current crisis demonstrates how crucial well-functioning and well-coordinated multilateral institutions are to global health, prosperity, peace and security. The EU's concerted efforts to support the effective implementation of the UN Secretary-General's reforms across the UN agencies, funds, and programmes have brought some important progress in terms of increasing cross-pillar coherence and advancing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus while fully respecting humanitarian principles. The EU will continue prioritising efforts to ensure a more flexible and efficient multilateral system, from human rights and addressing the root causes of forced displacement to conflict prevention, from climate change and sustainable development to digital transformation. In line with the UN Secretary-General's call to 'recover better', the EU will focus on building more sustainable, inclusive, and equitable societies with particular attention to ensuring gender responsive and human rights based approaches. The paradigm for action will continue to be the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

194. In a world of increasing geopolitical tensions, the pandemic is exacerbating existing challenges and vulnerabilities and is weakening the resilience of affected populations in fragile states and regions. The EU has expressed strong support for the UN Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire, reiterating the need to advance political solutions, to respect international humanitarian law and to ensure safe and unhindered access to humanitarian aid. The EU will continue to promote conflict prevention and to support peace and security around the world, maintaining its existing engagements and identifying new opportunities to resolve conflicts and build peace. The EU will take an active role in the 2020 UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review to ensure continued and effective implementation of the UN reforms, prioritising predictable and sustainable financing, enhancing the strategic links between the UN Peacebuilding Commission and the UN Security Council, and better linking early warning with early action. The EU will also continue efforts to strengthen the EU-UN strategic partnership on peacekeeping and crisis management.

195. The EU will remain steadfast as a strong defender of **human rights**. Significant progress has been achieved, such as improvements in countries and regions where human rights were under strain, through innovative engagement and investment in economic and social rights, or the empowerment of human rights defenders and civil society through strong EU political and financial support. Yet, the COVID-19 crisis has brought new challenges, and the EU has reaffirmed the need to pay special attention to the growing impact of the pandemic on all human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Respect for all human rights must remain at the heart of fighting COVID-19 and supporting the global recovery. The EU will continue to protect civic space and the work of human rights defenders, particularly those in vulnerable situations. In UN Human Rights fora, the EU will take a leading role in advancing country specific resolutions and thematic initiatives by building topical, cross-regional coalitions. The cross-regional "Good Human Rights Stories Initiative" puts the EU at the forefront of efforts to "take back" the human rights narrative, by promoting success stories about Human Rights initiatives. The EUSR for Human Rights will remain a key actor of political action. In spring 2020, the Commission and the High Representative submitted a joint proposal to the Council for a European Council decision on the next EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. Implementing the ambitious EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024) will be the key priority to enhance EU leadership in protecting and promoting human rights worldwide. In this regard, the Council continued its preparatory work towards establishing a sanctions regime concerning serious human rights violations and abuses, and remains committed to swiftly adopting the relevant legal acts and the first designations.
196. At a time when international criminal justice is needed more than ever, the **International Criminal Court** continues to face severe external challenges. As the central pillar of a global system of international justice, the ICC is a key element of the rules-based international order. As such, it requires the EU's support and engagement. The European Union objects to all measures that unjustly interfere with the exercise of the Court's judicial functions.

197. The EU is set to further implement the revised EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the **Rights of the Child** in relations with partner countries which promote 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 EU Guidelines to ensure that all children are reached effectively by EU policies and actions, including those in the most vulnerable and marginalised situations.
198. As regards **gender equality and the rights of all women and girls**, in 2020 the international community marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 20th anniversary of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and celebrates UN Women's 10 years of existence. The EU defined an ambitious approach to the 64th session of the Commission on the status of women, the Generation Equality Forum, and UNGA75 High-level Meeting as milestone moments for gender equality and women's rights, although preparations were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
199. The EU remains at the forefront of actions to achieve gender equality, rights and empowerment of all women and girls, the full enjoyment of all human rights by all girls and women, and non-discrimination on any grounds. The EU's commitment to gender equality is demonstrated through a variety of undertakings, in particular engaging in political and policy dialogues with partner countries and regional organisations, notably the African Union, NATO and ASEAN, higher profiling in international decision-making fora, and endorsing gender mainstreaming as the key strategy for achieving gender equality. The EU continues to forge a significant number of both gender-focused and gender-related initiatives. The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative is the EU flagship action to prevent and combat all forms of sexual and gender-based violence worldwide.

200. 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
201. In the current situation related to the COVID-19 outbreak, the EU promptly responded to UNSG's appeal on gender-based violence and COVID-19 by initiating a statement that was joined by 145 UN Member States and Observers from all regions. A joint statement was also issued by the High Representative and Commissioners Jutta Urpilainen and Janez Lenarčič, calling for the protection and promotion of the rights of all women and girls rights worldwide. Political commitment has been immediately backed up by adequate funding. Women and girls, in particular from population groups who are in situations of marginalisation and vulnerability, are a priority group in the EU's overall coronavirus response and recovery.

202. In a global context where **democracy** has been increasingly challenged, the COVID-19 crisis poses the risk to accelerate negative trends and to jeopardise progress made in fragile democratisation processes. To counter these developments, the implementation of the Council Conclusions on Democracy from 2019 and the democracy actions of the EU's new Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024) will be of utmost relevance. To protect, defend, and support democracy globally, the EU will for example step up its support to parliamentary institutions and independent and pluralistic media, as well as its fight against disinformation, and promote active citizenship and participation in public and political life, in particular of women and youth. To support building resilient, inclusive, and democratic societies, the EU will also continue to deploy election missions in agreed priority countries, subject to the restrictions of the pandemic and in close cooperation with the international election observation community, and to consolidate the missions' methodology, including on observing online campaigns and electoral technologies. The EU will also pursue and strengthen the consistent follow up of EU Electoral Mission recommendations as well as the support and cooperation with domestic citizen observers.
203. 2020 is a milestone set in the Paris Agreement to revise short-term commitments and define long-term trajectories, while climate science still states that global ambition shall be strengthened rapidly to meet the temperature goals agreed in Paris. In this context, and based on the assumption that the EU, now accountable for around 9% of global emissions, will not tackle the challenge of climate change alone, the January 2020 Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on **Climate Diplomacy** called on "the High Representative, Commission and Member States to work jointly and urgently towards a strategic approach to Climate Diplomacy". In response, the EU and its Member States have already initiated a revitalised climate outreach that shall be strategic (going beyond traditional climate policy circles), sustained (with robust messages and proactive proposals for cooperation), and tailor-made (accounting for partner countries' particular challenges and opportunities and sensitive to their political stance on climate action).

204. This effort will take into account the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the postponement of every major international event from March 2020 (including EU bilateral summits and Climate COP26, initially planned in November). The concept of **green recovery** and build back better will guide us in order to ensure that the massive invests coming in response to the consequences of the pandemic will follow a sustainable pathway and contribute to accelerate global low carbon transition. As climate change is a defining issue of our time, it will remain at the top of the European diplomatic agenda for the coming years. The Foreign Affairs Council will necessarily remain seized of this issue, while assessing progress on the way to COP26 in Glasgow.
205. Aware of the direct impact of climate change on peace and security around the world, and of its role of threat multiplier, the EU will strengthen its work on this dimension, in particular to better anticipate the effects of climate change on security and stability.
206. In 2020, **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. 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.

207. The EU emphasised that no country can address migration and forced displacement on its own, whether in Europe or elsewhere in the world. The EU will continue to work with partners – countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as international organizations – to address jointly these challenges, including in the framework of the UN. The EU will continue to pursue its comprehensive approach to migration and forced displacement, including addressing irregular migration, through the building of effective, sustainable, mutually beneficial and tailor-made partnerships. The EU will underline the importance of compliance with international refugee law including the principle of non-refoulement, the upholding of human rights law, and the provision of significant support to key refugee hosting countries.
208. The fight against **people-smuggling** networks will remain a priority through enhanced support to third countries on investigating, apprehending, and prosecuting smugglers, notably through dedicated partnerships 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 Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) agencies are being explored.

Connectivity

209. Given the geopolitical nature of connectivity, both proactive communication of the EU principles and collaboration with like-minded countries were and remain of particular importance. The connectivity partnership concluded with Japan in September 2019, the first of its kind entered into by the EU, was a tangible deliverable one year after the launch of the Joint Communication “Connecting Europe and Asia”, endorsed by the Council. This partnership sends a political signal, closely watched by other global actors on connectivity (China with Belt and Road Initiative, the US with Build Act and Blue Dot Network), about the will for practical cooperation in all aspects of connectivity, based on shared values of sustainability and transparency. The Europa Connectivity Forum held in September 2019 visibly demonstrated the convening power of the EU, attracting huge interest with more than 1,300 participants from 82 countries, and 11.5 million engagements on social media. It also shows expectations for the EU to be an effective global player, offering a credible and sustainable alternative to other visions of connectivity.

Digital diplomacy

210. Digital transformation remains at the top of the EU’s global agenda in 2020. In line with relevant Council conclusions and the European Commission Communication on “Shaping Europe’s Digital Future” from February 2020, the EU will continue to take strong initiatives to shape global interactions in the field of new technologies, and to develop digital standards vested in European values. Digitalization will remain a key tenet of the EU’s enlargement, neighbourhood and development policies, including the promotion of green digital technologies in partner countries and regions, in accordance with Europe’s commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The EU-African Union Digital Economy Task Force will underpin the support for the digital transformation in Africa.

211. The EU remains a strong supporter of the UN's efforts on global digital cooperation, including in the context of the UN 75th Anniversary. The EU contributed substantively to the recommendations of the UN High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, including in a joint meeting with the Global Tech Panel, and will continue to support their implementation and the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation.
212. The pace of technological innovation raises the stakes to harness its benefits and mitigate harms. Innovative partnerships like the Global Tech Panel, bringing together diplomacy with the tech sector and civil society, will be key for governance to keep up. To deepen its digital diplomacy, in 2020 the EU has set up a new Digital Diplomacy Network, bringing together the foreign ministries of the Member States and the European Commission under the auspices of the European External Action Service.

Strategic Communications

213. Strategic communications is a vital instrument enabling the EU to meet its ambition for a more active role and stronger voice for the EU in the world. Defending EU interests and values in an increasingly polarised world, in a competitive and polluted information environment, requires continuous investments in strategic communications.
214. The EEAS continued to make steady progress in the area of strategic communications by professionalising communications, mainstreaming integrated campaigns approach for EU Delegations and for global campaigns run from EEAS Headquarters, building engaging digital diplomacy and public diplomacy initiatives, and countering disinformation. A new approach was further embedded in policy making, focusing on the added value of strategic communications and anchored in clearly defined thematic priorities for the EU's foreign policy, in accordance with the High Representative's guidance.

215. The EU will continue its public diplomacy and strategic communications actions in coordination with Member States and national authorities; this will include developing and communicating positive narratives and strengthening its capacity to address disinformation, including around the COVID-19 pandemic.
216. The strengthened strategic and digital communications will be further employed to project the EU's high level of ambition and commitment on EU Climate action and to promote a global EU's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The EEAS will continue championing multilateralism and working with multiple policy communities at regional and sub-regional levels. In the context of the 75th anniversary of the UN (SDGs, human rights and the Green Deal), we will promote the EU as a global actor and strong partner on inter alia security and defence, and economic and cultural diplomacy.

Disinformation

217. The General Affairs Council in December 2019 recalled the importance of the continued implementation of the Action Plan Against Disinformation. It underlined the need for sufficient resources for the three Stratcom Task Forces (East, Western Balkans, South) of the European External Action Service and invited the EEAS to assess the needs and possibilities for reinforcing its strategic communication work in other geographical areas, such as sub-Saharan Africa while maintaining the necessary capacity to carry out the existing strategic communication tasks. The Commission and the EEAS were also urged to further develop, together with Member States, the Rapid Alert System towards a comprehensive platform for cooperation, coordination and information exchange for Member States and EU institutions. As regards social media platforms, the Commission is invited to consider ways to further enhance the implementation of the Code of Practice on Disinformation, including possible enforcement mechanisms. The EEAS continued to tackle the immediate and long-term threats posed by disinformation as an integral part of strengthening the EU's resilience against hybrid threats. The implementation of the Action Plan against Disinformation was at the heart of investments made in media monitoring, detection and countering of disinformation, and raising awareness about it in the EU and its neighbourhood.
218. The work of the EEAS Strategic Communications Divisions and in particular the three Task Forces (East, Western Balkans, South) was reinforced with resources allowing to better detect, analyse, and challenge disinformation activities of foreign State actors and external non-State actors. The Task Forces will continue to contribute to effective and fact-based positive communication and promotion of Union values and policies in the EU Eastern and Southern neighbourhood and the Western Balkans. An important work will continue to support independent media and civil society in the three priority regions.

219. The EEAS-managed Rapid Alert System (RAS) was further upgraded to improve sharing of information, research and insights between EU institutions, EU Member States, and international partners. The work continues to develop RAS into a comprehensive platform for coordination and information exchange in support of addressing disinformation campaigns and foreign interference.
220. The cooperation with international partners such as NATO and the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism has been further strengthened, contributing to the exchange of best practices on proactive communications and better situational awareness.
221. The reorganisation of the Strategic Communications Division allowed reinforcing work on emerging actors, such as China, and on big data analysis to address new online threats. The Division will continue to further explore these work strands. The Joint Communication by the High Representative together with the Commission "Tackling COVID-19 disinformation – Getting the facts right" was published on 10 June 2020. It outlined lessons learned and short-term measures necessary to address disinformation, which used COVID-19 related public health crisis and fears to undermine trust in European governments, polarise societies, and damage the EU's reputation internationally
222. Recognising the importance of and the role played by civil society, academia, and the private sector in addressing disinformation and in building resilience, the EEAS engaged with independent fact checkers, researchers and academia by organising several high-level conferences and seminars to discuss EU's response to disinformation.

223. Further work will be needed to strengthen coordinated and joint responses to disinformation and increasing societal resilience to disinformation. The EEAS will train and develop, in cooperation with Member States and their diplomatic missions, a new network of strategic communications officers in the 27 EU Delegations and Offices in the Neighbourhood and Western Balkans to improve analysis of information environments and strengthen strategic communications. The EEAS is also assessing the needs and possibilities for reinforcing its strategic communications work in other geographical areas, such as sub-Saharan Africa.

(D) CSDP AND CRISIS RESPONSE

Security and Defence

224. The implementation of the Global Strategy in the area of security and defence continues to be a priority in 2020. In light of the challenging security environment and strategic context and in order to reduce our vulnerabilities, which risk to be amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need to provide further impetus to the fulfilment of the Level of Ambition agreed in November 2016 by identifying policy goals and objectives that are more specific and updated. To this end, in 2020, following an invitation by the Council, the High Representative launched work, in close cooperation with and building on input from Member States and in consultation with the Commission, towards a Strategic Compass for adoption by the Council in the first semester of 2022. As a first step, the High Representative will present by the end of 2020 through the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity a comprehensive, 360 degrees analysis of the full range of threats and challenges, which will provide the background for the Member States to develop a Strategic Compass. The Strategic Compass will enhance and guide the implementation of the Level of Ambition agreed in November 2016 in the context of the EU Global Strategy and could further contribute to develop the common European security and defence culture, informed by our shared values and objectives and which respects the specific character of the security and defence policies of the Member States.

225. The Council remains committed to an ambitious and swift implementation of the EU's security and defence initiatives launched since 2016 to deliver on the EU Level of Ambition in support of responding to external conflicts and crises, building capacities of partners and protecting the Union and its citizens, which also enhances its role as a security provider and global actor.
226. The EU remains committed to enhance its ability to act as a security provider through its operational engagement, notably CSDP missions and operations, to reinforce its resilience and preparedness to effectively tackle all security threats and challenges, and to step up the development of necessary capabilities. In doing so, the EU will enhance its strategic autonomy and its ability to cooperate with partners in order to safeguard its values and interests. This will also strengthen our collective efforts, in particular also in the context of effective multilateralism and the transatlantic relationship, and will enhance the European contribution to a rules-based global order with the United Nations at its core and to Euro-Atlantic security. Despite all challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU managed to keep its CSDP missions and operations running to the maximum extent possible.
227. Further to the progress made since June 2019 on further increasing the common understanding on the implementation procedures of Mutual Assistance and/or Solidarity in line with Article 42(7) TEU and Article 222 TFEU, in 2020 the Council has agreed to table-top exercises and scenario-based policy discussions. This may also include an assessment by the relevant services of the type of assistance that they could provide, if so requested by a Member State in the context of an activation of Article 42(7) TEU. The Council in its conclusions from 15 June 2020 recalled that obligations for Member States stemming from Article 42(7) TEU are without prejudice to the specific security and defence policy of certain Member States. The Council also recalled that NATO remains the foundation of the collective defence for those States which are members of it.

228. 2019 has confirmed the EU-UN mutual commitment to cooperation on peacekeeping and crisis management on eight jointly defined priority areas 2019-2021 for reinforcing this strategic partnership. Cooperation has been strengthened between missions and operations in the field, notably in the Central African Republic, Somalia, Mali (including on the G5 Sahel Joint Force), Libya, Iraq, Western Balkans, and also with regard to conflict prevention; the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda; and trilateral EU-UN-AU cooperation. Progress can be noted in terms of more effective cooperation thanks to more systematic exchanges of information and increasingly clearly delineated roles. EU and UN missions and operations have also increased cooperation on logistics and support, with the finalisation of local technical agreements and MoUs.
229. 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 in July 2016 and in Brussels in July 2018 respectively. The fifth progress report submitted jointly by the High Representative/Head of Agency and the Secretary General of NATO on the implementation of the common set of proposals (a total of 74 actions) highlights key achievements, including in the areas of political dialogue, military mobility, strategic communications, including countering disinformation as well as coherence of output between the respective EU and NATO defence planning processes. The Council reiterates the importance of enhanced, mutually-reinforcing and beneficial strategic EU-NATO partnership in areas of shared interest, including with regard to key horizontal issues such as the unimpeded exchange of unclassified and classified information, in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner, with the overall objective of building a genuine organisation-to-organisation relationship. The implementation of the Joint Declarations remains a key political priority of the EU and it continues to take place in full respect of the decision-making autonomy and procedures of both organisations, on the basis of the principles of transparency, reciprocity and inclusiveness.

230. Further work has been undertaken on the finalisation of the institutional framework of **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)** notably with the agreement on the general conditions under which third States could exceptionally be invited to participate in PESCO projects. 47 PESCO projects have been launched so far (17 announced in December 2017 and launched in March 2018, 17 in November 2018, and 13 in November 2019). In line with the PESCO implementation roadmap, in April 2020 the High Representative presented the second Annual Report on PESCO implementation, including an assessment of the updated National Implementation Plans (NIPs) communicated by the participating Member States (pMS). Furthermore, as foreseen in the establishing Council Decision, in December 2019 the PESCO Strategic Review was launched with the view to be finalized by November 2020. Concrete recommendations on the Strategic Review were made also in the High Representative Annual Report. On that basis, the Council adopted in June 2020 a Recommendation assessing the progress made by pMS to fulfil commitments undertaken in the framework of PESCO.
231. The first full **Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD)** cycle was launched in September 2019, with the CARD Report (including political-level messages and relevant actionable recommendations) to be presented to the Defence Ministers in November 2020. CARD looks at the entire European defence landscape, including capability, Research and Technology, industrial, and operational aspects, with a major interim step achieved in late May 2020 with the release of the CARD Aggregated Analysis (providing an overview and trends, as well as including the analysis of collaborative opportunities). Beyond the review of participating Member States' defence activities, CARD is a key tool in support of overall coherence in Member States' defence planning and serves as a pathfinder for multinational collaborative opportunities, thus contributing 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, 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

232. Progress was also made on developing the **European Defence Fund (EDF)**, 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 (MFF), implementation of the Preparatory Action on Defence Research continued, with the selection of seven new defence research projects in April 2020 related to the calls for proposals in relation to the work-programme 2019, as well as the selection of three projects dedicated to disruptive technologies through dedicated calls on 15 June 2020. This dedicated call was designed to prepare the future EDF, which allocates up to 8% of its budget to such actions. Furthermore, the Commission also adopted on 15 June 2020 the first award decisions of the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (2018-2019). Total grant amount will reach €200 million and will be shared among 16 proposals covering all 2019 calls. The Programme is stimulating cross border cooperation and opening new supply chains opportunities throughout the Union, reaching out to SMEs that represent a significant portion of all entities that will receive funding. It will deliver key capability priorities identified by the Member States particularly in the context of the CDP. Where appropriate, regional and international priorities, including those in the NATO context, may also be taken into account, on condition that they serve the Union's security and defence interests and do not prevent any Member State from participating, while also taking account of the need to avoid unnecessary duplication. The programme proved to be open for the participation of third-country entities. Entities controlled by third countries, including the US, were assessed eligible for funding. Regarding the future MFF, the conclusions of the European Council in July 2020 included an agreement between Member States on a budget of €7.014 billion (2018 prices) for the European Defence Fund, demonstrating the EU's commitment to have a meaningful budget for the Fund.

233. Efforts have intensified to ensure **coherence and mutual reinforcement among EU initiatives** (CARD, PESCO, European Defence Fund) aimed at strengthening the Union's ability to take more responsibility as a security provider: such efforts supported the development of needed European capabilities through greater cooperation, thus contributing to achieving the EU level of ambition on security and defence. In May 2020, the High Representative/Head of the Agency delivered his second report on coherence among the EU defence initiatives. The second Report addresses the progress made in the areas identified in the first Report (May 2019) and reflects on the way forward as regards (i) the use of the EU Capability Development Priorities as a common reference for EU defence initiatives (CARD, PESCO and EDF); (ii) the appropriate synergies in the projects dimensions; (iii) the coherent sequencing of processes, including by making better use and taking into account EU tools and processes in national planning. Coherence remains a precondition for effective and efficient implementation of the complementary and mutually reinforcing EU defence initiatives, which remain distinct and have different legal bases. The first award decision of the EDIDP proves that all the efforts and measures taken to ensure coherence brings expected results. Projects selected for funding are fully in line with CDP priorities, and projects developed in the context of PESCO will receive around 80% of the funding.
234. The EU welcomes the positive impact of the **Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)** in its command and control of the EU's three non-executive military training missions and underlines the relevance of the MPCC, which was 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 take responsibility for the operational planning and conduct of the non-executive military CSDP missions and one executive military CSDP operations limited to EU Battlegroup size.

235. 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, also outlined in the relevant Council Conclusions. Following the update of the Military Requirements as approved by the Council in July 2019, the work continued with the updated gap analysis of July 2020, which reflects the changes in the two main elements on the technical parameters and geographical data, as well as the post-Brexit reality. This will allow the finalisation of the dual-use requirements before the end of 2020 (in the form of an implementing regulation to the new Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) regulation once adopted) for future funding of transport infrastructure projects. In accordance with the conclusions of the European Council of July 2020 on the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework, an agreement was reached on the amount of 1.5 billion EUR (in constant prices) for the military mobility envelope, which will allow the co-funding of dual-use infrastructure projects. In the ongoing review of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) Regulation, an evaluation to include certain dual-use infrastructure requirements is foreseen. In addition, further progress was achieved in the following areas: cross-border movement permission within the framework of the European Defence Agency and on customs formalities (establishment of the EU form 302 for military movements by the Commission services). The second Joint Progress Report outlines the progress achieved in all strands of work. The close EU-NATO cooperation on military mobility also continued on related issues, as part of the framework of the implementation of the Joint Declarations, and facilitated by the established Structured Dialogue at staff-to-staff level between the two organizations. Building on the previously achieved results, notably the coherence between the respective sets of military requirements, new deliverables were achieved with the exchange of the lists of National Points of Contact on military mobility.

236. 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 (i) more capable, by having Member States committing to develop the necessary capabilities to deploy their staff; (ii) more effective, responsive and flexible in providing an EU response; (iii) 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. The Annual Review Conference (ARC) provided a platform to exchange best practices and to take stock of the review of National procedures. Underlining the importance of the internal-external security nexus, the Civilian CSDP Compact, highlights that civilian CSDP missions should also contribute to the EU's wider response to tackle "new" security challenges that may hinder the host country or regional stabilization and hamper the achievement of the missions mandate, including those linked to irregular migration, hybrid threats, cyber security, terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime, border management and maritime security; as well as preventing and countering violent extremism and the need to preserve and protect cultural heritage. In this regard, efforts are ongoing to ensure closer CSDP-JHA cooperation and operational output of such cooperation by considering, where appropriate, new lines of operations or pilot projects in new or ongoing CSDP missions, also building on targeted mini-concepts.

237. 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 Horizontal Working Party on Enhancing Resilience and Countering Hybrid Threats established in July 2019 strives to support strategic and horizontal coordination among Member States in the field of countering hybrid threats, state and societal resilience, improving strategic communication and countering disinformation. The fourth Annual Progress report on the implementation of the 2016 Joint Framework and 2018 Joint Communication was adopted in July, together with “Mapping”, a Joint staff working document providing a comprehensive inventory of countering hybrid threats-related measures at EU level and listing the corresponding policy and legal documents, and with the Security Union Strategy. The COVID-19 pandemic and the proliferation of false information, both mis- and disinformation, around the virus showcased the importance of past steps taken by the EU to tackle disinformation campaigns. The EEAS-managed Rapid Alert System (RAS) served as a platform to exchange on disinformation related to the virus and on proactive communication initiatives put forward by EU institutions and Member States. Around the RAS, external dimension of cooperation has been developed as well: a separate collaboration space on the Rapid Alert System that facilitates exchanges between the platform’s PoCs and the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism has been provided. With the aim to prioritise the protection of missions against hybrid attacks and assist the host nation in increasing resilience against hybrid threats, a mini-concept on civilian CSDP support to countering hybrid threats is currently being drafted.

238. 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 17 May 2019, the Council established a framework that allows the EU to impose targeted restrictive measures to deter and respond to cyber-attacks that constitute an external threat to the EU or its Member States. On 14 May 2020, the Council adopted the decision extending the cyber sanctions regime until 18 May 2021. On 30 April, the High Representative issued a declaration on behalf of the EU on malicious cyber activities exploiting the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, in order to better prevent, discourage, deter and respond to malicious behaviour in cyberspace, the Council decided on 30 July 2020 to apply restrictive measures against six individuals and three entities or bodies involved in various cyber-attacks. These include the attempted cyber-attack against the OPCW (Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons) and those publicly known as 'WannaCry', 'NotPetya', and 'Operation Cloud Hopper'.
239. In 2018 the EU and its Member States updated the **EU Cyber Defence Policy Framework** 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. The implementation of this framework in supporting the development of Member States' cyber defence capabilities has progressed in 2019, enhancing the protection of CSDP communications and information systems, promoting civil-military cooperation in research and technology, improving education, training and exercises opportunities, and also enhancing cooperation with relevant international partners, particularly by putting forward EU–NATO cooperation on cyber security and defence.

240. On the **climate-security nexus**, following the discussion of Ministers of Defence in Helsinki at the end of August 2019 on climate and defence, the EEAS in cooperation with the EDA and relevant Commission services developed a reflection paper on climate and defence. The Reflection paper maps relevant ongoing work in different inter-linked areas, notably the operational context, capability development aspects and partnerships, and identified main work strands for further consideration. On the basis of the June 2020 Council Conclusions on security and defence, the next steps will include the development of a coherent set of concrete and comprehensive short, medium, and long term actions.
241. A joint EU-UN Workshop on **promoting women's meaningful participation in peace operations, crisis management and peace processes** was organised within the framework of the 2019-2021 priorities to reinforce the UN-EU Strategic Partnership on Peace Operations and Crisis Management. The Workshop report included recommendations for the EU, the UN, and their Member States.
242. A joint EU-UN mapping to assess cooperation between EU and UN crisis management and field missions on **Women Peace and Security** related activities was conducted within the framework of the UN–EU Strategic Partnership on Peace Operations and Crisis Management. The aim is further to strengthen the cooperation between UN peace operations and CSDP missions and operations on women, peace and security.
243. In 2020, the EU will actively contribute to the review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture and organise consultation meetings, which will contribute to the formulation of a common EU position.

International Security

244. 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.
245. Council Conclusions on EU External Action on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism were adopted on the 15th of June 2020. 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.
246. The EU's focus is on its closest neighbourhood, which is intrinsically linked to the EU's security. In addition, the EU continues to reinforce its presence in the Sahel, considering the increasing threat and the risk of contagion to coastal West African countries, and, more generally, to address the growing intra-continental dynamic spread of terrorism, such as in the Horn of Africa and in other African countries, where terrorist activities are increasing. The global threat picture requires that the EU is open to counter-terrorism engagement and outreach with countries in other regions that are strategically important for European security, such as Central Asia, South Asia and South-East Asia, supported by the deployment of CT/Security Experts in 18 EU Delegations.
247. The EU will steadfastly continue to build and strengthen its strategic partnerships with the leading global actors in this field, first and foremost the United Nations. It will continue to pursue cooperation and coordination with a number of partners and international and regional organisations, initiatives and other multilateral platforms, especially with key actors such as NATO, as agreed in the 2017 EU-NATO Common Set of New Proposals, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE. The EU is also a member of both the Global Counterterrorism Forum and its inspired institutions and the Global Coalition against Da'esh and its working groups.

248. 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.

249. On the European Union **Maritime Security Strategy** and on the Action Plan Implementation Report, the EU has continued to actively enhance its profile as a global maritime security actor. Civil/military cooperation remained high on the priority agenda, as shown by the European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) and former Operation EUNAVFOR SOPHIA setting up and operating their information sharing procedures. The EEAS and the Commission worked hand in hand to design new programmes/projects of capacity-building for coastal states, especially in the Indian and Pacific oceans, to enhance their maritime situation awareness and regional cooperation between all agencies that participate to the security and safety of the seas. These programmes follow up on the annual round of political dialogues led by the EEAS, where the maritime security component was present more than ever. Perspectives have opened to discuss maritime security issues in the next couple of years with major naval powers such as Japan, India, and possibly China. In this regard, the EU is chairing the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Intersessional Meeting on Maritime Security (together with Vietnam and Australia), supported by the FPI, and has sponsored several regional seminars and workshops tackling fundamental issues such as the emerging challenges that UNCLOS could face (e.g. environmental protection, cooperation between Law enforcement agencies, maritime domain awareness, etc.). Meanwhile, staff-to-staff talks between EU and NATO and their respective specialized training centres have enhanced as agreed in the declaration on EU-NATO cooperation. After having developed and adopted its Coordinated Maritime Presence concept at the FAC in August 2019, the EU is considering a pilot project in the Gulf of Guinea.

250. We continued to support the multilateral rules-based order in the field of non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms export control. In this field, the core thrust of the EU action in 2019 has addressed preparations for and EU engagement in Review Conferences, notably through Council Conclusions on an EU position on strengthening the ban against anti-personnel mines in light of the Fourth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Oslo, 25-29 November 2019), the implementation of the 2019 CFSP Council Decision (615) in support of the process leading to the Tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), through a series of thematic and regional seminars.
251. 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 non-proliferation agreements require that those agreements be fully complied with and enforced. The EU highlighted the importance of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in its statement of 14 July 2019. Given the expiration of the New START Treaty in early February 2021, the EU recalls its General Statement delivered to the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly First Committee.

252. The EU continued to promote the early entry into force and universality of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); coordinated diplomatic outreach was conducted globally by EU Delegations and EU Member States encouraging new ratifications of the Treaty. On 29 June 2020, the Council also decided to continue its financial support for the CTBTO for another three years through a new CFSP Council Decision 2020/901, with the amount of 6.3 million euro. Moreover, the EU continued to promote the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT) and the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (ACPPNM) as fundamental elements of the global nuclear security and counter-terrorism architecture. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) started implementing Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/1939 on Union support for the universalisation and effective implementation of ICSANT. The EU and its Member States continued to be actively involved in the work of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) in all areas: nuclear detection, nuclear forensics and response, and mitigation.
253. In 2019, the EU continued to support the universalisation and proper implementation of the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missiles Proliferation (HCoC), through Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2370.
254. Moreover, on 2 June 2020 the Council adopted a Decision that provides €1.4 million over three years in support of the UN Secretary-General's Mechanism for investigation of alleged use of chemical and biological or toxin weapons.

255. Regarding biological weapons, the Council adopted on 9 December 2019 Decision (CFSP) 2019/2108 in support of strengthening biological safety and security in Latin America in line with the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, which provides for €2.7 million over three years.
256. The EU continued to support the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) politically, diplomatically, and financially with a view to the full and effective implementation and the universalisation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Firm support was provided to the OPCW operations in Syria, in particular by further extending the implementation period of Decision 2017/2303/CFSP for the provision of satellite imagery to the OPCW, as well as the implementation of the OPCW Decision dated on 27 June 2018 on "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use". The EU welcomed the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team dated 08 April 2020. The EU furthermore strongly supported the OPCW Executive Council decision of 9 July 2020 in reaction to the IIT report, requesting the Syrian Arab Republic to take concrete measures to return to full compliance with the CWC. The Council is expected to renew the 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 condemned in the strongest possible terms the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, who was poisoned by a military chemical nerve agent of the "Novichok" group, reserving the right to take appropriate restrictive measures.
257. The EU demonstrated 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 (AG), the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), and the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) as well as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV).

258. With a view to making further progress on advancing common ground on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), in 2019 the EU continued actively to support the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) at the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).
259. At the Fourth Review Conference of the Anti- Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Oslo 25-29 November 2019), the EU's impact and visibility were ensured by a common position, timely adopted via Council Conclusions on 25 June 2019 and submitted as a Working Paper to the Convention. It was also ensured by an EU CFSP statement and a coordinated Commission statement, and by a side-event presenting the EU's support for the implementation of the Convention.
260. The Council adopted five Decisions in support of the implementation of the EU Strategy against Illicit Firearms, Small Arms & Light Weapons (SALW) and their Ammunition:
- Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/1298 in support of an Africa-China-Europe dialogue and cooperation on preventing the diversion of arms and ammunition in Africa, implemented by Safer world, for an amount of €one million;
 - Council Decision 2019/2009 in support of Ukraine's efforts to combat illicit trafficking in weapons, ammunition and explosives, in cooperation with the OSCE, for an amount of €5.15 million
 - Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2111 in support of SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South-East Europe reducing the threat of illicit small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, for an amount of €11.819.605.

- Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2191 in support of a global reporting mechanism on illicit small arms and light weapons and other illicit conventional weapons and ammunition to reduce the risk of their illicit trade ('iTrace IV'), implemented by Conflict Armament Research (CAR), for an amount of €5.5 million.
 - Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/979 in support of the development of an internationally recognised system for the validation of arms and ammunition management according to open international standards, implemented by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining ('GICHD') and its specialised agency, the Ammunition Management Advisory Team ('AMAT'), for an amount of €1.64 million.
261. Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council decided the no-cost extension of the implementation period of a number of CFSP Council Decisions in support i.a.; of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) activities in the area of nuclear security; of the implementation of the UNSC resolution 1540; of the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines; of the promotion of effective arms export controls; of the outreach activities in support of the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT); of strengthening the chemical safety and security, as well as the biosafety and security in Ukraine; of the OSCE activities relating to the reduction of small arms, light weapons and conventional ammunition in the Republic of North Macedonia and in Georgia.

262. On 16 September 2019, the Council also adopted a Decision amending the Council Common Position of 8 December 2008 on the control of arms exports, as well as a revised user's guide. It also adopted Conclusions on the review of the Common Position. The Council reaffirmed that **military equipment and technology should be transferred in a responsible and accountable way**. It also renewed its commitment to promote cooperation and convergence in Member States' policies, in order to prevent the export of military technology and equipment, which might be used for internal repression or international aggression, or contribute to regional instability. Based on the inputs of the Member States, the EEAS produced the 21st Annual Report on Arms Exports providing a detailed picture on the granted and denied exports by EU Member States of military equipment and technology per destination country and per military list category. The EEAS also set up COARM political dialogues with Canada, Norway, and the US
263. In addition to the work advanced on cyber in the context of the cyber diplomacy toolbox and on cyber-defence, following the resumption of the **United Nations processes on cyber issues, the EU reaffirms its commitment to continue building on the achievements of the previous UN Groups of Governmental Experts**, and actively supports the constructive and ongoing work of both the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) and the Group of Governmental Experts (UN GGE). 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 bilateral discussions. The EU also highlights the important work achieved by the international community in addressing cybercrime, including the existing and binding international instrument, namely the Budapest Convention, supported by 65 parties and a number of other countries using it as a model for their legislation.
264. **Cooperation between Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations and EU Justice and Home Affairs Agencies** has been promoted through the development of mini-concepts and in various forums to enhance CSDP-JHA cooperation.

265. While consular protection of EU citizens in third countries remains a national competence, the EU made good progress in promoting developing consular cooperation and consular 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 74 Joint EU Consular Crisis Preparedness Frameworks (JFWs) have become a key tool enhancing coordination and effectiveness of a joint consular crisis response.
266. They have ensured effective coordinated consular assistance to an increasing number of unrepresented EU citizens in third countries in crisis situations that required a coordinated EU crisis response, including during the terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka, Venezuela's long-lasting crisis, social unrest in Hong Kong and Latin America, natural disasters affecting Indonesia, the Philippines, and the Caribbean Region as well as by facilitating large-scale repatriations during the COVID-19 emergency.
267. Local consular exercises with the participation of EU Delegations, EU Member States, and third parties improved the coordinated consular crisis preparedness and response together with the regional video conferences, attended by more than 100 EU Delegations.
268. In this regard, the network of more than 135 Consular Correspondents in 142 EU Delegations has played an active supporting role in helping EU Member States in several consular crisis responses worldwide.
269. The roll-out of the IT-tool Consular On-Line platform CoOL in parallel with the testing phase of the enhanced 2.0 CoOl release, with more than 800 registered users, has provided a valuable sharing platform with EU Member States Crisis Centres and was successfully activated in many consular crises.

270. EU Consular Dialogues with Canada, USA, Australia, and from 2019 also with New Zealand reinforced the international cooperation for the protection of EU citizens in third countries as well as in time of consular crisis.
271. Negotiations are currently under way in the Council with a view to having an effective European Peace Facility (EPF) with a global geographic scope ready by January 2021 in order to enhance the Union's ability to preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security.

Security aspects of the European space policy

272. The High Representative issued on 31 October 2019 the Report on the functioning of the EU satellite centre (**SatCen**) for the period 2014-2019, which highlights the growing user demand for SatCen geo-intelligence products based on satellite imagery, and hence the increasing importance of this intergovernmental Centre in order to guarantee the highest level of quality in the assessment of internal and external threats. In 2019, the SatCen delivered a total of 3080 products, representing a 30% increase compared to 2018. In 2020, there has been a noticeable rise in its support to CSDP missions and operations, specifically to operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI.
273. However, the High Representative's Report also underlines the challenges linked to the strategic evolution of the Centre, notably the necessity to provide it with long-term and sustainable funding. In 2020, the EEAS (Space Task Force) has and will continue to give priority to the resolution of these challenges with the appropriate guidance of the SatCen Board.

274. The Space Task Force launched in September 2019 a public diplomacy initiative on **Safety, Security and Sustainability of Outer Space** (SSSOS=3SOS) towards policy-makers, industry, think-tanks and academia, space agencies and the scientific community throughout the world in order to raise awareness and build a common understanding on the need to act swiftly and jointly for security, safety, and sustainability of outer space.
275. The EU and its member states have continued to promote a safe, secure and sustainable space environment as well as the peaceful use of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis through work in the first committee of the UN General Assembly, the Conference on Disarmament and the UN committee on the peaceful uses of outer space (COPUOS). There is a need for a timely global, common, and multilateral solution. This is the second reading of the acronym 3SOS: thrice SOS, meaning that it is important to act swiftly.
276. This common understanding would concretise in voluntary norms and standards defined by the relevant actors and pave the way for a political commitment in the UN.

Conflict prevention and Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crisis

277. A second implementation report on implementation of **conflict prevention actions** was presented to PSC, drawing out lessons learned on how to enhance an early response. Progress was also registered in developing horizon-scanning tools. In 2020, the first-ever structured training programme on conflict prevention will be launched for conflict prevention focal points within the EU. The new guidance on conflict analysis will be launched as part of ongoing efforts to improve prevention capacity. The EU conflict Early Warning System will enhance its focus on ensuring a concrete and continued response to the observed risks for violent conflict.
278. The EU strengthened its partnership with the UN on **Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of ex-combatants** (DDR). In particular, the EU participated in the revision of the UN Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) and contributed to the development of a new IDDRS module “DDR and armed groups designated as terrorist organisations”. In 2020, the EU and the UN will further expand this collaboration with joint scoping missions in the field. In addition, a Joint communication on a strategic approach to support the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants is under preparation for 2021.
279. In relation to the stabilisation concept, work has continued on improving **knowledge management in the area of conflict prevention and crisis response**, which also aims at improving the effect and impact of EU stabilisation efforts. A joint EEAS/Commission paper on "supporting the operationalisation of the Integrated Approach in conflict prevention and crisis response through reinforced knowledge management" is being drafted and will start a process to look at methodologies to achieve this.
280. The **Article 28 action in support to UNVIM in Yemen** is extended from September 2019 until September 2020. Reflections on the scope and nature of the action beyond the current mandate are under consideration.

Missions and operations

Europe

281. 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. A technical one-year extension of the mission was signed in July 2020. The Strategic Review of EULEX Kosovo was delivered in November 2019 and recommended that the current mandate be extended for another two years without significant changes from June 2020 until June 2022. The Kosovo Specialist Chambers in The Hague stand ready to conduct proceedings on the basis of the prosecution conducted by the Specialist Prosecutor Office (SPO), which has intensified its investigation over the last months.
282. 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.

283. Through its monitoring and reporting about inter alia developments along the Administrative Boundary Lines between Tbilisi Administered Territory and the breakaway regions, **EUMM Georgia**, as the only international monitoring presence in 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. The Mission also closely follows and reports on threats posed by disinformation campaigns, electronic warfare and other hybrid activities when it is relevant to the implementation of its mandate. The Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meetings co-facilitated by EUMM and the OSCE between representatives of Georgia, Russia, and the de-facto South Ossetia authorities to discuss and resolve specific issues and incidents restarted in the summer of 2020 whereas corresponding meetings with the de facto Abkhazia authorities, chaired by the UN, with EUMM in observer capacity, unfortunately have not taken place since 2018. A 24/7 "hotline" telephone system is attached to the Mechanism, and operated wholly by EUMM for both theatres, which has proven to be a way to quickly establish common understanding of events and de-escalate possible tensions. Georgia is also an active contributor to EU CSDP efforts and contributes personnel to the EU Training Missions in Central African Republic and Mali.

284. **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 EU decided to rename the Regional presences as Field Offices and decided to open a fourth one in Mariupol: this decision showed the strong commitment of the EU to provide support to Civilian Security Sector reform throughout the country. EUAM Ukraine has a mandate until May 2021. 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. The Mission continues to promote and advise the reform of the Security Service of Ukraine into a modern Security Service operating in accordance with European principles, together with the reform of prosecution system and other legislative changes. EUAM Ukraine remains ready to assist Ukraine in these important tasks in coherence with its mandate.

Africa

285. The EU continued to provide capacity-building support to Somali security forces through its CSDP missions: **EUTM Somalia** has been providing advice, mentoring and training to the Somali National Army (SNA); **EUCAP Somalia** continued advising federal and regional authorities in Puntland and Somaliland on the development of Coast Guard and maritime policing functions, complemented with support to broader police development, including that of the Somali Police Darwish Concept; the Missions have also been advising the SNA and Somali Police Force in support of ongoing transition security operations in Lower Shabelle; EU maritime operation **ATALANTA** has been instrumental in suppressing and deterring piracy off the coast Somalia. EU's CSDP engagement remains relevant to both build up the capacities of Somali security forces for a smooth transition from AMISOM to Somali security responsibilities, and to suppress and deter piracy and enhance maritime security in the Horn of Africa, an area crucial for the EU's interests. The holistic Strategic Review, launched at the end of 2019, provides an opportunity for the Member States to re-assess and re-adjust the CSDP engagement in Somalia/Horn of Africa.

286. The CSDP action in the Sahel has been further strengthened as a major element of the EU's integrated approach in the region. The regionalisation process of CSDP has stepped up cooperation and coordination with international actors such as the UN, the AU, ECOWAS, G5 Sahel and also with EU Member States involved in the region through ongoing initiatives such as the Partenariat pour la Sécurité et la Stabilité au Sahel (P3S). The CSDP missions in the Sahel (**EUTM Mali, EUCAP Sahel Mali, and EUCAP Sahel Niger**), in coordination with the Regional Advisory and Coordination Cell (RACC), have continued to support Sahelian security forces in the development of their capacities. 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.
287. EUTM Mali in particular was extended until 2024 with a broadened mandate to provide military assistance to the G5 Sahel Joint Force and to national armed forces in the G5 Sahel countries through military advice, training, and mentoring. **EUCAP Sahel Mali** has reinforced its support to promote the redeployment of Malian Security forces into the centre of Mali within the framework of the Plan de Sécurisation Intégrée pour les Régions du Centre (PSIRC). **EUCAP Sahel Niger** has pursued its efforts at strategic level to support the development of a National Policy on Defence and Security and the implementation of the National Internal Security Strategy. Regarding irregular migration, the mission continued to ensure a follow-up on migration routes and trends and has also supported the creation of the second Compagnie Mobile de Contrôle des Frontières (CMCF). The **Regional Advisory and Coordination Cell (RACC)** based in Nouakchott reinforced its network of security and defence experts in Delegations in the G5 countries and continued to initiate and coordinate capacity-building activities for all G5 countries and the G5 structures with the support of the existing CSDP Missions. The International Humanitarian Law continues to be a relevant issue in the region, and the CSDP is engaged to reinforce the capacities of the local security forces in that regard.

288. The EU Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA), the third CSDP engagement in CAR, has been conducting its second mandate delivering strategic advice to the CAR government, military and security authorities, education to Forces Armées Centrafricaines (FACA) officers and NCOs as well as specialists, training to FACA units, and has been supporting the interaction with CAR Internal Security Forces, in order to contribute to the overall locally owned Security Sector Reform (SSR) process coordinated by MINUSCA. By the end of its current mandate in September 2020, EUTM will have trained four FACA battalions. With the objective to further support CAR authorities in the redeployment of the State authority throughout the country, the EU decided to establish a civilian **EU CSDP Advisory Mission (EUAM RCA)** in CAR, tasked to provide support to the CAR Ministry of the Interior and Public Security (MoI PS) and the Internal Security Forces. The respective Council Decision to establish EUAM RCA was adopted in December 2019, and the Mission was launched in summer 2020.

MENA

289. 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). Despite both Missions' activities and presence having been limited due to the COVID-19 outbreak, they have managed to provide support to the Palestinians in fighting the crisis. In April 2020, Member States extended the Missions technically (based on their current mandates and budgets) until 30 June 2021. The political and security challenges related to the threat of annexation of parts of the West Bank by Israel may have an impact on EUPOL COPPS and EUBAM Rafah in the second half of 2020.

290. Member States have prolonged the **EUAM Iraq**'s mandate until April 2022 and have confirmed an increase from 70 to 80 international staff. The new consolidated mandate encompasses the provision of strategic advice on the harmonised implementation of national strategies preventing and countering terrorism (including violent extremism) and organised crime with specific reference to border management, financial crime, in particular corruption, money laundering, and trafficking of cultural heritage goods, which is also seen as a way to reinforce the common cultural identity in the country.
291. The ongoing military confrontation in Libya has had a significant impact on the deployment and activities of international actors in Tripoli. In September 2019, a core team of **EUBAM Libya** returned to Tripoli, but the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020 led to the withdrawal of international staff in Tripoli and a presence in Tunis. A gradual return of more Mission staff is foreseen, conditions permitting. The strategic review discussions were postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions, and the Mission received a technical extension until June 2021. EUBAM Libya has continued to support Libyan authorities in their efforts aimed at disrupting organised criminal networks involved in smuggling of migrants, human trafficking, and terrorism in the areas of border management, law enforcement, and criminal justice. Despite the challenging situation, the Mission has remained a valued counterpart for the Libyan authorities and has ensured the continuity of EU's presence in Tripoli.
292. One contribution of the EU in supporting the UN leading international efforts towards the peace process in Libya has also been through the establishment of the **EU Liaison and Planning Cell (EULPC)** in April 2015. The Cell provides a broad expertise in the security domain, thanks to Voluntary National Contributions, with the prime objective to offer key security, intelligence and planning expertise both to EU actors in Brussels and in theatre and to UNSMIL as required. The EULPC is not a CSDP action but, taking into account its goal, it is an essential enabler for CSDP actions and EU activities in Libya. To that end, the EULPC liaises with all EU actors in Libya, primarily the EU Delegation to Libya, EUBAM Libya and EUNAVFOR MED Operation IRINI. Since the LNA started the offensive against Tripoli in April 2019, the EULPC has mainly focused on providing an increased support to the EU Delegation, especially in the context of the Berlin process.

293. The European Union remains committed to supporting UN-led efforts to restore peace and stability in Libya, thus contributing to a more secure southern neighbourhood, including through its CSDP tools. As such, the European Union will continue to maintain a military presence in the Central Mediterranean Sea. In the immediate aftermath of the Berlin Conference on Libya on 19 January 2020 and the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 January 2020, **EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia** was instructed to intensify its aerial monitoring with support provided by satellite surveillance over the whole area of operations in countering illicit arms trafficking in accordance with UNSCR 2473.
294. The new CSDP military operation, **EUNAVFOR MED IRINI**, was launched on 31 March 2020. Operation Iriini is a multi-faceted operation. In addition to the implementation of the arms embargo, the operation, as secondary tasks, also contributes to the implementation of UN measures to prevent the illicit export of petroleum from Libya, to capacity building and training of the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy, and to the disruption of the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks. Operation Iriini is the most concrete EU response to the Berlin Conference and the calls from the international community to cease hostilities in Libya and respect the arms embargo. Through the Operation, the EU is the most visible supporter of the arms embargo decided by the UN Security Council.

(E) FINANCIAL IMPLICATION FOR THE UNION'S GENERAL BUDGET

295. The year 2019 marked a high point in the budget for CFSP. The total funds committed reached their highest level ever recorded amounting to €359.40 million, of which €303.32 million (84,39%) went to CSDP missions, €33.60 million (9,35%) to Non Proliferation and Disarmament (NPD) actions, and €22.48 million (6,26%) to European Union Special Representatives.
296. In addition, the Commission's particularly close monitoring of the budget and its sustained efforts to actively manage recoveries and decommitments of funds that CSDP Missions and other beneficiaries of CFSP funding were unable to spend during their mandates enabled the CFSP budget to secure unused funds amounting to €42.54 million (€24.65 million recovered and €17.89 million de-committed). These were partly reused in 2019 for other CFSP actions. An amount of €24.04 million for commitments was transferred to 2020. The impact on the COVID-19 crisis on the overall CFSP budget and the spending rates of CSDP Missions remains to be seen in its full extent.
297. Meanwhile, as of the end of March 2020, CSDP Missions had relocated non-essential staff and operations have been delayed, slowed down or in some cases put on hold. Missions have been affected to different extents with some being able to maintain pre-crisis levels of operation. For example, the Mission in Georgia pursued its patrolling routine at the borders throughout the crisis, while operations in other Missions were severely affected by travel restrictions imposed by COVID-19. All these elements have clearly had an impact on the budget consumption, which necessitated constant monitoring throughout the course of the year.
298. Notwithstanding lower levels of activity in some cases, during the crisis Missions continued to incur standard running costs, including the cost of staff, rental of premises, insurance, and security surveillance.

299. COVID-19 also had a severe impact on efforts by the international community in NPD. The 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which was originally scheduled to begin on 27 April 2020, could not take place. Several NPD Actions supported by the CFSP budget that perform outreach activities, capacity-building or develop dialogue with State actors in third countries have been severely affected by travel restrictions imposed by COVID-19. As a result, the duration of several NPD Actions was extended with no budgetary impact to allow implementing partners to postpone activities that could not be performed during the crisis.
300. While the adopted CSFP Budget for 2020 amounted to €351.43 million, the carry forward from 2019 has pushed total available commitment appropriations in 2020 to €375.47 million.
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