



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2019) 2300 final

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

Brussels, 10 July 2019

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2300th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Tuesday 18 June 2019

(morning)

—

PV(2019) 2300 final

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

EN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attendance list	5-8
1. AGENDAS (OJ(2019) 2300/FINAL; SEC(2019) 2300)	9
2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET (RCC(2019) 2300)	9
3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2297 TH , 2298 TH AND 2299 TH MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (29 MAY, 5 AND 12 JUNE 2019) (PV(2019) 2297; PV(2019) 2297, 2 ND PART; PV(2019) 2298 AND /2)	9
4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (RCC(2019) 67)	9
4.1. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL	10
4.2. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT	10
5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS.....	11
5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2019) 245 ET SEQ.).....	11
5.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2019) 246 ET SEQ.)	11
5.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2019) 247 ET SEQ.)	11
5.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2019) 248)	12
6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2019) 251/2)	12
6.1. DG INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT – INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR AN AD15/16 DIRECTOR- GENERAL (PERS(2019) 57)	12
6.2. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – COMMISSION DECISION ON THE STATUS OF THE CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT/PRESIDENT-ELECT AND THE COMMISSIONERS-DESIGNATE (C(2019) 5110).....	12

7. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – UNITED IN DELIVERING THE ENERGY UNION AND CLIMATE ACTION – SETTING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION (COM(2019) 285 AND /2; SWD(2019) 212; SWD(2019) 213 AND /2; RCC(2019) 74).....13
8. COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION ON THE DRAFT INTEGRATED NATIONAL ENERGY AND CLIMATE PLANS COVERING THE PERIOD 2021-2030 (C(2019) 4401 AND /2; C(2019) 4402 AND /2; C(2019) 4403 AND /2; C(2019) 4404 TO /3; C(2019) 4405 AND /2; C(2019) 4406 AND /2; C(2019) 4407 AND /2; C(2019) 4408 TO /3; C(2019) 4409 AND /2; C(2019) 4410 AND /2; C(2019) 4411 AND /2; C(2019) 4412 AND /2; C(2019) 4413 AND /2; C(2019) 4414 AND /2; C(2019) 4415 AND /2; C(2019) 4416 AND /2; C(2019) 4417 AND /2; C(2019) 4418 AND /2; C(2019) 4419 AND /2; C(2019) 4420 AND /2; C(2019) 4421 AND /2; C(2019) 4422 AND /2; C(2019) 4423 AND /2; C(2019) 4424 AND /2; C(2019) 4425 AND /2; C(2019) 4426 AND /2; C(2019) 4427 AND /2; C(2019) 4428 AND /2; SWD(2019) 211; SWD(2019) 225; SWD(2019) 214; SWD(2019) 275 AND /2; SWD(2019) 229 AND /2; SWD(2019) 277; SWD(2019) 230 AND /2; SWD(2019) 261 AND /2; SWD(2019) 262; SWD(2019) 263 AND /2; SWD(2019) 224; SWD(2019) 264; SWD(2019) 223; SWD(2019) 265; SWD(2019) 228; SWD(2019) 266; SWD(2019) 267; SWD(2019) 268; SWD(2019) 227; SWD(2019) 226; SWD(2019) 281; SWD(2019) 272; SWD(2019) 273; SWD(2019) 271; SWD(2019) 274; SWD(2019) 276; SWD(2019) 278; SWD(2019) 279; RCC(2019) 74).....13
9. EU-SWISS RELATIONS (INFO(2019) 39).....18

10. OTHER BUSINESS.....	19
<i>LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE</i>	<i>19</i>

Single sitting: Tuesday 18 June 2019 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.42 with Mr JUNCKER, President, in the chair.

Present:

Mr JUNCKER	President	
Mr TIMMERMANS	First Vice-President	
Mr ANSIP	Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Vice-President	
Mr KATAINEN	Vice-President	
Ms MALMSTRÖM	Member	
Mr MIMICA	Member	
Mr ARIAS CAÑETE	Member	
Mr ANDRIUKAITIS	Member	
Mr AVRAMOPOULOS	Member	
Ms THYSSEN	Member	
Mr MOSCOVICI	Member	Item 10 (in part)
Mr STYLIANIDES	Member	
Ms BULC	Member	
Ms VESTAGER	Member	
Mr MOEDAS	Member	
Sir Julian KING	Member	
Ms GABRIEL	Member	

Absent:

Ms MOGHERINI	High Representative / Vice-President
Mr OETTINGER	Member
Mr HAHN	Member
Mr VELLA	Member
Mr HOGAN	Member
Ms BIENKOWSKA	Member
Ms JOUROVÁ	Member
Mr NAVRACSICS	Member
Ms CREȚU	Member

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

Mr RENTSCHLER	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms MOGHERINI
Mr GROSS	A member of Mr OETTINGER's staff
Ms JAHNS	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr HAHN
Ms STEFFNER	A member of Mr VELLA's staff
Mr POWER	Chef de cabinet to Mr HOGAN
Mr HEDBERG	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms BIENKOWSKA
Mr BRAUN	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms JOUROVÁ
Ms REILLY	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr NAVRACSICS
Ms RUS	Chef de cabinet to Ms CREȚU

The following also sat in:

Ms MARTÍNEZ ALBEROLA	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr ROMERO REQUENA	Director-General, Legal Service	
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr SCHINAS	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Mr MOTOC	European Political Strategy Centre	
Mr LEARDINI	Deputy Secretary-General	
Mr SZOSTAK	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr BALTAZAR	Senior adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 1 to 8
Mr DELVAUX	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 9 and 10
Ms ARKI	PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr NOCIAR	Chef de cabinet to Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Items 1 to 8
Ms ÅSENIUS	Chef de cabinet to Ms MALMSTRÖM	Item 10
Ms LOBILLO BORRERO	Chef de cabinet to Mr ARIAS CAÑETE	Items 1 to 8

Ms VILA NUÑEZ

Secretariat-General

Ms ANDREEVA

Commission Spokesperson's Service

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2019) 2300/FINAL; SEC(2019) 2300)

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

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(RCC(2019) 2300)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 17 June 2019.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2297TH, 2298TH AND 2299TH MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (29 MAY, 5 AND 12 JUNE 2019)

(PV(2019) 2297; PV(2019) 2297, 2ND PART; PV(2019) 2298 AND /2)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2297th and 2298th meetings and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2299th meeting for a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2019) 67)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held on Friday 14 June 2019 (RCC(2019) 67).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

i) Programming of Council business

(SI(2019) 488)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2019) 488 on the Council meetings between 20 June and 3 July 2019.

ii) Non-legislative dossier

(point 4.1 of the IRG record)

- Signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Council Decision) – 2018/0357 (NLE) / Signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the Investment Protection Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, of the other part (Council Decision) – 2018/0359 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 484 (see also item 10 of these minutes).

4.2. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

iii) Action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its March I 2019 part-session

(point 5.6.2 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved document SP(2019) 444/2 on the action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its March I 2019 part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

**iv) Action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by
Parliament at its March II 2019 part-session**

(point 5.6.3 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved document SP(2019) 445/2 on the action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its March II 2019 part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

**5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF
POWERS**

5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2019) 245 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 10 and 14 June 2019.

5.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2019) 246 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 10 and 14 June 2019.

5.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2019) 247 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 June 2019 archived in Decide.

5.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2019) 248)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 17 and 21 June 2019.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2019) 251/2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2019) 56/2)

**6.1. DG INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT –
INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR AN
AD15/16 DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

(PERS(2019) 57)

On a proposal from Mr OETTINGER, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr MIMICA and also Ms MOGHERINI, the Commission decided to authorise the publication, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2019) 57 for the post of Director-General of DG International Cooperation and Development.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**6.2. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – COMMISSION DECISION ON THE
STATUS OF THE CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT/PRESIDENT-ELECT
AND THE COMMISSIONERS-DESIGNATE**

(C(2019) 5110)

On a proposal from Mr OETTINGER, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission adopted the decision on the status of the candidate for

President/President-elect and the Commissioners-designate, as set out in C(2019) 5110.

This decision would take effect immediately.

7. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – UNITED IN DELIVERING THE ENERGY UNION AND CLIMATE ACTION – SETTING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION

(COM(2019) 285 AND /2; SWD(2019) 212; SWD(2019) 213 AND /2; RCC(2019) 74)

8. COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION ON THE DRAFT INTEGRATED NATIONAL ENERGY AND CLIMATE PLANS COVERING THE PERIOD 2021-2030

**(C(2019) 4401 AND /2; C(2019) 4402 AND /2; C(2019) 4403 AND /2;
C(2019) 4404 TO /3; C(2019) 4405 AND /2; C(2019) 4406 AND /2;
C(2019) 4407 AND /2; C(2019) 4408 TO /3; C(2019) 4409 AND /2;
C(2019) 4410 AND /2; C(2019) 4411 AND /2; C(2019) 4412 AND /2;
C(2019) 4413 AND /2; C(2019) 4414 AND /2; C(2019) 4415 AND /2;
C(2019) 4416 AND /2; C(2019) 4417 AND /2; C(2019) 4418 AND /2;
C(2019) 4419 AND /2; C(2019) 4420 AND /2; C(2019) 4421 AND /2;
C(2019) 4422 AND /2; C(2019) 4423 AND /2; C(2019) 4424 AND /2;
C(2019) 4425 AND /2; C(2019) 4426 AND /2; C(2019) 4427 AND /2;
C(2019) 4428 AND /2; SWD(2019) 211; SWD(2019) 225; SWD(2019) 214;
SWD(2019) 275 AND /2; SWD(2019) 229 AND /2; SWD(2019) 277;
SWD(2019) 230 AND /2; SWD(2019) 261 AND /2; SWD(2019) 262;
SWD(2019) 263 AND /2; SWD(2019) 224; SWD(2019) 264; SWD(2019) 223;
SWD(2019) 265; SWD(2019) 228; SWD(2019) 266; SWD(2019) 267;**

**SWD(2019) 268; SWD(2019) 227; SWD(2019) 226; SWD(2019) 281;
SWD(2019) 272; SWD(2019) 273; SWD(2019) 271; SWD(2019) 274;
SWD(2019) 276; SWD(2019) 278; SWD(2019) 279; RCC(2019) 74)**

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ presented the communication entitled ‘United in delivering the Energy Union and Climate Action – Setting the foundations for a successful clean energy transition’ and the Commission recommendations to each Member State on their draft integrated national energy and climate plans for the period 2021-2030.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ reminded the meeting that when the report on the state of the Energy Union was presented in April 2019, the watchword had been to focus efforts on implementation, so as to contribute effectively to achieving the Paris Climate Agreement targets.

He explained that under the legislation on governance of the Energy Union, the Member States submitted to the Commission draft national energy and climate plans. These plans had to be complete and had to meet the long list of criteria set out in the Regulation in question to enable them to adopt an integrated approach in formulating their policies, as was the case at EU level.

These plans were important for two reasons. First, they enabled the Union to collectively fulfil its targets, for example in the field of renewable energy, where the binding targets at national level had been replaced by a common target at EU level for 2030. Second, the plans provided the necessary predictability for investing in renewable energy, mobility or research and innovation, thereby sending a clear signal to the markets.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ explained that the governance process was divided into two stages. In the first of these, the Member States presented their draft integrated national energy and climate plans for assessment by the Commission, while in the second, the national plans were finalised by the end of 2019 on the basis of the Commission’s recommendations.

He stressed that these recommendations were fully in line with the legislation in

force and fulfilled a constructive function by helping the Member States to achieve the targets set collectively.

In this context, the national plans submitted by the Member States had to be reviewed, since the level of ambition was not sufficient to achieve the targets set collectively for 2030. This was particularly so in the case of energy efficiency, with a gap of 6.2 percentage points for primary energy consumption and 6 percentage points for final energy consumption, and in the case of renewable energy, with a possible gap of 1.6 percentage points. Although it was not impossible to close this last gap, the targets set should be met by offering the Member States with the support they needed to adjust their national plans. The Member States would have to supply more precise information on the policies envisaged and best estimates of the investments needed, while better integrating the need for social justice in their energy transition.

The Member States now had six months to raise their national ambitions when they finalised their national plans in close cooperation with the Commission.

In conclusion, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ said that the general communication accompanying the country-specific recommendations listed the tools the Union could provide during the implementation of the national plans, in particular the various financing programmes and the 'InvestEU' fund.

Mr ARIAS CAÑETE took the floor and underlined the substantial nature of the texts submitted to the College for approval. He explained that the methodology followed was presented in the staff working documents annexed thereto, which made the assessment process all the more transparent and clear for everyone.

In his view, one of the main advantages of the process initiated under the Energy Union Regulation was to encourage an integrated, decompartmentalised approach when drawing up the national plans, fostering close cooperation with the different ministries involved in the national plan. He also referred to the constructive attitude of the Member States, all of which had submitted their draft integrated national

energy and climate plans by or almost by the deadlines. Lastly, he pointed out that the Energy Union governance system was the result of a broad consultation, demonstrating the inclusive nature of the process.

Mr ARIAS CAÑETE said that setting targets at EU level gave the Member States a degree of flexibility to establish their individual targets. He explained that on the basis of the draft national plans presented by the Member States, the European Union as a whole was, however, 1.6 percentage points from the overall renewable energy target, and 6 percentage points from the energy efficiency target, with respect to the overall 2030 targets. He added that the Member States must follow the Commission's recommendations or give their reasons for diverging from them. However, he noted that the Commission was adopting a conciliatory attitude and focusing its action on the support it could provide to national government departments in order to attain the expected results. It was planned to review the applicable legislation in 2024 and the Commission would then be able to examine the possibility of making its recommendations legally binding.

He concluded by announcing to the Members of the College that they would be provided with communication material on the implication of the recommendations with regard to each of the national plans.

The PRESIDENT congratulated Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, Mr ARIAS CAÑETE and the Commission departments involved in preparing the package, for their outstanding work, which would make it possible to shape the Union's future in terms of climate. Although some Member States criticised the Union's alleged lack of action in combating climate change, he, for his part, noted in the Commission's analysis and recommendations the lack of ambition of the Member States in their draft national plans compared with the targets set at UE level. He therefore asked that this aspect be highlighted when communicating with the public and the media.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- approved the communication in COM(2019) 285/2, for transmission to

Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and, for information, to the national parliaments, together with the staff working documents distributed as SWD(2019) 212 and SWD(2019) 213/2, the contents of which were noted;

- adopted the country-specific recommendations in C(2019) 4401/2 – Belgium, C(2019) 4402/2 – Bulgaria, C(2019) 4403/2 – Czech Republic, C(2019) 4404/3 – Denmark, C(2019) 4405/2 – Germany, C(2019) 4406/2 – Estonia, C(2019) 4407/2 – Ireland, C(2019) 4408/3 – Greece, C(2019) 4409/2 – Spain, C(2019) 4410/2 – France, C(2019) 4411/2 – Croatia, C(2019) 4412/2 – Italy, C(2019) 4413/2 – Cyprus, C(2019) 4414/2 – Latvia, C(2019) 4415/2 – Lithuania, C(2019) 4416/2 – Luxembourg, C(2019) 4417/2 – Hungary, C(2019) 4418/2 – Malta, C(2019) 4419/2 – Netherlands, C(2019) 4420/2 – Austria, C(2019) 4421/2 – Poland, C(2019) 4422/2 – Portugal, C(2019) 4423/2 – Romania, C(2019) 4424/2 – Slovenia, C(2019) 4425/2 – Slovakia, C(2019) 4426/2 – Finland, C(2019) 4427/2 – Sweden and C(2019) 4428/2 – the United Kingdom, for transmission, for information purposes, to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments, together with the staff working documents in SWD(2019) 211, SWD(2019) 225, SWD(2019) 214, SWD(2019) 275/2, SWD(2019) 229/2, SWD(2019) 277, SWD(2019) 230/2, SWD(2019) 261/2, SWD(2019) 262, SWD(2019) 263/2, SWD(2019) 224, SWD(2019) 264, SWD(2019) 223, SWD(2019) 265, SWD(2019) 228, SWD(2019) 266, SWD(2019) 267, SWD(2019) 268, SWD(2019) 227, SWD(2019) 226, SWD(2019) 281, SWD(2019) 272, SWD(2019) 273, SWD(2019) 271, SWD(2019) 274, SWD(2019) 276, SWD(2019) 278 and SWD(2019) 279, the contents of which were noted.

9. EU-SWISS RELATIONS (INFO(2019) 39)

The PRESIDENT opened the discussion on the state of the European Union's relations with the Swiss Confederation, based on the information note prepared under his authority. He reminded the College that since 2014 the Commission had been negotiating an Institutional Framework Agreement with the Swiss authorities covering several dozen bilateral agreements allowing Switzerland to participate in numerous aspects of the EU's internal market and thereby maintain closer ties with the EU than any other country in the European Economic Area.

He invited the Secretary-General, Martin SELMAYR, as the person responsible for coordinating relations with Switzerland within the Commission, to give an update on the ongoing talks with Switzerland, and to discuss the decision that the Commission would have to take before 30 June on whether or not to extend until 31 October 2019 the implementing decision it had adopted on 21 December 2018 to recognise the equivalence of the legal and supervisory framework applicable to stock exchanges in Switzerland in accordance with Directive 2014/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on markets in financial instruments.

Following this presentation, the PRESIDENT made a proposal to the College to proceed as follows: if the Swiss Confederation did not undertake any commitments in writing by Friday 21 June at 12.00, the Commission would allow the equivalence decision to expire without extending it; if, on the other hand, Switzerland were to send to the Commission, by the same deadline, written commitments that Mr HAHN, Mr DOMBROVSKIS and the PRESIDENT himself considered to be credible, the Commission would extend the equivalence decision until 31 October, the aim being for the parties to sign the Institutional Framework Agreement by that date.

The PRESIDENT therefore asked the College to instruct Mr HAHN, Mr DOMBROVSKIS and himself to assess the situation on Friday 21 June and, in

light of their assessment, to choose one of the two options that he had just explained.

He noted the Commission's agreement on this course of action and stated that efforts would continue be made in the intervening period to attempt to convince the Swiss authorities to take a swift decision on their side.

The Commission took note of this conclusion and of the note distributed as INFO(2019) 39.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The PRESIDENT invited Ms MALMSTRÖM to update the College on two trade agreements in the process of being signed or negotiated, with Vietnam, on the one hand, and the Mercosur countries on the other.

Ms MALMSTRÖM referred firstly to the **free trade agreement and the investment protection agreement with Vietnam**, which were nearing completion (see also point 4.1, ii) of these minutes). She explained that the Committee of Permanent Representatives of the Member States (COREPER) was expected to approve the decision to sign these agreements on 19 June, that the Council would adopt its decision on 25 June and that the official signing was due to take place on 30 June if everything went according to plan. In such an event, she announced that she would travel to Hanoi with representatives of the Council presidency.

She referred, however, to the remaining reservations of certain Member States with regard to respect for workers' rights, the dispute settlement mechanism and rice imports. She had made efforts to allay their fears and had been given indications that this would be the case. In any event, she referred to the solution, which was still possible, whereby recourse could be had to declarations, on both the Commission and the Member States' side, as had already been done for other trade agreements.

She reminded the College that, once the agreement had been signed by the Commission and the Council, it would be desirable to obtain the consent of the European Parliament, at which point the Parliament might voice its concerns regarding human rights violations in Vietnam. She explained that the PRESIDENT had raised this issue with the Vietnamese authorities several months earlier, that she was herself in close contact with the Vietnamese authorities regarding this matter and that a platform for bilateral talks had been set up to deal with this issue.

She concluded this first presentation by expressing her hope that the EU would be able to sign these important agreements with Vietnam, a country of 90 million inhabitants, as planned, and therefore begin a new phase in its relations with the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Secondly, Ms MALMSTRÖM reported on the state of **trade negotiations with the Mercosur countries – Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay**. She emphasised that an agreement was imminent and that it would be the largest ever concluded in terms of the population covered and the volume of customs duties eliminated. In particular, she noted that EU exporters would save EUR 4 billion in customs duties, which was eight times higher than the savings generated by the trade agreement with Canada and four times higher than the trade agreement with Japan. This agreement would therefore send a strong political message at a time when multilateral trade was being undermined.

The PRESIDENT congratulated Ms MALMSTRÖM on her excellent work in difficult circumstances. He encouraged her to pursue the negotiations to their conclusion, in close cooperation with Mr HOGAN, for the sensitive issues relating to agriculture, before the G20 summit that would take place on 28 and 29 June in Osaka.

He stressed the importance of uniting all efforts to reach an agreement that could be the largest ever signed by the EU. He pointed out that the success of the negotiations was to a large extent dependent on the ability of the members of the College to work hand in hand in order to reconcile trade and agriculture policy.

The Commission took note of this information.

*

* *

The Commission's other discussions on certain agenda items are recorded in the special minutes.

*

* *

The meeting closed at 10.30.