



INDO-PACIFIC CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

Virtual Panel Discussion on From Connectivity to Security: EU's Vision for the Indo-Pacific **Tuesday, February 25, 2025 | 1130-1230 UTC**

Background and Context

The Indo-Pacific region has become a critical area for the European Union (EU) due to its growing economic and strategic importance. Trade between the EU and the Indo-Pacific has surged significantly, with imports rising by 117% and exports by 59% from 2011 to 2022. Currently, the region accounts for 37% of the EU's imports and 25% of its exports. However, the region's prominence is underscored by its strategic trade routes—such as the South China Sea, the Strait of Malacca, and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait—and by the challenges posed by China's growing influence and the EU's trade deficit.

In recent years, the EU has increased their involvement in the Indo-Pacific region by launching partnership projects and strategic policies like the EU Indo-Pacific Strategy, the Global Gateway Initiative, the EU-Vietnam Cooperation in, EU- Japan Security Partnership, and EU- South Korea Security Agreement to reduce dependency on China for the resilient supply chain.

In response to these dynamics, the EU has intensified its engagement in the Indo-Pacific through strategic initiatives and partnerships. Key milestones include the EU Indo-Pacific Strategy, the Global Gateway Initiative and recent security collaborations such as the EU-Vietnam Cooperation Agreement, the EU-Japan Security Partnership and the EU-South Korea Security Agreement (November 2024). These initiatives aim to strengthen the EU's presence in the region while reducing dependency on China, particularly in building resilient supply chains.

To further bolster connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, the EU has launched multiple projects under its Global Gateway Strategy, focusing on infrastructure, digital connectivity,

and supply chain networks. However, these efforts face growing risks from hybrid threats, including piracy, trafficking, cybercrime, and escalating geopolitical tensions.

Recognising the critical need for maritime security, the EU extended the Critical Maritime Routes in the Indo-Pacific (CRIMARIO II) program. This extension aims to address security challenges in the region, ensuring safer maritime routes and strengthening the EU's role as a security partner in the Indo-Pacific. As part of its forward-looking strategy, the EU is exploring the possibility of launching CRIMARIO III and ESWIA+ (Enhancing Security for Women and Improving Access) to tackle emerging challenges such as digital and climate-linked security risks.

Given the increasing importance of connectivity and security in the Indo-Pacific, this webinar seeks to explore the EU's evolving role and strategy in the Indo-Pacific. By bringing together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders, the discussion will focus on the future trajectory of the EU's connectivity and security-focused initiatives. It will address pressing challenges, identify potential areas for collaboration with like-minded partners, and explore pathways to ensure a resilient, secure, and sustainable Indo-Pacific region.

Objectives

- Examine the link between the EU's growing connectivity projects and the need for robust maritime security measures in the Indo-Pacific.
- To analyse the EU's ongoing initiatives, including the Global Gateway Strategy and maritime security programs like CRIMARIO II, in enhancing connectivity and addressing security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Expectation of getting answers to the question, are connectivity or security projects fulfilling the aim of the EU's interest? Are the EU's connectivity projects helping in building a resilient supply chain?

Expected Outcomes

- Participants will gain insights into the EU's initiatives and strategic priorities in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in connectivity, resilient supply chains, and maritime security.
- The webinar will provide concrete recommendations for strengthening partnerships between the EU and like-minded stakeholders, with a focus on addressing hybrid threats, climate-linked risks, and digital security.

Agenda

Time (UTC)	Agenda	Duration
1130-1135	Welcome and Introduction	5 min.
1135-1140	Keynote Address	5 min.
1140-1225	Panel Discussion/ Q&A	45 min.
1225-1230	Closing Remarks	5min.