

## **Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on developments in the Middle East**

The European Union follows developments in Iran and the Middle East with utmost concern. The European Union has adopted extensive sanctions in response to the actions of Iranian authorities, whether their brutal repression and human rights violations against the Iranian people or threats to the region and to European and international security, through Iran's ballistic missile and nuclear programmes, and its support for armed groups in the Middle East. We will continue to protect EU security and interests, including through additional sanctions. The European Union has consistently urged Iran to end Iran's nuclear programme, curb its ballistic missile programme, refrain from destabilizing activities in the region and in Europe, and to cease the appalling violence and repression against its own people.

We call for maximum restraint, protection of civilians and full respect of international law, including the principles of the United Nations Charter, and international humanitarian law. The Middle East stands to lose greatly from any drawn-out war. Iran's attacks and violation of sovereignty of a number of countries in the region are inexcusable. Iran must refrain from indiscriminate military strikes. We express our solidarity with partners in the region that have been attacked or affected. We reiterate our commitment to regional stability and to the protection of civilian life.

We remain in close contact with partners in the region to contribute to de-escalation and reaffirm the steadfast commitment of the European Union and its member states to safeguarding regional security and stability. The European Union will continue to contribute to all diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions and to bring about a lasting solution to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Full cooperation by Iran with the International Atomic Energy Agency as well as adherence to Iran's legal obligations under Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement are crucial, and nuclear safety is a critical priority. Preservation of maritime security and respect of freedom of navigation are also of utmost importance.

The EU and its member states are taking all necessary steps to ensure the safety of EU citizens in the region, including by activating the EU Civil Protection Mechanism if necessary.

The events unfolding in Iran must not lead to an escalation that could threaten the Middle East, Europe and beyond, with unpredictable consequences, also in the economic sphere. The disruption of critical waterways, like the Strait of Hormuz, must be avoided.

The EU reiterates its solidarity with the Iranian people and strongly supports their fundamental aspirations for a future where their universal human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully respected.