



Brussels, 11 March 2026

Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) meeting

12 March 2026 (19h15-21h15) | Rue du marais 119, Brussels (room P61)

A. Factual background

Ariadne Landfall

In early March 2026, an exceptionally severe **Atlantic storm system** (*Ariadne*) made landfall on the Iberian Peninsula, moving northwards from Morocco towards Western Europe. Prolonged torrential rainfall, combined with exceptionally strong winds and unusually high tidal surges, led to widespread and sudden flash floods and landslides across northern Morocco, Portugal, and western regions of Spain. The hardest hit areas include Tangier, Salé, and Casablanca; the Setúbal Peninsula and Leiria region of Portugal; and Cáceres, Salamanca and Astorga in Spain.

River basins overflowed simultaneously across national borders, overwhelming existing flood-control systems and dams. Several major urban and industrial areas were inundated within hours, forcing the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of residents, including vulnerable populations in low-lying coastal zones and river valleys. Temporary shelters were rapidly established, but capacity was quickly exceeded, resulting in significant humanitarian needs.

The storm caused extensive damage to energy infrastructure, including high-voltage transmission lines, substations, and offshore wind installations. As a consequence, prolonged electricity blackouts affected millions of households and businesses across the three countries, disrupting water supply systems, telecommunications networks, and fuel distribution. Backup power systems in hospitals and emergency services came under severe strain, with some facilities forced to reduce operations. Several ports were also temporarily closed due to unsafe conditions, interrupting supply chains and the delivery of essential goods, including food and medical supplies.

As shortages of fuel, drinking water and basic food items intensified, instances of looting were reported in certain urban districts of Lisbon, Setúbal, Seville and Salamanca. Confrontations were registered between residents and security forces deployed to protect distribution centres and energy facilities, with rising concerns of escalation and growing unrest. Social media has also amplified disinformation narratives blaming EU climate policies for inadequate preparedness, further fuelling public anger.

In Morocco, the scale of destruction, the growing number of displaced residents, and perceived delays in relief distribution triggered widespread public protests in Tangier and Casablanca. Opposition groups accused the government of systemic corruption, poor infrastructure planning and failure to anticipate climate risks. Calls for the resignation of senior officials and early elections intensified, leading to political instability and a

heightened risk of violent confrontation. Fears for the security of foreign personnel deployed across the country are also increasing. The offices of EUAM Morocco, a civilian advisory mission present in the territory since 2023 to support security sector reform and crisis management capacity-building, for instance, are located near areas affected by protests. Contingency plans are in place for the relocation of non-essential staff.

In light of the scale, cross-border nature, cascading effects, and emerging security dimensions of the Ariadne Storm System, national authorities in Morocco, Portugal and Spain declared states of emergency in the most affected regions. Given the magnitude of the crisis and the limits of national response capacities, coordination mechanisms at the European and regional levels were also activated.

On the 10th of March 2026, Spain and Portugal formally requested a **full activation of the Council's Integrated political Crisis Response Mechanism**, with a view to achieving a political and operational solution to the situation. An IPCR meeting has therefore been scheduled for Thursday, 12 March, in advance of the European Council gathering of Thursday, 19 March, in Brussels.

Delegations are invited to advance concrete political and technical proposals to inform the conclusions of the Council meeting (General Affairs), under the guidance of the Presidency of the Council.

B. Invited delegations

The IPCR meeting of 12 March is open to the following delegations:

1. Council Presidency (Chair)
2. European Commission, Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (Emergency Response Coordination Centre)
3. European External Action Service (Peace, Security and Defence unit)
4. Portugal (Ministerial authorities and civil protection services)
5. Spain (Ministerial authorities and civil protection services)
6. Morocco (Ministerial authorities and civil protection services)

Additional experts from EU agencies and bodies may be invited to join the meeting on an ad hoc basis, as the situation evolves. The agenda for the meeting will be available shortly.

For security reasons, delegations are invited to inform the Secretariat of the Council of the full list of accredited delegates expected to attend the meeting as soon as possible.