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Subject: 2024 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's
External Action Instruments in 2023
- Council conclusions (26 May 2025)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the 2024 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's External Action Instruments in 2023, as approved by the Council at its 4099th meeting held on 26 May 2025.

**2024 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's External Action
Instruments in 2023****Council conclusions**

1. The Council recalls the importance of strengthening the EU's international partnerships in the context of an increasingly unpredictable global environment. The EU's external action instruments, European Financial Architecture for Development (EFAD) and the Global Gateway strategy are key tools to foster partnerships based on mutual interests and ownership across all dimensions of sustainable development, advancing – among others – the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. It is also in the EU's strategic interest to uphold democratic values, human rights and international law, underpin peace and stability and advance the EU's policy priorities, including the support to the rules-based and values-based global order with multilateralism as its key principle and the UN at its core. In this way, EU external action promotes the EU's geopolitical role and impact, strengthening its strategic global outreach, the EU's competitiveness and economic security both for the EU and its partners, including through a Team Europe approach.
2. EU Development Cooperation and International Partnerships are a multidimensional endeavour. Considering the evolving international landscape, the EU should be ready to adapt and refine its approach to external action instruments, including by ensuring alignment with EU political priorities, by promoting effective multilateralism. Building on the results achieved within the Global Gateway, the private sector should be further involved in development cooperation activities at the local level in partner countries on the basis of a closer collaboration between EU delegations and EU Member States embassies.

3. The Council notes that the EU and its Member States are collectively the world's largest development partner – delivering 42% of global ODA – largest trading bloc, and a major global humanitarian assistance provider. The EU and the Member States, through a Team Europe approach, save lives, alleviate suffering, contribute to sustainable development, poverty eradication, reducing inequalities and to peace and stability, also through the development-humanitarian-peace nexus, as well as tackling climate change and biodiversity loss.
4. The Council stresses that the coherence between the EU's development, foreign, climate, economic, trade, security, defence and migration policies, as well as its internal policies more broadly, should be furthered in line with respective competencies, and, where appropriate, facilitated by its external financing instruments.
5. The Council welcomes the 2024 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's external action instruments in 2023, and the report's effort to show how the EU's external action contributes to the implementation of EU's policy priorities. The report covers key aspects of the EU's financial support in 2023 for international partnerships, European neighbourhood policy, humanitarian assistance and civil protection, EU enlargement policy, peace, security and defence, crisis response and preparedness, and support to EU geostrategic objectives. The Council calls on the Commission to further report on the financing and investment operations covered by the External Action Guarantee, as advised by ECA's opinion 03/2024, and on the recommendations given by the ECA in its reports and opinions. The Council appreciates the timely publication of the report in line with Article 41 of the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.
6. The Council underlines the importance of the report for the transparency and accountability of EU external action, thus providing essential information for the exercise of its political steer. The Council recognises the important role the annual reports and the underlying monitoring and evaluation system play to assess the EU's progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. The Council underlines the importance of reporting on results.

7. The Council welcomes reporting on the implementation of the Global Gateway strategy supporting the EU's development policy and other EU policy goals, as well as the achievements of the well-coordinated Team Europe approach, including on the implementation of Team Europe initiatives. The Council encourages the Commission and Member States to keep showcasing examples of Global Gateway projects as appropriate, to amplify the visibility of Global Gateway implementation. The Council highlights the importance of EU's engagement with the private sector, including to increase investments in sustainable development and strengthen EU's competitiveness. The Council appreciates the efforts in implementing the Global Gateway strategy, including the approval of flagship projects, the first Global Gateway Forum and the launch of the Lobito Corridor.
8. The Council appreciates that the report presents the support that the EU continued to provide to address the consequences of Russia's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, including support to Ukraine and to the most affected partners in its proximity, as well as to partner countries from the rest of the world. The EU will continue to work closely with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova and support their reform efforts on their European path. The Council emphasises that the EU support for other partner countries also remains strong, in particular least developed countries (LDCs) and the most vulnerable and fragile countries. The Council also recalls the importance of the humanitarian aid provided in safe and unhindered manner and in line with humanitarian principles, to Gaza, Sudan and other conflict-affected areas in 2023.
9. The Council recalls the importance of the partnership approach, emphasising ownership and regular political dialogue with partner countries. The Council underscores the importance of the EU-CELAC Summit and the Western Balkans Summit for the EU's external relations engagement. The Council welcomes the Samoa Agreement¹, as a means of strengthening cooperation in democracy and human rights, macroeconomic stability, economy and trade, green energy transition, migration, and mobility. The Council also welcomes the Memorandum of Understanding on a strategic and global partnership between the European Union and Tunisia.

¹ Partnership agreement between the EU and its Member States, of the one part, and the Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, of the other part

10. The Council appreciates that the report presents EU's support to human development, in particular health and education, fighting inequalities, including gender inequality, food security and nutrition, energy and emerging challenges, as well as the support and commitments regarding climate-related financing and the protection of biodiversity. The Council stresses the importance of ensuring that climate financing is scaled up including through private mobilisation, addresses both mitigation and adaptation and reaches the most vulnerable communities including LDCs, Small Island Developing States and Land-Locked Developing Countries. The Council notes that corruption is a serious obstacle to sustainable development and stresses that anti-corruption efforts are critical for increased transparency and efficiency. The Council also acknowledges the importance of local ownership and notes that partner countries have the primary responsibility for their development.
11. The Council welcomes the attention dedicated by the report to migration and forced displacement, and recalls the importance of designing, financing and implementing EU initiatives in particular addressing irregular migration and forced displacement, including addressing their root causes, supporting host communities, and enhancing cooperation on return, readmission and sustainable reintegration as well as maximising the development impact of regular migration, in line with national competencies. The Council encourages the Commission to continue highlighting EU support to tackle these challenges.
12. The Council appreciates the report's focus on EU's support to partner countries' digital transition, for which secure and trusted digital infrastructure is a fundamental prerequisite. The Council welcomes the attention given to the activities of the Digital for Development Hub (D4D Hub) in actively promoting the EU's human centric model of digital transformation in partner countries as well as the Commission's increased attention to cyber resilience, cyber capacity-building and artificial intelligence.

13. The Council underlines the importance of impact monitoring and of ensuring that the EU's external instruments effectively deliver on all targets set out in their respective legal frameworks and the political and strategic guidance of the Council. The Council commends the efforts made to reach over 2021-2023 a share of 35,5% of total ODA commitments to support social protection and human development, 15,0% of total commitments for migration and forced displacement, 12,9% in support of education, 22,1% contributing to human rights, democracy and good governance, as well as the trend towards a share of 85% of actions contributing to gender equality. The Council takes note of the progress made towards the institutional and strategic targets of the Commission's EU Gender Action Plan III "An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action", as welcomed through Presidency conclusions and as reflected in the Annual Report. The Council invites the Commission to continue its steady efforts to achieve the climate target and the G2 gender equality target within NDICI-Global Europe and to keep providing annual updates to the Council. The Council requests the Commission to highlight data on all targets, as well as on the EU's action in LDCs, in future reports.
14. The Council welcomes the diversity of tools and implementing modalities provided for by external action instruments, as an asset for EU international partnerships. It allows the EU to design appropriate and flexible answers to global challenges and to adopt tailor-made and differentiated approaches, strengthening the EU's position as a reliable partner. The Council recognises the value of working with various implementing partners, including with European DFIs, development agencies and Export Credit Agencies, and to resort to a wide range of cooperation modalities, such as technical cooperation, peer-to-peer exchanges, technical assistance, twinning, budget support, project support, funding to civil society organisations and local actors, blending and investment tools.
15. The Council appreciates the continuous improvement of the reporting by the Commission services and the EEAS on concrete results of EU projects and programmes, including the Results and Financial Annexes, and the continuous updating of the online Team Europe Initiatives and joint programming tracker. In addition, the Council welcomes the new Budget Support Annexes and the new section on EFAD. The Council encourages the Commission to include a short general assessment of the state of the implementation of the EFAD Roadmap in the next report.

16. The Council calls on the High Representative to invite EU Delegations to fully exercise their co-ordinating role for Team Europe by closely involving resident as well as non-resident Member States' embassies.
17. The Council emphasises the need to continue strengthening communication activities, including through close coordination at partner country level between EUDELS and Member States' embassies, reflecting country and regional specificities. The Council welcomes the organisation of high-level political missions in a Team Europe format that contribute to the visibility of the EU and its Member States as credible and trustworthy partners for sustainable development. The Council also supports activities to counter foreign information manipulation and interference, including disinformation.
18. The Council welcomes efforts to promote equal opportunities and meet accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
19. The Council calls for a collective reflection on the report's format going forward with a view to enhancing the timely availability of data, facilitating the communication on results while maintaining the report's important role in providing accountability. In this regard, it also underlines the importance of comparability of data over the years.