

## **VI. EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

### ***Belarus***

21. The European Council strongly condemns the instrumentalisation of migrants and refugees by the Belarusian regime and the humanitarian crisis it has created. The EU will continue to counter the hybrid attack launched by Belarus with a determined response, addressing all dimensions of the crisis in line with EU law and international obligations, including fundamental rights. The European Council underlines in particular the importance of:
  - effectively protecting the EU's external borders, including by strengthening the EU's legal framework. In this respect it calls on the Council to examine the Commission proposal on provisional emergency measures;
  - combatting smuggling and trafficking;
  - promptly implementing restrictive measures, following the adoption of the fifth package of listings, and being prepared to adopt further measures as necessary;
  - ensuring unhindered access for international organisations in Belarus and stepping up humanitarian support;
  - supporting the return of migrants from Belarus.
22. The European Council reiterates its call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners and for an end to the repression of civil society and independent media. It reiterates the democratic right of the Belarusian people to elect their president through new, free and fair elections.

### ***Ukraine***

23. The European Council stresses the urgent need for Russia to de-escalate tensions caused by the military build-up along its border with Ukraine and aggressive rhetoric. The European Council reiterates its full support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Any further military aggression against Ukraine will have massive consequences and severe cost in response, including restrictive measures coordinated with partners.
24. The European Council encourages diplomatic efforts and supports the Normandy format in achieving the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements.