



**19th Inter-Parliamentary Conference
for the Common Foreign and Security Policy
and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/CSDP)**

9 September 2021

via video conference

Joint statement by the Co-Chairs

Preliminary remarks

The 19th Inter-parliamentary Conference (IPC) for the CFSP/CSDP was held in the context of the parliamentary dimension of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council on 9 September 2021. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the event was held for the third time via video conference. It was attended by parliamentarians from the EU Member States and the European Parliament. Also taking part were parliamentarians from EU candidate and potential candidate countries, and the European member countries of NATO that are not EU members, namely Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, and the United Kingdom.

We, the co-chairs of the 19th IPC:

1. Note that recent international developments and challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, have thoroughly challenged the world we live in and are affecting key aspects of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Stress that the EU needs to act on the global stage with a common strategic culture to become an even more important global player and to actively push for the strengthening of multilateralism.
2. Consider the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic as an accelerator of changes in the international environment and recall the opportunity for the EU to redefine its international agenda in order to address the new geopolitical challenges.
3. Stress the fundamental importance of the EU's internal and external resilience, reinforcing cooperation with like-minded partners, developing new partnerships, and strengthening the EU's multilateral vision on a global scale. Underline the

importance of the EU's strategic sovereignty, built on openness, multilateralism, and the rules-based global order.

4. Note that the COVID-19 crisis has shown the need to step up multilateral cooperation, particularly in global health governance and economic recovery. Call for further support of the partners worldwide in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic by addressing the immediate health emergencies and humanitarian needs, strengthening health systems, and supporting the economic recovery.
5. Welcome the continuous efforts of the Team Europe and Coronavirus Global Response initiatives, such as COVAX Facility, which are helping partner countries to tackle the impact of the pandemic. Call for further support of COVAX, as the vehicle for delivering on international vaccine solidarity.
6. Acknowledge the seriousness of geopolitical and security implications of the withdrawal of international forces from **Afghanistan** for the country, its immediate surroundings, and the international community as a whole. Express concern for the threats that may emerge in this unpredictable security environment and thus call on all parties to respect the principles of international law, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law. Stress the need for those in positions of power and authority across Afghanistan to hold responsibility and accountability for the protection of human life and property and for the immediate restoration of security and civil order. Reiterate that Afghan women and girls, as all Afghan people, deserve to live in safety, security and dignity and welcome the broad international support for their the rights and freedoms which are an integral part of the life of the lives of women and girls in Afghanistan for the past twenty years. Call for greater engagement of the international community to prevent and manage potential risks associated with an unstable Afghanistan.
7. Reiterate the call for accelerating a credible EU **enlargement process** and putting clear focus on strengthening democracy, the rule of law and human rights as well as on fostering reconciliation in the Western Balkans. Encourage all countries in the Western Balkan region to implement the reforms aimed to improve the institutional and socio-economic situation. Welcome the active participation in regional cooperation initiatives, including the commitment to a common regional market as a step on the EU path. Call for increased efforts to build stronger political will among the Member States regarding the enlargement to the Western Balkans and to ensure that the citizens of the region are more closely associated with the EU and simultaneously benefit from the accession process. Call upon the EU to speed up the involvement of the countries in the region into cohesion policies and foreign affairs issues. Are convinced that modernised Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) must improve visibility of the EU funding in the region and bring a tangible impact on the ground through enhanced conditionality.

8. Call on the High Representative, the Council, and the Member States to make the **full integration of the Western Balkan countries in the EU's foreign, security and defence policy** a priority under the Strategic Compass. Stress the urgency of holding the first intergovernmental conferences with North Macedonia and Albania. Recall in that context that the EU should be the first "partner of choice" in order to promote peace, security, and progress in the region. Underline that the Western Balkan countries should benefit from EU-level security and defence cooperation, such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation and the European Defence Fund.
9. Underline that close cooperation with the Western Balkan region, including in the CFSP/CSDP domain, is in the strategic interest of the EU. The enhancement of regional partnerships with the countries of the Western Balkans through the CSDP is an additional opportunity to reaffirm the importance of the European perspective of the entire region and an investment in a safer and stronger Europe. The strengthening of partnership and structured dialogue with Western Balkan countries within the CSDP along with the involvement of the region in the EU defence projects and initiatives will contribute to an enhanced defence cooperation. In addition, it will increase the EU's capacity and capability as a reliable international security actor. This joint cooperation will enable better inclusion of the whole region by sharing common strategic culture and building common security capacities of the Union and its neighbours. The intensified cooperation will be an upgrade of the already established partnership within the CSDP missions and operations with the Western Balkan countries, both in the region and beyond.
10. Stress that the **Strategic Compass** has the ambition of developing a new approach to security and defence partnerships with international organisations and third countries. So far, dialogues under the Compass process have reiterated the need to build a flexible and tailor-made partnership framework that considers the specificities of each partner and the importance of its contribution to EU actions. In this context, developing a tailor-made approach to partnerships with the Western Balkans should be a priority. Indeed, the integration of the Western Balkans in the EU remains a key strategic objective and it is in the shared interest of the Union and the region to support its further Euro-Atlantic integration. Building on the work of the 2018 Sofia Priority Agenda and the 2021 European External Action Service's non-paper on the EU's reinforced engagement with the Western Balkans on the CSDP and the CFSP, the Strategic Compass provides an opportunity to achieve closer engagement and deeper dialogue with the region and the EU candidate countries.
11. Stress that **cyber security**, with the acceleration of digitisation, automation, robotics, and the introduction of artificial intelligence, has become one of the most important components of global security. Highlight the need for resilience of critical infrastructure and the economy, as well as security of users of digital technologies. Call to enhance the EU's efforts and investments to detect, contain, adapt to, manage, and prevent and appropriately tackle the ever more frequent and sophisticated cyber threats and risks. Encourage the creation and

implementation of international cyber security standards and norms to become able to ensure a global, open, and secure cyberspace.

12. Highlight the importance of the full implementation of the **EU-UK** Withdrawal Agreement as well as the Trade and Cooperation Agreement and of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, which is an agreement that protects the integrity of the Internal Market and the indivisibility of the four freedoms and limits the negative consequences of the UK's withdrawal from the EU by providing legal certainty for citizens and businesses. Welcomes steps towards the establishment of a Parliamentary Partnership Assembly for Members of the European and UK Parliaments, as foreseen by the Agreement. Express hopes that foreign policy cooperation will be further developed and strengthened in areas of common concern.
13. Underline the need to strengthen the **EU-US transatlantic cooperation** on the basis of equal partnership. Emphasise the need for global promotion of common democratic values with a tendency to rebuild and reinvigorate the multilateral rule-based international order, with the UN system at its centre and with respect of international law, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law. Fully support and commit to pursue synergies and shared foreign and security objectives through further deepening of cooperation in the framework of the EU-US transatlantic dialogue. In this regard, stress the value of transatlantic cooperation for the security and stability of the EU's eastern and southern neighbourhood, the Western Balkans, and the African continent, and call for regular dialogue and consultations to this effect. Emphasise the importance of common cyber resilience promotion, close cooperation on the use of new technologies and artificial intelligence, and the need to deepen legislative cooperation and establish stronger structures.
14. Closely monitor the political developments in **Russia**, which are directly affecting the security of the EU and its immediate neighbourhood. Reiterate that the main interest of the EU is to maintain freedom, stability, and peace on the European continent and beyond. Underline that closer coordination, cooperation, and unity among the EU Member States are necessary in order to maintain a constructive dialogue with the Russian authorities based on the five guiding principles. Note that besides the traditional selective strategic engagement with the Russian authorities, a dialogue with the Russian civil society should be promoted in order to foster a positive impact on the development of democratic standards and practices.
15. Deplore that one year after the fraudulent presidential election in **Belarus**, the Lukashenka regime continues its brutal crackdown against opposition figures, independent media and civil society representatives. Condemn the weaponization of illegal migration by the regime to carry out hybrid attacks on Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, thereby violating the European Union's external borders. Support the extensive restrictive measures introduced by the EU in response to the serious human rights violations in Belarus. Reiterate our united

and unwavering support to the democratic forces and the brave people of Belarus in their quest for dignity and freedom.

16. Recommend to develop a more assertive, comprehensive, and consistent **EU-China** strategy that unites all Member States and shapes relations with China in the interest of the EU as a whole, with the defence of our values at its core and promoting a rule-based multilateral order. Underline that the strategy needs to take into account the multifaceted nature of the EU's relations with China. Highlight that China is a cooperation and a negotiating partner for the EU, but also an economic competitor, and a systemic rival in an increasing number of areas. Suggest that this strategy should be based on the following principles: open dialogue and cooperation on global challenges; enhanced engagement on universal values, international norms, and human rights; analysis and identification of the risks, vulnerabilities and challenges; building partnerships with like-minded partners especially in the Indo-Pacific region; fostering open strategic autonomy, including in trade and investment relations as well as defence and promotion of core European interests and values.
17. Reiterate that the EU's priority is to actively engage in a revival of the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action** (JCPoA) as a matter of security for Europe and the region. Underline that the JCPoA is our only way to stop Iran's worrying nuclear activities. Urge the new Irani leadership to halt all activities in violation of the JCPoA without delay and to return to the negotiations in Vienna as soon as possible with a view to bringing them to a swift and successful conclusion.
18. Call to further step-up synergies and coherence between all the legal and political frameworks on which the **EU-Africa** relations are based in order to be more effective and sustainable, with a stronger long-term, multi-faceted and multi-sectoral partnership. Stress the importance of addressing more effectively the nexus between security, food and health security, climate change and migration. Call for a swift ratification of the new Partnership Agreement between the EU and the members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (post-Cotonou-Agreement). Recall that Africa is an important partner in multilateral fora in which we need to reform the multilateral decision-making bodies to make them more just and representative, which is crucial to find solutions to our common global challenges. Stress that the EU needs to develop a strategic and long-term response to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, which should be guided by our shared values and needs articulated by our African neighbours.
19. Encourage solidarity and efforts of the EU Member States and institutions to improve the **EU's ability to respond to crises**, especially considering the growing frequency and severity of natural and man-made disasters in recent years, not least because of the negative consequences of climate change. In light of recent disasters that include the COVID-19 pandemic, the wildfires in Greece, Italy and Spain, and the deadly floods in Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, stress the importance of the Solidarity

Clause which enables the EU and its Member States to act jointly in assisting another Member State that is a victim of a natural or man-made disaster.

20. Emphasise the need to upgrade the existing **crisis response mechanisms** and urge the Member States to reconsider the existing restrictive approach to the implementation of the Solidarity Clause. Consider that the respective Council Decision on the implementation of the Solidarity Clause is inadequate and does not provide a sufficient ground for the EU and the Member States to prepare and act in a coordinated manner in cases of natural or man-made disasters. Call on the relevant EU institutions to review the current set-up of the EU's disaster crisis management and report on their findings. For this purpose and based on the military dimension of the Solidarity Clause, call on the relevant EU institutions to explore the manner in which Member States' military capabilities are integrated with their civil crisis response capabilities and the manner in which these could be utilised across the EU in the event that a Member State invokes the Solidarity Clause.

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