



The Diplomatic Service of the European Union

[EEAS](#) > [Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific](#)

Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific

🕒 22.02.2022 📍 Paris

On 22 February 2022, the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell Fontelles, co-organised in Paris a Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific bringing together the European institutions, the Foreign affairs ministers, or their representatives, from the 27 EU Foreign Ministers and around 30 from the Indo-Pacific region, as well as Representatives of the regional organisations from both Indian ocean and Pacific ocean (see list of participants in annex). This event was organised on the occasion of the French Presidency of the Council and following the adoption, in September 2021, of the **EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific**.

The Ministerial Forum was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, and by Mr. Josep Borrell, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission.

Discussions during the meeting helped to identify ideas and avenues for cooperation between the EU and its Indo-Pacific partners in the light of the recently adopted EU Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Global Gateway Strategy.

The Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific highlighted the shared ambition among participants to:

Work together for peace, prosperity and sustainable and inclusive development in Europe and the Indo-Pacific;

Reaffirm their commitment to a rules-based international order, democratic values and principles, as well as to the strengthening of multilateralism and the rule of law, respect for

international law, and freedom of navigation, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);

Promote the development of the Indo-Pacific region and to strengthen the ties between the EU and Indo-Pacific partners through cooperation and solidarity actions building on our shared commitments including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate change and the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD);

Strengthen their cooperation in a number of areas and to continue their exchanges on the avenues identified, in particular, in the framework of three round tables held during the Ministerial Forum, on: i) security and defence; ii) connectivity and digital issues and iii) global issues such as climate change, the preservation of biodiversity and oceans, and health.

The EU participants reiterated the importance of the Indo-Pacific region for Europe and underlined their support for an increased and long-term engagement of the EU and its Member States through concrete actions. The role of the outermost regions and European overseas countries and territories in the Indo-Pacific was highlighted in this respect.

In the field of security and defence, the EU announced the extension of the concept of a coordinated maritime presence in the north-west Indian Ocean. This will allow the EU to further support stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region, to optimise naval deployments, to promote coherence of European action and to facilitate the exchange of information and cooperation with partners in the Indo-Pacific, including by conducting joint maritime exercises and port calls. Furthermore, the EU reaffirmed its determination to enhance its engagement in security and defence with partners in the region, for example through strengthening its dialogues and bilateral relationships. In addition, the EU reaffirmed its commitment to:

- deepen existing cooperation programmes, aimed at carrying out capacity-building actions with the Indo-Pacific partners, in particular through the **ESIWA** programme (Enhancing Security Cooperation In and With Asia), in the field of counter-terrorism, cyber, maritime security and crisis management;
- promote maritime domain awareness, notably through the IORIS information exchange platform of the **CRIMARIO** project (Critical Maritime Routes in the Indo-Pacific), the extension of which to the Pacific Ocean will be explored in the coming months.

On **cybersecurity**, in particular the importance of the UN normative framework for responsible state behaviour, the framework of international and regional instruments on organised crime and cybercrime including the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime as well

as the strengthening of cyber resilience were discussed; the EU took this opportunity to promote its 5G toolbox and the prospects for cooperation with the Indo-Pacific countries that it offers.

In the area of connectivity, the importance of a sustainable, inclusive and rules-based approach was reiterated, as was the need to enhance cooperation on central regulatory frameworks and the deployment of secure and resilient physical infrastructures, in line with the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment (QII).

The EU will aim to promote all dimensions of quality connectivity with Indo-Pacific partners in a strategic manner, building on the Global Gateway, the EU Strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, and the EU Strategy on Connecting Europe and Asia. The **Global Gateway** is based on the principles of good governance (including transparency, financial and fiscal sustainability, fair competition and use of multilateral tools) and of green ambition (including through support to cleaner infrastructures, ensuring proper environmental and social assessments, and promoting a just transition to climate neutrality). The Global Gateway will support the deployment of secure and sustainable quality infrastructures, fostering the resilience of global supply chains, and strengthening the decision-making autonomy of the EU's partners. With a view to optimize processes, EU delegations, as well as the EIB new development branch and offices recently set up in Jakarta, Suva and Nairobi, will support the implementation of the Global Gateway and quality connectivity projects on the ground.

The EU underlined the potential of the **Team Europe Initiative for Sustainable Connectivity in ASEAN**, to develop concrete projects in cooperation with South-East Asian partners and looked forward to its successful launch in the near future.

In addition, the **Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement (CATA) between the EU and ASEAN Member States** was presented as an example of a major initiative, which will enhance people-to-people connectivity between the two regions and create new business opportunities for their economic actors. The EU welcomed the conclusion of the negotiations and expressed the hope that the agreement would be signed shortly. The potential for deepening and diversifying the EU's trade relations in the Indo-Pacific was noted, building in particular on the existing network of ambitious and mutually beneficial free trade agreements.

The important role of **education** and **youth** in both regions was highlighted. The EU's **Erasmus+** university exchange programme, the **Marie Skłodowska-Curie** actions and their grants and scholarships will strengthen links and lasting relations between the EU and the Indo-Pacific region. Between 2014 and 2020, more than 50.000 people benefitted from Erasmus+ mobility between the EU and Indo-Pacific countries. Erasmus+ higher education

cooperation projects will continue to develop capacities, skills and know-how to tackle global issues that are crucial for the Indo-Pacific.

In the field of **research and innovation**, the importance of adhering to key R&I values was underlined to ensure cooperation in a fair and reciprocal way, as will be considered at the Marseille Conference on the Global Approach in R&I under the French Presidency in March 2021. This work is important to fully benefit from the research and innovation actions under Horizon Europe, which offers many cooperation opportunities for the Indo-Pacific Region.

In line with the Global Approach on international cooperation on R&I and the Global Gateway Strategy, the launch of a Global Innovation Platform is under consideration, aiming at connecting innovators from around the world, to come up with solutions in support of global challenges. Such Platform would help fostering innovation among European countries and the Indo-Pacific Region.

On digital issues, the Ministerial Forum discussed the contribution of digital economy, infrastructure and education to the transformation of economy and society. Participants also exchanged views on the need for an open, safe, secure and human-centric internet. Network security issues, particularly those related to 5G, were discussed, and the need to adopt the highest security standards reaffirmed. The EU announced its intention to launch a regional branch for the Asia-Pacific region within the **Digital4Development Hub** in, with a view to fostering digital cooperation among the EU and its Member States and partners in the region to support a sustainable and inclusive digital transformation. The Ministerial Forum reaffirmed the importance of ensuring a **high level of protection of personal data** as reflected in the Declaration between the EU and nine Indo-Pacific countries (Australia, Comores, India, Japan, Mauritius, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea; Singapore, Sri Lanka) on privacy and personal data protection, to strengthen confidence in the digital economy and continue cooperation on trusted data flows. The Ministerial Forum also supported the launch of the negotiation for the **digital partnerships** between the EU and Japan, Singapore and South Korea, based on **shared values** and a common approach to a human-centric digital transformation.

On global issues, the round table discussions covered three major priorities.

On the **fight against climate change** and regarding **sustainable energy transition**, the discussions focused on the means required to achieve ambitious mitigation actions, on the vulnerabilities of many countries in the Indo-Pacific region and the importance of adaptation, and on how to pursue a fair energy transition. The EU and Indo-Pacific partners demonstrated a shared commitment to effectively tackle common sustainability challenges, including sustainable food systems, and going forward, to continue sharing regulatory and innovation best practices with a focus on green technologies and carbon

pricing mechanisms. Cooperation-driven tools such as the **Green Team Europe Initiative in partnership with ASEAN/South East Asia** may also be leveraged to support achieving ambitious and fair energy transitions in the Indo-Pacific region. The interest in engaging, jointly with international partners, in projects similar to the "Just Energy Transition Partnership with South Africa" approach in the Indo-Pacific region was underlined.

Moreover, the role of cities as drivers of climate action and clean energy transition was highlighted and EU participants welcomed the continuous support of the European Commission to the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) in the Indo-Pacific region.

In the field of **biodiversity preservation** and **ocean protection**, the discussions focused on advancing the high ambition coalition on Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdiction "Protecting the Ocean: time for Action", to achieve an ambitious outcome of the ongoing negotiations on a Treaty of the High Seas under the auspices of the United Nations. Following the One Ocean Summit in Brest on 11 February, discussions also focused on the adoption of key objectives for biodiversity by the countries of the region, such as the protection of 30% of land and marine areas by 2030, with a view to promote the sustainable use of natural resources in a region where the economy is highly natural resource dependant, and to join forces with the EU for the adoption of an ambitious Global Biodiversity Framework in the context of the Convention of Biological Diversity's COP 15 and to achieve transformative results at the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon.

In this respect, the EU stressed the importance of consolidating Team Europe Initiatives such as the **Green-Blue Alliance for the Pacific and Timor-Leste**. The EU also announced an increase in its contribution to the **KIWA initiative**, to which Indo-Pacific countries (Australia, New Zealand) are already contributing, in order to strengthen the adaptation of territories to the adverse effects of climate change and to preserve the unique character of biodiversity in the Pacific Ocean. The Ministers and EU representatives in attendance highlighted the **Varuna project and the MarEco initiative**, both of which are supported by the French Development Agency, and which allow for a better management of marine ecosystems and resources, as well as for the promotion of a sustainable blue economy.

The EU's announcement of its membership to the **North Pacific Fisheries Commission**, demonstrates its willingness to play a greater role in ocean governance. To **combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing** and to contribute to the sustainable management and conservation of marine resources, the EU recalled its dialogue with coastal countries and its support for initiatives to strengthen international cooperation as well as fisheries control and management systems through programs such as ECOFISH in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific-EU Marine Partnership, and in particular by contributing to the development of an "*ASEAN IUU Network*".

In the area of **health cooperation**, discussions focused on strengthening the capacities and health sovereignty of the Indo-Pacific partners by promoting multilateral cooperation in the field of research and innovation, industrial policies, and supporting projects to develop pharmaceutical production capacities in the region, including in the field of mRNA vaccine production. Prospects for partnerships to strengthen Indo-Pacific regional institutions and organisations in pandemic preparedness and response, such as the ASEAN Center for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED), were raised.

The international PREZODE initiative, which aims at strengthening cooperation and establishing research networks on a global scale for the implementation of the "One Health" approach, was highlighted.

The EU highlighted its support in the fight against COVID-19, notably by contributing 117 million vaccine doses (delivered to date) to countries from the Indo-Pacific region via COVAX.

In addition, several partners, including New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam, are either connected or in the process of connecting their Digital COVID certificate systems to the EU scheme and underlined the benefit of cross-border use of Digital COVID Certificates.

These fields of cooperation will benefit from ongoing Global Europe cooperation programmes as well as coordination between European development banks and other financial institutions active in the region in the areas discussed at the forum.

The Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific was a place for reflection and exchange to **build a common vision between the European Union, its Member States and the countries of the Indo-Pacific region, based on the principles of sustainability and openness. Minister Le Drian and High Representative Borrell welcomed the Czech Republic's willingness to also make the Indo-Pacific a priority of its rotating presidency of the Council of the EU**, a commitment welcomed by all European participants.

[Main announcements and areas of enhanced cooperation](#) 

[Joint Declaration on privacy and the protection of personal data](#)

CONTACT DETAILS

NABILA MASSRALI

Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

✉ nabila.massrali@ec.europa.eu

☎ +32 (0) 2 29 88093

☎ +32 (0) 460 79 52 44

XAVIER CIFRE QUATRESOLS

Press Officer for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

✉ xavier.cifre-quatresols@ec.europa.eu

☎ +32 (0)2 29 73582

☎ +32 (0)460 75 51 56



EUROPEAN UNION WEBSITES

[European Union](#) | [European Commission](#) | [European Parliament](#) | [European Council](#) |

[All EU Institutions](#)

[Contacts](#)

[Data protection](#)

[Privacy statements](#)

[Cookie policy](#)

[Europa analytics](#)

[Language policy](#)

[Legal notice](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Login](#)