



2026/1876

28.7.2026

COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2026/1876

of 23 July 2026

appointing the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union, and in particular Article 33, in conjunction with Article 31(2), thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,

Whereas:

- (1) On 18 March 2013, the Council agreed to appoint a European Union Special Representative (EUSR) for the Sahel.
- (2) On 19 November 2024, the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2024/2905 ⁽¹⁾, appointing Mr João CRAVINHO as the EUSR for the Sahel. The EUSR's mandate expires on 31 August 2026.
- (3) An EUSR for the Sahel should be appointed for a period of 12 months.
- (4) The EUSR will implement the mandate in the context of a situation which may deteriorate and could impede the achievement of the objectives of the Union's external action as set out in Article 21 of the Treaty.
- (5) It is necessary to ensure coherent and effective Union engagement in the Sahel, including through the appointment of a new EUSR to lead political dialogue, coordination and the implementation of the Union's Renewed Approach to the Sahel region, taking into account views expressed by Member States.
- (6) It is important to maintain momentum in Union action, including through Council conclusions on the Sahel, while continuing the ongoing implementation of the Union's Renewed Approach to the Sahel, taking into account views expressed by Member States,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

European Union Special Representative

1. Ms Birgitte MARKUSSEN is hereby appointed as the European Union Special Representative (EUSR) for the Sahel from 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2027. The Council may decide that the EUSR's mandate (the 'mandate') be extended or terminated earlier, on the basis of an assessment by the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and on a proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (the 'High Representative').

2. For the purposes of the mandate, the Sahel is defined as comprising Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. The EUSR shall also engage, as appropriate, with the countries of the Lake Chad Basin and other countries and regional or international entities in and beyond the Sahel, including in the Maghreb and the Gulf of Guinea, as appropriate, and, in particular, with the neighbouring countries that are affected by the dynamics of the Sahel.

⁽¹⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/2905 of 18 November 2024 appointing the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel (OJ L, 2024/2905, 19.11.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2024/2905/oj>).

*Article 2***Policy objectives**

1. On the basis of the policy objectives of the European Union's Integrated Strategy in the Sahel as adopted by Council conclusions on 16 April 2021, the adaptation of the Union's approach to the Sahel region as discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council of 11 December 2023 and 19 February 2024, and the Union's Renewed Approach to the Sahel region endorsed by the Foreign Affairs Council of 20 November 2025, taking into account views expressed by Member States, the mandate shall be to contribute actively and give priority to regional and international efforts to achieve lasting peace, security, stability and sustainable development in the region. The EUSR shall furthermore aim to enhance the quality, impact and visibility of the Union's multi-faceted engagement in the Sahel and to promote universal values and Union interests. In line with the orientations of the Council, the EUSR shall assist the High Representative in implementing the Union's renewed approach to the Sahel region, related to the growing risks of insecurity and instability in the region.
2. The EUSR shall contribute to developing and implementing the Union's efforts in the region, in accordance with international law, including respect for territorial integrity, in an integrated way, including in the political, security and development areas, and to coordinating all relevant instruments and stakeholders for Union actions. The EUSR shall contribute to deepening the Union's engagement and coordination efforts with national, regional and international mechanisms.
3. The EUSR shall act in close cooperation and coordination with the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Union delegations, Member States and other relevant stakeholders, in particular the United Nations (UN) and African organisations, notably the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

*Article 3***Mandate**

1. In order to achieve the policy objectives set out in Article 2, the mandate shall be to:
 - (a) actively contribute to the implementation of the Union's Renewed Approach to the Sahel region, as appropriate and taking into account views expressed by Member States, and coordinate and further develop the Union's integrated approach in the region, with a view to enhancing the overall coherence and effectiveness of Union activities in the Sahel as well as supporting effective strategic communication;
 - (b) engage, including through shuttle diplomacy and high-level political outreach with governments and regional organisations, as well as through peace agreements and international mediation and conflict resolution initiatives, with all relevant stakeholders in the region, including international organisations, women, youth, civil society and diasporas and the countries of the Maghreb, West Africa and the Lake Chad Basin, with a view to furthering the Union's objectives and interests and contributing to a better understanding and positive image of the role of the Union in the Sahel and its immediate vicinity;
 - (c) represent and promote the interests and visibility of the Union in relevant regional and international fora and any other processes relevant for the stability of the region;
 - (d) facilitate fully coordinated and integrated Union action in the region drawing on all relevant instruments, including development cooperation, the European Peace Facility, and Member States' activities and Union support for crisis management and conflict prevention through Union common security and defence policy (CSDP) actions and regional and national stabilisation efforts, including those on security sector reform and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants, and cultural heritage in conflict and crisis;

- (e) maintain close cooperation with the UN, in particular the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, the AU and its Special Representative to Mali and the Sahel, ECOWAS, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and other leading national, regional and international stakeholders, including other special envoys for the Sahel;
- (f) closely follow, analyse and report on the impact of root causes of instability and long-term trends in the region, including climate change, biodiversity loss, pastoralism, food insecurity and access to natural resources, in particular land and water, as well as promote sustainable management of, and cooperation over, natural resources to reinforce stability and support efforts to limit the spread of instability, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable regions and to regional initiatives to foster cross-border cooperation in this regard, including between West African coastal states and Sahel states;
- (g) closely follow other regional and trans-boundary dimensions of the challenges the region is facing, including terrorism, radicalisation, organised crime, hybrid and cyber-threats, arms smuggling, trafficking in human beings and smuggling, drug trafficking, maritime insecurity, refugee and migration flows and related illicit financial flows;
- (h) closely follow the humanitarian, political, security and development consequences of large scale refugee and migration flows, including internally displaced persons, and, as appropriate, engage in dialogues on migration with relevant authorities and stakeholders and contribute more generally to the Union's policy on migration and refugees with respect to the region, in line with the Union's objectives and interests, in order to promote fruitful cooperation in the area of migration with a comprehensive whole-of-route approach;
- (i) contribute to the implementation of the relevant Council conclusions on preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism, maintain regular high-level political contacts with the countries affected by terrorism and international organised crime and ensure the Union's key role in the efforts to fight terrorism and international organised crime;
- (j) closely follow the political, security and development consequences of humanitarian crises in the region, taking into account the peace-humanitarian-development nexus and promoting long-term regional solutions to crises and conflicts;
- (k) contribute, in cooperation with the EUSR for Human Rights, to the implementation of the Union's human rights policy in the region, in line with the Union Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, the Union Guidelines on human rights, in particular the Union Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict, as well as on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them, and the Union's policy on Women, Peace and Security, promote inclusiveness and gender equality in the state building process, in line with UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security, including UNSCR 2242 (2015), and support the implementation of UNSCR 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security;
- (l) continue to observe the justice sector as a whole, and accountability mechanisms that can be used to fight impunity, including formulating recommendations, maintaining regular contacts with the relevant authorities in the region, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and engaging with the human rights defenders and observers in the region;
- (m) deepen the Union's knowledge on local expectations and local contexts through frequent contacts in the region, including with local actors and, on the basis of a thorough and continuous analysis of the situation, facilitate reflection and contribute to the early response, the adaptation, and the strategic and long-term vision of the Union in the Sahel.

2. For the purpose of the fulfilment of the mandate, the EUSR shall, *inter alia*:
 - (a) advise and report on the formulation of Union positions in regional and international fora, as appropriate, to proactively promote diplomatic contacts and actions that strengthen the Union's integrated approach towards the Sahel;
 - (b) contribute to maintaining an overview of all Union activities and cooperate closely with relevant Union delegations and Member States.

Article 4

Implementation of the mandate

1. The EUSR shall be responsible for the implementation of the mandate, acting under the authority of the High Representative.
2. The PSC shall maintain a privileged link with the EUSR and shall be the EUSR's primary point of contact with the Council. The PSC shall provide the EUSR with strategic guidance and political direction within the framework of the mandate, without prejudice to the powers of the High Representative.
3. The EUSR shall cooperate and work in close coordination with the relevant departments of the EEAS.

Article 5

Financing

1. The financial reference amount intended to cover the expenditure related to the mandate (the 'expenditure') for the period from 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2027 shall be EUR 1 788 249,05.
2. The expenditure shall be managed in accordance with the procedures and rules applicable to the general budget of the Union.
3. The management of the expenditure shall be subject to a contract between the EUSR and the Commission. The EUSR shall be accountable to the Commission for the expenditure.

Article 6

Constitution and composition of the EUSR's team

1. Within the limits of the mandate and the corresponding financial means made available, the EUSR shall be responsible for assembling a team. The EUSR's team shall include expertise on specific policy issues as required by the mandate. The EUSR shall keep the Council and the Commission promptly informed of the composition of the EUSR's team.
2. Member States, institutions of the Union and the EEAS may propose the secondment of personnel to work on the EUSR's team. The salaries of such seconded personnel shall be covered by the seconding Member State, by the institution of the Union concerned or by the EEAS, as appropriate. Experts seconded by Member States to the institutions of the Union or to the EEAS may also be seconded to work on the EUSR's team. International contracted personnel shall have the nationality of a Member State.
3. All seconded personnel shall remain under the administrative authority of the seconding Member State, of the institution of the Union concerned or of the EEAS and shall carry out their duties and act in the interest of the mandate.
4. The EUSR personnel shall be co-located with the relevant EEAS departments or Union delegations in order to ensure the coherence and consistency of their respective activities.

*Article 7***Privileges and immunities of the EUSR and members of the EUSR's team**

The privileges, immunities and further guarantees relating to the EUSR and to the members of the EUSR's team which are necessary for the completion and smooth functioning of the mandate shall be agreed with the host countries, as appropriate. Member States and the EEAS shall grant all necessary support to that effect.

*Article 8***Security of EU classified information**

The EUSR and the members of the EUSR's team shall respect the security principles and minimum standards established by Council Decision 2013/488/EU ⁽²⁾.

*Article 9***Access to information and logistical support**

1. Member States, the Commission, the EEAS and the General Secretariat of the Council shall ensure that the EUSR is given access to any relevant information.
2. The Union delegations in the region and Member States, as appropriate, shall provide logistical support to the EUSR and to the members of the EUSR's team.

*Article 10***Security**

In accordance with the Union's policy on the security of personnel deployed outside the Union in an operational capacity under Title V of the Treaty, the EUSR shall take all reasonably practicable measures, in conformity with the mandate and on the basis of the security situation in the area of responsibility, for the security of all personnel under the EUSR's direct authority, in particular by:

- (a) establishing a specific security plan based on guidance from the EEAS, including specific physical, organisational and procedural security measures governing the management of the secure movement of personnel to, and within, the area of responsibility and the management of security incidents, and by establishing a contingency plan and an evacuation plan;
- (b) ensuring that all personnel deployed outside the Union are covered by high-risk insurance, as required by the conditions in the area of responsibility;
- (c) ensuring that all personnel to be deployed outside the Union, including locally contracted personnel, have received appropriate security training before or upon arriving in the area of responsibility, based on the risk ratings assigned to that area by the EEAS;
- (d) ensuring that all agreed recommendations made following regular security assessments are implemented, and providing the High Representative, the Council and the Commission with written reports on the implementation of those recommendations and on other security issues within the framework of the regular progress reports and the final comprehensive mandate implementation report referred to in Article 15.

⁽²⁾ Council Decision 2013/488/EU of 23 September 2013 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 274, 15.10.2013, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2013/488/oj>).

*Article 11***Reporting**

The EUSR shall regularly provide the High Representative with reports. The EUSR shall report regularly to the PSC and, when necessary, to other Council preparatory bodies. Regular reports shall be circulated through the COREU network. The EUSR shall provide the Foreign Affairs Council with reports. In accordance with Article 36 of the Treaty, the EUSR may be involved in briefing the European Parliament.

*Article 12***Access to documents and data protection**

1. The EUSR shall apply the rules laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽³⁾, as well as the implementing rules laid down in the Decision of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 6 March 2025 ⁽⁴⁾.

2. The EUSR shall protect individuals with regard to the processing of their personal data in accordance with the rules laid down in Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽⁵⁾ and with the implementing rules adopted by the High Representative for the EEAS.

*Article 13***Coordination**

1. In the framework of the Union's renewed approach to the Sahel region, the EUSR shall contribute to the unity, consistency and effectiveness of the Union's action and shall help ensure that all Union instruments and actions of the Member States are applied or implemented consistently in order to attain the Union's policy objectives. The EUSR shall seek to liaise with Member States on a regular basis. The activities of the EUSR shall be coordinated with those of the EEAS, the Union delegations and the Commission, as well as those of other EUSRs active in the region. The EUSR shall provide regular briefings to the EEAS, the Union delegations and to Member States' missions in the region.

2. In the field, the EUSR shall liaise closely with the relevant Member States' Heads of Mission, the Heads of Union delegations and the Heads of CSDP missions. They shall make every effort to assist the EUSR in the implementation of the mandate. The EUSR, in close coordination with the relevant Union delegations, shall provide the Head of mission of EUCAP Sahel Mali with local political guidance. The EUSR and the Civilian Operation Commander shall consult each other as required. The EUSR shall also liaise with other international and regional actors in the field.

*Article 14***Subrogation of rights**

For the purposes of ensuring the respect of legal commitments entered into by previous EUSRs for the Sahel with regard to their team members, the procurement of works, supplies or services and the rental of land, buildings or other immovable property, the EUSR shall succeed to, and assume the rights and obligations of, such previous EUSRs, with the exception of obligations arising from serious misconduct, for which such previous EUSRs shall remain solely responsible.

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, p. 43, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2001/1049/oj>).

⁽⁴⁾ Decision of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 6 March 2025 on the rules regarding the handling of requests for public access to documents held by EU Special Representatives (OJ C, C/2025/1951, 31.3.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/1951/oj>).

⁽⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC (OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 39, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1725/oj>).

*Article 15***Review**

The implementation of this Decision and its consistency with other contributions by the Union to the region shall be kept under regular review. The EUSR shall present the High Representative, the Council and the Commission with regular progress reports and a final comprehensive mandate implementation report by 31 May 2027.

*Article 16***Entry into force**

This Decision shall enter into force on the date of its adoption.

Done at Brussels, 23 July 2026.

For the Council

The President

T. BYRNE