

UN Biodiversity Summit: Council sends a united signal to step up



The Council today authorised the Commission to endorse, on behalf of the EU, the “**Leaders’ Pledge for Nature**“, in order to send a **united signal to step up global ambition for biodiversity**. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is thereby authorised to endorse the pledge at an UN event to be held virtually on 28 September 2020 in the context of the **UN Summit on Biodiversity**.

The pledge is a voluntary declaration which stresses that **biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation require urgent and immediate global action**. It is an expression of the need to increase efforts to address the interrelated challenges of biodiversity loss, land, freshwater and ocean degradation, deforestation, pollution and climate change in an integrated and coherent way.

It is, inter alia, a commitment to putting biodiversity, climate and the environment as a whole at the heart both of **COVID-19 recovery strategies** and of the pursuit of national and international development and cooperation. The aim is to ensure that the response to the current health and economic crisis is green, just and contributes directly to **recovering better and achieving sustainable societies**.

The authorisation given today is in line with the Council’s ongoing efforts to protect biodiversity. In its conclusions of 19 December 2019, the Council encouraged the EU and its member states “to consider joining relevant global initiatives aimed at strengthening political awareness and ambition for the protection of biodiversity, such as high ambition coalitions, to urgently implement existing commitments and to make additional commitments, and thereby to significantly step up actions to halt biodiversity loss and to reverse ecosystem degradation, thus also contributing to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration”.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

Webinar: European Digital SME Alliance & EUIPO

September 21, 2020 [Learning](#)

Webinar: European Digital SME Alliance & EUIPO



On 24 September, the [European Digital SME Alliance](#) is hosting a webinar with the EUIPO, intended to help SMEs and startups with IP-related dispute resolution.

The webinar focuses on the Effective Dispute Resolution (EDR) mechanisms available through the EUIPO's [Ideas Powered for Business hub](#), which can help SMEs and startups find an alternative to complex litigation proceedings.

Registration for the webinar, which is organised by the European Digital SME Alliance, and features the participation of EUIPO EDR experts, can be accessed [here](#). The webinar starts at 16.00 CEST.

[Foreign Affairs Council: Remarks by the High Representative/Vice](#)



Check against delivery!

Good morning,

At the Foreign Affairs Council today we have three main points for our discussion. As you can imagine, Belarus is very high on the agenda, but also Libya and our relationship with the African Union and with Africa in general.

On Belarus, I have to regret that the situation continues to deteriorate with ongoing repression against peaceful protesters, as everybody can see from the images on the television. I am very much impressed by those peaceful protests.

Today, we will discuss how to support the Belarusian population and how to review our relationship with the Belarus government according to the situation, where we do not recognise [Alexander] Lukashenko as the legitimate President of Belarus.

I am happy that we could meet with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya [candidate in the August 9 Presidential elections] in the hours before the Council. The members [of the Foreign Affairs Council] had the opportunity to meet her and she gave us her account of the events in Belarus. We are really impressed by the courage and perseverance of the Belarusian people, especially Belarusian women, who show a real sense of leadership. Let me stress that we will support an inclusive national dialogue and the right of Belarusian people to free and fair elections.

This cannot be regarded as an interference in internal affairs. Because democracy and human rights are at the core of the European Union.

On Libya, after many months I see a reason for cautious optimism. There is a positive momentum, there is a ceasefire and we need to use it. We will talk about that, I will debrief the Council about my visit to Libya and my outreach also to the Egyptian government regarding Libya, and how can we support the peace efforts.

There are some concrete decisions regarding our sanctions list but I will talk about it in our afternoon press conference.

We will talk about the relationship with Africa, you know that the Summit has been delayed due to the coronavirus effects but we will continue working and reaching out to our African partners to face the new challenges such as the fight against the pandemic and economic recovery.

And we have many current affairs, I will talk about Venezuela and debrief my colleagues about the International Contact Group meeting and my conversations during the summer both with the government and the opposition.

During the lunch, we will pay a lot of attention to our Southern Neighbourhood.

As you see there is a very busy and interesting agenda. We will talk about the results of the discussions in the Council later in the afternoon.

Thank you.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-195261>

Article – Coming up: Belarus, migration, youth unemployment



Meeting with Belarus opposition leader

The exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya will [attend a foreign affairs committee meeting on Monday](#) to discuss the latest developments in the country with MEPs. Members will also adopt recommendations on how the EU should reassess its relations with Belarus following the [fraudulent presidential elections and the brutal crackdown of mass protests](#).

Monitoring the rule of law

On Tuesday, the [civil liberties committee](#) will vote on a legislative initiative regarding a permanent EU mechanism to monitor and prevent

backsliding on EU values in all member states. In a plenary resolution adopted on 17 September, Parliament pointed to overwhelming evidence of [breaches of rule of law in Poland](#).

Migration pact

On Thursday, the civil liberties committee will debate proposals for a new EU policy on asylum and migration with Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas and Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson. The Commission is expected to present the proposals on Wednesday as Commission President von der Leyen announced in her [State of the Union address](#) on 16 September.

Tackling youth unemployment

To mitigate the possible sharp rise of [youth unemployment in the EU](#) due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the employment and social affairs committee will vote on Monday on a resolution calling for [a swift reinforcement of the Youth Guarantee](#) and an increase in its financing.

Vaccines: safety, production, access

MEPs from the [public health](#) and the [industry](#) committees will hold a [public hearing](#) on Tuesday on [how to secure access to Covid-19 vaccines for everyone](#). They will discuss with researchers and representatives from pharmaceutical industry, academia, civil society and the European Medicines Agency, focusing on adequate clinical trials, speedy manufacturing, and distribution.

Multilingualism Day

Multilingualism is also about ensuring all Europeans can follow the work of their democratic representatives in any of the EU's 24 official languages. On Saturday, the Parliament celebrates [Multilingualism Day](#), inviting people to gain insight into the work and life of interpreters and translators. People can participate online in interactive workshops.

[**Give peace a chance: No to armed conflict, yes to political solu**](#)



The combat against the global pandemic has put into question our daily activities, the capacity of our health systems and our resilience to adapt and endure change. It has demonstrated the scale of our interdependence in a globalised world, making us understand that what affects others has an impact inside our borders.

The continuation of ongoing armed conflicts and the eruption of new conflicts violates international norms and reduces the space for dialogue. In the face of a common enemy, it is more important than ever to ensure the protection of citizens and to allow health professionals to do their work.

The outbreak of COVID-19 also exposes more fragilities across the globe, highlighting differences in societies, as well as putting into question the role of multilateralism.

“The current crisis is shaking the foundations of our societies and exposing the vulnerabilities of the most fragile countries. It has the potential to deepen existing conflicts and generate new geopolitical tensions. It is a reminder that peace, democracy and prosperity must constantly be nurtured, expanded, and made more inclusive”, the High Representative/Vice President **Josep Borrell** has stated on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War on European soil.

The EU on the frontline of peace promotion

Protecting international peace and security has been on the agenda of the European Union since its foundation. The EU was created on the grounds of a post-war European continent and as a peace project in itself, made possible through concerted dialogue as the only alternative to armed conflict.

The European Union and its Member States are engaged in all conflict theatres to assist resolution and raise awareness for prevention of conflict and promotion of peace in the United Nations Security Agenda. It is through

multilateralism that we are capable of enforcing respect for common international norms and mitigate conflict-relations.

As a global actor, the European Union assumes its responsibility for the promotion of peace, set on three interlinked essential pillars: peace building, conflict prevention, and mediation and dialogue.

1. Peace building

Peace building involves the use of all of the tools and instruments of the EU to address the underlying factors contributing to violent conflicts. The EU counts on peace building activities in several parts of the globe. The EU is the UN largest partner and aid donor: the EU and its Member States provide almost a third of the contributions to the United Nations' budget, to its funds and agencies.

The EU is also able to employ its wide array of external assistance instruments in support of conflict prevention and peace building.

2. Conflict prevention

Preventing the escalation to conflict situations is key to save populations from the impact of armed conflict, which cause immense human suffering and come at a huge economic and social cost.

The EU's external action for the prevention of conflict is based on early identification of risks of violent conflict, improved understanding of conflict situations, enhanced identification of the range of options for EU action and conflict-sensitive programming of external assistance.

As a concrete example, the [EU Conflict Early Warning System](#) is a risk management tool designed to close the gap between early warning and early action by engaging EU staff across headquarters and in-country, in a joint assessment process that leads to specific recommendations and follow-up for action.

3. Mediation and Dialogue

Peace Mediation is an essential part of the EU's on-the-ground preventive diplomacy, since the adoption of the 2009 [EU Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities](#).

The effectiveness and cost efficiency of mediation is incontestable and the EU is enhancing its mediation capacity to be more systematic and strategic in its approach to mediation activities. To achieve this goal and reinforce its capacities, the EEAS is updating the EU Mediation Concept in 2020, and developing guidelines to support EU mediators and implementing partners.

The EU engages in a range of mediation roles to support peace processes by for example leading mediation acting as a third party, opening up and facilitating spaces for dialogue, supporting mediation efforts of others through capacity building, training, coaching, logistical support, expertise, mediation opportunities assessments and options for engagements.

A selected team provides expertise with regard to mediation and mediation

support activities. The Mediation Support Team (MST) promotes the use of mediation and dialogue as a tool of first response to emerging and ongoing crisis.

Actors such as EU Special Representatives, Heads of Delegations, our Mediation Support Team and EEAS mediators are engaged in mediation efforts, alongside [EU Common Security and Defence Policy \(CSDP\) missions](#). These efforts range from high political level mediation meetings to political facilitation, training and capacity building, provision of expertise and the designing of specific confidence building measures that can assist conflict settlement. The EU is also, through its partners working on the ground, and particular women and youth active in dialogue processes involving civil society organisations at grassroots levels, in particular through the [Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace \(IcSP\)](#).

Adapting our actions

Actions on the ground may take different shapes and forms. The promotion of peace relies heavily on national, regional and local contexts. Today that is even truer, when coming out to the streets may increase the risk of COVID-19 contamination.

To mark the day, the EU Delegation in Sudan is organising an online concert, gathering 14 young Sudanese musicians. It is a moment to celebrate their ideas, dreams and their use of music and arts to call for peace in Sudan and the world and rejecting all kinds of violence.

High Representative **Josep Borrell** sees this as the time to reinforce our commitments to peace and security: “This is an opportunity to revitalise the peace and security agenda in terms of conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and strengthening of peacekeeping. We must guarantee humanitarian access to vulnerable populations and we must ensure effective global action on new security threats, including those that use cyber technologies. In all this, we must safeguard the fundamental freedoms and rights of our citizens.”

It is clear that joint work is now more important than ever. Combatting a virus that knows no borders should not be accompanied by armed conflict. The EU takes its responsibility in the promotion of multilateralism, a system built on common international norms, and on activity on the ground to prevent the eruption of armed conflict events.