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Press releases

High Representative/Vice President Josep Borrell holds bilateral meetings ahead of the Asia-Europe Foreign Ministers' Meeting

Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, held bilateral meetings with a number of his Asian counterparts today in Madrid. The meetings took place in the margins of the 14th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) ministerial in Madrid, which will be chaired by the High Representative/Vice-President.

With the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Toshimitsu Motegi, High Representative/Vice-President Borrell discussed the implementation of the EU-Japan Strategic Partnership Agreement focusing notably on the concrete initiatives taken by the EU and Japan on connectivity. They further discussed bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the areas of security and defence, including maritime security, peacekeeping and crisis management. They welcomed the EU and Japan's joined up approach in multilateral fora. They also had an opportunity to review foreign policy issues of mutual interest, in particular the situation on the Korean Peninsula. The EU and Japan intend to hold their next Summit in Japan in 2020.

Josep Borrell met with State Councillor and Foreign Minister of China, Mr Wang Yi. Together, they addressed the press after the meeting ([transcript](#); [video](#)). They discussed the outlook for the Strategic Partnership between the EU and China in 2020 and how to deepen cooperation. The High Representative also conveyed the importance of a constructive dialogue in Hong Kong. Josep Borrell also raised human rights issues. In 2020, the EU and China will hold their regular bilateral Summit, which will be preceded by a bilateral visit of the High Representative to China, as well as a special Summit involving EU Member States.

With Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan of Singapore, the ASEAN coordinator for relations with the EU, the High Representative emphasised the strong bilateral ties between Singapore and the EU on trade, climate change or digital issues. He thanked the Foreign Minister for Singapore's active role in deepening relations between the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). He stressed the strategic importance to establish an alliance for effective multilateralism and to enhance the rules-based international order, while deepening relations on security.

In his meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, Don Pramudwinai, Josep Borrell expressed appreciation for Thailand's chairmanship of ASEAN in 2019. He reiterated the EU's willingness to broaden its engagement with Thailand by preparing for the signature of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement and by taking steps towards the resumption of negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement. He also stressed the importance of political space in Thailand remaining open and with the fundamental freedoms protected.

The High Representative met with Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prak Sokhonn. He expressed gratitude for Cambodia hosting the ASEM Summit next year. The High Representative reiterated the importance of Cambodian authorities taking immediate action to open the political space in the country, to establish the necessary conditions for a credible, democratic opposition and to initiate a process of national reconciliation through genuine and inclusive dialogue.

High Representative Borrell met the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Vietnam, Pham Binh Minh. They looked ahead to Vietnam's Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2020. The High Representative raised the importance of full respect for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in the context of ongoing negotiations on a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea. He looked forward to deepening EU - Vietnam relations in the fields of security, trade and environment. In this context, he welcomed Vietnam's contribution to EU Common Security and Defence Policy missions. He urged further steps to guarantee the protection of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression

In a bilateral meeting with Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Tleuberdi, the High Representative underlined Central Asia's pivotal role in regional stability and security. He looked forward in enhancing bilateral EU - Kazakhstan relations including on trade, connectivity and energy, in the framework of the new EU - Central Asia Strategy.

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