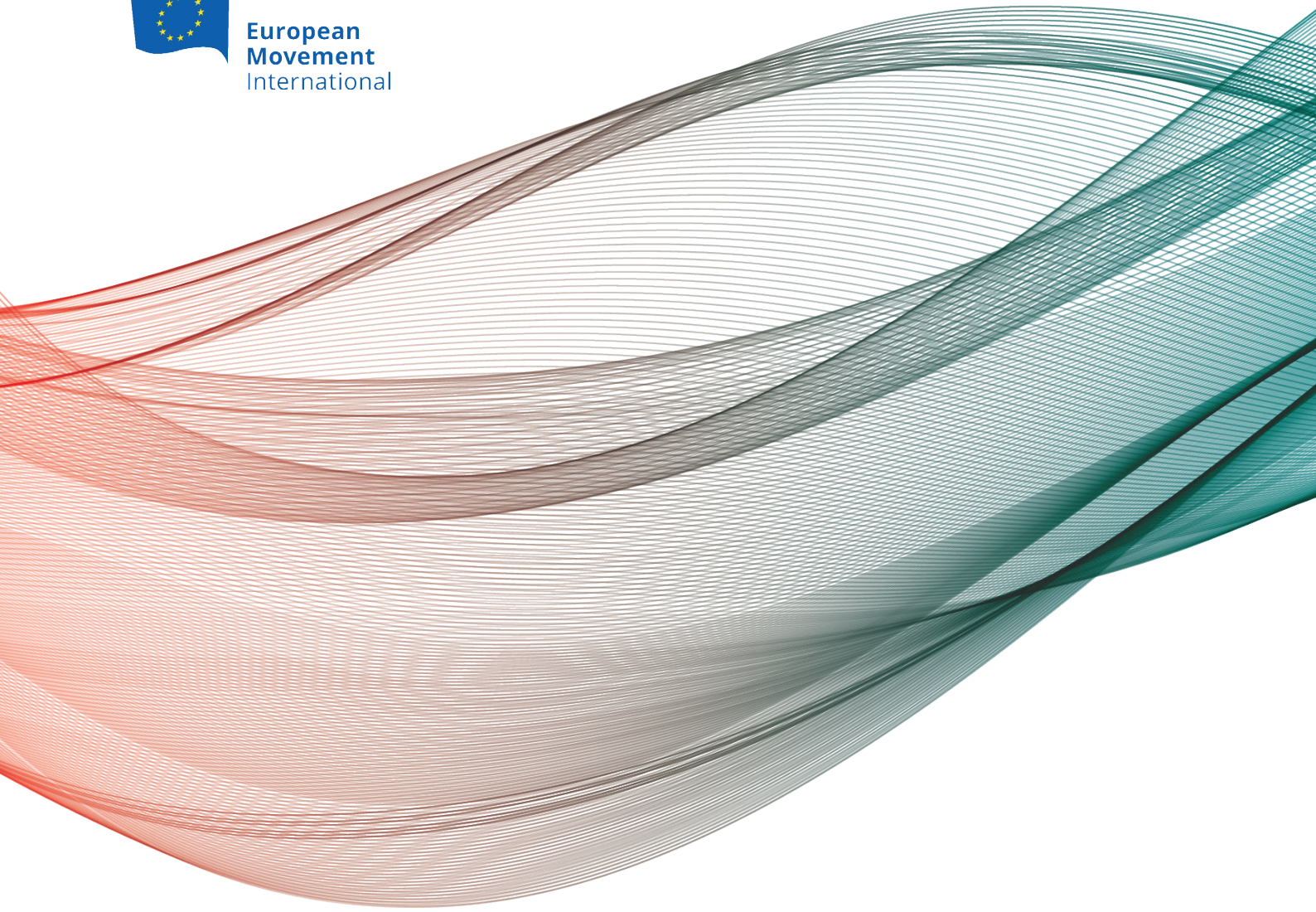




European  
Movement  
International



# Strengthening the European Union's Position on the Global Stage

#Eurmove





# Strengthening the European Union on the Global Stage

Europe is still in the early stages when it comes to shaping its common foreign policy. Current geopolitical shifts and greater support from citizens who want to see more actions from the EU in this area require the bloc to rethink its strategy. The Lisbon Treaty offered more decisive steps in the direction of a stronger EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), leading to the creation of its diplomatic service, the European External Action Service (EEAS), acting under the authority of the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Within this framework, the EU Global Strategy, launched in 2016, aims to identify a common vision and action plan for EU foreign and security policy.

However, the EU's international position often lacks unity as much as flexibility when addressing the world stage. National foreign policies as well as voting rules for the Council of Ministers can hold back collective action at EU level. The European Movement International welcomes the Commission's proposals to move from unanimity to qualified majority voting in the Council in certain areas

of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. This reform would allow the EU to shoulder international responsibilities more effectively. However, changes in the process must be accompanied by transparent decision-making to reinforce legitimacy of decisions. Moreover, policies and actions within the Global Strategy should boost support for and deepen the exchange with civil society in the EU and partner countries, as well as civil society contacts beyond the EU's borders.

## Transatlantic Relations

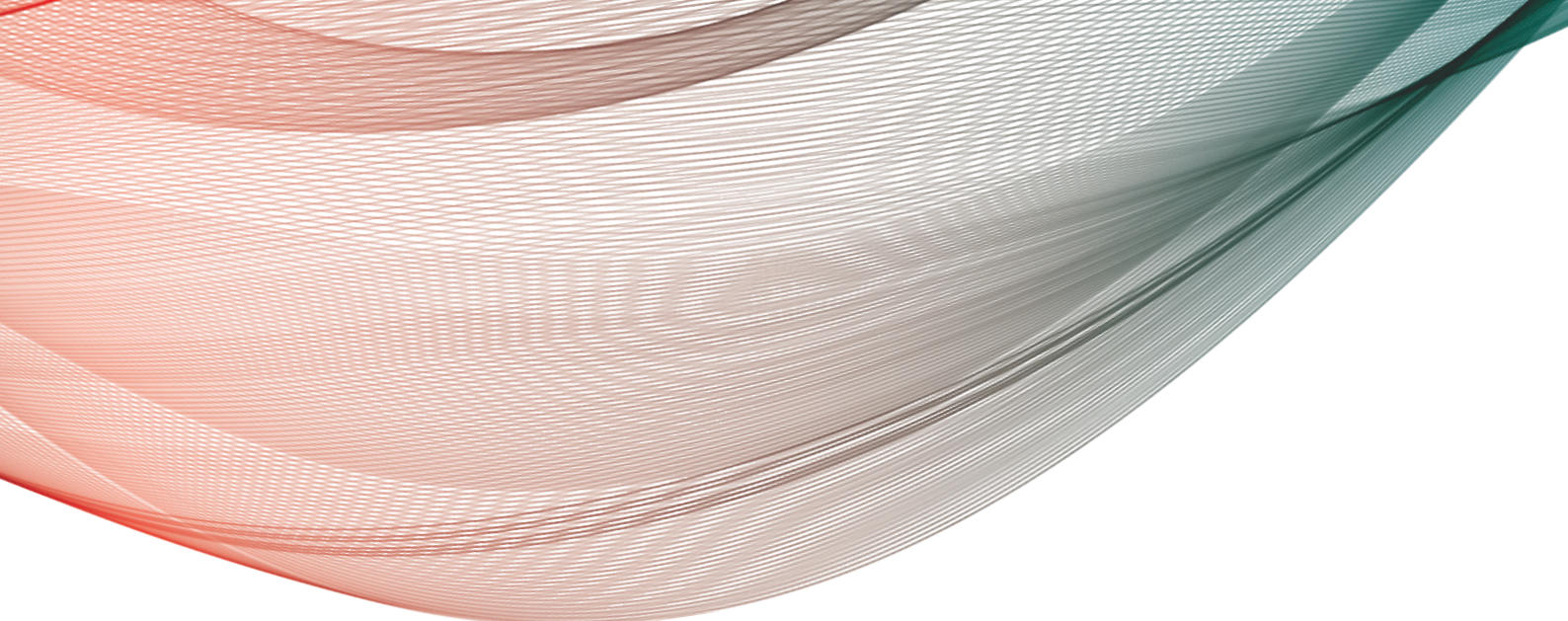
The EU's soft power approach is constrained as it faces a world increasingly ruled by power politics. A crucial wake-up call for EU foreign and security policy has been the election of Donald Trump. While the EU can do little to limit the damage caused by the current administration, it can still use existing frameworks within the Treaties to respond to these challenges with greater unity. The EU should enter into a structured dialogue with U.S. organisations and political actors interested in advancing the transatlantic cooperation based on common values. At the same time, it needs to build on relationships with allies that want

to preserve the rules-based international order.

## Security and Defence Cooperation

Especially when it comes to security and defence, the EU has realised it cannot rely solely on its partnership with the U.S.. Recent Eurobarometer surveys suggest that Europeans have become more supportive of joint EU decision-making in the field of defence. In our position paper on A Safer Europe Through Increased Security and Defence Cooperation, we highlight that the EU is the best platform to increase defence and security cooperation and welcome the launch of initiatives such as the European Defence Fund, an EU operational headquarters, a Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and an annual review of member states' defence plans. NATO relies on a strong European pillar and should remain a crucial alliance. At the same time, the EU should put in place the necessary mechanisms to enable close cooperation with the UK in the areas of security and defence after its departure from the Union. Finally, the EU should use its military cooperation to ensure peace on the





European continent and contribute to peace efforts worldwide whilst defending human rights and promoting European values.

### **Enlargement**

The European Movement strongly supports the enlargement process which leads to more democratic societies and regional stability, promotes peace and enhances citizens' rights and freedoms. The EU's involvement in its neighbourhood should be more proactive at a time when the adverse role of some international actors is on the increase. For this, the EU needs to support democratic development, pluralism, the fight against corruption and economic growth, by requesting more straightforward and committed reforms from the applicants.

The accession process needs to go hand in hand with transparent decision-making and an open and inclusive dialogue with the participation of civil society. At the same time, the consequences of continued instability particularly in the Western Balkans as well as the chances of enlargement need to be openly communicated in

order to gain democratic support. A credible enlargement perspective and a positive enlargement narrative are crucial to regain the enlargement momentum and to bring about positive changes to both candidate countries and those aspiring to become members of the EU.

### **Turkey**


Turkey, a recognised accession candidate since 1999, has in recent years been backsliding on the rule of law and on fundamental rights and has yet to address these shortcomings and implement in full the necessary reforms qualifying it for EU membership. This has led to strained relations between the EU and Turkey. While both parties share strong economic and social ties and cooperate closely on issues such as migration, humanitarian aid, security and energy, it is vital that the EU continues its constructive relations with Turkey and aids its strategic partner to revert to its European orientation. Moreover, Turkey and the EU would benefit from an increased dialogue and intercultural exchange between civil societies, including exchanges at local level.

### **Eastern Partnership**

The EU is not sufficiently stabilising its Eastern Neighbours and should provide a solid policy framework to enhance political and economic relations with the region. For a more inclusive policy that fully engages and positively affects citizens, all stakeholders, including organised civil society and institutions of local governments, must be structurally involved in setting the agenda of the Eastern Partnership. While civil society exchange and cooperation are vital, more effort should be put in facilitating common projects, building networks that involve regional partners, and providing capacity-building support. While the Eastern Partnership is no guarantee for EU membership, the EU should provide accession perspective for eligible countries and take into serious consideration membership aspirations from its Eastern European partners, some of which are considering formal applications.

### **Ukraine**

Given the military actions in the East, Ukraine deserves special European attention. The EU has so far successfully managed to maintain unity in its sanctions



policy towards Russia in response to the crisis in Ukraine. However, only two EU member states, Germany and France, participated in the Normandy Negotiations format. We therefore encourage the launch of a new diplomatic process to enable the full implementation of the Minsk agreement. While continuing to support Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, the EU should urge for a stronger protection of the rights of internally displaced and support for conflict-affected residents. In addition, there is a need to upscale funding for affordable housing in conflict areas.

### **Russia**

Russia's violations of international law and disinformation warfare need to be met with a strong European diplomatic response. While the dialogue and cooperation with Russia must continue, the relationship should be guided by the country's commitment to respecting the fundamental values and principles of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and the market economy, as well as international law. Organised civil society can play an important role in strengthening this

relationship. In view of Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns, we welcome the East StratCom Task Force's efforts to expose Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns.

### **Middle East**

The EU must play a leading role in advancing a political transition in Syria through the United Nations' framework, necessary to allow the safe return of refugees. While continuing its humanitarian and non-humanitarian aid, the EU should further use its capabilities to promote democracy, human rights and freedom of speech by strengthening civil society organisations on the ground. Meanwhile, the civil war in Yemen has led to what is currently considered to be one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. Aside from humanitarian aid, the EU needs to reassess its current approach in the region and invest in civil society, good local governance and political transition.

A further flash point is the Middle East peace process, which requires a more effective European policy leading to a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-

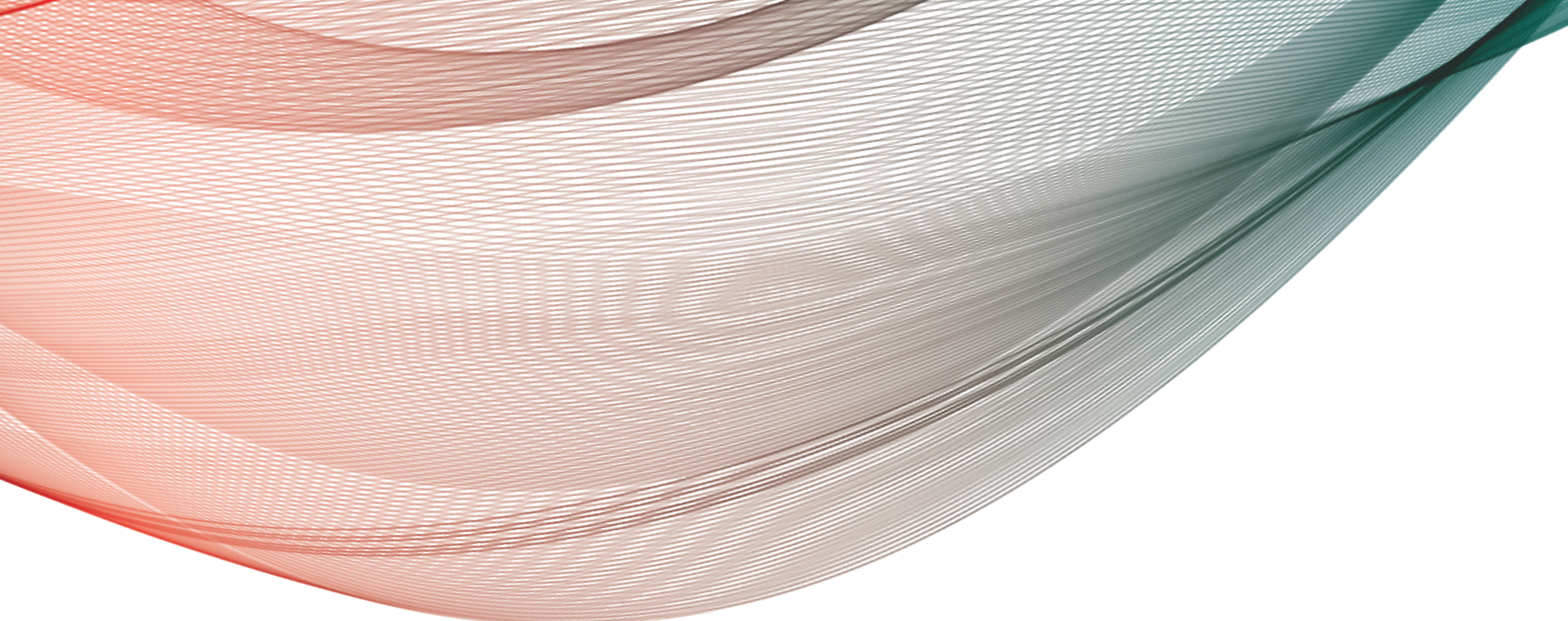
state solution. Communication between all parties to the peace process, political actors, other countries, the UN and other international organisations is crucial and should be facilitated by the EU.

As regards Post-Arab Spring countries, the EU needs to step up its political and diplomatic role and support successful transitions to democracy by enhanced access to EU markets, increased assistance in State-building and good governance, and encourage regional cooperation. The MENA region is facing a number of great challenges, in particular socio-economic, demographic and political ones. It is of strategic importance to the EU to support these countries on their path to democratisation and resilience, as stated in the EU Global Strategy.

### **Africa**

When it comes to the EU's relationship with the African Union, the EU should focus on civil empowerment and conflict prevention while strengthening sustainable economic growth with emphasis on a partnership of equals. The European Movement International continues to





advocate for a robust post-Cotonou partnership and development framework. Investments on the continent should respect the environment and lead to the creation of quality jobs, while governments, civil society and businesses should be supported in the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Moreover, the partnership with the G5 Sahel force remains vital for the region's stability. Financial aid and operations within the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy should reflect an in-depth understanding of local conflict and governance challenges in the region and should be better harmonised with the G5 countries. To stabilise the region and prevent radicalisation in the long run, the partnership must also generate conditions for economic development and opportunities especially for young people.

### **Migration**

The implementation of the EU Agenda on Migration should be

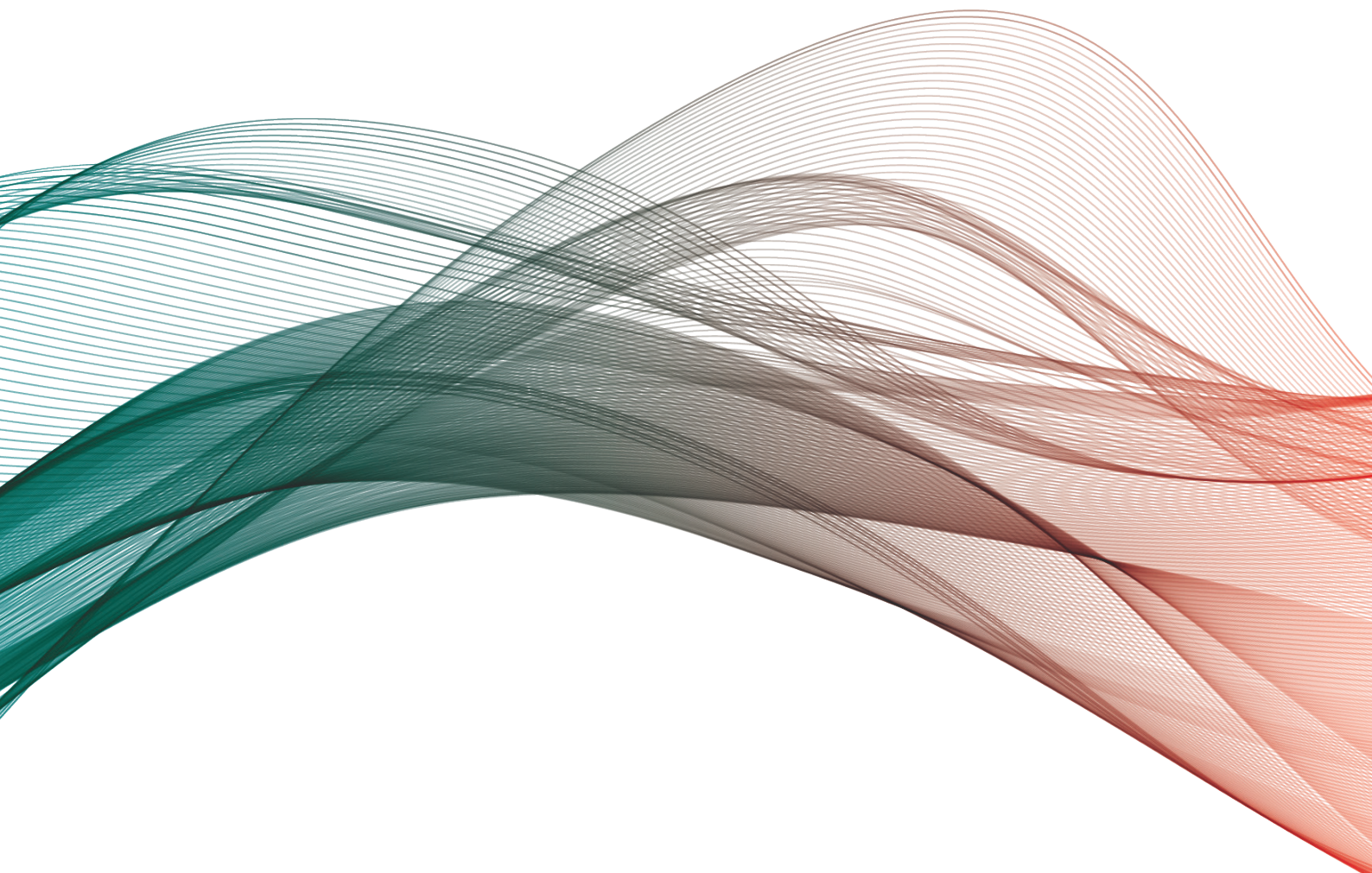
fully coherent with the overall direction of the EU's foreign and security policy in the previously mentioned regions and in particular with regard to Africa and the MENA region. When seen as strategic partners for the EU, these countries can be best supported with new investments and efforts to promote human rights and equality and strengthen civil society. At the same time, the EU's actions should address the 'root causes' of mass population displacement and conflicts, including also the EU's development policy.

### **Conclusion**

The EU cannot afford to sit on the sidelines of global politics and instead needs to find common responses, even to the more challenging and dividing conflicts and crises. No international actor is better positioned than the EU to lead the struggle for a rule-based international order and to fill the void left by the U.S. By using its existing frameworks and skills in the areas of diplomacy, development

cooperation and defence, Europe can find its place in the new world order with a stronger and more united voice. The EU Global Strategy deserves a swift implementation and regular revision of its priorities. Policies and actions in this framework should also establish a direct link with citizens, so that the EU is better able to act on their concerns.

Europe can make more use of its expertise when it comes to foreign and security related questions while closely integrating the European Neighbourhood Policy in the overall strategies for security and foreign policy. Moreover, visibility of EU action and the fight against disinformation in third countries should be a priority. EU foreign and security policy remain a work in progress, but there is a clear momentum to strengthen the EU's global position and allow citizens worldwide to benefit. In view of the serious challenges in the neighbourhood and on the global level, this opportunity must not be missed.



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