



Questions and Answers: EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific

Brussels, 16 September 2021

STATE OF THE UNION 2021

On 19 April 2021, the Council adopted conclusions on an EU Strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific [\[1\]](#). As a follow-up to the Council conclusions, the Commission and the High Representative presented a Joint Communication on the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy on 16 September 2021.

Why an EU Strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific?

The Indo-Pacific region is increasingly becoming strategically important for the EU. The region's growing economic, demographic, and political weight makes it a key player in shaping the international order and in addressing global challenges.

The EU and the Indo-Pacific are highly interconnected. The EU is already the top investor, the leading development cooperation partner and one of the biggest trading partners in the Indo-Pacific region. Together, the Indo-Pacific and Europe hold over 70% of the global trade in goods and services, as well as over 60% of foreign direct investment flows.

However, current dynamics in the Indo-Pacific have given rise to intense geopolitical competition adding to increasing tensions on trade and supply chains as well as in technological, political and security areas.

This is the reason why the EU has decided to step up its strategic engagement with the Indo-Pacific region.

What are the main elements of the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy?

The EU's increased engagement in the Indo-Pacific aims at maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific for all while building strong and lasting partnerships. The basic message is that the EU will deepen its engagement with partners in the Indo-Pacific to respond to emerging dynamics that are affecting regional stability. The EU's approach is designed to foster a rules-based international order, a level playing field, as well as an open and fair environment for trade and investment, tackling climate change and supporting connectivity with the EU.

In this context, the Joint Communication highlights **seven priority areas** for EU action:

- Sustainable and inclusive prosperity;
- Green transition;
- Ocean governance;
- Digital governance and partnerships;
- Connectivity;
- Security and defence;
- Human security.

The EU Strategy on the Indo-Pacific is an invitation to our partners in the region to address together common challenges and uphold international law and defending values and principles to which we are committed.

What actions will the EU take in the area of security and defence?

The EU will promote an open and rules-based regional security architecture, including secure sea lines of communication, capacity-building and enhanced naval presence by EU Member States in the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, the EU will seek to conduct more joint exercises and port calls with Indo-Pacific partners, including multilateral exercises, to fight piracy and protect freedom of navigation in

the region.

The EU will intensify its dialogues with partners on security and defence, including counter-terrorism and cybersecurity. The EU will also support Indo-Pacific partners' capacity to ensure maritime security. The EU will also strengthen capacity-building for partners to tackle cybercrime.

Is the EU Indo-Pacific strategy directed against China?

The EU's approach to the region is one of cooperation not confrontation. Our renewed commitment to the region is inclusive of all partners wishing to cooperate with the EU. We will adapt this cooperation according to specific areas where partners share principles, values or mutual interest.

The EU will also pursue its multifaceted engagement with China^[2], engaging bilaterally to promote solutions to common challenges, cooperating on issues of common interest and encouraging China to play its part in a peaceful and thriving Indo-Pacific region.

Will human rights be part of the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy?

The EU will remain a consistent defender of human rights and democracy and continue to use all tools at its disposal: political and human rights dialogues and consultations, trade preferences and the mainstreaming of human rights considerations in all EU policies and programmes.

The EU will continue to use its restrictive measures (sanctions) regime against individuals, entities and bodies responsible for, involved in, or associated with serious human rights violations and abuses worldwide.

Are there any concrete actions the EU will take to implement its Indo-Pacific Strategy?

The implementation of the EU strategy will include a number of actions, in particular:

- Concluding **Partnership and Cooperation Agreements** (PCA) with Malaysia and Thailand; starting PCA negotiations with the Maldives, and bringing the EU's upcoming Partnership Agreement with the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) to full fruition.
- Engaging with Indo-Pacific partners to build more resilient and sustainable global **value chains** by diversifying trade and economic relations, and by developing technological standards and regulations that are in line with our values and principles.
- Completing EU **trade negotiations** with Australia, Indonesia and New Zealand; resuming trade negotiations and starting investment negotiations with India; completing an Economic Partnership Agreement with the East Africa Community; assessing the possible resumption of trade negotiations with Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, and the eventual negotiation of a region-to-region trade agreement with ASEAN.
- Concluding **Green Alliances** and Partnerships with willing and ambitious Indo-Pacific partners to fight against climate change and environmental degradation.
- Strengthening **ocean governance** in the region, including increasing the EU's support for Indo-Pacific countries' fisheries management and control systems, the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and the implementation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements.
- Expanding the network of **digital partnerships** with Indo-Pacific partners, as well as exploring the possibility of new Digital Partnership Agreements.
- Strengthen cooperation on **research and innovation** under 'Horizon Europe'; explore the association to this programme of eligible likeminded Indo-Pacific partners such as Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand and Singapore.
- Stepping up implementation of the **Connectivity Partnerships** with Japan and India; supporting partners in establishing an appropriate regulatory environment and facilitating the mobilisation of the necessary funding to improve connectivity on the ground between Europe and the Indo-Pacific.
- Exploring ways to ensure enhanced **naval deployments** by EU Member States to help protect the sea lines of communication and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific while boosting Indo-Pacific partners' capacity to ensure **maritime security**.
- Reinforcing support to **healthcare systems** and **pandemic preparedness** for the least-developed countries in the Indo-Pacific region, enhancing collaborative research on communicable diseases in the context of the Horizon Europe research programme.

For More Information

[Joint Communication on the EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific](#)

[Factsheet on EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific](#)
[State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen](#)

[1] <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7914-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

[2] Joint Communication: EU-China; a Strategic Outlook, 12 March 2019

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