

## **Europe Hit by Record-Breaking Early-Summer Heatwave; WHO Links More Than 1,300 Excess Deaths to Extreme Heat**

An unprecedented severe early-summer heatwave swept across Europe in late June, first affecting western Europe before intensifying across central and eastern parts of the continent. In the UK, the Met Office provisionally recorded a new June maximum temperature record for the third consecutive day, reaching 37.3°C at Santon Downham, Suffolk, on 26 June, above the previous June record of 35.6°C set in 1957 and matched in 1976. Preliminary all-time temperature records were reported on 27 June in Germany, Denmark and the Czech Republic. Germany recorded 41.5°C at Möckern-Drewitz in Saxony-Anhalt, surpassing a national record set only the previous day. Denmark recorded 37°C north of Aarhus, while the Czech Republic reported 40.9°C north of Prague. Switzerland also recorded a new June temperature high, and Poland experienced widespread extreme heat as the hot air mass moved east. The heat placed major strain on infrastructure and the World Health Organization's Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said on 28 June that more than 1,300 excess deaths had been recorded across Europe since 21 June in connection with high temperatures. He warned that Europe is the fastest-warming continent, heating at about twice the global average, and urged stronger heat-health action plans. The event has intensified public debate about climate resilience and emissions reduction across Europe. However, while Western climate scientists are largely in agreement that urgent action is needed to reduce the pace of global warming, Western governments ignore their scientists when their recommendations threaten the short-term interests of the companies that control policy.

## **US–Iran Hostilities Flare After Strait of Hormuz Ship Attack; Doha Talks Expected Amid Fragile Truce**

Tensions between the United States and Iran escalated sharply after a Singapore-flagged commercial vessel, the M/V Ever Lovely, was struck in the Strait of Hormuz on 25 June. US Central Command said Iran hit the ship with a one-way attack drone while it was exiting the strait along the Omani coast. In response, US forces carried out strikes on 26 June against Iranian missile and drone storage sites and coastal radar facilities. The confrontation continued over the following days. CENTCOM said US forces launched additional strikes on 27 June after another vessel, the Panama-flagged tanker M/T Kiku, was hit near the Strait of Hormuz. Iran, meanwhile, accused Washington of violating the ceasefire and launched missiles and drones at US military sites in Kuwait and Bahrain. Kuwait reported that its air defences responded to missile and drone attacks. Despite the escalation, mediators have opened de-escalation channels, and US and Iranian technical teams are expected to meet in Doha to discuss implementation of the interim agreement and management of the Strait of Hormuz. The uncertainty and volatility reflect internal contradictions on both sides as much as the conflict between them does. Iran is internally conflicted between the IRGC that wants to pursue its advantage against the US, while political negotiators prefer appeasement and returning a

couple of steps closer to the former orbit with the US. Likewise, the US is conflicted between those who thought they could totally dominate Iran and those who now realize that the US lacks the military and diplomatic power to achieve what was foolishly promised at the start of the US aggression against Iran.

### **UK, Germany, France, Italy and Poland Agree to Deepen Defence Cooperation**

Leaders of the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and Poland met in Berlin on 24 June for an E5 summit focused on European security and defence cooperation. NATO's Secretary General joined the meeting from Washington. In their joint statement, the five countries reaffirmed their commitment to Euro-Atlantic security, the transatlantic bond and a stronger European role within NATO, while recognising the continuing role of the United States in the Alliance. The leaders agreed to intensify defence-industrial cooperation, with particular emphasis on air defence, unmanned systems, artificial intelligence, long-range firepower and other critical capabilities. They also committed to accelerate European joint development and procurement of deep precision-strike capabilities, with the aim of closing capability gaps, improving interoperability and strengthening NATO readiness and deterrence. The statement also pledged continued support for Ukraine, including military support, sanctions and economic pressure on Russia, and backing for Ukraine's resilience and closer partnership with NATO. On Iran, the leaders welcomed the US–Iran memorandum of understanding as an opportunity to restore regional stability and stabilise the global economy, while stressing that Iran must never acquire a nuclear weapon. They also reaffirmed the importance of unrestricted freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and confirmed their intention to participate in a UK–France-led multinational maritime mission once conditions allow.

### **Trump Threatens Europe with 100% Tariffs Over Digital Services Taxes**

In a Truth Social post on the 26th of June, Trump threatened that any country imposing such a 'digital services' tax would "immediately" face a 100% tariff on all goods exported to the United States, adding that the measure would override existing or pending trade agreements. His warning was aimed mainly at European countries, several of which have introduced or considered taxes on revenues earned by large US-based digital platforms. France, the UK, Spain, Italy and Austria have already imposed a digital services tax, and Trump's latest threat creates new uncertainty even as economic treaties with the US have been recently penned. European governments argue that the taxes ensure that companies such as Google, Meta, Amazon and Apple contribute fairly in markets where they generate substantial revenue but may book profits elsewhere. The dispute now threatens to reopen a major front in US-Europe trade tensions despite European fawning to the US in relation to NATO cooperation.