

Speech by President Michel at the international conference on assistance and support to Beirut



This time yesterday **I was in the port of Beirut**, witnessing the immensity of the tragedy that hit the country. A tragedy that is beyond words, the images of which will remain in my memory forever.

I met **rescuers** from Lebanon, from Europe and from other countries, working around the clock in the devastated remains of the port. And I was impressed. Impressed by their courage and by their determination.

I met **survivors** of this catastrophe, some wounded, all in shock. And I was touched. Touched by their resilience.

I saw the **people**, most of them young, gathering in the streets, calling for a better future.

I had the opportunity to convey in person the **condolences** of Europe to the victims and their families and to express our **solidarity** with the people in Lebanon.

These difficult times call for urgent action. We have indeed to **focus in the first place on the immediate needs** of the people in Lebanon.

This is why the **EU has activated its emergency mechanisms**. It has already mobilised **33 million euros** and is offering **30 millions** more for the most urgent needs. More than **250 rescuers** from European Member States are on the ground. **Tons of emergency supplies** have been made available and more will follow. Commissioner Lenarcic will provide more details.

Together with the President of the European Commission, we called on all leaders of **Member States to intensify the support to Lebanon**. I was personally in contact with many of them. I can assure you, they all stand ready to help and to provide assistance to those who need it.

Secondly, we have to look to the future.

What struck me most yesterday was the need for confidence, the need for trust and the need to know the truth:

The people in Lebanon want to know the truth, they deserve transparency and justice. An **independent and credible inquiry** into the cause of this tragedy is therefore crucial. The European Union and its Member States stand ready to assist.

Confidence is also needed to create a political and economic environment based on accountability and transparency. It's high time to implement a

credible **reform agenda**, including in the financial sector, the energy sector and in terms of anti-corruption measures.

An **agreement with the International Monetary Fund** is urgently needed. This will help put Lebanon on a solid path towards a brighter economic future.

I called on the **Lebanese political authorities to work together**, overcome their differences and drive these reforms **for the good of the people**.

Confidence is key: **confidence of the people in their authorities** and **confidence of the international community in the real implementation of reforms in Lebanon**. We will be by the side of the people in Lebanon in the longer-term **reconstruction efforts** too, for the benefit of the country, for the benefit of the people.

With full solidarity and real political will, something good will follow from this tragedy.

I reiterate the promise I made yesterday to the people in Beirut:

You are not alone.

Europe is ready to act.

And you can count on us.

Check against delivery.

["The people in Lebanon can count on the European Union" – press release following President Charles Michel's visit to Beirut](#)



Charles Michel, President of the European Council, travelled to Beirut on 8 August 2020 to convey EU solidarity with the people in Lebanon after the devastating explosions on 4 August.

The President visited the Port of Beirut to witness the scale of the disaster. He called for an independent enquiry to shed light on the causes of this catastrophe and offered European expertise. During his visit, President Michel met with representatives of the Lebanese Red Cross and paid his respect to the rescue teams, including Europeans, working around the clock and showing tremendous courage.

I'm touched by the bravery of the Lebanese people who have been hit by this tragedy in an already difficult context. The EU is a long-standing friend and partner. We are in full solidarity with Lebanon more than ever in these difficult times.

Charles Michel

President Michel repeated the EU readiness to continue the provision of urgent assistance to help the people in Lebanon. The EU has already activated its emergency mechanisms. It has mobilised EUR 33 million for emergency needs and more than 250 rescuers from European Member States are on the ground. Tons of emergency supplies have been made available and more will follow. Together with the President of the European Commission, President Michel urged all EU Member States to intensify their support to Lebanon both for the immediate needs and for the longer-term reconstruction. It is key that assistance reaches those who need it.

During his visit, the President of the European Council met with President Michel Aoun, Speaker of the Parliament Nabih Berri and President of the Council of Ministers Hassan Diab. The unity and stability of Lebanon are all the more crucial today, both internally, and also for the whole region. President Michel also underlined the importance of structural reforms in line with the government's reform plan and Lebanon's international commitments and as called by the Lebanese people. An agreement with the International Monetary Fund is urgently needed. He therefore called for concrete steps to reform the financial system and to adopt anti-corruption measures.

Local political forces should seize the opportunity and unite around a national effort to respond to the immediate needs but also more long term challenges the country is facing. It's of critical importance for Lebanon to implement the fundamental structural reforms. The Lebanese can count on the European Union in this effort – but internal unity is key.

Charles Michel

[Lifting of travel restrictions: Council reviews the list of third countries](#)



Following a review under the recommendation on the gradual lifting of the

temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU, the Council updated the list of countries for which travel restrictions should be lifted. As stipulated in the Council recommendation, this list will continue to be reviewed regularly and, as the case may be, updated.

Based on the criteria and conditions set out in the recommendation, as from 8 August member states should **gradually lift the travel restrictions at the external borders for residents of the following third countries:**

- Australia
 - Canada
 - Georgia
 - Japan
 - New Zealand
 - Rwanda
 - South Korea
 - Thailand
 - Tunisia
 - Uruguay
- China, subject to confirmation of reciprocity

Residents of Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican should be considered as EU residents for the purpose of this recommendation.

The **criteria** to determine the third countries for which the current travel restriction should be lifted cover in particular the epidemiological situation and containment measures, including physical distancing, as well as economic and social considerations. They are applied cumulatively.

Regarding the **epidemiological situation**, third countries listed should meet the following criteria, in particular:

- number of new COVID-19 cases over the last 14 days and per 100 000 inhabitants close to or below the EU average (as it stood on 15 June 2020)
- stable or decreasing trend of new cases over this period in comparison to the previous 14 days
- overall response to COVID-19 taking into account available information, including on aspects such as testing, surveillance, contact tracing, containment, treatment and reporting, as well as the reliability of the information and, if needed, the total average score for International Health Regulations (IHR). Information provided by EU delegations on these aspects should also be taken into account.

Reciprocity should also be taken into account regularly and on a case-by-case basis.

For countries **where travel restrictions continue to apply**, the following **categories of people should be exempted** from the restrictions:

- EU citizens and their family members
- long-term EU residents and their family members

- travellers with an essential function or need, as listed in the Recommendation.

Schengen associated countries (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, Switzerland) also take part in this recommendation.

Next steps

The Council recommendation is not a legally binding instrument. The authorities of the member states remain responsible for implementing the content of the recommendation. They may, in full transparency, lift only progressively travel restrictions towards countries listed.

A Member State should not decide to lift the travel restrictions for non-listed third countries before this has been decided in a coordinated manner.

This **list of third countries should continue to be reviewed** regularly and may be further updated by the Council, as the case may be, after close consultations with the Commission and the relevant EU agencies and services following an overall assessment based on the criteria above.

Travel restrictions may be totally or partially lifted or reintroduced for a specific third country already listed according to changes in some of the conditions and, as a consequence, in the assessment of the epidemiological situation. If the situation in a listed third country worsens quickly, rapid decision-making should be applied.

Background

On 16 March 2020, the Commission adopted a communication recommending a temporary restriction of all non-essential travel from third countries into the EU for one month. EU heads of state or government agreed to implement this restriction on 17 March. The travel restriction was extended for a further month respectively on 8 April 2020 and 8 May 2020.

On 11 June the Commission adopted a communication recommending the further extension of the restriction until 30 June 2020 and setting out an approach for a gradual lifting of the restriction on non-essential travel into the EU as of 1 July 2020.

On 30 June the Council adopted a recommendation on the gradual lifting of the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU, including an initial list of countries for which member states should start lifting the travel restrictions at the external borders. This list was updated on 16 July and 30 July.

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Declaration by High Representative Josep Borrell, on behalf of the European Union, 9 August 2020



As we mark the International day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, the EU extends its solidarity to all indigenous peoples around the world at a time when their health, lives and livelihoods are endangered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Indigenous peoples are among those in the most vulnerable situation in face of the pandemic. Especially older persons, persons with underlying health conditions, persons with disabilities, women and children are at risk both in urban and rural areas, mainly due to pre-existing inequalities and disadvantages. Indigenous peoples are nearly three times more likely to live in extreme poverty compared to other population groups. They often lack access to health care and social services, water and sanitation, to education, and to decent work. Dispossession of lands, environmental degradation, displacement due to conflict and violence, and natural disasters is the reality for many.

In the fight against and the recovery from the pandemic, there is an urgent need to redouble global efforts to tackle the discrimination, racism and inequalities facing indigenous peoples. Response measures must be in accordance with international law, including of human rights law, and take account of the specific needs of indigenous peoples. Importantly, measures affecting indigenous peoples must be taken in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representatives and institutions.

This is why the EU is taking additional response measures aiding indigenous peoples. At the same time, we are continuing our long-standing support for indigenous peoples. The most recent examples include projects to empower Trio and Wajana communities in Suriname and tackling the discrimination indigenous peoples are facing in the Bouenza region in the Republic of Congo.

The recent devastating fires in the Amazon have exposed once more the detrimental impact of climate change on indigenous peoples. The respect and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples in the management and protection of biodiversity and in climate actions need to move to the top of our priorities. This was also a key message from the EU Roundtable with Indigenous Peoples' Experts and Representatives held in February of this year in Brussels. The exchanges of the Roundtable on how the EU can implement better its ambitious Green Deal will inspire the EU's future actions.

The International day is also an occasion to pay tribute to the resilience, ingenuity and resourcefulness of indigenous peoples. They are carriers of invaluable indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage. The EU is inspired by the many indigenous-led effective responses to the pandemic across the world. The EU will continue to work with indigenous peoples and with all our other partners, be they governments, international organisations or civil society, to build back together a better world leaving no one behind. A world where the full enjoyment of human rights by all prevails.

[‘We urge member states to intensify their support to Lebanon’ – joint letter of President Michel and President von der Leyen to the members of the European Council](#)



Dear colleagues,

On 4 August, the city of Beirut was hit by an immense tragedy, leading to the loss of many lives, many more injured and widespread damage across the city. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to the victims, the survivors and their families, who also include European nationals. We spoke both to President Aoun and to Prime minister Diab to offer our condolences and we assured them that Lebanon can count on solidarity from the EU.

We are grateful for the immediate support expressed by many of you and the assistance that has already been provided, notably through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism activated in the immediate aftermath of the explosion. The Commission and the Member States are working hard to provide the most adequate response to the tragedy.

The dramatic incident will have major economic consequences for a country that was already facing many challenges, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. We must keep in mind the strong partnership between the EU and Lebanon, a country of strategic importance which hosts the largest number of refugees per capita. We have committed to the stability of the country through economic assistance, support to Syrian refugees and recently, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, programmes strengthening the health system and addressing its socio-economic consequences.

But with the dramatic humanitarian and reconstruction needs that have now

arisen, our solidarity – and that of the whole international community – will be needed more than ever before. We have a common interest in acting now to limit the fall-out of this tragedy.

We therefore invite you to intensify your support to Lebanon both on the immediate needs, but also with a view to the longer-term reconstruction of the country.

In order to ensure efficiency and swift delivery, we stand ready to ensure the synergy of the aid that you and the EU as a whole will provide to Lebanon, through a coordination mechanism that the EU institutions will put in place.

Together, we as EU must contribute to the road to recovery that lies ahead.