

# Intervention du président Charles Michel en compagnie du premier ministre grec Mitsotakis à Athenes



Monsieur le premier ministre, très cher Kyriakos, c'est un plaisir pour moi d'être de retour en Grèce, de retour en particulier à Athènes. C'est la deuxième comme président du Conseil européen que j'ai l'occasion de venir dans ton pays. La première fois, c'était pour redire le soutien de l'Union européenne lorsque, au mois de mars, une pression très forte a été portée sur la question migratoire. Je dis "en particulier", parce qu'être présent ici, en Grèce, à Athènes, dans le berceau de la démocratie, ça me rappelle les plus jeunes années lorsque, étudiant en Belgique, j'apprenais le latin et le grec. J'étais bercé par cette culture extraordinaire, par cette méthodologie qui a eu un impact tellement fort sur le projet européen qui nous rassemble et qui nous mobilise les uns et les autres. Ce socle commun de valeurs – l'État de droit, la démocratie, le respect des libertés personnelles – est le fondement de cette ambition politique qui est partagée.

Je voudrais à mon tour adresser quelques commentaires sur les quelques points que tu as mentionnés.

Le premier point, naturellement: la question migratoire est un défi pour l'Union européenne. Ce n'est pas un défi pour quelques États membres qui sont en première ligne, c'est au-delà de cela, la nécessité de trouver la capacité avec l'ensemble des États membres pour adresser une réponse qui soit juste, qui soit forte et qui soit efficace. Être mobilisés pour faire reculer la migration illégale, être mobilisés pour progresser afin qu'on ait davantage de convergences dans nos systèmes d'accueil des migrants et dans le système qui vise à octroyer le droit d'asile lorsque les conditions sont rencontrées. Être plus efficace en termes de politique de retour pour ceux qui ne rentrent pas dans les critères qui sont fixés. Et organiser cette démonstration de solidarité d'un côté, mais également de responsabilité, et, tu l'as évoqué, nous aurons l'occasion de poursuivre le débat dans l'enceinte européenne pour une réponse davantage européenne, au départ des propositions que la Commission européenne mettra sur la table très prochainement, avant la fin du mois. Et nous pourrons, je l'espère, progresser de manière plus opérationnelle, plus concrète.

J'aurai l'occasion de visiter, en compagnie de membres du gouvernement, l'île de Lesbos. Parce que je voulais voir de mes propres yeux quelle est la réalité à laquelle nous sommes confrontés. Je veux d'emblée dire à quel point nous mesurons la prise de responsabilité de ton gouvernement face à cet événement qui est un événement extrêmement brutal, et la capacité en quelques heures, en quelques jours, d'apporter des réponses. Je veux te dire aussi la mobilisation de l'Union européenne pour venir en soutien, en solidarité, et en concordance avec les priorités qui sont les tiennes sur l'île de Lesbos, en lien avec la situation à laquelle vous êtes, et à laquelle nous sommes,

confrontés.

Le deuxième point évoqué: le prochain sommet européen sera particulièrement consacré à la situation de la Méditerranée orientale et aux relations entre l'Union européenne et la Turquie. Tu l'as évoqué et je veux l'affirmer ici: la question de la stabilité, la question de la sécurité en Méditerranée et spécialement en Méditerranée orientale, la question de la prédictibilité de nos relations extérieures, n'est pas seulement l'affaire de la Grèce ou de Chypre, c'est l'affaire de l'Union européenne. Je veux dire formellement, solennellement, la solidarité de l'Union européenne, parce que nous considérons que tous les États membres doivent être respectés.

Et c'est ça aussi le sens de ma présence ici: c'est d'affirmer ce message sans ambiguïté et c'est aussi, comme nous avons commencé et nous allons continuer à le faire, de travailler ensemble de manière intense, constructive et précise pour voir comment nous pouvons progresser et progresser avec une double démarche. D'une part, nous sommes prêts à être fermes, à être stricts pour faire respecter des principes qui sont essentiels pour nous et pour nos États membres, pour la Grèce et pour Chypre.

Et d'autre part, nous sommes prêts également à ouvrir les bras pour montrer qu'un agenda positif est possible, s'il y a une volonté commune de respecter des principes qui sont à nos yeux extrêmement essentiels. Ce sera un point majeur qui sera débattu au sommet de l'Union européenne au travers du prochain Conseil européen, le 24 et le 25. Nous allons donc activement continuer à travailler tout au long des prochains jours pour préparer convenablement cette réunion afin que ce soit l'occasion d'affirmer l'unité de l'Union européenne, d'affirmer aussi la force de l'Union européenne parce que nous considérons effectivement que cela relève de l'intérêt stratégique de l'Union européenne. Garantir la désescalade et garantir plus de stabilité et plus de sécurité, c'est le sens de l'approche que nous voulons développer.

Je salue ton implication, je salue ton engagement et je voudrais aussi dire que nous débattons de cette idée d'une conférence multilatérale parce que là, au-delà du dialogue bilatéral, il y a la nécessité, probablement, de mettre autour de la table les différents pays afin d'aborder les différents sujets. Les questions maritimes sont un sujet, il y en a d'autres: les questions énergétiques, les questions de sécurité, les questions de développement économique, de coopération dans différents domaines doivent pouvoir aussi être abordés, s'il devait y avoir cette volonté constatée avec sincérité d'aller de l'avant dans un agenda qui soit plus positif et plus prévisible qu'il ne l'a été ces derniers temps.

Enfin, il y a un troisième point que je voudrais mettre en œuvre, mettre en évidence brièvement. Au mois de juillet, l'Union européenne avec un sommet historique par sa longueur, quatre jours et quatre nuits, a adressé un signal fort de confiance et d'optimisme face aux citoyens européens, mais aussi à l'adresse du reste du monde. Ensemble, nous sommes mobilisés pour engager 1.800 milliards d'euros, pour apporter une réponse forte et dans l'unité à un défi auquel nous sommes confrontés, le défi du COVID-19. Nous allons donc continuer à travailler ensemble pour gérer aussi bien que possible cette crise qui nous frappe et faire en sorte que l'on puisse se relever le plus

vite possible sur le plan économique. Je te remercie.

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## Arms exports: Remarks by the High Representative/Vice-President



*Check against delivery!*

I would like to start by thanking Ms [Hannah] Neumann and Members who have contributed to this important resolution on European arms export. I think it includes many useful suggestions that will help me to deal with a difficult subject like this on a more convergent, transparent and responsible way.

Decisions on arms export receive great attention and are politically sensitive because, indeed, trade in arms may potentially carry the risk of serious breaches for human rights, humanitarian law and regional stability. Most of the times the three things together.

A strict implementation by Member States of the agreed Common Position on arms export is, therefore, essential to uphold European Union values and strategic objectives. As you state in your Report, this is also crucial for our credibility as a geopolitical player. A high level of convergence as regards its full application will indeed more effectively ensure respect for human rights and international law by all parties involved.

I think we can say that we, the European Union, are moving fast in the field of defence: European Defence Fund (EDF) and European Peace Facility (EPF) will serve to strengthen internal collaboration on defence matters to make the European Union a more capable security provider at the global level. Our defence industries will become ever closer intertwined, they will strengthen our strategic autonomy, the protection of our citizens, while fostering innovation and saving costs. All that is right, but at the same time, in this context, further convergence of arms export policies becomes still more important.

As mentioned in your draft resolution, maintaining a vibrant and innovative defence industry in the European Union is a key component of our strategic autonomy and our European defence. It serves to ensure our capabilities and reduce dependency, while the defence industry is also a major source of technological innovation.

I may give you more examples: in 2018, it generated more €100 billion of revenues and supported more than 400,000 jobs in Europe. To ensure a thriving defence industry, exports are essential.

Of course, the defence industry is different from other industrial sectors and deserves a special consideration, taking into account its obvious links to national and international security, human rights and humanitarian values. That is why the European Union Member States have also exported control rules in place for military equipment, since 2008.

Under the Common Position on arms export, Member States assess arms export license applications, against a number of criteria established to ensure our strategic interests and also our values. A review of this text was finalised last year. The Council agreed that the Common Position still serves its purpose, but introduced some changes to bring the text in line with the adopted Arms Trade Treaty, and other recent developments.

Honourable Members,

In your own assessment on the Common Position on arms export control, you stress three key objectives: the need for increased control, convergence and transparency.

First, on your support for an increased control. Let me start by saying that I am grateful your report welcomes Operation IRINI's objective to implement the United Nations arms embargo on Libya. This is a concrete example of what the European Union does to prevent arms ending up in the wrong hands.

Further, as a global actor, the European Union supports outreach activities to assist countries in the European neighbourhood and beyond, in setting up arms export control mechanisms and implementing the Arms Trade Treaty.

Second, on transparency. The European Union Member States are already among the most transparent countries, including in arms export. Still, in order to increase the possibility for further scrutiny and accountability, I am glad to say that, this year, the European External Action Service will launch a public searchable database on its website, to allow all stakeholders to consult and analyse Member States' arms exports in a user-friendly way. So, everybody will be able to know what the Member States arms export is about in a way that everybody could know whatever data they want about it.

Third and last, increased convergence. Member States are holding regular exchanges to share information on policies, denial of licenses and possible measures. As a concrete result, a new initiative has been launched and the Working Party on Arms Export is currently preparing a Council Decision to set rules on end-user certificates for the export of small arms and light weapons

and their ammunition.

Honourable Members,

Let me conclude by anticipating that the next annual European Union arms export report on 2019 will become available shortly; probably next month, in October -two months earlier than in previous years. It will bring a lot of precious information about these developments.

I would like to thank you for your attention. I am looking forward to hearing your points of view.

Thank you very much.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-194774>

### **Closing remarks**

Thank you President.

I understand your criticism, I heard some interesting points, let me summarize some of your points.

First, criticism on export from Member States to sensitive destinations. Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have been mentioned.

But as one of the Members [of the European Parliament] who participated in the debate rapidly remembered, decisions when issuing export licenses are taken at the national level. There isn't anything we can do from the European Commission. This is a decision that is taken at the national level, but we can call for more convergence in arms export policy, as the Member States implement it. On that I agree completely. We are together because we think we can behave together in accordance with international rules which reflect our values. It is a Member States competence but we need more convergence on the way these Member States implement this competence.

You have also called for an arms embargo for specific destinations. I could also agree but an arms embargo to specific destinations requires unanimity in the Council. You should be aware of that, and you know how difficult it is to have unanimity today. We can try to agree on arms but then you have to implement them, and the experience shows how difficult it is to do so, as we try to do it with Operation Irini in Libya. First, unanimity, then the willingness to really implement the decision.

Honorary members, Ms President,

Military weapons have an indispensable role in the preservation of security, freedom and peace, provided they are used in accordance with International Law, Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law. You cannot pretend to have security and to protect freedom and peace without having military resources, but you have to use them in accordance with the law, and weapons of war are by definition capable of inflicting death and destruction.

This ambivalence means that governments that export weapons must ensure that they are traded and used in a responsible and accountable way, and prevent their diversion to terrorists, criminals and other unauthorised users. This must remain our ambition, to control the use of these weapons so they are not misused. But by definition weapons inflict death and destruction and our role is to try to be sure that they are used in accordance with the rules of war and with the rules that protect human rights.

Accountability for arms export decisions can only take place when authorities are transparent. The European Union does all it can to ensure that utmost transparency is being upheld. This enables national parliaments, civil society, and also the European Parliament to hold informed debates.

The Council and the Parliament clearly agree that the strengthening of the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base should be accompanied by closer cooperation and convergence in the control of exports of military technology and equipment.

I will continue working on the process of increased convergence and promoting more transparency in arms export in the framework of the competences of the Commission and of the High Representative.

Thank you.

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## [Lebanon: Remarks by the High Representative / Vice-President Jos](#)



*Check against delivery!*

Honourable Members [of the European Parliament],

Let us now focus – as you have requested – on the difficult situation in Lebanon.

As you know, there was a devastating explosion on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August in Beirut that struck the country in the financial, economic, and political dimension. The situation is compounded by the [coronavirus] pandemic and the consequences of the conflict in Syria, including the fact that Lebanon has been hosting over a million Syrian refugees for many years now. Last week, additionally, we witnessed a huge fire in the port of Beirut.

I am proud to say that our response to the explosion was swift and solid. We mobilised civil protection, immediate humanitarian and crisis response in the amount of €63 million. Our civil protection mechanism mobilised 17 Member States plus Norway and Turkey, with search and rescue teams and medical care providing life-saving assistance.

Our determination is strong and clear. The European Union is a long-standing partner and a major donor of humanitarian, development and other assistance to Lebanon and we remain committed to assisting the Lebanese people in the upcoming period.

Going forward, and as called for by President Macron during his visit on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September, we want to quickly see the formation of a capable, representative and accountable Lebanese government. It should deliver on a credible reform agenda as the Lebanese people has long been claiming. Concrete steps to reform the financial system and to adopt anti-corruption measures remain vital. As important are the reforms of the electricity sector and public procurement.

Lebanon also needs to reach an agreement with the International Monetary Fund in order to solve its deep economic crisis. It is also a precondition for a possible Macro-Financial Assistance programme from the European Union. We cannot do that without an agreement with the International Monetary Fund first.

We have recently finalised with the World Bank and the United Nations a joint Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment for rehabilitation and reconstruction, and work continues on its operationalisation. This should help to provide assistance in the future, and we will continue to apply safeguards to ensure that funds reach the intended beneficiaries. That is what the people of Lebanon asked, to give the help directly to the people in need. They do not seem to rely very much or to trust a lot their institutions and government.

Finally, an independent and credible investigation into the explosion should be conducted – and we stand ready to help.

We want to help Lebanon, but Lebanon must also do its part and urgently proceed to implement longstanding reforms.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-194060>

### **Closing remarks**

We require from Lebanon to implement reforms, helping to ensure the stability of the country and the stability of the region. We allocate the resources we

have, but you know that we are at the end of the financial perspective, and as long as we do not have new resources, we cannot do more than what we are doing.

Some of you asked to change the position on Hezbollah. For the time being, the EU position on Hezbollah remains unchanged: the military wing of Hezbollah is under our sanctions regime. The presence of Hezbollah in the government is not new. We are convinced that engaging in a constructive dialogue with all political parties is a way of strengthening Lebanon's institutions, including the Lebanese Armed Forces, state security agencies, and this is key for the stability of Lebanon and the Middle East. To change the position on Hezbollah would require once again unanimity of all Member States and this is not the case.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-195015>

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## [Russia / Poisoning of Alexei Navalny: Remarks by the High Repres](#)



*Check against delivery!*

### **Opening remarks**

Let us have a look at the situation – as you have requested – in Russia, particularly at the poisoning of the opposition leader, Mr Alexei Navalny, which has shocked all of us.

I would like to take this opportunity to transmit once again my best wishes to him and his family and the fact that we condemn in the strongest possible terms this assassination attempt – because these are the words that we have to use, assassination attempt.



I personally issued two statements immediately after these events happened, [on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August](#) and [on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September](#), and the 27 EU Member States issued a [Declaration on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September](#).

The German government confirmed, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September, that Mr Navalny has been poisoned by a military chemical. Yesterday we learnt that French and Swedish laboratories have ratified this conclusion.

There is now irrefutable evidence that a nerve agent of the “Novichok” group, similar to the one used in the assassination attempt on Sergei and Yulia Skripal in March 2018, was used to try to assassinate Mr Navalny.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances, constitutes a serious breach of international law and international human rights standards.

We keep calling upon the Russian authorities to cooperate fully in this investigation and particularly with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

This is what I have to inform you of, distinguished Members of the European Parliament.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-194060>

### **Closing remarks**

*Check against delivery!*

[We continue calling on Russia to investigate this crime](#) through a fully transparent procedure, under the auspices of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We can expect that the poisoning of Mr [Alexei] Navalny will have an impact on European Union-Russia relations. We are going to discuss that in the next Foreign Affairs Council.

Some of you talk about the possibility of this affecting Nord Stream 2. Once again, this is something that is outside of the possibilities of the European institutions. What I can tell you is that the European Commission has never shown a lot of enthusiasm about this pipeline, which from the Commission we have been considering as not a relevant priority infrastructure. But it is something that is up to the Member States that have been pushing for this infrastructure to be built. As I said, there is the scepticism of the Commission, which has never shown strong support for it.

Finally, about the possibility of sanctioning Russia with a kind of “Magnitsky-style” [human rights sanctions] regime: When I took office, I immediately launched [\[negotiations for\] a global human rights sanctions regime](#), which has been discussed once again at the last Foreign Affairs Council. [There are] continued discussions in the Council. The legal acts are currently being drafted.

I hope that what has happened to Mr Navalny will represent an encouragement for Member States to stop discussing and start acting and approving this

human rights sanctions regime that, in the same way that the Americans call it the “Magnitsky Act”, we could call it the “Navalny sanctions regime”. This could be a good way of taking stock of what has happened and keep in the records for the future the name of Mr Navalny associated to a sanctions regime for people who violated human rights.

Mr President, thank you very much.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-195015>

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## [Belarus: Remarks by the High Representative / Vice-President Jos](#)



### **Opening remarks**

*Check against delivery!*

Thank you Mr President, Honourable Members,

You have invited me to address the [European Parliament] plenary on three very important foreign affairs issues. All of them together is going to be a lot of work and not enough time to deal with them as much as needed. But let us try to summarise what has been, indeed, a summer of crisis.

Let us start with Belarus. The situation is clear for us. We consider the elections on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August fraudulent. We do not recognise Lukashenko as the legitimate President of Belarus.

I appreciate the support that this Parliament has demonstrated for the rights of the Belarusian people, as well as for the actions taken until now by the European Union.

But the brutal crackdown continues. More than 7,500 peaceful protesters have

been detained. 500 cases of torture have been recorded and documented. All Presidium members of the Coordination Council have been arrested or forced into exile, with the exception of Nobel Prize Laureate Ms [Sviatlana] Alexievich.

We have reacted covering four pillars of action.

First, adopting sanctions. We are in the process of adopting sanctions for a substantial number of those responsible for violence, repression and falsification of election results. They are, right now, under examination of the Council working parties with a view to adoption as soon as possible. "As soon as possible" – what does it mean? They should be adopted before the European Council if we want to keep the European credibility. We are trying to apply a gradual approach, and if the situation further deteriorates, additional sanctions will be envisaged.

Secondly, we call on the Belarusian authorities to find a way out of the crisis by ending violence and unlawful detentions, and by establishing an inclusive national dialogue. We continue to stress that we are ready to support any credible initiative in this direction. For example, the offer of the OSCE Chair in Office to visit Minsk could help to resolve the crisis. We stress the fact that, from our point of view, the re-run of elections under OSCE's supervision would be the best solution, but so far it has been impossible for us to reach out to the Belarusian authorities on this issue at any level.

The single-minded determination of Lukashenko to stay in power – with the, apparently, increasing support of Moscow – makes all this difficult. You know that there was a meeting between Lukashenko and Putin on Monday (15 September), yesterday. It seems from this meeting that the support of Russia to Belarus – to Lukashenko – continues.

Thirdly, we are committed to strengthening the engagement with the Belarusian people and civil society. President von der Leyen announced €53 million allocated to Belarus. Funds have been made immediately available to the victims of violence, and we try to provide support to independent media.

Finally, we are conducting a review of European Union-Belarus relations. We are identifying areas where contacts should be suspended or scaled back; areas where our interest is to engage and even intensify contacts in support of the Belarusian people and civil society; and, finally, areas where we can assist further if there is a move towards a new, democratic Belarus.

I want to stress these three areas: where we can suspend or scale back, where we can engage, and where we can assist further.

This is, telegraphically, what I can say about the Belarusian situation.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-194060>

## **Closing remarks**

*Check against delivery!*

Thank you Mr President, thank you honourable members for all your contributions to this debate. I do not have a lot of time to summarise.

We are using all the tools that we have at our disposal to contribute to the end of the violent repression that has been developing in Belarus after the [elections, which we do not consider to have legitimately elected \[Alexander Lukashenko \[as President\]\]](#).

We [support](#) a peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis through political engagement, restrictive measures, and increased support to civil society and independent media. This is what we can do and that is what we are doing. Do not ask for things that are out of the competences of the European institutions. Sometimes you ask for decisions that belong to [the competence of] Member States, for which I am sorry but I cannot feel responsible. I try to work within the framework of the treaties for the European and the capacities we have. And believe me it is not always easy.

We are still discussing sanctions on Belarus and my main purpose is to try to see them approved with an agreement in the technical working groups of the Council, in order to have it approved before the European Council. But we will continue engaging on the situation with Belarus with all the tools at our disposal.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-195015>