



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2014) 2106 final

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

Brussels, 3 December 2014

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

**of the 2106th meeting of the Commission
held in Brussels
(Berlaymont)
on Wednesday 19 November 2014
(morning)**

PV(2014) 2106 final

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

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Single sitting: Wednesday 19 November 2014 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.10 with Mr JUNCKER, President, in the chair.

Present:

Mr JUNCKER	President	
Mr TIMMERMANS	First Vice-President	
Ms MOGHERINI	High Representative/ Vice-President	
Ms GEORGIEVA	Vice-President	
Mr ANSIP	Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	Items 7 to 9 (in part)
Mr OETTINGER	Member	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Ms MALMSTRÖM	Member	
Mr MIMICA	Member	
Mr ARIAS CAÑETE	Member	
Mr VELLA	Member	
Mr ANDRIUKAITIS	Member	
Mr AVRAMOPOULOS	Member	
Ms THYSEN	Member	
Mr MOSCOVICI	Member	
Mr STYLIANIDES	Member	
Mr HOGAN	Member	
Lord HILL	Member	
Ms BULC	Member	
Ms BIEŃKOWSKA	Member	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Member	
Mr NAVRACSICS	Member	
Ms VESTAGER	Member	
Mr MOEDAS	Member	

Absent:

Mr DOMBROVSKIS

Vice-President

Mr KATAINEN

Vice-President

Ms CREȚU

Member

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

Mr LAHTI	Chef de cabinet to Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Items 5 (in part) to 9
Mr ROMAKKANIEMI	Chef de cabinet to Mr KATAINEN	
Mr ONACA	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms CREȚU	

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 7 and 8
Mr BALTAZAR	A member of the PRESIDENT's staff	Items 1 to 6
Mr SZOSTAK	A member of the PRESIDENT's staff	Item 9
Ms SUTTON	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr TIMMERMANS	Items 1 to 8
Ms HRISTCHEVA	Chef de cabinet to Ms GEORGIEVA	Items 1 to 7
Mr NOCIAR	Chef de cabinet to Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Items 1 to 6
Ms ÅSENIUS	Chef de cabinet to Ms MALMSTRÖM	Item 8
Ms CHRISTOPHIDOU	Chef de cabinet to Mr STYLIANIDES	Item 9 (in part)

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2014) 2106 /FINAL/2; SEC(2014) 589/2)

Opening the meeting, the PRESIDENT reminded the Members of the somewhat unusual nature of the organisation of the Commission's work in the days ahead. He referred in particular to the meeting to be held on a major package of measures and reports on European economic and budgetary governance as well as on other important political initiatives in the area of growth and investment.

These decisions would be prepared by the Chefs de Cabinet at two meetings, on Saturday 22 and, if necessary, Sunday 23 November, on the basis of documents to be given to them from this Friday evening. He asked the Members of the Commission to make sure they were accurately informed about this preparatory work.

He also asked as many Commission Members as possible to attend the meeting to be held on 2 December with the conference of the chairs of the parliamentary committees, which would deal mainly with the Commission's draft work programme. This work programme would be finally adopted at the Commission meeting on 16 December at Strasbourg.

He also reminded each Member of the date of the swearing-in of the Commission before the European Court of Justice, which would take place in Luxembourg after the Commission's ordinary meeting on 10 December.

The Commission took note of this information, of that day's agenda and of the tentative agendas for forthcoming meetings.

**2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET
(RCC(2014) 2106)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 17 November.

3. MINUTES OF 2105TH MEETING (12 NOVEMBER)

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2105th meeting for the following week.

4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

**4.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2014) 590 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 10 and 14 November.

**4.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2014) 591 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 10 and 14 November.

4.3. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2014) 592 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 10 and 14 November, as archived in e-Greffe.

4.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2014) 593)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 17 and 21 November.

**4.5. COMMISSION DECISION CONCERNING THE UPDATING OF A
NUMBER OF EMPOWERMENTS PREVIOUSLY GRANTED IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE COMMISSION'S COMPETENCES**

(C(2014) 9005 AND /2)

The Commission adopted the Commission Decision concerning the updating of a number of empowerments distributed as C(2014) 9005/2.

5. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2014) 86)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group held on Friday 14 November (RCC(2014) 86).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

5.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

i) Trilogues

(point 3.1 of the IRG record)

- Payment Package – Payment services in the internal market, amendment of Directives 2002/65/EC, 2013/36/EU and 2009/110/EC and repeal of Directive 2007/64/EC (Directive) – TAJANI report – 2013/0264 (COD) / Interchange fees for payment operations linked to a card (Regulation) – ZALBA BIDEgain report – 2013/0265 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2014) 420.

- Monitoring, reporting and verification of carbon dioxide emissions from maritime transport and amendment of Regulation (EU) 525/2013 (Regulation) – SKYLAKAKIS report – 2013/0224 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2014) 421/2.

- Amendment of Directive 94/62/EC on packaging and packaging waste to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags (Directive) – AUKEN report – 2013/0371 (COD)

Mr VELLA reported on the last trilogue between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November, at which the proposal for a Directive presented by the Commission in 2013 was aimed at tackling the serious environmental issues caused by the proliferation of plastic bags was discussed. He pointed out that the Commission's proposal aimed precisely at reversing the proven trend towards the exponential growth of this phenomenon, while at the same time fulfilling the Union's commitment to ending the large-scale depositing of plastic bags in landfill sites by 2025.

The European Parliament and the Council had proposed a number of amendments to the Commission's initial proposal following their examination of the legislative proposal, and Mr VELLA noted that the agreement reached on a compromise text at the last trilogue did not take account of a number of institutional concerns raised by the Commission at that meeting or of the Better Regulation objective.

Mr TIMMERMANS highlighted the Commission's ongoing commitment to environmental protection as shown by his initial proposal's aim of heavily reducing the consumption of plastic bags. He regretted the fact that some of the amendments introduced by the co-legislators raised numerous problems in terms of the Better Regulation obligation. In particular, he cited the practical difficulties that might be faced in some of the follow-up tasks outlined in the compromise document. However, since a unanimous agreement between the co-legislators had now been reached, he said that the Commission might not oppose it, but in that case it would issue a very clear statement raising its concerns about the specific possible impact of the future application of the Directive both for the Member States and for the Commission.

The PRESIDENT reiterated that the Commission's position on this matter did not in any way affect its firm intention to achieve the environmental protection objectives, which were shared with the co-legislators. But he did express the fear that, as the negotiations stood, the arrangements for implementation were not appropriate in this particular case. He noted the Commission's agreement with the approach proposed by Mr TIMMERMANS.

The Commission approved the approach presented by Mr TIMMERMANS and took note of the information in SI(2014) 414/2.

- Amendment of Regulation (EC) 223/2009 on European statistics (Regulation) – BAYET report – 2012/0084 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2014) 428.

ii) Dossier in European Parliament

(point 3.2 of the IRG record)

- Amendment of Regulation (EC) 2533/98 concerning the collection of statistical information by the European Central Bank (Council Regulation) – GUALTIERI report – 2014/0808 (CNS)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2014) 683.

iii) Council dossiers

(point 3.3 of the IRG record)

- Reporting and transparency of securities financing transactions (Regulation) – SORU report – 2014/0017 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2014) 422/3.

- Statute for a European Foundation (FE) (Council Regulation) – KÖSTER report – 2012/0022 (APP)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2014) 423.

- Amendment of Directive 2001/18/EC as regards the possibility for the Member States to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of GMOs in their territory (Regulation) – RIES report – 2010/0208 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2014) 434.

5.2. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

iv) Programming of Council business

(SI(2014) 433)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2014) 433 on the Council meetings between 20 November and 3 December.

v) Non-legislative dossiers

(point 4.1 of the IRG record)

- GNI-related adjustments to the contributions from the Member States to the general budget of the European Union

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2014) 429 (see also item 7 of these minutes).

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

(point 4.2.1 of the IRG record)

- Second progress report on the implementation by Georgia of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2014) 431.

5.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

vii) Action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its September 2014 part-session

(point 5.6.1 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved, for transmission to Parliament, document SP(2014) 663/2 on the action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its September part-session.

viii) Action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its October 2014 part-session
(point 5.6.2 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved, for transmission to Parliament, document SP(2014) 676 on the action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its October part-session.

ix) Action to be taken on Parliament's legislative resolutions and other resolutions of a legal nature

The Commission took note of document SP(2014) 690/2, drawn up following Parliament's part-session of 12 and 13 November.

x) Results of the November I part-session

The Commission took note of the information on the proceedings of the part-session of Parliament held in Strasbourg from 12 to 13 November, as set out in SP(2014) 700.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2014) 594 TO /3)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2014) 140 TO /3)

Ms GEORGIEVA presented the administrative decision, which was being tabled for adoption by the Commission that day, relating to the open selection procedure for

candidates for Chair and Vice-Chair of the Single Resolution Board within the framework of the Single Resolution Mechanism and the Single Bank Resolution Fund set up in July 2014. During the meeting, she announced the three names selected for each of these two posts. She also explained in detail the subsequent stages in the procedure leading to these appointments, and the role to be played by Lord HILL in this.

Following these remarks, a revised version of the reference documents was handed out during the meeting.

***DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY / DG FINANCIAL STABILITY,
FINANCIAL SERVICES AND CAPITAL MARKETS UNION – LISTS OF
CANDIDATES FOR CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF THE SINGLE
RESOLUTION BOARD***

(PERS(2014) 140 TO /3)

The Commission noted the procedure followed and to be followed, as described in document PERS(2014) 140/3, and, on a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Lord HILL, and after consulting Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr KATAINEN, decided:

- to approve the list announced at the meeting by Ms GEORGIEVA and set out in document PERS(2014) 140/3, composed of three candidates presented in alphabetical order, with a view to appointing the Chair of the Single Resolution Board;
- to approve the list also announced at the meeting by Ms GEORGIEVA and set out in document PERS(2014) 140/3, composed of three candidate presented in alphabetical order, with a view to appointing the Vice-Chair of the Single Resolution Board;

- to instruct Lord HILL, Member of the Commission responsible for financial stability, financial services and capital markets union, to submit these lists to Parliament and to inform the Council thereof, with immediate effect;
- to invite Lord HILL to present to the Commission, in due course, the proposals for the appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Single Resolution Board with a view to submitting them to Parliament for approval, in order to enable the Single Resolution Board to be fully operational by the dates set out in Articles 98 and 99 of Regulation (EU) 806/2014.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

BUDGETARY CONCILIATION – DRAFT BUDGET 2015

Ms GEORGIEVA reported on the progress of the interinstitutional budgetary negotiations during the preceding week. The co-legislators were examining the draft budget for 2015 and the draft amending budgets for 2014 in a single overall package, to which the proposal for an amendment to Regulation 1150/2000 implementing the Decision on the Union's own resources had been added (see also point 5.2(v) above). In this context, the Council had been unable to present its common position to the European Parliament until a few hours before expiry of the three-week conciliation period, so that the procedure proper had been opened extremely late.

In spite of the very tight deadlines, the three institutions had embarked on negotiations in a constructive spirit, to enable all parts of the package – and the 2015 budget in particular – to be adopted in time. However, although substantial progress had been made during the negotiations, Ms GEORGIEVA regretted that the Council, which had been waiting for a more detailed examination of the latest compromises (put forward at the Commission's initiative), had not been able to confirm its final agreement before the deadline expired.

She highlighted certain key points in the negotiations, mentioning in particular the Council's position concerning the special instruments. She recalled that conditionality was an integral part of the agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-20, in particular the inclusion of special instruments over and above the set budgetary ceilings, and regretted that the Council appeared to be calling this principle into question in this first year of the new MFF.

In terms of the next steps, Ms GEORGIEVA confirmed that the Commission would have to propose a new draft budget for 2015 in the next two weeks. Her departments would do all they could to put forward a draft likely to secure the agreement of the co-legislators, whilst hoping that the latter would continue to reconcile their positions and stressing the importance of drawing the Council's attention to the need to respect the conditions laid down in the MFF. In this context, the Commission was faced with an urgent situation with regard to payments in particular; payments to recipients in the Member States were to a large extent dependent on a final agreement on the 2015 budget.

Finally, she stated that the Commission would also make preparations for implementation of the provisional twelfths system; if there was no agreement on the 2015 budget, this arrangement would be put in place at the beginning of the financial year and would be much less favourable.

The PRESIDENT thanked Ms GEORGIEVA for her mediation efforts on behalf of the Commission in the budgetary negotiations. He took note of her remarks on the respective positions of the European Parliament and the Council, whilst hoping that the Commission would do everything in its power to encourage interinstitutional agreement in the near future on a budget for 2015 that was realistic and commensurate with the Union's ambitions.

In conclusion, he stated his intention of sending a letter to the Council to insist on the need to guarantee that the Member States were represented at an appropriate (i.e. ministerial) level during the final stages of the negotiations.

The Commission took note of this information.

8. POLICY DEBATE ON TRANSPARENCY (SEC(2014) 610)

MR TIMMERMANS opened the policy debate on the preparation of the Commission's initiatives on transparency and made the point that the purpose of the discussion was not to take a decision of principle concerning transparency, but to establish the relevant arrangements and scope. Greater transparency in the relations between the European institutions and the representatives of interest groups was one of the commitments made by the PRESIDENT in his political guidelines. Furthermore, transparency of the European decision-making process was an important precondition for public understanding of EU institutions and hence for creating an atmosphere of trust.

He noted that increased transparency in the relations between the institutions and representatives of interest groups would contribute to ensuring a balance between these various interests and took the view, more generally, that it would bring about the change in culture which European citizens expected in terms of access to information.

Mr TIMMERMANS called on the Commission to provide guidance with a view to adopting the first set of measures on transparency at its meeting on 25 November, so that they could enter into force on 1 December.

With regard specifically to relations with the representatives of interest groups, he

listed the main issues on which the Commission was called on to express its opinion, namely (i) the joint rules to apply to the disclosure of information concerning the meetings held with representatives of interest groups, (ii) the precise definition of a ‘representative of an interest group’, (iii) whether it should be compulsory or voluntary to enter representatives of interest groups in the transparency register, (iv) whether or not to extend the scope of the requirement to disclose information to the meetings of members of cabinets, who reported directly to the Members of the Commission, and to Directors-General, (v) the timing of the disclosure of information about the meetings, with, as a minimum, ex-post publication of meetings held and, lastly, (vi) exceptions to the requirement for transparency and their justification.

In concluding his presentation, Mr TIMMERMANS stressed that the Commission had to set an example by adopting specific measures to increase its own transparency and by encouraging the other institutions to do likewise.

Ms MALMSTRÖM set out the proposed measures to increase the transparency of the negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). She noted the opposition to the TTIP among a certain section of the public, which was based in particular on the perceived secrecy of the negotiation process, and stressed the importance of winning public trust for this project, which would generate growth and jobs, and which was one of the new Commission’s priorities. She also referred to the calls by Parliament for greater transparency in the conduct of the negotiations, which also had to be covered by specific measures on which the College was asked to give guidance.

Among the main measures proposed to make the TTIP negotiations more transparent, Ms MALMSTRÖM suggested: (i) more extensive access to TTIP documents, and in particular to the negotiating texts already shared with Member States and Parliament; (ii) a change in the classification of information, with use of the ‘Limited’ rather than ‘EU RESTRICTED’ category whenever

possible; and (iii) broad access to negotiating documents for all MEPs, subject to arrangements to be agreed with Parliament to ensure confidentiality.

She also noted a series of one-off measures to provide information to and communicate with civil society, and informed the Members of the Commission of her intention to consult the Member States on the transparency to be applied to the TTIP at the next Council of Trade Ministers.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

Information to be made public about meetings with representatives of interest groups

- unanimous support by the College for greater transparency in order to provide tangible follow-up to the political commitments given by the PRESIDENT and the Members of the new Commission; the example to be set and the impetus to be provided by the institution in this respect; the importance of encouraging the other EU institutions to provide a comparable level of transparency;
- nonetheless, it urged weighing up the manifold consequences of systematically providing information about meetings with representatives of interest groups; particular emphasis was given to the possible increase in requests for access to documents which might result from the disclosure of information about meetings with representatives of interest groups; the importance of assessing, where possible, the impact of this on the workload of the departments concerned; there was a risk of the requirement for greater transparency having the undesirable effect of reducing the number of contacts with representatives of interest groups;
- Directors-General should be included within the scope of the draft decision and NGOs should be included in the definition of representatives of interest groups;

- provision should be made for exceptions to the new transparency rules where confidentiality was paramount, as in competition cases or within the framework of bilateral negotiations;
- it should be mandatory for some operators, like law firms, to be entered in the transparency register (not currently the case) before they had any dealings with representatives of interest groups; it would be difficult to make registration mandatory for all interest groups, such as local authority representatives, or in the case of occasional meetings, and checks should be made on its legality;

Enhanced transparency of negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)

- enhanced transparency of the negotiations on the TTIP would ensure that they were better understood by the general public and their objectives supported, this being essential to the conclusion of the agreement;
- for some, the US side could be expected to reciprocate in terms of enhanced transparency; for others, it was necessary to consult the negotiating partners and obtain their explicit approval before a joint document was published;
- the right balance should be struck between enhanced transparency of the negotiations and the confidentiality necessary for their successful conclusion.

Mr TIMMERMANS noted that the Commission had agreed to include Directors-General within the scope of the transparency requirement as regards meetings with interest groups. The Members were in favour of promoting enhanced transparency within other EU institutions too, in particular Parliament and the Council.

In the light of the debate, local, regional authority or government representatives would be excluded from the scope of the draft decisions and checks would have to be carried out on the legality of making entry in the transparency register mandatory.

The timetable for implementing decisions was ambitious; decisions should be evaluated some time after they entered into force and amended if necessary.

With regard to the risk of an increase in the number of document access requests, enhanced transparency might actually have the opposite effect, since public opinion and the media would already have wide-ranging access to information.

Mr TIMMERMANS added that the entry in the register of representatives of interest groups could be simplified, thereby becoming more systematic. Online publication of the Members' diaries should not be an additional administrative burden given that it was already done within the institution and by most national governments.

He concluded by acknowledging the practical difficulties that enhancing transparency could involve, but set them against the political consequences for the EU of refusing to respond to the public mood by taking transparency initiatives. For that reason it was essential for the Commission to take a clear stand in favour of enhanced transparency and to encourage the other institutions to follow its lead.

The PRESIDENT ended the policy debate, noting that the Commission would continue discussing transparency at its meeting on 25 November with a view to adopting decisions governing relations with representatives of interest groups on the one hand, and the TTIP on the other.

The Commission took note of the results of this policy debate and of the background note distributed on the authority of the PRESIDENT and Mr TIMMERMANS and with the agreement of Ms MALMSTRÖM (SEC(2014) 610).

9. RELATIONS WITH NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES

RESULTS OF THE G20 SUMMIT (BRISBANE, 15 AND 16 NOVEMBER 2014), OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL (BRUSSELS, 17 NOVEMBER 2014) AND OF THE EU-US MINISTERIAL MEETING ON JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS (WASHINGTON, 12 AND 13 NOVEMBER 2014), AND THE EBOLA CRISIS
(INFO(2014) 91; INFO(2014) 89)

G20 Summit

The PRESIDENT reported on the summit meeting of G20 leaders that he had attended in Brisbane (Australia) on 15 and 16 November. He underlined, in particular, the welcome given to the 300 billion euro European investment package that he had announced on behalf of the Union and the 2.1 % GDP growth rate that the G20 members had agreed for the following year. Referring to the discussions on tax issues, he reported on the proposal he had announced for a directive on the automatic exchange of information on prior agreements between businesses and national tax administrations (tax rulings). He explained that this announcement had met with strong misgivings from some non-member countries, and varying levels of support from EU Member States, explaining the compromise reached advocating transparency in the information concerned.

The PRESIDENT spoke of a number of bilateral meetings he had held on the fringes of the summit with Heads of State or Government of the Union on the European investment package and with a number of foreign leaders. He had also met the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund. He referred in particular to the lengthy talks he had with the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir

Putin. He made a number of comments on the talks on the situation in Ukraine, which had highlighted divergences of opinion between the Member States on the current political stance of the Ukrainian authorities.

Turning to the negotiations between the EU and the United States on the TTIP, he reported on the agreement found in Brisbane between President Obama and European leaders, including himself, to reinvigorate the current process. He concluded by informing Ms MALMSTRÖM, in particular, of the wish expressed by a number of foreign leaders to open negotiations with the Union on free-trade agreements, a point to which the Commission would return at a later stage, given the necessity to clarify the Commission's priorities in this area.

Foreign Affairs Council

Ms MOGHERINI reported to the Commission on the results of the Foreign Affairs Council of 17 November, which had continued the following day with a meeting on defence matters, attended by the NATO Secretary-General Mr Jens Stoltenberg, in order to discuss the security situation in the EU's broader neighbourhood, and was due to continue on Friday with a session on trade issues.

She said that the Foreign Affairs Council had focused mainly on Ukraine and that, at the Council's suggestion, the European External Action Service and the Commission would submit a proposal by the end of the month to add the separatists implicated in the recent disputed local elections in eastern Ukraine to the list of persons targeted by EU sanctions.

On a more general note, she explained that ministers had agreed, on the one hand, that they should examine ways of rebuilding relations with Russia and, on the other, that it was important for Ukraine to form a government as soon as possible, and to commit to or pursue internal political, institutional and economic reforms. It was also agreed that the Union should insist on the conditions attached to its support and assistance to Ukraine.

Ms MOGHERINI referred to the other items on the agenda that had been addressed, namely (i) the situation in the Middle East, in particular the debate opening up on the recognition of a Palestinian state and the balance that the EU had to find between supporting this recognition and relations with Israel, (ii) the state of play concerning the Ebola virus, on which Mr STYLIANIDES would be reporting in more detail, (iii) the latest developments in Libya and (iv) Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the Commission might have some scope for initiative, depending on the position of the countries in the region and of the EU's international partners. She promised to explore this as soon as possible.

As regards working methods, it had been agreed that the work of the Foreign Affairs Council would be planned further in advance and that the group of Commissioners responsible for external action would be involved to that end in order to better integrate horizontal issues. She therefore suggested holding a meeting of this group in the near future in order to programme several relatively urgent dossiers concerning relations with Russia and in the areas of energy and trade, as well as other issues that would shortly be on the table concerning climate change and migration. In any event, she welcomed the fact that the EU foreign affairs ministers considered the new organisation of the Commission to be beneficial for their work.

Ebola crisis

Taking the floor, Mr STYLIANIDES returned to the information note distributed under his authority on the coordination of measures to combat the Ebola virus in Africa. He stressed that it was an absolute priority to mobilise further medical teams as soon as possible, including epidemiology specialists, and to support the health services, in these countries, where they were totalling lacking in resources. Mr ANDRIUKAITIS concurred with this point. Mr STYLIANIDES then referred to the development of a vaccine, the holding of a major international conference on the

virus, and the ways of raising awareness among European citizens. He hoped to associate the Commission Members concerned closely with these activities.

Justice and internal security – European Union / US

Mr AVRAMOPOULOS, who had returned from a visit to Washington where he attended the EU-US ministerial meeting on justice and home affairs, reported on his meetings with his US counterparts, the justice and internal security ministers. The discussions had covered a wide range of topics in these two areas. The subjects discussed included the participation of foreign fighters in terrorist movements in the Middle East, a common challenge on both sides of the Atlantic which must be tackled by the exchange of information; the EU-US agreement on the use of personal data in passenger files (PNR data), the results of which were considered favourable; and the Commission's appeal for proportionality in the US passenger information system, ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization) with regard to European citizens. He had stressed the need for full and total reciprocity and for concrete progress on the issue of visas. Lastly, he reported on the questions which, standing in for Ms JOUROVÁ, he had raised with the US justice minister concerning data protection.

Ms JOUROVÁ took the opportunity to thank the whole College for their good wishes for her recovery and Mr AVRAMOPOULOS for being willing to stand in for her at short notice. She intended to call on the US authorities to adopt a constructive approach in the negotiations on the framework agreement on data protection in the field of police and judicial cooperation, and to reiterate the EU's position on the Safe Harbour Agreement applicable to transfers of commercial data.

Still on the subject of relations with the US, Ms MOGHERINI said that at her initiative, her first bilateral meeting with the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, would take place in Brussels rather than in Washington. In her view, this had a significant symbolic value.

The Commission took note of this information and the information note on the G20 summit distributed under the authority of the PRESIDENT and Mr DOMBROVSKIS as INFO(2014) 91, and of the information note on the ministerial meeting on justice and internal security distributed under the authority of Mr AVRAMOPOULOS as INFO(2014) 89.

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The meeting closed at 11.39.