



Brussels, 20. 11. 2020

Dear Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

Thank you for your letter dated 19 October 2020, regarding the European Union's participation in the virtual G20 summit on 21-22 November hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as rotating Chair.

The G20 is of strategic importance to the EU. It is a key forum to discuss and coordinate with the largest world economies the major global challenges we face. Such global coordination is all the more important as the world faces one its deepest crisis with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The G20 summit will address issues such as global cooperation to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines and treatments are made available to all at affordable prices; how to improve global preparedness against future pandemics; the fight against climate change; how to ensure that our recovery efforts help building back better and in a more sustainable way; or how to make trade and taxation fairer. The EU cannot be absent from this discussion.

The Chair of the G20 rotates every year. Participation at a G20 meeting does not mean endorsement of the policies of the Chair.

This being said, the promotion and protection of human rights are at the core of EU's engagement with Saudi Arabia. As part of its regular dialogue with Saudi counterparts, the EU has raised on several occasions, and at various levels, the issues mentioned in your letter.

The situation of women's rights, individual activists, human rights defenders, or the need for accountability for the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, feature prominently in our discussions with the relevant Saudi institutions, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Saudi Human Rights Commission. The EU has also voiced concern about a number of those individual cases in multilateral fora, including at the September 2020 session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva¹. We will continue to do this.

¹ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-geneva/86968/hrc-45-item-2-general-debate-hc-oral-update-eu-statement_en

In parallel, and in close coordination with EU Member States, we are seeking to strengthen our dialogue with Riyadh on human rights-related matters. As part of these efforts, we have engaged with the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs during his recent visit to Brussels², as well as with the Chairman of the Saudi Human Rights Commission, and the Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

It is our intention to further intensify our dialogue on all human rights topics including civil and political rights, with the aim of mirroring progress Saudi Arabia has achieved in recent years in the socio-economic domain. We will continue to pay utmost attention to this question in the run up to the G20 Summit and beyond, in coordination with the EU Special Representative for Human Rights and relevant stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,

For the European Council



Charles MICHEL

For the European Commission



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² <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/86039/saudi-arabia-high-representativevice-president-borrell-meets-foreign-minister-faisal-bin-en>

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