EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2019) 2302 final

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

Brussels, 24 July 2019

TEXTE EN

<u>MINUTES</u>

of the 2302nd meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 3 July 2019

(afternoon)

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Single sitting: Wednesday 3 July 2019 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 12.44 with Mr JUNCKER, President, in the chair.

Present:

Mr JUNCKER	President
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President
Mr HAHN	Member
Ms MALMSTRÖM	Member
Mr MIMICA	Member
Mr ARIAS CAÑETE	Member
Mr VELLA	Member
Mr ANDRIUKAITIS	Member
Mr AVRAMOPOULOS	Member
Ms THYSSEN	Member
Mr MOSCOVICI	Member
Mr STYLIANIDES	Member
Mr HOGAN	Member
Ms BULC	Member
Ms JOUROVÁ	Member
Ms VESTAGER	Member
Mr MOEDAS	Member
Sir Julian KING	Member

Absent:

Mr TIMMERMANS	First Vice-President
Ms MOGHERINI	High Representative / Vice-President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Vice-President
Mr KATAINEN	Vice-President
Mr OETTINGER	Member
Ms BIEŃKOWSKA	Member
Mr NAVRACSICS	Member
Ms GABRIEL	Member

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

Mr SMULDERS	Chef de cabinet to Mr TIMMERMANS
Mr GRASSI	Chef de cabinet to Ms MOGHERINI
Mr SUARDI	Chef de cabinet to Mr DOMBROVSKIS
Ms DE BASALDÚA	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr KATAINEN
Mr HAGER	Chef de cabinet to Mr OETTINGER
Mr HUSAK	Chef de cabinet to Ms BIEŃKOWSKA
Ms KIRALY	Chef de cabinet to Mr NAVRACSICS
Ms BORISSOVA	Chef de cabinet to Ms GABRIEL

The following also sat in:

Ms MARTÍNEZ ALBEROLA	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr ROMERO REQUENA	Director-General, Legal Service	Items 1 to 11
Ms BANKS	Deputy Director-General, Legal Service	Item 12
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr SCHINAS	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms METTLER	Head of the European Political Strategy Centre	
Mr LEARDINI	Deputy Secretary-General	
Mr SZOSTAK	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Ms DEJMEK HACK	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Item 12 (in part)
Ms ARKI	PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr BAILLY	Chef de cabinet to Mr MOSCOVICI	Items 1 to 12 (in part)
Ms VILA NUÑEZ	Secretariat-General	
Ms ANDREEVA	Commission Spokesperson's Service	

Mr BUTI	Director-General, DG Economic and Financial Affairs	Item 12 (in part)

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

1. AGENDAS
(OJ(2019) 2302/FINAL; SEC(2019) 2302)

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) 2302)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Wednesday 3 July 2019.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2299TH, 2300TH AND 2301ST MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (12, 18 AND 25 JUNE 2019)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2299th meeting, and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2300th and 2301st meetings until a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
(RCC(2019) 76)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held on Friday 28 June 2019 (RCC(2019) 76).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

i) Programming of Council business
(SI(2019) 511)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2019) 511 on the Council meetings between 4 and 17 July 2019.

ii) Non-legislative dossier
(point 4.1 of the IRG record)

– 40th Session of the International Civil Aviation Organisation Assembly – Working Paper – Standards and principles on the collection, use, processing and protection of passenger name record (PNR) data

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 465 and /2.

iii) Latest developments in the Council
(point 4.4 of the IRG record)

– Application of Article 8 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 of 14 November 2018 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement – Reply to a letter sent by the Netherlands

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 506/2.

– Just transition to a climate-neutral, green and fair Europe in the light of the Commission's long-term vision for a climate-neutral economy – Employment aspects – Commission Services Non-Paper

The Commission took note of SI(2019) 500 and /2.

– Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) …/... of 13 March 2019 supplementing Directive 2010/40/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to the deployment and operational use of cooperative intelligent transport systems

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 509/2.

5. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF EUROPEAN UNION LAW

STATE AID AND OTHER COMPETITION RULES

The Commission's decision on this item is recorded in the special minutes.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2019) 261 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 24 and 28 June 2019.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2019) 262 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 24 and 28 June 2019.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2019) 263 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 24 and 28 June 2019 archived in D*e*cide.

6.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2019) 264 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 1 and 5 July 2019.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2019) 265/2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2019) 61/2)

7.1. DG COMPETITION – APPOINTMENT OF AD14 CHIEF COMPETITION ECONOMIST (PERS(2018) 87 TO /4)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 2(a) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union for the post of Chief Competition Economist in DG Competition (PERS(2018) 87 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 3 and 13 June 2019 (PERS(2018) 87/3 and /4).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr OETTINGER, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms VESTAGER and also Mr ŠEFČOVIČ and Mr KATAINEN, the Commission decided to appoint Mr Pierre REGIBEAU as a member of the temporary staff under Article 2(a) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union, for a period of three years, renewable once for a maximum period of two years, to the post in question.

This decision would take effect on 1 September 2019.

7.2. DG EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION – TEMPORARY APPOINTMENT AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN LABOUR AUTHORITY

The Commission noted the information in point 2 of PERS(2019) 61/2 and, on a proposal from Mr OETTINGER, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms THYSSEN, and also Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr KATAINEN, decided to appoint Mr Jordi CURELL GOTOR, Director of the 'Labour Mobility' Directorate in DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, to perform temporarily the duties of Executive Director of the European Labour Authority until the Executive Director took up his/her duties.

This decision would take effect immediately, subject to the availability of the necessary budget resources.

8. COMMISSION DECISION ON THE ADMISSIBILITY OF THE PROPOSED CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'A PRICE FOR CARBON TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE'
(C(2019) 4973)

9. COMMISSION DECISION ON THE ADMISSIBILITY OF THE PROPOSED CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'LET'S PUT AN END TO THE ERA OF PLASTIC IN EUROPE'
(C(2019) 4974)

10. COMMISSION DECISION ON THE ADMISSIBILITY OF THE PROPOSED CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'GROW SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS: CROPS MATTER!'
(C(2019) 4975)

11. COMMISSION DECISION ON THE ADMISSIBILITY OF THE PROPOSED CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'EU LAW, MINORITY RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATISATION OF SPANISH INSTITUTIONS'
(C(2019) 4972)

In the absence of Mr TIMMERMANS, the PRESIDENT asked the Members of the Commission responsible for the areas in question to present four draft decisions being tabled for approval by the College concerning the registration of European citizens' initiatives entitled, respectively,

– (i) in the authentic language (English), 'A price for carbon to fight climate change'; Mr ARIAS CAÑETE explained that this proposal essentially called on the Commission to propose Union legislation aimed at discouraging consumption of fossil fuels and encouraging energy saving and the use of renewable energy sources in order to combat global warming and limit the increase in temperature to 1.5°C, in particular through the introduction of a minimum price for CO_2 emissions, and a border adjustment mechanism for imports from third countries such as to offset the lower price of CO_2 emissions in the country of export;

– (ii) in the authentic language (French), '*Mettons fin à l'ère du plastique en Europe*'; Mr VELLA explained that this proposal essentially called on the Commission to revise the Directive on the impact of certain plastics on the environment, with the aim of banning all single-use plastics in Europe, in particular plastic packaging and bottles by 2027;

– (iii) in the authentic language (English), 'Grow scientific progress: crops matter!'; Mr ANDRIUKAITIS explained that this proposal essentially called on the Commission to revise the current exemption mechanism in Directive 2001/18/EC regarding new plant breeding techniques (NPBTs);

– (iv) in the authentic language (English), 'EU law, minority rights and democratisation of Spanish institutions'; Ms JOUROVÁ explained that this proposal essentially called on the Commission and the European Parliament to be fully aware of the systemic risks which, according to the organisers of the initiative, existed in Spain, the treatment of minority groups and the urgent need to encourage action to help democratise the country and align it with the basic principles of EU law.

They reminded the meeting that in accordance with the conditions for admissibility provided for in Regulation (EU) 211/2011 on the European citizens' initiative, the proposed actions must, in order to be registered, manifestly fall within the Commission's powers to submit proposals for legal acts for the purpose of implementing the Treaties, and fulfil the other conditions set out in Article 4(2) of that Regulation.

Mr ARIAS CAÑETE, Mr VELLA and Mr ANDRIUKAITIS noted that the requests submitted by the proponents of the three European citizens' initiatives entitled (i) 'A price for carbon to fight climate change', (ii) '*Mettons fin à l'ère du plastique en Europe*', and (iii) 'Grow scientific progress: crops matter!' fell within the Commission's powers to propose legal acts for the purpose of implementing the Treaties, respectively under (i) Article 113, Article 192(1) and (2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in conjunction with the first and fourth indents of Article 191(1) thereof, (ii) Article 192(1) and (2) of the Treaty on The Functioning of the European Union, in conjunction with Article 191(1) thereof, and (iii) Article 114 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

With regard to the European citizens' initiative entitled 'EU law, minority rights and democratisation of Spanish institutions', Ms JOUROVÁ noted that the initiative called on the Commission to examine the situation in Spain regarding the movement for independence of the Catalan region in the context of the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council 'A new EU Framework to strengthen the Rule of Law' and, as the case may be, to take steps in that context. Conversely, the proposed citizens' initiative did not invite the Commission to submit a proposal for a legal act of the Union. The initiative therefore manifestly did not fall within the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act of the Union for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

In any case, it was emphasised in conclusion that the College's task that day was to decide only on the legal admissibility of the initiatives and not at this stage to analyse their substance or political expediency. If, in the space of a year, one million signatures from citizens from at least seven Member States were collected for initiatives that were admissible and therefore registered, the Commission would have three months to decide whether or not to consent to the requests, duly justifying its decision.

At the end of these presentations, the Commission confirmed, in accordance with Article 4(2) of Regulation (EU) 211/2011, that:

- the admissibility criteria were fulfilled for the proposed citizens' initiative entitled 'A price for carbon to fight climate change'; it therefore decided to register the initiative, in accordance with document C(2019) 4973, and authorised Mr TIMMERMANS to sign the decision on its behalf, to notify the organisers of the initiative thereof in the authentic language (English), and to publish it, for information, in the *Official Journal of the European Union*;

- the admissibility criteria were fulfilled for the proposed citizens' initiative entitled '*Mettons fin à l'ère du plastique en Europe*'; it therefore decided to register the initiative, in accordance with document C(2019) 4974, and authorised Mr TIMMERMANS to sign the decision on its behalf, to notify the organisers of the initiative thereof in the authentic language (French), and to publish it, for information, in the *Official Journal of the European Union*;

- the admissibility criteria were fulfilled for the proposed citizens' initiative entitled 'Grow scientific progress: crops matter!'; it therefore decided to register the initiative, in accordance with document C(2019) 4975, and authorised Mr TIMMERMANS to sign the decision on its behalf, to notify the organisers of the initiative thereof in the authentic language (English), and to publish it, for information, in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Finally, the Commission confirmed that the admissibility criteria under Article 4(2) of Regulation (EU) 211/2011 were not fulfilled for the proposed citizens' initiative entitled 'EU law, minority rights and democratisation of Spanish institutions'. It therefore decided not to register the initiative, in accordance with document C(2019) 4972, and authorised Mr TIMMERMANS to sign the decision on its behalf, to notify the organisers of the initiative thereof in the authentic language

(English), and to publish it, for information, in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

12.1. DECISION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE ORGANISATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION FOLLOWING THE DEPARTURE OF MR ANSIP AND MS CREŢU (C(2019) 5203)

The Commission took note of the PRESIDENT's decision in C(2019) 5203.

12.2. PROPOSAL FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ON THE NON-REPLACEMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION (COM(2019) 325)

The Commission took note of the PRESIDENT's proposal in COM(2019) 325, drawn up under Article 246(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

12.3. RESULTS OF THE G20 SUMMIT (OSAKA, 28 AND 29 JUNE 2019) (INFO(2019) 44)

The Commission took note of the information in INFO(2019) 44.

12.4. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL ON THE SPRING 2019 ROUND OF FISCAL SURVEILLANCE FOR ITALY (COM(2019) 351; SWD(2019) 430/2)

Mr MOSCOVICI informed the College of the outcome of the discussions that he and Mr DOMBROVSKIS had held with the Italian authorities in recent days regarding the economic and budgetary situation in Italy and the decision that the Commission was therefore proposing to the Council with regard to the debt-based excessive deficit procedure.

He began by reminding the College that, in line with the Eurogroup's wishes, the Commission had entered into talks with the Italian Government with the aim of preventing the opening of an excessive deficit procedure against Italy, even though the preliminary legal procedures had already been set in motion.

Mr MOSCOVICI explained that during these talks, which, he stressed, were frank and constructive, it had been agreed that three conditions had to be met in order to prevent the opening of the procedure, namely Italy needed to (i) offset as far as possible the gap observed in the 2018 budget by Eurostat, the EU's statistical body, last April, (ii) correct the 0.3% gap observed in the 2019 budget based on the spring economic forecast, and (iii) provide assurances in its draft budgetary plan for 2020, for which the Commission had forecast a deficit corresponding to 3.5% of gross domestic product (GDP) and higher debt levels that were expected to reach 135% of GDP.

He explained that the Italian Government had adopted a package of measures on 1 July formalising the responses to these three conditions. Notably, these measures included an amending budget for 2019 providing for a fiscal correction of EUR 7.6 billion, which corresponded to 0.42% of GDP, based primarily on additional budget revenue of around EUR 6.2 billion, which included a tax amnesty and an increase in social security contributions. The Italian Government had also adopted a Decree-Law freezing EUR 1.5 billion in the 2019 budget, in addition to the EUR 2 billion already frozen last December. This Decree would have to be put to the vote in the Italian parliament within 60 days and brought into effect by 15 September.

Mr MOSCOVICI stressed that, as a result of this package of measures, Italy would broadly comply with the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact in 2019 by making a greater than expected structural adjustment to the budget and would also offset to a large extent the gap observed in 2018.

As regards the headline deficit, he noted that Italy would thus honour its commitment made in December 2018 by bringing its deficit down to 2.04% of GDP in 2019, despite growth of 0.1% as opposed to the forecast of 1%. In other words, the Italian authorities had agreed to make the same major effort without growth, which few Member States had done thus far. He therefore concluded that it would be counterproductive, from an economic standpoint and in terms of public debt, to ask for greater consolidation efforts to be made in these particular circumstances.

As regards 2020, Mr MOSCOVICI reminded the College that the spring forecast pointed to a headline deficit of 3.5% and a deterioration in the structural balance of 1.2% of GDP. This was why the Commission was stressing the need to comply with the Stability and Growth Pact by continuing to make significant structural efforts in 2020.

He noted that the Italian Government had made this commitment on 2 July in a letter signed by the Prime Minister, Giuseppe Conte, and the Economy Minister, Giovanni Tria, in agreement with the two Deputy Prime Ministers, the details of which would be set out in October 2019 in Italy's draft budgetary plan for 2020. He reminded the College that one of its final tasks would therefore be to carry out a first analysis of this draft, which was why he felt that it was vital to obtain guarantees as of now to prevent any potential tensions, or even a rejection of Italy's draft budgetary plan, in the autumn.

Although the package of planned measures was not perfect, Mr MOSCOVICI, like Mr DOMBROVSKIS, who was absent that day, nevertheless considered it to be acceptable from a legal point of view, credible from a political point of view, and reasonable as regards the quality of the measures. He added that, unlike the situation last December, the agreement had been reached without a crisis and exceeded the targets set in terms of adjustments for the 2019 budget exercise, against a backdrop of almost zero growth. The efforts made by Italy were sufficient to conclude that an excessive deficit procedure was no longer necessary, and Mr MOSCOVICI therefore recommended not to propose to the Council the opening of the procedure at this stage.

He pointed out that the Commission would monitor very closely the implementation of the Italian budget throughout the second half of 2019 and would in particular ensure that the draft budgetary plan for 2020 was in line with the Stability and Growth Pact. At the same time, Italy would have to make progress with its structural reforms to stimulate growth and thereby help to reduce its public debt.

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

– its support for the proposal made by Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr MOSCOVICI not to recommend to the Council that it open at this stage a debt-based excessive deficit procedure against Italy;

– the case for explaining the reasons justifying the approach taken with regard to macroeconomic imbalances in Italy, which had led to the economic and fiscal governance rules being applied in a pragmatic and discerning manner in this instance;

– the importance of communicating effectively with Italian citizens and the Italian media in order to make clear that the economic and fiscal measures implemented by Italy were chosen by the Italian Government, and not the European Union.

The PRESIDENT closed the discussion by noting the agreement of the members of the College on the proposal made by Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr MOSCOVICI to not recommend at this stage that the Council open a debt-based excessive deficit procedure against Italy.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the communication in COM(2019) 351 for transmission to the Council and, for information, to the Parliament and the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2019) 430/2, the contents of which were noted.

12.5. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE MERCOSUR COUNTRIES

The PRESIDENT congratulated Ms MALMSTRÖM and Mr HOGAN for reaching a political agreement on the EU's future trade agreement with the Mercosur countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay). He asked them to brief the Members of the College on this matter.

Ms MALMSTRÖM highlighted the successes achieved by the Union in recent weeks with, on the one hand, the signing of the Free Trade and Investment Protection agreements with Vietnam on 30 June in Hanoi and, on the other, the trade agreement concluded with Mercosur. She considered that they sent a clear message against the detractors of the multilateral trading system.

She underlined the importance of the two agreements signed with Vietnam, which were the first trade agreements the new European Parliament would have to deal with. In particular, these agreements made explicit reference to the importance of sustainable development and to the International Labour Organization conventions.

Ms MALMSTRÖM then reported on the three days of intense discussions that had preceded the conclusion of the political agreement on the future trade agreement with Mercosur. In particular, she praised the excellent work done by Ms Sandra GALLINA, the Deputy Director-General of DG Trade, who had led the negotiations.

Once implemented, this agreement would create a market of around 780 million people, providing both undertakings and workers in the EU with trade openings in countries with which the Member States had historical links and whose markets had been relatively closed up to now. Thanks to the agreement, European companies would be able to save over €4 billion in customs duties – four times as much as under the EU’s trade deal with Japan – and would have a head start over their competitors from elsewhere in the world. The agreement set high standards and established a strong framework that included issues such as protection of the environment and of labour rights, while delivering on the sustainable development commitments already made, for example under the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Ms MALMSTRÖM pointed out that the negotiations, which had begun exactly twenty years ago, had finally concluded in support of a favourable policy environment. However, she also noted that the announcement of this agreement had rapidly provoked reactions and criticisms from certain players and organisations in the fields of environmental protection and agriculture. It was therefore important to ensure targeted communication so that a constructive debate could be held and people were able to make informed choices.

Mr HOGAN took the floor and explained that he had collaborated closely with Ms MALMSTRÖM in the negotiations with Mercosur, given the sensitivity of the agricultural issues addressed, which had allowed the interests of the sector to be taken into account in the agreement concluded. He, too, confirmed the need for communication activities on the future agreement to stress its benefits and dispel the misunderstandings and misinterpretations which never failed to arise where trade agreements were concerned. He regretted the silence on the part of the economic sectors that would be the chief beneficiaries of the agreement, in particular in the automotive, pharmaceutical, chemical and agri-food industries.

He considered that the agreement concluded was fair and balanced and that it provided opportunities and benefits to both parties, including for European farmers. The EU's typical, high-quality agri-food products would now get the protection that they deserved in Mercosur countries, which would strengthen the Union’s market position and increase its export opportunities.

On this point, he specified that the Mercosur countries would put in place legal guarantees to protect from imitation 357 high-quality European food and drink products recognised as Geographical Indications.

Mr HOGAN added that the EU would be opened up to agricultural products from Mercosur that were sensitive for the Union on the basis of carefully managed quotas, in order to ensure there was no risk that any product would flood the EU market and thereby threaten the livelihood of EU farmers. Lastly, he stressed that all imports from Mercosur would have to comply with the EU's rigorous food safety standards.

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

- the significant improvements that the agreement would bring with respect to the current situation, particularly as regards fisheries, the protection of biodiversity and the implementation of the precautionary principle;
- the desirability of using the agreement to step up the dialogue with the Mercosur countries on reforestation and the fight against deforestation, an issue on which the Commission would soon be presenting an important initiative;
- emphasis of the fact that thanks to the trade agreement with the EU, the Mercosur countries were undertaking to effectively implement the Paris climate agreement.

Ms MALMSTRÖM pointed out that should a Mercosur country decide no longer to implement the Paris climate agreement, the EU would not hesitate to withdraw from the trade agreement, which specifically put in place regular cooperation on climate change issues. However, during the negotiations, the Mercosur ministers had confirmed their commitment to implementing the Paris Agreement, so the trade agreement was a means of strengthening this commitment.

Winding up the discussion, the PRESIDENT once again congratulated Mr KATAINEN, Ms MALMSTRÖM and Mr HOGAN, and also Ms Sandra GALLINA, the Chief Negotiator of the agreement for the Commission, for their excellent work. He asked the Members of the Commission to communicate actively on the trade agreement concluded with Mercosur, drawing on the press documents drawn up by the Spokesperson's Service.

The Commission took note of this information.

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

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The meeting closed at 13.25.