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A Stronger Europe in the World



This briefing follows up the commitments made by the High Representative / Vice President since 2019.

Commitment	State of play
Qualified majority voting (QMV) in the Council <p><i>"I will try to use the provisions of the Treaty" to apply qualified majority voting for "sanctions, human rights and CSDP missions".</i></p>	<p>Serious attempts to introduce qualified majority voting QMV for sanctions, but unsuccessful so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In November 2020, the Council approved the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024. HR/VP Borrell said 'The Member States did not agree' to adopt implementing decisions by QMV – a proposal of the Commission and the HR/VP. In December 2020, the Council adopted the new EU global framework for human rights sanctions. The framework did not include the use of QMV for individual sanction (de-)listings, contrary to the proposal made by the Commission and HR/VP. The European Parliament had requested that QMV be used in resolutions in March 2019, January 2021, July 2021 and February 2022. In a press conference on 13/12/2021, the HR/VP expressed 'frustration' about the Council's failure to adopt sanctions on Ethiopia due to the lack of unanimity. <p>The Council has used the unanimity rule when adopting extensive sanctions against Russia and against Belarus since February 2022, in response to the war in Ukraine. This has caused significant delays in the adoption of a sixth package of sanctions against Russia.</p>



The progressive switch from unanimity to QMV in all areas of foreign and security policy was one of the final proposals of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

In June 2022, the HR/VP used his [blog](#) to call for switching from unanimity to QMV, not only for the adoption of sanctions, but also for enlargement.

Human rights and democracy

"I will launch a new human rights action plan in which I plan to involve the EP".

"I ask Parliament to work with me to ensure that ... the EU remains an example for the defence of human rights in the world".

"... Human rights are not just the cherry on the top of a trade agreement. It is an integral part of it, not only during the drafting of the agreement but also when it comes to monitoring its implementation' I will see that a human rights clause be included in all bilateral trade agreements and that dialogues on human rights with these countries deliver results that take into account each country's specificity".

"...we need coherence between internal and external policies...".

"The promotion of human rights should not only be an issue of external policy that you relegate to a corner, it must be at the centre".

The EEAS and Commission [Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024](#) was adopted by the [Council](#) on 17/11/2020. The European Parliament's Human Rights (DROI) subcommittee was informed, but [expressed](#) 'disappointment' that the EEAS had not involved the committee and Parliament more.

Council adopted a new [human rights sanctions regime](#) on 7/12/20, but without covering corruption, as requested by Parliament. A [first set of human rights sanctions](#) was agreed in March 2021, and [sanctions against the Wagner Group](#) were added in December 2021.

While human rights clauses are included in EU trade agreements, there is [no dedicated monitoring and problem-solving mechanism](#) to improve their use and enforcement. The EU guidelines on human rights dialogues with non-EU countries were [updated](#) in February 2021, but [lack indicators](#) for evaluating dialogues' results and an operational link to the human rights clauses.

The Action Plan aims 'to enhance coherence ... between internal and external policy areas', and integrate human rights 'into all areas of external action'.

The Commission updated and extended the toolkit for a [human rights-based approach to international partnerships \(June 2021\)](#) (although this was not signed by the EEAS).

The Commission and EEAS issued joint [guidance for companies on forced labour](#) on 12/07/21.

After delays, the Commission's [proposal on corporate sustainability due diligence](#) was published on 23/02/2022.

Ukraine and a common strategic culture

"Ukraine remains central to the strategic challenge... that Russia poses, and it is the most important, one of the biggest priorities, in order to develop a credible foreign policy."

HR/VP Borrell helped maintain Member States' unanimity on various [sanctions](#) responding to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Member States have also agreed to the [six-monthly renewal of restrictive measures](#) in place since 2014 targeting Russian actors.

Impressive speed and adaptability were shown with the use of the European Peace Facility (expanded with up to

"We need to progress towards a common strategic culture, e.g. via a more coherent strategic approach to our many actions, and operationalising the EU's level of ambition."

EUR 2.5 billion for Ukraine by mid-2022) and a Clearing House Cell, established to coordinate the delivery of priority weapons according to Ukraine's requests. This unprecedented reactivity in decision making suggests a new geopolitical turn for the EU as it develops a strategic culture on security and defence.

The '[Strategic compass for security and defence](#)', published on 24/03/2022 and endorsed by the Council two days later, was launched in order to: formulate a common threat analysis at EU level; agree on clear and achievable strategic objectives; and offer political guidance for future military planning processes.

The Compass sets out concrete actions in four work strands so that that the EU:

- acts more quickly and decisively when facing crises;
- secures citizens against fast-changing threats;
- invests in needed capabilities and technologies; and
- partners with others to achieve common goals.

Of the 80 commitments in the Strategic Compass, 51 are due this year.

The Compass proposes reinforcing civilian and military CSDP missions and operations by making them more robust, flexible and modular, thereby contributing to making the EU's CSFP more operational and credible.

Gender equality

"We have to introduce gender as a value in diplomatic and military activities".

The EU's 2021-2025 Action Plan on [Gender equality and women's empowerment in external relations](#) was published on 25/11/2020. The HR/VP and Commissioner Urpilainen presented it to Parliament on 3/12/2020. Specific objectives and indicators for diplomacy and women, peace, and security agenda are integrated.

A new EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender was appointed, after a delay, with 'diversity' added to the post's responsibilities. (In 2021 Parliament asked that the EEAS '[establish one role for each of these issues](#)')

The '[Strategic compass for security and defence](#)', published on 24/03/2022, includes gender-related goals. It will be important to see progress in these, as CSDP Missions and Operations frequently fail to achieve their gender targets. [EEAS figures](#) state that women constitute 24 % of international staff in civilian missions and only 7 % of total staff in military missions and operations.

"A good target, the one we have to fight for, is about 40 %' of women in EEAS management posts."

According to EEAS data, despite a slight upward trend, women account for only 35.7 % of EEAS middle management and 28.3% of senior management. The EEAS established a Joint Committee on Equal Opportunities (COPEC) in 2020.

Cooperation with the European Parliament

"I will be happy to work in close collaboration with the European Parliament, because I am convinced of the potential of parliamentary diplomacy'. 'I must commit myself here to ... consulting the Parliament, in plenary, in the committee and in the special committee, to explain to you the most sensitive elements of the foreign, security and defence policy".

■ *"The Parliament has to have access to the documents it needs to exercise its scrutiny role, be they classified or not... the instrument in force for classified information in CFSP/CSDP matters – the 2002 Interinstitutional Agreement – dates back to Pre-Lisbon, and is no longer in line with the current institutional setup and needs to be replaced. Following Council's recent endorsement to restart the negotiations with the Parliament on a successor arrangement to replace the 2002 Interinstitutional Agreement, I believe that negotiations should start immediately and I am fully committed to reaching an agreement as swiftly as possible in the new mandate."*

"I also commit to explain... the negotiations of international agreements".

"I also commit... to hold at least five times a year the joint consultation meeting on the execution of the CFSP budget".

"I also commit to engage with the rotating presidency of the Council to make sure the AFET Chair is invited to Gymnich meetings".

The HR/VP's briefings to the coordinators of Parliament's Foreign Affairs (AFET) committee and to the chairs of the Human Rights and Security & Defence subcommittees (DROI and SEDE) before and after the Foreign Affairs Council have been on hold since the start of the COVID pandemic. Discussions about the resumption of such briefings are ongoing. The EEAS is aware that these were commitments made by the HR/VP during the hearing. One possibility being discussed is that these briefings would be delivered by the EEAS Secretary-General in the future.

AFET receives regular debriefings from the EEAS Secretary General on the outcome of EU-US high-level dialogue meetings.

The EP and EEAS are still discussing how to improve EP access to EEAS documents, including confidential ones. The EEAS may only share some information with Parliament if the Council agrees, but negotiations to revise the related Parliament-Council [Agreement of 2002](#) are ongoing.

When Parliament does not receive CSDP documents, the institution's Treaty responsibility in this area is undermined.

Regarding international agreements, the EEAS sends a representative to Parliament to explain the state-of-play of negotiations when requested by the Parliament.

The joint consultation meeting with the PSC Chair, Commission and Parliament on the CFSP budget was held once in the first half of 2022, twice in 2021 and three times in 2020.

The AFET Chair has been invited to all Gymnachs (informal foreign ministers' meetings) organised by the rotating Council Presidencies. Since the Gymnich organised in August 2020, the Chair has attended the entire programme. In January 2022, the SEDE Chair attended the Gymnich in informal defence ministers format.

Involving the EP in external financing instruments

"I will ensure, in cooperation with the Commissioners for International Partnerships and for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, that Commission services and EEAS continue to associate the co-legislators closely with the preparation of EU cooperation programmes."

"I agree with the EP on the need for horizontal steer and coordination of EU external financing."

"I also commit myself to jointly explore ways of ensuring a meaningful in-depth dialogue on documents for the strategic planning phases of the financial instruments under my remit."

The Commission's efforts to involve the Parliament in its [Neighbourhood, development and international cooperation instrument \(NDICI\)-Global Europe Regulation, adoption of Delegated Act](#), and programming are the following:

- the 2021 [Commission declaration](#) attached to the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation, established a regular high-level geopolitical dialogue with Parliament (the AFET & Development (DEVE) committees);
- HR/VP Borrell appeared in both dialogues with AFET-DEVE in June and October 2021; and
- Members of AFET and DEVE had a very fruitful exchange of views with the HR/VP on NDICI-Global Europe in June 2022.

While Parliament welcomed the geopolitical dialogues in a [resolution](#) from February 2022, it also pointed to the need to 'receive relevant preparatory documents sufficiently on time and with an adequate level of detail in order to carry out a meaningful scrutiny'. It remains to be seen to what extent the Commission takes into account Parliament's positions, expressed during and following the dialogues.

Parliament's [request for an update of Article 9 of the Council Decision establishing the EEAS](#), assigning responsibility of various Commissioners for EU's external financing instruments, remains unanswered.

Global connectivity and an integrated policy approach

"Addressing connectivity requires ... a whole of EU approach".

A Global Gateway initiative – a [joint communication](#) of the Commission and the HR/VP (EEAS) – was adopted on 1 December 2021, promising up to 300 billion in sustainable and rules-based connectivity worldwide.

Connectivity is also a theme in many of the earlier initiatives that contributed to the Global Gateway, including economic and investment plans for [the Eastern Partnership](#), [the Southern Neighbourhood](#), and [the Western Balkans](#); as well as [the strategy for Africa](#) and the [related investment package for Africa](#).

Operations on the ground / European Peace Facility

"We have to be more operational on the ground and deploy forces, e.g. in our neighbourhood; the proposed European Peace Facility (EPF) should bring a step-change in EU efforts abroad."

CSDP missions and operations face different challenges, including personnel and equipment shortages, with military headquarters (MPCC) also short-staffed. The Strategic Compass, adopted on 24-25/03/22, foresees a reform of CSDP deployments in response to this. The

model of military CSDP missions and operations will be adapted by mid-2022. For example, the document proposes to incentivise force generation by expanding the scope of common costs under the [European Peace Facility \(EPF\)](#). As for civilian interventions, a new Civilian CSDP compact will be adopted by mid-2023.

The EPF was created to finance CFSP actions with military or defence implications. On 18/12/21, the Council [reached a political agreement](#) on the off-budget instrument, worth EUR 5.7 billion for 2021-2027. Its implementation since 2021 has contributed to lethal and non-lethal capacity building for the EU's partners. In the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the Council had adopted five assistance measures to the benefit of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in 2022 (28/02, 23/03, 13/04, 23/05 and 22/07) by late July 2022, bringing the Union's overall military assistance to Kyiv through the EPF to EUR 2.5 billion. Continuous financial support of the Ukrainian war effort has raised questions about the EPF's capacity to sustain other CSDP military operations, notably in the Western Balkans and Africa.

Hybrid and cyber threats and disinformation

"We need to make further progress as far as EU protection against hybrid threats is concerned, in particular to counter cyber-attacks and disinformation."

Two joint staff working documents were issued in July 2020, focusing on [mapping](#) measures and [addressing](#) hybrid threats.

A joint communication on [Tackling COVID-19 disinformation](#) was published on 20/06/2020, and the [European Democracy Action Plan](#) from December 2020 includes responses to disinformation.

The EEAS's StratCom team has been reinforced and the Rapid Alert System upgraded.

A new [Cybersecurity Strategy](#) was issued on 16/12/2020.

The [Strategic Compass](#), adopted in March 2022, paves the way for a 'global' EU response and strategy to hybrid threats (including cyber and disinformation), with a comprehensive EU Hybrid Toolbox and the development of 'Response Teams,' an EU Cyber Diplomatic Toolbox and Cyber Defence Policy (detailed in the 'Secure' part of the Compass).

(In the EP's 2021 enlargement reports, Parliament reiterated the need for stronger efforts to fight disinformation and hybrid threats that seek to undermine the EU perspective of the Western Balkans.

Mediation

"In short an EU high-level advisory board on mediation will be set up to enhance EU

The updated [mediation concept](#) was presented in October 2020 and endorsed in [Council Conclusions](#) in December 2020. The EEAS set up a pool of mediation experts,

strategic capacity to engage through a pool of experienced senior mediation advisors."

"A process of updating the 2009 concept on strengthening EU and mediation capacities has also been launched."

initiated a taskforce with Managing Directors in 2020 to steer the process politically, and published [guidelines](#). External support is available through the EEAS framework contract on conflict prevention and mediation, implemented through the third phase of the [European Resources for Mediation Support](#) (ERMES) project. However, no High Level Advisory Board including other institutions has been created.

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Manuscript completed: July 2022.

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This document is available on the internet at: www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses

Print ISBN 978-92-846-9592-8 | doi:10.2861/29345 | QA-07-22-536-EN-C
 PDF ISBN 978-92-846-9591-1 | doi:10.2861/035921 | QA-07-22-536-EN-N