European External Action Service (EEAS)

EU-Jordan Association Council: Remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell at the press conference

2024-07-15 · Brussels, Belgium · EEAS Press Team

Check against delivery!

Good afternoon,

Dear friend [Ayman] Safadi, dear Minister, dear Commissioner [for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi],

The Association Council is one of the many occasions on which we are meeting and talking with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs [and Expatriates of Jordan], Ayman Safadi.

You were in Brussels only less than two months ago. We have a lot of interactions and meetings, and this reflects the intensity and quality of the relations between Jordan and the European Union.

It happens in a very difficult context, and Jordan is an indispensable partner for us, for the European Union, and a pillar of regional stability.

It is important that this partnership continues improving every day, in a continuous process of relationship, reaching out, cooperation.

And that is why, we have to start the preparation to enhance this partnership to bring it to the level of a Comprehensive and Strategic Partnership between the European Union and Jordan.

In doing that, we are only recognising the importance of our strong relationship, and the important role of Jordan in the region.

Advancing in this direction will allow us to further increase our cooperation in key areas which are strategic, which are security, defence, trade, investment, energy, digital, helping Jordan to fully unlock [its] trade and investment potential.

In today’s meeting, we discussed our bilateral cooperation and confirmed [our] common willingness to further enhance it, as I said, in the strategic domains like security, political, apart from the economic and trade areas.

I reiterated the European Union's commitment to continue supporting the implementation of Jordan's triple modernisation process in which you are engaged – political, economic and public administration reforms.

We also exchanged on democratic principles, on fundamental freedoms and human rights, which constitute one of the pillars of our partnership.

Here, a particular emphasis lies in the importance of preserving freedom of expression and appreciating the work of a civil society. A vibrant civil society is one of the bases of this modernisation process.

In a further expression of our support for these democratic principles and electoral reforms, I am happy to announce that we are sending an Election Observation Mission for the September parliamentary elections.

You know that for us, our Election Observation Missions are the jewel of the crown. It is the most appreciated tool of our foreign policy. We do a lot of them, we have a strong experience in electoral observation. And we are very happy to contribute with this mission to the holding these parliamentary elections.

In the area of security and counterterrorism, we are also actively supporting Jordan through various programs, as well as providing assistance to the Jordanian Armed Forces from the European Peace Facility, helping securing Jordan's borders - and further assistance of this kind will be worked on.

Then we go to the wider regional issues. The most important one [and] pressing one, closed to you geographically, and close to us from a political and humanitarian point of view is Gaza.

I want to express my utter dismay over the unbearable climbing human cost and wide-scale destruction caused in Gaza by this conflict.

The scope of the tragedy for the civilian population in Gaza is breaking all limits we knew so far, and also the fact that the Israeli hostages have still not been released.

The massive bombing with heavy death toll in Mawasi refugee camp on Saturday is unbearable, unacceptable.

The bombing yesterday of a UN-run school used as a shelter – it is the fifth in one week.

The constant rise of the number of civilian casualties, as I said, is unbearable and underlines the urgency of establishing a ceasefire and working to find a durable solution.

For that, we continue working with you, with other Arab partners, to help to end this conflict and to find a way to sustainable peace and security for all Israelis and Palestinians.

I have to commend you, my dear Minister, [for] Jordan's tireless efforts for peace, for stability, your humanitarian efforts, your cooperation in bringing aid into Gaza, for instance through the Jordan Corridor and transport hubs in Amman and Aqaba.

By the way, this is a good occasion to reject and condemn the repeated attacks by extremist settlers on these Jordanian humanitarian convoys.

Today, we have adopted further sanctions against these violent settlers, including the organisation that called for attacking the Jordanian convoys.

On UNRWA, we agreed that it is critical to preserve UNRWA's irreplaceable role throughout the region, certainly including in Jordan.

We reject any attempts to label UNRWA as a 'terrorist organisation'. How can a United Nations' agency be considered a terrorist organisation? And we will continue – along with other international donors - supporting and funding UNRWA.

A special point on our discussion was the situation in Syria and Syrian refugees. We value and appreciate Jordan for hosting such a high number of Syrian refugees for more than a decade now.

This is for you a heavy financial burden. We will continue assisting you in carrying it.

We discussed how to make progress towards a political solution in Syria in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions, and therefore allowing Syrian refugees to return to their homes. That is what they want, that is what they should [be able to do], that is what we also want to happen.

Unhappily, the conditions for many of them are not yet there, and this is primarily the responsibility of the Assad regime.

To conclude, allow me to be a little bit more personal.

This is my last Association Council with you – not the last of the European Union, but my last Association Council with Jordan, and our last official bilateral meeting as High Representative here in Brussels with Minister Safadi.

I stopped counting how many times we met – bilaterally, in international fora, or chairing the Union for the Mediterranean. We have been the Co-chairs, and we will still be the Co-chairs of this meeting I hope, next October.

My dear Ayman, I appreciated a lot your wisdom, your openness, your friendliness, your friendship, and your strong will to look for peace – you personally, and your country.

You were indispensable to reinforce the already very strong ties between Jordan and the European Union and I am happy I could work with you on this for almost five years.

I started working with you when I was Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain – my country – and I am happy that for almost five years, we have been building a lot among us, between the European Union and Jordan, and working together for the peace in the Middle East.

You have been a valuable colleague, a great friend in very difficult times, so thank you very much.

Q&A

Q. As it was said, and we know, that Jordan is a very good partner of the European Union, is a very close partner, not like the other partners, how can it profit from its geographical situation and political situation in Jordan to put pressure, to do more on Gaza, at least to have a solution to [deliver] all the aid for Gaza, and for all the issue in general? How can we profit from Jordan as a good partner geographically near both to Palestinians and Israelis, and the European Union?

The [European] Commission and myself, we will present the same approach, I am sure. Maybe the dear Foreign Affairs Minister has a different answer, but I doubt it. So, allow me to start saying that yes, Jordan is a pillar of stability and one of the most important partners for the European Union, in the region. Jordan has done a lot in order to get peace in Gaza. Jordan has been committed. The most important commitment comes from you. When you came to the Foreign Affairs Council, your voice was very important, very clear in sending the message that international law has to be respected, that hostages have to be freed, but civilians in Gaza have to be respected as well. And we have been working hard and very closely with Jordan, in order to look for a common approach from the Arab world and the European Union in order to look for a solution. Unhappily, not all our efforts have been successful, but I wish that everybody could engage in looking for peace in the Middle East as much as Jordan is doing and providing so much engagement and provide humanitarian support to the people in Gaza. This Jordanian corridor is a good example of that. And I am sorry that your trucks have been attacked by violent settlers, and I told [you] today there is a decision to [sanction] some of them. So, Jordan does not have a magic wand, but it has a strong will, and has been using this will in order to do the best. And that is why, we are very happy to increase our partnership and our working together with Jordan. I am sure that Commissioner [Várhelyi] has a good knowledge on how this partnership has been growing along the [years], and will continue growing, enhancing its Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership.

Link to the video: https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-259450

Joint press statement – European Union and Jordan confirm ever stronger partnership at their 15th Association Council - Consilium (europa.eu)

Source: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-jordan-association-council-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-press-conference_en