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**'I/A' ITEM NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council  
Subject: 13th EU-Israel Association Council  
- Establishment of the EU position

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1. With a view to the 13th meeting of the EU-Israel Association Council in Brussels on 24 February 2024, the Mashreq/Maghreb Working Party has finalised the European Union's position as follows:
  - Annex I: draft EU statement;
  - Annex II: draft agenda.
2. Subject to confirmation by the Permanent Representatives Committee, the Council is therefore invited to approve the draft EU position as set out in Annexes I and II hereto.

**THIRTEENTH MEETING OF  
THE EU-ISRAEL ASSOCIATION COUNCIL**

(Brussels, 24 February 2025)

**Statement of the European Union**

1. The European Union (EU) welcomes this 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the **EU-Israel Association Council**. The EU attaches great significance to its close relations with the State of Israel, and values its frank and open political dialogue with Israel with a view to promoting a shared understanding of the challenges in the Middle East and beyond. This meeting of high importance is taking place in the aftermath of the extraordinary situation of the 7 October 2023 terrorist attacks against Israel, the ordeal of the hostages, the conflict in Gaza, and regional shifts. It will be an opportunity to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the conflict in Gaza and its significant humanitarian consequences, as well as EU-Israel cooperation.

2. The EU and Israel have close and mutually beneficial political, cultural, people-to-people, tourism, trade and investment relations, as well as significant economic, financial, research and innovation and security cooperation, including on crisis management and civil protection. This cooperation takes place **in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan<sup>1</sup>**, providing the EU and Israel the full opportunity to take forward their cooperation, including through possible negotiation of partnership priorities. The EU's relations with Israel will also be an important part of the new comprehensive EU Middle East Strategy and the new Pact for the Mediterranean.
3. The EU recalls that, pursuant to Article 2 of the Association Agreement, relations between the Parties, as well as all the provisions of the Agreement itself, shall be based on **respect for human rights and democratic principles**, which guides their internal and international policy and constitutes an essential element of the Association Agreement.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2019-11/eu-israel\\_action\\_plan\\_2005.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2019-11/eu-israel_action_plan_2005.pdf)

4. The EU reiterates its condemnation in the strongest terms of the **brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks conducted by Hamas** and other terrorist groups against Israel on 7 October 2023, of the attacks on Israel carried out by Hezbollah between 8 October 2023 and 27 November 2024, of the **Iranian attacks on Israel** on 13 April and 1 October 2024, and of the recurrent **attacks on Israel by the Houthis**. The EU expresses its full solidarity and support to Israel and its people, stands with the families of the victims and the hostages taken by Hamas, expresses deep concerns over the conditions in which they were held, and reaffirms its full commitment to Israel's security and to regional stability. In exercising its right to defend itself, Israel must fully comply with its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, in all circumstances. The EU reiterates the importance of ensuring the protection of all civilians, including humanitarian workers, at all times, as well as civilian infrastructures, including medical facilities, schools and UN premises.

5. Following the 7 October 2023 attacks, the EU reviewed its Terrorist List (CP-931) to designate the political leader and two military leaders of Hamas. On 19 January 2024, it adopted a new **sanctions regime against Hamas** for any individuals or entities who support, facilitate or enable violent actions by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, under which 12 individuals and three entities are currently sanctioned. On 12 April 2024, three Hamas entities were designated by the EU under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime (EUGHRSR) for their actions during the 7 October attacks (widespread sexual and gender-based violence).
6. The EU warmly welcomes **the ceasefire agreement in Gaza**, which will allow the **phased release of the hostages** - ending their terrible ordeal that has lasted for more than 15 months – end hostilities and **ease the humanitarian suffering** in Gaza. It is vital that the deal is fully implemented to allow all the hostages to be released, and to ensure a permanent end to hostilities. The EU extends its gratitude to the US, Egypt and Qatar for their efforts in negotiating the ceasefire, which the EU had consistently called for. The EU deeply deplores the unacceptable number of civilians, especially women and children, who have lost their lives, and the catastrophic humanitarian situation notably caused by the insufficient entry of aid into Gaza, in particular in the North. While welcoming the increase of aid entering Gaza since the ceasefire entered into force, the EU reiterates its calls for full and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid to the Gaza strip and that aid can be effectively distributed to those in need, including by UN agencies and notably UNRWA. Displaced Gazans should be ensured a safe and dignified return to their homes in Gaza. The EU calls on Israel to make efforts to facilitate consular border crossings so that EU citizens can leave Gaza. The EU also recalls the need to fully implement the **International Court of Justice** orders, which are legally binding.

7. The **European Union's civilian Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point** (EUBAM Rafah) has been redeployed to the Rafah Crossing Point (RCP) at the request of the Palestinians and the Israelis in agreement with the Egyptians, and in line with the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA). The mission deployed a specialised team to allow Palestinian personnel to reopen the RCP, allowing the transfer of individuals out of Gaza, including some who require medical treatment. EUBAM Rafah can play a decisive role in supporting the ceasefire.
8. The EU reiterates its unwavering commitment to a **just, comprehensive and lasting peace** in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council (UNSC), on the basis of the **two-state solution**, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine living side-by-side in peace, security and mutual recognition, with Jerusalem as the future capital of both states. The EU and its Member States will continue to respect the international consensus on Jerusalem embodied in the relevant UNSC resolutions until the final status of Jerusalem is resolved. The EU is gravely concerned that the occupation of the Palestinian territory that began in 1967 continues to this day, underlining in particular that the International Court of Justice has found that the continued presence of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory is unlawful. The EU recalls UNSC resolution 2735 (2024) rejecting any attempt at demographic or territorial changes in the Gaza Strip and stressing the importance of unifying the Gaza Strip with the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority.

9. The EU will continue to actively support and **engage with international partners** on concrete irreversible steps towards the two-state solution, reviving a political process to this end, including through the holding of an international peace conference as soon as possible. The EU stresses that **a credible pathway to Palestinian statehood** is a crucial component of that political process. The launch of “the Global alliance for the implementation of the two-State solution” on 26 September 2024 was an important step to demonstrate the EU’s commitment to the two-state solution. In accordance with the EU-Israel Action plan, the EU encourages Israel to actively engage in efforts to revive the political process towards the two-state solution.
10. The EU will actively contribute to a coordinated international effort to early recovery and reconstruction in Gaza. The EU will continue **supporting the Palestinian Authority** to help it address its most pressing needs, build institutional capacities, implement its reform agenda and help it, including through EUPOL COPPS, address security challenges. The EU stresses that actions weakening the Palestinian Authority must stop. The EU calls on Israel to support the Palestinian Authority, to facilitate its return to Gaza, to release withheld clearance revenues, to consider the resumption of work permits for Palestinians, and to take the necessary measures to ensure that correspondent banking services between Israeli and Palestinian banks remain in place after the last extension.
11. The EU stresses the importance of the full implementation and updating of the **Paris Protocol**, including regarding full, timely, predictable and transparent transfer of tax and customs revenues. The EU is ready to support relevant measures, including the transfers of customs responsibilities, the full implementation of e-VAT and other revenue-raising infrastructure.

12. The EU strongly **opposes all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution**. The EU will continue to closely monitor developments on the ground and their broader implications and will consider further action in order to protect the viability of the two-state solution, which is constantly eroded by new facts on the ground, including through settlement expansion.
13. The **EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and activities**, including in and around East Jerusalem. The EU will not recognise changes to the 1967 lines, unless agreed by the parties. The EU recalls that annexation is illegal under international law. The EU calls on Israel to halt continued settlement expansion and related activities, including state land declarations as well as evictions, demolitions, confiscation and forced transfers of Palestinians, which have reached record levels in the past year. Furthermore, the EU strongly condemns the demolitions of the structures funded by the EU or its Member States and expects that Israel make good the damage in accordance with international law. Since 7 October 2023, increased access restrictions by Israel in the West Bank have gravely impacted socioeconomic conditions for Palestinians. The EU calls on Israel to allow for a tangible improvement of freedom of movement and access for the Palestinians, to enable accelerated Palestinian construction, as well as social and economic development in Area C, and reverse the worsening of living conditions for Palestinians in Area C.



14. The EU and its Member States are committed to fully comply with international law and to implement **EU legislation as well as the bilateral technical arrangement applicable to settlement products** accordingly. The EU and its Member States count on cooperation between the EU and Israel for an effective implementation of the technical arrangement. The EU expresses its commitment to ensure that - in line with international law - all agreements between the State of Israel and the EU must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territory occupied by Israel in 1967. This does not constitute a boycott of the State of Israel, which the EU strongly opposes.
15. The EU strongly condemns the further escalation in the **West Bank, including East Jerusalem**, following increased settler violence, the expansion of illegal settlements, Israeli military operations and increased terrorist attacks against Israel. The EU recalls that counterterrorism measures must comply with international law, including international human rights law and humanitarian law. The EU strongly condemns the ongoing **extremist settler violence** in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israel must do more to prevent settler violence and perpetrators must be held to account. The EU has so far listed nine individuals and five entities under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime. The EU is ready to take work forward on further restrictive measures against extremist settlers and against entities and organisations which support them.

16. The EU calls on Israel to ensure safe access to the **Holy Sites and to uphold the Status Quo** put in place in 1967 for the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif in line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan's special role. The special status and character of Jerusalem and its Old City, the inviolability of its sacred spaces and the viability of all its communities must be preserved and respected by all.
17. The EU stresses the essential role of the **UN** and its agencies, notably **UNRWA**, which provides crucial support to the civilian population, including humanitarian aid and basic services, both in the occupied Palestinian territory and the wider region. The EU reiterates its grave concern with the far-reaching consequences of the Israeli legislation on UNRWA for its operations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Gaza. The EU deplores Israel's withdrawal from the 1967 agreement between Israel and UNRWA and condemns any attempt to obstruct its capacity to operate its mandate. It is essential that UNRWA can continue carrying out its crucial work in line with its mandate adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1949 and renewed since. The EU is committed to continuing its support to the Agency, and closely monitors and evaluates the implementation through the Action Plan of the recommendations of the Independent Review Group report following the allegations against some UNRWA staff, and looks forward to further decisive action by the UN to ensure neutrality, accountability and strengthen control and oversight in order to prevent further cases. The EU condemns Hamas for the alleged use of UNRWA facilities.
18. The EU reaffirms its unwavering commitment to **effective multilateralism and to the rules-based international order** with the United Nations at its core, steadfastly upholding the UN Charter and the rules and principles enshrined in the UN Charter, including those of sovereignty and territorial integrity, political independence and self-determination. The EU affirms its full and unwavering support to the UN Secretary-General and regrets the decision to declare him 'persona non grata'.

19. The EU reiterates its call on Israel to cooperate fully with the United Nations, including human rights mechanisms, and to facilitate access for UN mandate holders, including in relation to the issuance of visas for international staff.
20. The EU reiterates its support to the **normalisation of relations between Israel and a number of Arab states** in the region, which is beneficial to all countries involved and a fundamental step for the stabilisation of the region as a whole. The EU supports regional and trilateral cooperation and joint initiatives opening up new perspectives for business, people, trade, travel, research, the environment as well as in a number of other areas. The EU reiterates its commitment to a comprehensive and lasting peace for the entire region and stands ready to work to this end together with its regional and international partners. In this regard, the EU will seek to encourage and build upon the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and a number of Arab countries, with a view to enhancing the prospects to reach a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East Peace Process.
21. The EU welcomes the **ceasefire agreement of 27 November 2024 between Israel and Lebanon**, following the mediation efforts undertaken in particular by France and the United States. It urges the parties to fully implement their commitments made under the ceasefire agreement, and calls for the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. The EU reiterates in that context the fundamental stabilisation role of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in southern Lebanon. The EU will continue to support the Lebanese State's sovereignty, territorial integrity and state-building efforts, including by contributing to the strengthening of the Lebanese Armed Forces, including in the framework of the European Peace Facility.

22. The EU reiterates its strong condemnation of **Iran's transfers of drones and ballistic missiles to Russia**, which is a direct threat to European security, as well as Iran's seriously destabilising actions throughout the Middle East. The EU remains fully committed to de-escalation in the Middle East and urges Iran to end all destabilising actions across the region, including its support to terrorist and armed groups, including the Houthis, Hezbollah, and Hamas.
23. It is a **key security priority for the EU to ensure that Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon**. Iran's unabated nuclear advances without any credible civilian justification over the last five years are of utmost concern. The EU calls on all countries to support the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015), which endorsed the JCPOA, providing the basis for monitoring and reporting work of the IAEA. The EU reiterates its commitment to diplomacy in order to address Iran's nuclear programme.

24. Following the fall of Assad's criminal regime in Syria, supported by Russia and Iran, the EU stresses the historic opportunity to reunite and rebuild the country and underlines the importance of an **inclusive, Syria-owned and Syrian-led political process** that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, in line with the core principles of UN Security Council Resolution 2254. Syria's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within secure borders must be fully respected, in accordance with international law. The EU calls on Israel to uphold the terms of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The EU reiterates its support for the UN Disengagement Observer Force monitoring the Syrian Golan Heights and recalls the importance of UNSC resolution 497 (1981). The demilitarized buffer zone must be respected. The EU recalls its position on Syria as agreed by the European Council on 19 December 2024 and underlines the need to restore justice and accountability. The EU also emphasises the importance of the fight against terrorism, of the prevention of re-emergence of terrorist groups, and of the destruction of Syria's remaining chemical weapons stockpiles while making progress on accountability for the documented uses of chemical weapons.
25. The EU reiterates its **condemnation in the strongest possible terms of Russia's illegal unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine**, which grossly violates the UN Charter and international law, and poses a direct threat to European and global security and stability. The EU welcomes Israel's vote in the United Nations General Assembly on the relevant resolutions, as well as the participation of Israel in the Summit on Peace in Ukraine convened in Switzerland on 15-16 June 2024 and support to its Joint Communiqué. Since February 2022, the EU has responded in a united and resolute manner to Russia's war of aggression by adopting sanctions, holding Russia to account, and supporting Ukraine with unprecedented humanitarian, financial, political, diplomatic and military aid. The EU will continue doing so for as long and as intensely as needed. The EU welcomes Israel's assistance to Ukraine and its citizens, including the supply of defensive military equipment and humanitarian aid. The EU appreciates Israel's commitment to preventing the circumvention of sanctions through its territory and will continue to work together with Israel on this issue.

26. The EU calls on the Houthis to stop immediately all attacks and to allow maritime security to be restored. The EU reaffirms its commitment to ensuring the freedom of navigation and maritime security in the Red Sea through the **EUNAVFOR Operation ASPIDES**.
27. The EU reiterates its strategic interest in a **stable and secure environment in the Eastern Mediterranean**. Regional cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean must be developed in accordance with international law, including UNCLOS. The EU notes positively ongoing project-based cooperation between Israel and EU Member States, with the aim of advancing peace, security and stability in the region.
28. **Democracy and human rights**, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and the importance of a vibrant civil society stand central to the EU-Israel partnership.
29. Israel is bound by **international humanitarian law** (IHL) and applicable norms of **international human rights law** (IHRL), including, as an occupying power, the obligation to protect the population under occupation. The EU calls on Israel to adhere strictly to the rules and principles of IHL and IHRL governing the use of force and the conduct of hostilities, including humanity, necessity, distinction and proportionality. The EU calls on Israel to ensure the impartial and effective investigation of alleged misconduct by the appropriate authorities in accordance with IHL.

30. The EU reaffirms its unwavering support for the **international criminal justice system**, particularly to the International Criminal Court (ICC), as well as its commitment to upholding the Rome Statute and preserving the ICC's independence and integrity, and calls for the respect of the independent functioning of the Court.
31. The EU is determined to **fight against antisemitism in all its forms and manifestations, and to promote non-discrimination** in the EU and around the world. The EU condemns antisemitism in the strongest terms possible; it is incompatible with the EU's values and aims. It represents a threat to Jewish people and to Jewish life, as well as to open and diverse societies and the very fabric of the European way of life. The EU deplores that antisemitic incidents and hate crimes against Jews and Jewish institutions have dramatically increased leading to an exceptionally high level of antisemitism across the EU, following the attacks of 7 October 2023 and the conflict that ensued in Gaza.

32. The EU has reinforced the EU-Israel High-Level Seminar on combating racism, antisemitism and xenophobia, co-organised annually. The 2008 EU Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia provides a strong legal framework to combat antisemitic hate crimes and hate speech, including public condoning, denial or gross trivialisation of the Holocaust in a manner likely to incite violence or hatred. The EU is determined to fight antisemitism online, in particular antisemitic hate speech, conspiracy myths, Holocaust denial and distortion, as further evidenced by the approval of the Council Declaration on fostering Jewish life and combating antisemitism on 15 October 2024. The work of the European Commission Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life further reflects the fight against antisemitism is a priority in the EU. Since 2017, the Commission has been using the non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), adopted in Bucharest (2016), as a practical guidance tool and a basis for its work to combat antisemitism and it encourages its adoption and use. The EU is committed to exploring further areas of cooperation on Holocaust remembrance, including through the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI). To combat antisemitism and prejudices, raise awareness and knowledge of Jewish history and culture, and achieve full recognition of Jewish life as part of Europe's society, the Commission has closely cooperated with the World Holocaust Remembrance Center Yad Vashem in Israel, in line with the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life (2021 - 2030), and has supported the creation of an Immersive Audiovisual Experience in its Valley of the Communities.



33. The EU remains resolute in its commitment **to promote non-discrimination and respect, protect and fulfil the right to freedom of religion or belief**. The EU promotes and protects **the right to freedom of religion or belief** and condemns any act of discrimination, hostility, hatred, violence or persecution based on religious or belief, including acts of antisemitism, anti-Muslim and anti-Christian hatred. The EU stresses the importance of guaranteeing effectively the right to freedom of religion or belief for all to promote peace, tolerance, respect and cooperation among people of all religions or beliefs.
34. The EU calls on Israel to adhere to its international human rights obligations to uphold **freedom of association, assembly and expression**, including by ensuring a safe, open and enabling civic space, both online and offline, as well as access to information, media freedom and safety of journalists. A free, independent and diverse civil society is indispensable for promoting democratic values, the pursuit of accountability and to build more peaceful societies. The EU is concerned with the risk of restrictions for foreign-funded NGOs, limiting civil society and its democratic participation and activity. Anti-terrorism or national security legislation must never be misused to undermine fundamental rights and freedoms. The EU calls upon Israel to allow access to Gaza to independent media including international outlets. The EU reiterates its support for **human rights defenders, journalists and other media workers**.

35. The EU calls on Israel to fully comply with its **international human rights obligations including in the context of arrest, interrogation and detention**. The EU remains gravely concerned about the extensive recourse by Israel to indiscriminate arrests and administrative detention without formal charge, which has increased since 7 October 2023. Under international law, detainees have the right to be informed about the charges underlying their detention and to have the legality of their detention determined without undue delay, as well as the right to legal assistance, due process and a fair trial. **The prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment is absolute under international law**. The EU recalls that States have a heightened duty of care to take any necessary measures to protect the lives of individuals deprived of their liberty. The EU and its Member states call on all parties to grant the ICRC unhindered access to places of detention, in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

36. Respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the **rights of the child** remain central to the EU's human rights policy, underscoring its commitment to secure a future for children free from violence and deprivation. The EU continues to be profoundly concerned over the severe impact of the conflict and violence on children, who face grave risks to their safety and well-being due to conflict, with notably large numbers of Palestinian children killed, injured, and displaced, with many schools and medical facilities damaged or destroyed. The EU calls on Israel to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all Palestinian minors, especially those faced with arrest and detention, in line with its obligations under international law, specifically the UN convention on the rights of the child, and standards regarding the detention of children, including in cases of security offences, and ending the practice of administrative detention. The EU calls for the protection of children, including ensuring their right to education and medical care in a safe and secure environment.
37. The EU encourages Israel to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all persons, including those belonging to **minorities**, notably the Arab minority, to enhance their integration into Israeli society, to protect their rights, and to reduce economic and social disparities. The EU encourages Israel also to enhance the participation of all minority groups in policy and governance processes at all levels and to avoid any discrimination in law and practice. The EU calls for a comprehensive and equitable solution with regard to unrecognised Bedouin villages.

38. The EU promotes **gender equality** and the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by all women and girls, and their empowerment as a priority across all areas of action, in line with international commitments. The elimination of all forms of discrimination and exclusion, and all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, and full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls are fundamental for peace and security, sustainable development, and economic growth. The EU commends Israel for adopting the law on electronic tracking bracelets on the arms of domestic abusers, and hopes it will be further reviewed.
39. The EU reaffirms its strong commitment to respect, protect and fulfil the full and equal enjoyment of human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (**LGBTI**) persons. The EU has a major partner in Israel when it comes to addressing the inequalities, discrimination, and violence affecting LGBTI persons, including in international fora. The EU commends Israel for enhancing protection and promotion of the human rights of LGBTI persons, including by means of legislation. The EU would be interested to hear updates on the status of implementation of the Universal Periodic Review recommendations relating to LGBTI persons.

40. The EU reaffirms its commitment to promote and protect **human rights in the digital sphere**. In this regard, the EU welcomes the participation of Israel as a signatory of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and human rights, democracy and the rule of law (Vilnius Convention). In line with commitments made under the recently adopted Global Digital Compact, the EU encourages Israel to ensure that laws and regulations on the use of technology in areas such as surveillance are in compliance with international law. The EU encourages Israel to take effective action to tackle disinformation campaigns and hate speech and to promote information integrity online. The EU recalls that access to an open, safe and secure internet is essential in a democracy, including for accessing health and education and to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid.
41. A democratic, more stable, greener and prosperous Southern Neighbourhood is a shared strategic priority and fundamental interest for both the EU and its Southern Neighbourhood partners. The EU considers Israel as a key **partner for cooperation in the five priority policy areas that the Joint Communication by the European Commission and the High Representative on a Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A New Agenda for the Mediterranean<sup>2</sup> identifies**, notably human development, good governance and the rule of law; resilience, prosperity and digital transition; peace and security; migration and mobility; green transition: climate resilience, energy, and the environment. The Joint Communication suggests that the EU steps up its existing cooperation with Israel in the digital, research and innovation areas and identifies opportunities to reinforce cooperation in related areas of mutual interest. The EU underlines the key role of Israel, as well as of the other members from the Southern Neighbourhood, in the governance, efficiency and strengthening of the Union for the Mediterranean.

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[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint\\_communication\\_renewed\\_partnership\\_southern\\_neighbourhood.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_renewed_partnership_southern_neighbourhood.pdf)

42. Under the **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument**, Israel continues to benefit from allocations supporting institutional cooperation (Twinning and TAIEX projects and other forms of technical support). Israel also benefits from projects aimed at promoting regional cooperation in order to strengthen regional stability and advance the Middle East Peace Process.
43. The EU is Israel's largest trading partner and the second largest investment partner. Israel is among the EU's biggest trading partners in the Mediterranean area with the most diversified structure of **trade**. In spite of some remaining market access impediments, the overall conditions for bilateral trade and investments are good. The EU welcomes the import regulatory reform that entered into force on 1 January 2025, which will simplify import procedures for a variety of consumer goods, abolishing dozens of national import standards and relying instead on compliance with EU and other international standards. The EU welcomes the support of Israel in the process of revision of the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean (PEM) Convention, which resulted in its adoption by unanimity by all contracting parties on 7 December 2023. The EU counts on Israel's cooperation in view of a successful implementation of the revised Convention on 1 January 2025.

44. The EU values Israel's close cooperation with the EU when trade irritants arise and particularly appreciates the pilot project put in place to address the long-standing import authorisation practice of the Israeli authorities for medical devices which discriminates among EU Member States. However, the EU continues to expect there to be a legislative amendment to render the pilot regime permanent. Furthermore, the EU continues to be concerned by some **market access** issues, most recently the lack of transparency by Israeli competent authorities in rejecting medical devices destined to hospitals in the West Bank, but also longstanding issues such as the cumbersome certification process for EU exports of kosher meat and the ban on EU exports of non-kosher meat.
45. The EU is interested in continuing to work on trade-related issues under discussion with Israel and in **sharing practices** in different areas, including on standards for agricultural and industrial goods as well as the protection of geographical indications. It is interested in continuing cooperation on food security, food safety, agricultural policy, rural development, and organic farming.
46. The EU counts on Israel to contribute constructively to the swift resumption of work on the implementation of the Package of measures to facilitate the trade of Palestinian products with other Euro-Mediterranean partners, when conditions allow. The EU will continue supporting these efforts.

47. The EU recalls the **counter-terrorism dialogues** initiated with Israel in 2015. The last dialogue took place in May 2023.
48. Building on past engagements, the EU and Israel will continue their exchanges to advance an **open, free, stable and secure cyberspace**, notably by promoting the application of international law in cyberspace and the implementation of the voluntary norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace in the United Nations and other relevant international fora, as well as by advancing the establishment of a UN Programme of Action in this context. The EU and Israel will in addition explore the possibility to further exchange knowledge and best practices, and to cooperate on enhancing cyber resilience and tackling cybercrime, in particular ransomware.



49. The EU values the fruitful cooperation between Israel and **the European Maritime Safety Agency** in the framework of the relevant EU-funded programme (SAFEMED) on maritime safety, security and sustainability. In this context, the EU especially appreciates Israel's active interest and participation in the learning services provided by the EMSA Academy and the use of tools and services such as THETIS-Med (port State control information system) and CleanSeaNet (maritime pollution surveillance by satellite service). While there is scope for further technical cooperation, particularly with regard to ratification and transposition by Israel of Annex VI to the MARPOL Convention and regional AIS (Automatic Identification System) data sharing, Israel remains one of the most active beneficiary partners of the SAFEMED Project. The EU notes that there is potential for further exchanges, e.g., on railway transport, transport security, the promotion of multimodal transport, sustainable urban mobility, and intelligent transport systems. The further implementation of the comprehensive EU-Israel Euro-Mediterranean Aviation Agreement should be pursued.

50. The EU calls for active engagement of all partners to ensure that **international climate, ocean, biodiversity and environment commitments** are effectively implemented, as a basis for achieving the United Nation's 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The EU encourages all Parties to come forward in their next nationally determined contribution (NDC) to be submitted ahead of COP30 in Belem, with ambitious, economy-wide emission reduction targets, covering all greenhouse gases, sectors and categories, and aligned with limiting global warming to 1.5°C; align their NDC with long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies; build on the global stocktake outcomes on energy transition, as well as to follow international guidelines by providing clear and transparent information on the NDC. The EU also calls on Israel to join in the collective efforts to mobilize climate finance in developing countries in the context of the new collective quantified goal as agreed to at COP29.
51. The EU is committed to strengthening **energy** cooperation with Israel to foster energy security, sustainability and resilience while promoting peace and stability in the region. Our cooperation, reinforced by the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation related to Trade, Transport and Export of Natural Gas to the European Union, signed on 15 June 2022 by the EU, Israel and Egypt, is centred on advancing the energy transition, diversifying energy sources, access to energy in the region, and strengthening regional energy security, where exports of gas from Israel are currently one key contributor, as is regional energy cooperation, including in the context of the East Med Gas Forum. Going forward, our cooperation will be centred on accelerating renewable energy, energy efficiency, and hydrogen investments with a view to untapping the region's sizeable renewable and decarbonisation potential. The EU welcomes Israel's participation in Horizon Europe and looks forward to increased cooperation on research and innovation in the energy sector.

52. The EU expresses readiness to explore cooperation with Israel on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) within the **Global Gateway**'s framework, with a view to support regional integration, normalisation between Israel and a number of Arab States, stability and peace.
53. In the area of **science and technology**, following the full association of Israel to the Horizon Europe programme for the period 2021-2027, the EU warmly welcomes the increased participation of Israeli research entities in the programme. The EU looks forward to continue its cooperation with Israel, to address global challenges, facilitate green and digital transitions, accelerate the world shift to a secure and just food system and bring the EU and Israel's innovation systems closer together. Since 1996, Israel's association to the EU framework programmes for research and innovation has been a success story. This cooperation contributes to stronger bilateral economic and trade relations and facilitates engagement in the region. In this context, the EU welcomes Israel's continuous active participation in regional science diplomacy initiatives, such as SESAME, PRIMA and EMUNI.

54. In the field of **digital economy and society**, the EU welcomes Israel's commitment to the activities of the Euro-Mediterranean Regulators Group (EMERG), the EU initiative aimed at increasing EU-Mediterranean regulatory harmonisation and promoting cooperation among telecommunications regulation authorities, and is ready to work towards an ambitious partnership on digital issues. The EU also welcomes the fact that Israel is a full member of related OECD bodies, in particular the working group for Communications Infrastructure and Services Policy (CISP).
55. The EU recalls that the International **Telecommunication** Union's (ITU) Radiocommunications Conference, held in Sharm Al Sheikh in November 2019, revised Resolution 12. This Resolution called for a process to deploy 3G technology and establish an adequate timeframe for the allocation of 4G and 5G frequencies for Palestinian operators. The EU calls on Israel and on the Palestinian authorities to reach a timely agreement on the assignment of necessary 4G and 5G frequencies for Palestinian operators, prior to the completion of the Israeli 5G deployments, and to cooperate with international actors working on this topic such as the Office of the Quartet.
56. In the area of **education**, the EU welcomes the participation of Israel in the international dimension of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 continuing to contribute to promoting mutual understanding by developing people-to-people contacts through cooperation between higher education institutions and student and staff exchanges, as well as through youth exchanges. The EU also welcomes the benefits brought by the programme to Israeli higher education, including its increased internationalisation, and looks forward to continuing cooperating with Israel under the Erasmus+ programme.
57. The EU looks forward to a fruitful and constructive meeting of the EU-Israel Association Council.

**13TH MEETING OF THE EU-ISRAEL ASSOCIATION COUNCIL**

(Brussels, 24 February 2025)

**Draft Agenda**

- 1 *Adoption of the agenda*
- 2 *Adoption of the minutes of 12<sup>th</sup> EU-IL Association Council*
- 3 *Exchange of notes: EU statement for the meeting; Israel's statement for the meeting*
- 4 *Political Dialogue*
  - i. *Conflict in Gaza, Israeli-Palestinian relations*
  - ii. *Regional issues, including Iran*
  - iii. *Global issues*
- 5 *EU-Israel bilateral relations*
- 6 *AOB*