



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2014) 2105 final

- English language version of the French text which is authentic -

Strasbourg, 25 November 2014

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2105th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

Wednesday 12 November 2014

(morning)

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PV(2014) 2105 final

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Single sitting: Wednesday 12 November 2014 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.09 with Mr JUNCKER, President, in the chair.

Present:

Mr JUNCKER	President
Mr TIMMERMANS	Vice-President
Ms MOGHERINI	High Representative/ Vice-President
Ms GEORGIEVA	Vice-President
Mr ANSIP	Vice-President
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Vice-President
Mr KATAINEN	Vice-President
Mr OETTINGER	Member
Mr HAHN	Member
Ms MALMSTRÖM	Member
Mr MIMICA	Member
Mr ARIAS CAÑETE	Member
Mr VELLA	Member
Ms THYSSEN	Member
Mr MOSCOVICI	Member
Mr HOGAN	Member
Lord HILL	Member
Ms BULC	Member
Ms BIENKOWSKA	Member
Mr NAVRACSICS	Member
Ms CREȚU	Member
Ms VESTAGER	Member
Mr MOEDAS	Member

Absent:

Mr ANDRIUKAITIS	Member
Mr AVRAMOPOULOS	Member
Mr STYLIANIDES	Member
Ms JOUROVÁ	Member

The following sat in to represent absent Members of the Commission:

Mr VINČIŪNAS	Chef de cabinet to Mr ANDRIUKAITIS
Mr ADAMIDIS	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr AVRAMOPOULOS
Ms CHRISTOPHIDOU	Chef de cabinet to Mr STYLIANIDES
Mr BRAUN	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms JOUROVÁ

The following also sat in:

Mr SELMAYR	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr ROMERO REQUENA	Director-General, Legal Service	
Mr PAULGER	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr SCHINAS	Head of the Spokesperson Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms BENÍTEZ SALAS	European Political Strategy Centre	
Ms MARTÍNEZ ALBEROLA	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Ms KRAMER	Director of coordination and administration in the PRESIDENT's office	Items 1 to 6
Mr DELVAUX	A member of the PRESIDENT's staff	Item 11
Ms SUTTON	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr TIMMERMANS	Items 1 to 10
Ms HRISTCHEVA	Chef de cabinet to Ms GEORGIEVA	Items 1 to 6
Ms CALVIÑO	Director-General, DG Budget	Items 1 to 6
Ms KLINGBEIL	Deputy Secretary-General	Items 6 (in part) to 11

Secretary: Ms DAY, Secretary-General, assisted by Mr AYET PUIGARNAU, Director in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDA

(OJ(2014) 2105/FINAL)

The PRESIDENT opened the Commission meeting by informing the Members that Ms JOUROVÁ would be absent; he sent her the Commission's best wishes for a prompt recovery.

He mentioned various dates and information important for the institution's work over the coming weeks.

He also mentioned an extraordinary meeting of the Commission to be held on 24 November in Brussels, which would be dedicated to a very large package of economic decisions and measures. He reminded those present that this extraordinary meeting would not replace the ordinary meeting already planned for 25 November in Strasbourg and informed them that Pope Francis would visit the European Institutions that same day in the premises of the European Parliament and that Members of the Commission who wished to do so could attend. He also made reference to the meeting on 3 December between the Commission and the Latvian government to prepare for its Presidency of the Council of the Union in the following semester. He added that the Commission would take a solemn oath on 10 December before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in Luxembourg after its ordinary meeting in Brussels and an official lunch at the CJEU. Finally, he announced that the Commission would examine its work programme for 2015 at its meeting on 16 December.

The Commission took note of this information and of that day's agenda.

**2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET
(RCC(2014) 2105)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 10 November.

**3. MINUTES OF 2104TH MEETING (5 NOVEMBER)
(PV(2014) 2104 AND /2)**

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2104th meeting.

**4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
(RCC(2014) 85)**

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held on Friday 7 November (RCC(2014) 85).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

i) Trilogue

(point 3.1 of the IRG record)

- Type-approval requirements for the implementation of the *eCall* system and amendment of Directive 2007/46/EC (Regulation) – SEHNALOVÁ Report – 2013/0165 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2014) 411/2.

ii) European Parliament dossiers

(point 3.2 of the IRG record)

- Conclusion of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part (Council Decision) – AUŠTREVIČIUS Report – 2014/0083 (NLE) – 2014/2817(INI)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2014) 662.

4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

iii) Programming of Council business

(SI(2014) 417)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2014) 417 on the Council meetings between 13 and 26 November.

iv) Non-legislative dossiers

(point 4.1 of the IRG record)

- Authorisation for Member States to ratify, in the interest of the European Union, the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention (No 29), 1930, of the International Labour Organisation with regard to matters related to judicial cooperation in criminal matters (Council Decision) / Authorisation for Member States to ratify, in the interest of the European Union, the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention (No 29), 1930, of the International Labour Organisation with regard to matters related to social policy

(Council Decision) – LEHYARIC Reports – 2014/0058 (NLE) /
2014/0259 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2014) 419 and /3.

**v) Preparations for Council meeting (Foreign Affairs) (Brussels,
17 November)**

(point 4.2.3 of the IRG record)

- Amendment to the standard clause against the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2014) 412.

5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT, AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2014) 567 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 3 and 7 November.

5.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2014) 568 ET SEQ)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 3 and 7 November.

5.3. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2014) 569 ET SEQ)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 3 and 7 November, as archived in e-Greffe.

5.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2014) 570)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 10 and 14 November.

5.5. GENERAL EMPOWERMENT FOR IMPLEMENTING MEASURES UNDER THE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION INSTRUMENT (DCI) AND THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD INSTRUMENT (ENI)

(C(2014) 8444)

The Commission granted the Members of the Commission responsible for international cooperation and development, and for European Neighbourhood Policy, the general empowerment set out in C(2014) 8444 for the adoption, on the Commission's behalf and under its responsibility, of implementing measures concerning the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) respectively.

5.6. GENERAL EMPOWERMENT FOR CERTAIN DECISIONS CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IAP II)

(C(2014) 8399)

The Commission granted the Members of the Commission responsible for European Neighbourhood Policy and enlargement negotiations, regional policy, and agriculture and rural development, the general empowerment set out in C(2014) 8399 in order to adopt, on the Commission's behalf and under its responsibility, certain decisions concerning the implementation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IAP II).

6. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION AMENDING REGULATION (EC, EURATOM) 1150/2000 IMPLEMENTING DECISION 2007/436/EC, EURATOM, ON THE SYSTEM OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES' OWN RESOURCES (COM(2014) 704 AND /2)

The PRESIDENT asked Ms GEORGIEVA to present the proposal drawn up by the Commission, at the Council's request, to make the European budgetary rules more flexible in the event of exceptional adjustments to the Member States' contributions to the Union's own resources – those calculated on the basis of value added tax and gross national income – by putting it in the general political context of the ongoing budgetary negotiations.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Ms GEORGIEVA referred to the interinstitutional budgetary discussions currently under way to close the 2014 budget and to finalise the 2015 budget of the Union, and the challenges to be addressed in the short term in this area.

To start with, she reviewed the budgetary situation in 2014, highlighting the key issue of the current financial year, which was the shortfall in payment appropriations to meet all obligations. She also presented a forecast of the evolution of payment appropriation ceilings up to 2020, which took the expected effect of draft amending budget No 3/2014 into account.

She then turned to the main issue in the negotiations on the 2015 budget, which was to bring it into line with the Union's political priorities, given that the European Parliament and the Council read the situation differently. She reported on the ongoing conciliation procedure and emphasised the distance still to go towards closing the gap between the various positions.

Finally, Ms GEORGIEVA explained the issue surrounding the automatic adjustment of gross national income (GNI) carried out in 2014, which for the Member States meant an exceptionally high overall surplus of EUR 9.5 billion, to be paid as part of their contribution to the Union budget by 1 December. She noted that this amount was by far the largest in the last twelve years, and that it placed some Member States in a difficult position in view of the obligation to pay very large sums at very short notice. For this reason, she was submitting for the Commission's approval an amendment to the Council Regulation implementing the Decision on the Communities' own resources.

The purpose of this amendment was to make provision for exceptional cases of very large adjustments to GNI – which could also apply to value added tax (VAT), which also formed part of the calculation of national contributions to the Union budget – by (i) extending the payment deadline to 1 September in the following financial year (2015), and (ii) setting at a very high level the individual thresholds for the Member States and the overall threshold for the Union as a whole, above which additional contributions to be paid in exceptional circumstances could benefit from this more flexible arrangement. In return, to protect the automatic nature of payments, she noted that the Member States making use of this arrangement would have to send in a binding payment schedule before 1 December 2014, failing which they would incur financial penalties.

Ms GEORGIEVA concluded her presentation by mentioning the need to ensure that the Union's budgetary expenditure was credible, particularly with regard to continuing efforts to reduce the estimated error rate. As regards the longer-term view, she suggested exploring a possible change in the way that the European budget operated, making use of the work of the reflection group led by Mr Mario Monti, a former Member of the Commission and former Prime Minister of Italy, by emphasising the concepts of performance and results, and drawing conclusions from current practices in the mid-term review of the 2014-20 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which would take place in 2016, and in

the development of the next MFF.

During the discussion, the Commission considered the following issues:

- the general support for the proposal to amend the rules in the manner discussed, in order to offer a political, not a bureaucratic, solution to a situation that was becoming a political problem for the governments of certain Member States vis-à-vis the Union; notwithstanding this, a warning of the risk that European public opinion could interpret this solution as a gesture equating to preferential treatment for one Member State or another, to the detriment of the Union as a whole;
- in any event, the need for the Commission to explain clearly that it was not in any way the source of the problem posed by the increase in contributions to the Union budget on account of the adjustment of certain parameters used in calculating them, which was in application of the legislation in force adopted by the Member States, and that this concerned financial resources to be redistributed to the benefit of Member States;
- the need to point out that over 94 % of the European budget was spent to the benefit of the Member States in one form or another, and that less than 6 % financed operating expenses and the expenses of the staff at the EU institutions and bodies;
- when informing the public of the Commission's proposal, the importance of giving due weight to the exceptional thresholds needed in order to be allowed to defer payment, and to the adjustment requested from Member States with effect from 1 December 2014 set against the amount of the EU budget, of which it represented only a tiny fraction;
- the need to be alert to the connection that might be made between the Commission's proposal of that day and use of the Common Agricultural Policy's

crisis reserve in relation to Russia's boycott of European agricultural exports following the sanctions adopted by the EU against Russia;

- the need for a complete rethink and analysis of the facts that had led to political stalemate in certain Member States before the Commission took the initiative of proposing amendments to the own resources Regulation, in particular the validity of the forecasts; the suggestion that there was a case, too, for examining whether similar situations might take the same course in other areas, in order to defuse these situations in so far as possible;
- payment arrears under the operational programmes, which were already causing problems to beneficiaries on the ground and would cause even more in 2015.

Ms GEORGIEVA thanked the Commission Members for their contributions and made some remarks. The reason why the amount of the adjustment was so high in 2014 was the change in the method of calculating GNI, which in certain Member States included new activities from now on. The flexible arrangements proposed by the Commission, which in the case at hand were merely a kind of good offices mission, applied to all the Member States and were designed to find a solution to the exceptional situation faced by certain countries which, with six weeks' prior notice, were being asked for an amount that was twice or three times more than that of their monthly contribution to the EU budget. She pointed out, too, that this measure also had the benefit of maintaining a climate conducive to the smooth conduct of the overall budgetary negotiations for 2014, 2015 and beyond. Each Member State could decide to defer payment of its contribution to the EU budget until 1 September 2015 in the light of its own budgetary situation. This possibility would from now on also be granted in cases where the increase in the contribution of a particular Member State exceeded the individual threshold set but the overall threshold for the Member States as a whole had not been reached.

These points apart, she supported the suggestion that this issue be analysed as a case study in order to draw lessons if necessary for other similar situations. Finally, she

reiterated the Commission's support for the European farmers who were facing difficulties as a result of the Russian embargo.

Winding up the discussion, the PRESIDENT reminded the meeting that the Commission's proposal followed up the conclusions of the meeting of EU finance ministers on 7 November; that if adopted, it would be communicated that day to the Member States for approval in COREPER, and that it would then require the opinion of the European Parliament and the Court of Auditors of the European Union. With regard to the negotiations on the 2014 and 2015 budgets, he hoped that the EU governments would follow the example of the European Parliament by giving the Commission the means for credible action.

The Commission adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2014) 704/2, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council and the Court of Auditors and, for information purposes, to the national parliaments.

**7. DECISION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE
CREATION OF A COMMISSIONERS' GROUP ON EXTERNAL ACTION**

(C(2014) 9003)

**8. COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION ON THE WORKING
METHODS OF THE COMMISSION 2014-2019**

(C(2014) 9004)

The PRESIDENT referred to his decision on the creation of the commissioners' group on external action and his Communication to the Commission on the working methods of the Commission for 2014-19. He pointed out that these two documents contained the points presented at the Commission's preparatory seminar on 11 and 12 September in Brussels and the result of numerous subsequent exchanges, in

particular in connection with the seminar of Chefs de cabinet on 7 November on the Commission's working methods.

The Commission took note of the two decisions adopted by the PRESIDENT in C(2014) 9003 and C(2014) 9004.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

JUDGMENT OF THE COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION OF 11 NOVEMBER 2014 IN CASE C-333/13 – FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND RIGHT OF RESIDENCE FOR EU CITIZENS AND ACCESS TO SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS IN THE HOST COUNTRY

The PRESIDENT asked Ms THYSSEN to report on the judgment handed down the previous day by the Court of Justice of the European Union on the entry of EU citizens into the territory of a Member State with the aim of obtaining social assistance (case C-333/13 *Elisabeta Dano, Florin Dano v Jobcenter Leipzig*).

Ms THYSSEN said that the Court of Justice had issued an important ruling on this sensitive issue, sometimes called 'benefit tourism', and that in her view the Commission should take a coordinated position on this judgment.

In this case, the Court had ruled that in order to access certain social security benefits - in this case, a Romanian national had applied for basic welfare benefits in Germany for herself and her son - nationals of other Member States could claim equal treatment with nationals of the host Member State only if their residence complied with the conditions laid down in the 'EU Citizen's Directive' (Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States).

According to this Directive, as the Court had pointed out in its judgment, the host Member State was not obliged to provide social assistance during the first three months of residence, and where the length of stay exceeded three months but was shorter than five years, the right of residence for persons who were not economically active (i.e. unemployed and not seeking employment) depended on their having sufficient own resources. In other words, a Member State could refuse to grant social security benefits to economically inactive Union citizens who were exercising their right to freedom of movement with the sole aim of obtaining social assistance in another Member State, despite having insufficient resources to qualify for a right of residence. In this case, the Court had found that the applicant and her son did not have sufficient resources, so they could not claim a right of residence in Germany under the ‘EU citizens’ Directive. Accordingly, they could not rely on the principle of non-discrimination enshrined in Directive 2004/38/EC and in Regulation (EC) 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems.

A discussion followed in which Members of the Commission stressed the distinction between the right to move freely within the Union, a fundamental value underpinning European integration, and entitlement to social security benefits. They also expressed a wish to coordinate their communication of the various issues raised by the judgment of the Court of Justice.

The PRESIDENT thanked Ms THYSEN for her explanations and said that a number of supporting documents would be sent to the Members of the Commission, in particular the Commission Communication of November 2013, ‘Free movement of EU citizens and their families: five actions to make a difference’.

The Commission took note of this information.

10. PREPARATION OF THE COMMISSION'S 2015 WORK PROGRAMME

Mr TIMMERMANS outlined the state of play in preparations for the Commission's work programme for 2015. He began by placing it in context, referring to the new impetus which the Commission wanted to give to Europe over the next five years, in line with the political guidelines proposed by the PRESIDENT. He pointed out that a clear and simplified legislative framework was a prerequisite for a real return to growth and that the European Parliament, the Member States and the people of Europe had high expectations of the Commission to deliver on this commitment through an action programme that was more integrated and coherent, both in substance and in form.

He stressed first of all that the initiatives to be included in the work programme would have to be linked directly to the ten priorities announced by the PRESIDENT in his political guidelines, which would serve as the basis for the Commission's work over the next five years.

Mr TIMMERMANS therefore highlighted the need to select a limited number of specific and clearly defined initiatives and to ensure the overall coherence of the work programme over and above individual policy areas. To this end, he called on the Commission Members to be pragmatic and rigorous and to show political courage. He also asked them to explain this new approach to the departments under their authority. The extent to which people assumed ownership of this new method would have a direct influence on the achievement of objectives.

He then mentioned the importance he would attach to interinstitutional dialogue during the preparatory process, pointing out that the effectiveness of the proposals to be presented by the Commission would ultimately depend on whether they were adopted by the co-legislators and implemented by the Member States. The preparations this year would therefore include not only the usual structured dialogue with the European Parliament, both at the level of the College of Commissioners and the PRESIDENT, but also a dialogue with the General Affairs Council. The

intention was to launch the process that day by sending a letter to the interinstitutional players concerned, which he himself would sign together with the PRESIDENT.

As regards the stages in the internal preparation of the work programme at the Commission, Mr TIMMERMANS referred to his joint letter with the PRESIDENT dated 7 November, asking Commission Members to submit their proposals by 14 November, before a series of sectoral meetings which he intended to hold the following week. He stressed again that the aim was to ensure that only proposals directly connected to the ten priority areas were selected. He acknowledged that this approach would require an effort by Commission departments to adapt, which was why he was calling for adequate capacity to be assigned to pursuing these political priorities, in particular the implementation of the EUR 300 billion investment plan. Given the current economic climate and the need for a global recovery, he explained that better deployment of the Commission's capabilities would in some cases be much more effective than maintaining legislative proposals that for some time had been blocked before the Council and Parliament, with little prospect of being adopted in the near future.

He ended by highlighting the major contribution which a work programme guided by the principle of better lawmaking should make to reviving growth in the EU, restoring business confidence and encouraging private investment. He asked each of the Commission Members to contribute in their own field to creating this virtuous circle.

The Commission held an in-depth discussion during which the following points were raised:

- broad support from the Commission Members for the approach put forward by Mr TIMMERMANS to create a new dynamic and inject greater rigour into the Commission's work programme, so that it could deliver concrete results on its commitment to boost employment and growth, maintain justice and promote

greater democracy; agreement on the need to prioritise measures likely to lead to tangible effects on growth in the short term; the importance attached to the idea of forging closer cooperation in this exercise, both within the Commission and with Parliament and the Council;

- the need for all Commission Members and departments to be involved, in a dynamic and collegiate approach; support for the goal of having a limited number of targeted initiatives; the need to move in a new direction towards a more political Commission, while ensuring the continuity of work carried out in recent years to stabilise the economic situation and encourage reforms in the aftermath of the crisis;
- the shared political responsibility of Members of the Commission to communicate the key messages of the new work programme to both the European Parliament and Commission departments; the importance of encouraging greater mobility within the Commission, based on the priorities, and to highlight the dynamic opportunities this opened up for its staff;
- a number of priority areas were put forward in view of their economic, strategic and societal leverage effect, including energy and climate policy, the digital single market, negotiation of a balanced free trade agreement with the United States and progress on tax harmonisation;
- the selected proposals in these priority areas should be carefully gauged and resources should be provided so that the objectives could be achieved; it was important to ensure that technical proposals did not degenerate into political controversy to the detriment of the common European interest and that of the general public;
- with regard in particular to climate and energy policies until 2030, the tools the EU had established meant that it was currently a world leader in terms of energy efficiency and ecodesign;

- tax harmonisation initiatives should be supported, for example by giving a new impulse to the financial transaction tax and the common consolidated corporate tax base, reflecting the priority placed by the G20 on combating tax evasion and tax fraud and on the automatic exchange of information between tax authorities; the PRESIDENT asked Mr MOSCOVICI to table a draft directive on this subject as soon as possible;
- it was emphasised that ordinary people looked to the EU to flag the way forward and give them renewed confidence in the future; a broad consensus was needed on the Commission's working priorities in the European institutions. This consensus would be particularly necessary if the investment plan to be presented by the Commission shortly was to be a success; the broader interinstitutional dialogue proposed by Mr TIMMERMANS should be welcomed.

Mr TIMMERMANS replied by emphasising that the Commission should produce better legislation, while not denying that implementation also required attention. These ambitions in turn supposed a change in internal working methods.

With regard to the selection of targeted initiatives in the work programme, he urged the Members of the Commission to move beyond ideological considerations and act pragmatically. When a legislative proposal had been blocked by the co-legislators for some time and progress seemed unlikely, consideration should be given to dropping it. Where tough interinstitutional negotiations meant that the original objective of a legislative proposal had become distorted, it would be of little use at best, not to mention proposals which were pending more or less indefinitely. He therefore felt that duly justified application of the principle of 'political discontinuity' would make good interinstitutional sense a few months after the renewal of the European Parliament and a few days after a new Commission, with new priorities, had taken office. He wound up by noting that he would hold talks with the Commission Members in a series of meetings over the coming week.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr TIMMERMANS and the Members of the

Commission for their contributions. He closed the debate by noting that fiscal policy should be among the Commission's work programme priorities for 2015 and confirmed that, together with Mr MOSCOVICI, he would set out the EU's ambitions in this very important field in the near future.

The Commission took note of this information.

11. EXTERNAL RELATIONS PRIORITIES

Ms MOGHERINI presented the EU's external relations priorities, which centred on the following five main themes: (i) defining a common strategic vision of the EU's external policy with the close involvement of the foreign affairs community – the Commission, the European External Action Service, the Member States and the European Parliament – and making appropriate use of all available instruments; (ii) security, stability and prosperity in the neighbouring countries (and in the 'neighbouring countries' neighbours) to the south and east of the EU, and support for regional integration; (iii) reviewing the main strategic partnerships; (iv) promoting effective multilateralism; and (v) the EU's contribution to regional and global security and stability.

The external action priorities had already been discussed informally but in-depth by the Members of the Commission with a view to identifying the main issues for EU foreign policy in the coming five years. But over and above the identified priorities, the EU had to be prepared to react to the unforeseen events which would inevitably occur during the Commission's current term of office.

Developing a common strategic vision of the EU's external relations meant, in her view, adopting a new method. This would mean a change of course on the part of the Commission, which would have to adopt a more political approach to issues and

work more closely with the Council and the European Parliament and, in a more general way, tackle big foreign policy issues in a more dynamic way.

Although the EU had most foreign policy instruments at its disposal, it still lacked a vision and, in many areas, needed to establish common responsibilities between Europeans and promote political ownership by the Member States and the EU institutions on the basis of close coordination. For that reason Ms MOGHERINI intended to reform the working methods of the Foreign Affairs Council. She referred in particular to the possibility of mobilising groups of Member States to tackle specific issues relating to external relations with the aim of developing common working bases. The recent initiative by Germany and the United Kingdom on Bosnia and Herzegovina was a good example of what could be done.

In similar vein, cooperation between EU institutions and agencies on all issues relating to external relations should be stepped up. She would encourage these bodies to work with all the foreign policy and defence players in the Member States to identify a common strategic vision. The meeting scheduled for that day with the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs and the decision adopted by the Commission to set up a group of commissioners responsible for external action (see item 7 of these minutes) were very much in line with this approach.

In Ms MOGHERINI's view, security, stability and prosperity to the south and east of the EU should be one of the main objectives of European foreign policy. This was because numerous crises were concentrated on the EU's borders, and therefore the EU had a major role to play in tackling them.

Referring to the situation on the Union's eastern borders, which she described as its mid-term regional priority, she noted that, in addition to relations with Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, she also intended to incorporate relations with their immediate neighbours into the EU's strategic vision.

As regards Ukraine in particular, she indicated the three main strands of the Union's strategy, namely (i) maintaining its support to the country on the economic front, in the energy sector and in the area of institutional reform, (ii) addressing the issue of security in the field, as the Union would of necessity be called upon if the situation deteriorated and might have to review its current approach of combining sanctions and political dialogue with Russia in the light of the results obtained, and (iii) rethinking the Union's strategic relationship with Russia in the longer term.

With reference to the western Balkans and Turkey, she considered that, even if there was no prospect of enlargement in the next five years, the enlargement process remained critical to further promoting and supporting the reforms undertaken by the candidate countries. She noted that, for the first time in almost seventy years, the Prime Minister of Albania was due to visit Belgrade for a meeting that was a clear indication of the normalisation of relations in the region, a key element in the accession negotiations. She also stressed the need to strengthen the Union's engagement with Bosnia-and-Herzegovina and to step up its involvement in the process of the country's rapprochement with the Union.

She underlined too the vital role played by the Union in the Middle East and how it was important for it to help in facilitating the creation of a regional framework for discussions between the different parties.

Ms MOGHERINI went on to give a mixed picture of the Union's strategic partnerships with non-member countries, pointing out that fewer summit meetings had been organised with the United States than with Russia. However, she believed that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) remained an essential factor in and objective of the Union's partnership with the United States.

On a more general note, she thought that a review was needed of all the Union's partnerships, particularly those with China, India, South Africa and Latin America, and that the organisation of summits should be optimised accordingly, in cooperation with the President of the European Council.

She also highlighted the prominent role that the Union could play in promoting effective multilateralism, by ensuring that multilateral organisations worked together and by improving the coordination of the Union's position in international fora, particularly in the United Nations Security Council.

On the subject of security and regional and global stability, Ms MOGHERINI believed that the Union should address a cultural challenge and develop its military capabilities in order to supplement its range of foreign policy instruments. This was not, however, to downplay the importance of the existing instruments, such as conflict prevention, human rights policy, humanitarian aid and development aid, which enjoyed considerable political impact. She stressed in particular the need to examine the issue of migration in more depth in close cooperation with the Member of the Commission responsible, following an integrated approach to external and internal policies.

Alongside the joint review with all stakeholders of the Union's foreign policy strategy, which had already been mentioned, she wanted the Members of the Commission, in order to achieve a shared strategic vision within the Union on foreign policy, to reflect on ways of incorporating the three main dimensions of external relations policy – foreign policy, defence policy and development policy – in all Union policies.

She wound up her presentation of the priorities for Union external action by underlining the driving role the Commission should play in guiding the work of its departments and encouraging them to coordinate spontaneously on all foreign policy matters.

During the discussion which followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- the support of Members of the Commission for the formulation of a joint strategic vision of the Union's external action incorporating all its policies, in

particular in the areas of trade, energy, climate, telecommunications, science, research and innovation, and transport; the importance in this connection of paying particular attention to cross-border projects;

- the importance of pursuing the accession process with the candidate countries and of continuing reform programmes, even if there was no prospect of enlargement of the Union within the next five years;
- on the specific question of Ukraine, the need to adapt from day to day to developments in the crisis in the east of the country and of preparing for the eventuality of a deterioration of the situation on the ground, while continuing to encourage the Ukrainian authorities to pursue long-term economic and institutional reforms; the need to take account of the impact of these developments on energy supply security and the suggestion of setting up an ad hoc group of Commissioners to set out the main elements of a strategy for the Union's eastern borders;
- the question of what support to give the Republic of Moldova in implementing the association agreement so as to prevent a similar sort of crisis arising to that in Ukraine;
- the value of a possible rethink of the Union's strategic relationship with Russia in particular, but also with certain emerging powers;
- the need to adopt a more ambitious communication policy for Union external action, particularly with regard to neighbouring countries, in order to give it a higher profile.

Following this discussion, Ms MOGHERINI reiterated the Union's engagement with the candidate countries and stressed the importance of resolute and effective pursuit of reform efforts as part of this political process, the results of which would determine the timetable of future accessions. She nevertheless called on the Commission not to raise false expectations, to differentiate clearly between the

policies of association or partnership and enlargement policy, and to identify the Union's interests, as well as those of the countries concerned.

She asked the Members of the Commission to take account of aspects of external policy in their respective portfolios, adding that cultural policy was also an important element of the Union's external action to take into consideration.

She noted the Commission's support for the development of a comprehensive long-term strategy for relations with Russia, a strategy that would need to adjust to the turn of events. Referring to the policy on Africa, she regretted that the results of the aid provided by the Union had not always been translated in political terms in bilateral or regional relations, something she regarded as a priority.

Given the climate of budgetary constraint, Ms MOGHERINI also observed that resources should focus on the priorities, which would sometimes require flexibility in the use of resources.

The PRESIDENT thanked Ms MOGHERINI for her presentation.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 11.54.