In response to this request, the European Union would like to submit the following:

Strengthening of security and internal and inter-regional regional co-operation in the Mediterranean, and in the broader Middle East, remains high on the European agenda. A democratic, more stable, greener and more prosperous Southern Neighbourhood is a strategic priority for the EU. Further to the adoption of the Joint Communication on a renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood, a new Agenda for the Mediterranean on 9 February 2021, which inter alia proposes to develop further the EU’s partnership on security matters with its neighbouring countries, the EU has moved ahead with its implementation in all priority domains.

The EU stresses the urgent need to renew efforts for a political solution to the crisis in Gaza. The EU continues to call for an immediate humanitarian pause leading to a sustainable ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages and the provision of humanitarian assistance. The EU also underlines the need to implement the two-state solution respecting all the relevant UN resolutions and based on the internationally agreed parameters as the only way forward. Towards this end, the EU is working with its regional and Arab partners to organise a preparatory peace conference. The EU continues to call for the respect of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, by all parties. In this regard, the EU calls on all parties to respect and implement the orders of the International Court of Justice. The EU stresses its continued support to the Palestinian Authority as the only legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people and to UNRWA, which provides essential services in Gaza and across the region.

Important efforts have been put in place by the EU during the past year to enhance regional cooperation in the Mediterranean through continued support and cooperation with the UfM, the League of Arab States (LAS), the Anna Lindh Foundation and the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation, an effort now more necessary than ever.

The Regional Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean of 2023 took place on 27 November in Barcelona and was redesigned to discuss the critical situation in Israel and Gaza/Palestine, the consequences across the region and the way forward. The EU Southern Neighbourhood Ministerial was postponed to a later date.

The UfM continued to contribute to promote a more peaceful, secure, green, prosperous and inclusive Mediterranean region by creating, through dialogue and cooperation, a political environment, which can mitigate the tensions affecting its members by addressing many root causes of conflict, and working towards a shared prosperity. The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States together with other Arab Partners continued work on the Peace Day Efforts aimed a reviving the Middle East Peace Process

The EU partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and its members enjoys a positive momentum, following the adoption in May 2022 of an EU Joint communication on a partnership with the Gulf which was followed by Council Conclusions on 20 June, which detailed concrete proposals for a strengthened cooperation on global issues and challenges
(green transition, energy, climate, trade), as well as regional stability, global security, development and people-to-people exchanges.

As part of its revamped strategy vis-à-vis the Gulf, the EU has appointed the EUSR for the Gulf in June 2023 that as part of his mandate is engaging with the interlocutors in the region on security and sectoral cooperation.

The 27th EU-GCC Joint Council held in Muscat agreed on additional commitments, such as the launch of a EU-GCC Security Dialogue in January 2024 in Riyadh, a one of a kind format, that focus among others on avenues for further cooperation and coordination on Maritime Security, cyber and hybrid threat, disaster preparedness and response, non-proliferation and Counter Terrorism. A second edition of this dialogue might take place in the second semester of 2024. Also, the organisation of a High Level Forum on Regional Security and cooperation – led on EU side by the EUSR Di Maio - to foster exchange of views on maritime security, War in Gaza and Iran/Gulf security.

In implementing the Agenda for the Mediterranean, the EU draws on its full toolbox. Multiannual indicative programmes (MIPs) are in place for most of the Southern partners, together with a Regional MIP and a Multi-country MIP for Migration, along with the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP). Under the EU’s Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), up to 7 billion euro are foreseen to be mobilised for the period 2021-2027 to implement the Economic and Investment Plan - EIP (annexed to the Agenda for the Mediterranean), potentially going to leverage up to 30 billion euro in private and public investment in the region. Through the Global Gateway (GG) strategy and once more the EIP, the EU is stepping up its support to partners to meet their infrastructure needs through the implementation of identified flagship initiatives (ex. MEDUSA, ELMED).

The EEAS led political and sectoral dialogues and subcommittees with partner countries on issues of common interest such as governance, the rule of law, inclusive growth, climate change, and energy, taking into account recent political developments in each country. It was agreed to re-launch the High-level Dialogue on Security with Algeria. A Security Dialogue with Morocco took place on 8 May 2023 in Rabat.

Joint efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, and promote security cooperation, are paramount priorities. The EU is a main provider of humanitarian and development assistance in the Mediterranean region and is able to deploy a wide range of instruments in a triple nexus humanitarian-development-peace approach. The EU is deploying Military and Civilian Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions and operations, mediation and stabilization actions, as well as restrictive measures. Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI mandate was renewed in 2023 until 31 March 2025, and continued to be the only implementer of the UN arms embargo on Libya, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1970 (2001) and 2292 (2016). In April 2023, the Council extended the mandate of the European Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM Libya) until 30 June 2025, to enhance the capacity of Libyan authorities and agencies to manage Libya’s borders, to fight human trafficking and migrant smuggling, as well as to counter terrorism. EUPOL COPPS is mandated to contribute to the establishment of effective and sustainable policing and wider criminal justice arrangements under Palestinian ownership and to Security Sector and Justice Sector Reform. EUBAM Rafah, is supporting the Palestinian Authority General authority for Borders and crossings. The mandate of both EUPOL COPPS and EUBAM Rafah was extended until June 2024.

The EU continues to call for a political solution to the Syria conflict in line with UNSCR 2254 and to support the UN Special Envoy for Syria. The EU organized the 6th Brussels Conference
(10 May 2022), and 7th Brussels Conference (15 June 2023), and keeps sending annually a strong signal of its continued commitment to the Syrian people and for refugee-hosting communities. The EU continues to impose sanctions on leading members and entities of the Syrian regime. From a security perspective, the EU is working on a package of measures to help alleviate the pressure on camps in North East Syria, where persons believed to be affiliated to Da’esh and their families are detained, by supporting rehabilitation centres and reintegration efforts of Syrian/Iraqi nationals. The EU supports a sustainable solution for the Syrian refugees, which can only be based on their voluntary, safe and dignified return to their places of origin when conditions on the ground as defined by UNHCR will allow this. In April 2023, the EU also adopted additional sanctions against individuals and organisations associated with the Syrian regime, related to the production and trafficking of narcotics, notably Captagon.

The EU continued to work in support of the UN-facilitated political process in Libya, calling for the renewal of the legitimacy of institutions through national elections, as well as the implementation of the Ceasefire agreement (withdrawal of foreign forces, fighters, mercenaries and armed groups). Following the recent resignation of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, the EU remains committed to a lasting and sustainable political solution, based on an UN-led mediation.

The EU continued to support the work carried out by the Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary General for Western Sahara, Staffan de Mistura, towards a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the Western Sahara conflict, based on the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

Part of EU support on security addressed the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) risks in the region. The Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) funds projects for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in the Mediterranean. EU CBRN Centres of Excellence in the Mediterranean contribute to these tasks, including those in Morocco and Algeria.

The EU continued to co-operate with Southern partners on tackling terrorism and preventing radicalisation leading to violent extremism, by supporting institutional capacity building, development of relevant legislation Counter-terrorism/security experts’ work continues in EU Delegations and counter-terrorism dialogues were organised with partner countries.

Migration continues to be a priority for the EU and its Member States. Work is ongoing on the external dimension of the EU Pact for Migration and Asylum, which is the EU’s overarching framework for migration policies. In this context, the EU has further strengthened its cooperation with its partners in the region, aiming at a comprehensive, balanced and mutually beneficial partnership. Helping host countries in the region in protecting millions of refugees and displaced persons, building partners’ capacities for border management and anti-smuggling, funded assisted voluntary returns from host countries to countries of origin, establishing legal pathways and skills development as well as tackling the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement are important elements of these partnerships.