

Implementation of the common foreign and security policy – annual report 2024

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the report by David MCALLISTER (EPP, DE) on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy – 2024 annual report.

The 2024 report is the first resolution on the implementation of the CFSP in this legislature and aims to act as a guide for the priorities of a new Commission and High Representative. The report first reviews the VP/HR's annual CFSP report and subsequently complements it with Parliament's positions on the CFSP objectives in 2025.

The VP/HR's 2024 annual report

Firstly, the report welcomed the constructive role of vibrant civil societies in enlargement countries in advancing EU integration processes. It acknowledged key achievements, including the successful finalisation of **Albania's** screening process and the opening of its first cluster of negotiating chapters, the decision to open accession negotiations with **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, and progress in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, particularly in freedom of movement and energy. The report also noted the 2024 Enlargement Report on **Serbia**, **Kosovo's** application for EU membership and its 2024 report, **Montenegro's** progress in meeting interim benchmarks for Chapters 23 and 24, and the completion of **North Macedonia's** screening process. Additionally, it welcomed the decision to open accession negotiations with **Ukraine** and **Moldova** and praises the EEAS's efforts to counter foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) through the EU FIMI Toolbox, the STRATCOM taskforce, and collaboration with Member States and international partners.

On the other hand, the report condemned several concerning developments, including Russia's ongoing illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and its increasing attacks on civilian targets and infrastructure. It criticised the role of **Belarus's** illegitimate regime under Aliaksandr Lukashenka, **North Korea's** illegal involvement in the war against Ukraine, and its continued weapons testing and nuclear programme development. The report also condemned Hamas's brutal terrorist attacks in Israel on 7 October 2023, the adoption of restrictive laws in **Afghanistan**, and the increasing intensity of **Chinese** operations, including cyberattacks and foreign information manipulation. Lastly, it denounces the authoritarian regime of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo in **Nicaragua** for systematically undermining democratic structures.

Four strategic trends have been identified that define the overall orientation of the EU's common foreign and security policy and which have exacerbated the necessity for the EU to define its interests and deploy the capabilities to pursue them. These include:

CFSP objectives in 2025

Addressing the global consequences of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine

The report outlined its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) objectives for 2025, focusing on addressing the global consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. It emphasised that the conflict, alongside Russia's revisionist behaviour, destabilises the Eastern Neighbourhood and Western Balkans, threatening the European security architecture. Members called for reinforced EU capacities to support democratic institutions in these regions. It noted that the EU's response to Russia's aggression is being closely monitored by autocratic regimes worldwide, which are increasingly cooperating and

supporting Russia's war efforts. The Council is urged to impose restrictive measures on countries providing military goods to Russia, condemning their use against civilian targets as war crimes. Members also highlighted the growing cooperation between Russia and North Korea, including the employment of North Korean troops, and called for further sanctions against **Belarus**.

Members expressed serious concerns over Russia and China's sabotage of critical maritime infrastructures, such as undersea communication cables, and calls for enhanced monitoring and surveillance systems to prevent such attacks. Strict control over Russia's shadow fleet is also called for.

Resolving conflict and supporting peace in the Middle East

The report affirmed Israel's right to defend itself in accordance with international law while emphasising its obligations to address the risk of mass starvation, disease outbreaks, and the protection of civilians in Gaza. It expressed deep concern over the disproportionate military actions by the Israeli Defence Forces in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon, calling for an **immediate and permanent ceasefire and the unconditional release of all hostages**. Members reiterated their unwavering support for a negotiated two-state solution. The report insisted that EU funds must not support Hamas or Hezbollah and called for greater transparency and accountability in funding mechanisms. It welcomed the recent ceasefire in Gaza and the phased release of hostages, praising the efforts of mediators, including the US, Egypt, and Qatar.

Moreover, the report called for a revised EU strategy towards **Iran**.

Incentivising cooperation with like-minded partners

Members reiterated their call for the Council to gradually switch to **qualified majority voting** for decisions in areas of the CFSP that do not have military or defence implications. They acknowledged the concerns of some Member States, which fear a decreased ability to influence foreign and security policy at EU level. They encouraged, pending the full application of qualified majority voting to decisions without military or defence implications, the full use of all currently existing possibilities to enhance decisiveness in this regard, including the use of constructive abstention.

Member States are called on to reinforce inclusive forms of multilateral governance and encouraged, in this context, the Commission, the EEAS and the Council to step up interinstitutional cooperation with multilateral organisations that are integral to the international rules-based order and thereby protect the UN and the multilateral system as a whole.

EU action abroad

Members stressed the need for the EU to foster the visibility and effectiveness of its external action and development cooperation efforts. They regretted, nonetheless, that in some cases there is a lack of clarity in the external representation of the EU, hindering the EU's strategic communication abroad. They called for the EEAS - both its headquarters and EU delegations - to be strengthened through the provision of the appropriate financial and human resources so that the EU can be better prepared for current and emerging global challenges.

Moreover, there is an urgent need to double the relevant EU budget within the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument and strongly increase EU action on mediation, dialogue and reconciliation.

Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and parliament oversight

The report highlighted the importance of parliamentary oversight over CFSP and CSDP decisions entailing expenditure, calling on the VP/HR to consult Parliament before proposing such decisions to

ensure transparency and accountability. It regretted the insufficient budget for civilian CSDP missions, noting the increased number of missions, a more challenging security environment, and rising operational costs. It urged the European Council to **increase CFSP funding** under a separate heading for civilian CFSP and crisis management and called for efficient use of funds to ensure missions can respond effectively to crises. Parliament expressed deep concern over the structural underfunding of the EEAS, warning of serious consequences for the EU's external action and relations with third countries.

In the context of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the Commission is called on to propose resources for EU external action, including support for human rights, democracy, and development in third countries, as well as funding for digital and green diplomacy. Members also urged the Commission to present its MFF proposals by the first semester of 2025 and stressed the need for a detailed budgetary nomenclature in the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance and the CFSP budget, to allow for clear policy and geographic priorities.

Members believe that there is a need for **stronger institutionalised parliamentary oversight** of the EU's external action, including regular, timely, and secure access to confidential information and briefings in the European Parliament. The report underlined Parliament's joint budgetary function with the Council in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), including the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and recalled its role in political control and consultation. It stressed that all CFSP and CSDP administrative and operational expenditure should be charged to the EU budget, except for operations with military or defence implications.