



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2021) 2391 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 13 October 2021

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2391st meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 29 September 2021

(morning)

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- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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Single sitting: Wednesday 29 September 2021 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.07 with Mr TIMMERMANS in the chair.

Present:

Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President	
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Ms GABRIEL	Member	Items 8/10 and 11
Mr SCHMIT	Member	
Mr GENTILONI	Member	
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	Items 8/10 and 11
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

Absent:

Ms von der LEYEN	President
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President

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Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President
Mr BRETON	Member
Ms FERREIRA	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member

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

Ms CANENBLEY	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms VESTAGER
Ms VEGNERE	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr DOMBROVSKIS
Mr NOCIAR	Chef de cabinet to Mr ŠEFČOVIČ
Mr SCICLUNA	Chef de cabinet to Ms ŠUICA
Ms CAUDET	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr BRETON
Ms MADSEN	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms FERREIRA
Mr ANDREJKÓ	Member of Mr VÁRHELYI's staff

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Chef de Cabinet to the PRESIDENT
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Director-General, DG Communication
Ms SPINANT	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's Office
Ms HILI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office
Ms SCHULTZ	Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office
Mr VALERO	Secretariat-General

Secretary: Ms JUHANSONE, Secretary-General, assisted by Ms DEPREZ, Director in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2021) 2391/FINAL; SEC(2021) 2391/FINAL)

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(2021) 2391)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 27 September 2021.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2386TH, 2387TH, 2388TH , 2389TH AND 2390TH MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (14 AND 20 JULY, 8, 14 AND 22 SEPTEMBER 2021)

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2386th, 2387th, 2388th, 2389th and 2390th meetings.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2021) 180)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held on Friday 24 September 2021 (RCC(2021) 180).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Position to be taken on behalf of the European Union, for the period 2021-2026, in the Specialised Committee on Fisheries established by the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the**

European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part - 2021/0174 (NLE)

Line set out in SI(2021) 271.

- **Amendment of Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/442 and Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/521 related to the mechanism making certain products subject to the production of an export authorisation**

Line set out in SI(2021) 274.

- **Authorisation for the opening of negotiations for an agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part, in respect of Gibraltar (Council Decision)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 276.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **European Union Agency for Asylum and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 (Regulation) – YONCHEVA report – 2016/0131 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2021) 604, further to note SI(2021) 229, which the Commission had already approved on 6 July 2021.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EC) No 1367/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 September 2006 on the application of the provisions of the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters to Community institutions and bodies (Regulation) – DOLESCHAL report – 2020/0289 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2021) 605, further to note SI(2021) 226/2, which the Commission had already approved on 14 July 2021.

– **Changes to plenary organisation in October I**

Information set out in SP(2021) 607/2.

– **Transparency Pledge (presented in the context of the Conference on the future of Europe)’ – Joining the pledge ahead of the second ‘Citizens’ Panel’ of the Conference on 24-26 September focused on European democracy/values, rights, rule of law and security**

Information set out in SPI(2021) 47.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2021) 40)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2021) 40 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held by videoconference on Wednesday 22 September 2021.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

**6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2021) 320 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General’s memoranda recording decisions adopted between 20 and 24 September 2021.

**6.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2021) 321 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General’s memoranda recording decisions adopted between 20 and 25 September 2021.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2021) 322 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 20 and 24 September 2021 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES
(SEC(2021) 323 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant procedures for which the time limit expired between 27 September and 1 October 2021.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2021) 324)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2021) 84)

7.1. DG INFORMATICS – APPOINTMENT OF AN AD14/15 DIRECTOR
(PERS(2021) 85 TO /3)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) and Article 29(1)(b) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the 'Digital Services' Directorate in DG Informatics (PERS(2021) 85).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 13 and 15 July 2021 (PERS(2021) 85/2 and /3).

The Commission then examined the applicants' qualifications for the post. It also considered their ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, it then decided to appoint Ms Natalia ARISTIMUÑO PEREZ to the post.

This decision would take effect on a date to be determined.

**7.2. DG TAXATION AND CUSTOMS UNION – APPOINTMENT OF AN
AD14/15 DIRECTOR
(PERS(2021) 86 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it the list of applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the ‘Indirect Taxation and Tax Administration’ Directorate in DG Taxation and Customs Union (PERS(2021) 86).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 8 and 10 June 2021 (PERS(2021) 86/2 and /3).

The Commission then examined the applicants’ qualifications for the post. It also considered their ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr GENTILONI, it then decided to appoint Ms Maria Elena SCOPPIO to the post.

This decision would take effect on a date to be determined.

**7.3. DG TRANSLATION – LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF
DIRECTOR OF THE TRANSLATION CENTRE FOR THE BODIES OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION (LUXEMBOURG), AT GRADE AD14
(PERS(2021) 87 TO /3)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided:

- to approve the list of four candidates, presented in alphabetical order, set out in point 3 of PERS(2021) 84, for the post of Director of the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union in Luxembourg, and to consider this list as the Commission proposal;

- to ask Mr HAHN, the Member of the Commission responsible, to communicate this decision to the Management Board of the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.4. DG MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS – LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN CHARGE OF RETURNS AND OPERATIONS AT THE EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY (FRONTEX), IN WARSAW, AT GRADE AD13
(PERS(2021) 88 TO /3)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms JOHANSSON, the Commission decided:

- to approve the list of three candidates, presented in alphabetical order, set out in point 4 of PERS(2021) 84, for the post of Deputy Executive Director in charge of Returns and Operations at the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), in Warsaw, and to consider this list as the Commission proposal;
- to ask Ms JOHANSSON, the Member of the Commission responsible, to communicate this decision to the Management Board of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex).

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.5. DG MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS – LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN CHARGE OF STANDING CORPS MANAGEMENT AT THE EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY (FRONTEX), IN WARSAW, AT GRADE AD13
(PERS(2021) 89 TO /3)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms JOHANSSON, the Commission decided:

- to approve the list of three candidates, presented in alphabetical order, set out in point 5 of PERS(2021) 84, for the post of Deputy Executive Director in charge of Standing Corps Management at the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), in Warsaw, and to consider this list as the Commission proposal;
- to ask Ms JOHANSSON, the Member of the Commission responsible, to communicate this decision to the Management Board of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex).

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.6. DG MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS – LIST OF CANDIDATES
FOR THE POST OF DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN CHARGE
OF EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD INFORMATION
MANAGEMENT AND PROCESSES AT THE EUROPEAN
BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY (FRONTEx), IN WARSAW,
AT GRADE AD13
(PERS(2021) 90 TO /3)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms JOHANSSON, the Commission decided:

- to approve the list of three candidates, presented in alphabetical order, set out in point 6 of PERS(2021) 84, for the post of Deputy Executive Director in charge of European Border and Coast Guard Information Management and Processes at the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), in Warsaw, and to consider this list as the Commission proposal;

- to ask Ms JOHANSSON, the Member of the Commission responsible, to communicate this decision to the Management Board of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex).

These decisions would take effect immediately.

7.7. EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE – TERMINATION OF THE SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR AN AD14/15 DIRECTOR POST (PERS(2020) 85)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to terminate internal selection procedure COM/2020/2206 for the post of Director of the ‘Anti-Fraud Knowledge Centre’ Directorate at the European Anti-Fraud Office, without making an appointment.

This decision would take effect immediately.

7.8. EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE – INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR AN AD14/15 DIRECTOR (PERS(2021) 91)

The Commission took note of the information in point 8 of PERS(2021) 84 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided:

- to approve the vacancy notice for the post of Director of the ‘Anti-Fraud Knowledge Centre’ Directorate at the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), as annexed in document PERS(2021) 91, and to confirm that the Director-General of OLAF was authorised to decide on its publication;
- to carry out the selection procedure in accordance with the Compilation Document on Senior Officials Policy (SEC(2004) 1352);

- to authorise Mr HAHN, the Member of the Commission responsible for budget and administration, to interview all suitable candidates for the post before the final decision on appointment was taken;
- to confirm that the final appointment decision was taken in accordance with the Commission Decision of 4 June 2013 (C(2013) 3288) on the exercise of powers conferred by the Staff Regulations on the appointing authority and by the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants on the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.9. DG ENERGY – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART AND AUTHORISATION FOR THE INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF A POST FOR AN AD14/15 PRINCIPAL ADVISER
(PERS(2021) 92; SEC(2021) 345)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms SIMSON, the Commission decided:

- to approve the creation of a temporary post of Principal Adviser for ‘an Integrated Renewable Energy Strategy towards the 2050 Carbon Neutrality Objective’ in DG Energy, a post which would be abolished upon the departure of the future jobholder;
- to authorise the internal publication at grade AD14/15, with immediate effect, of the vacancy notice set out in PERS(2021) 92 for the newly created post of Principal Adviser for an Integrated Renewable Energy Strategy towards the 2050 Carbon Neutrality Objective in DG Energy, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations;
- to approve the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 345.

Unless indicated otherwise, these decisions would take effect on 1 October 2021.

7.10. DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART AND AUTHORISATION FOR THE EXTERNAL PUBLICATION OF A POST FOR AN AD14 PRINCIPAL ADVISER

(PERS(2021) 93; SEC(2021) 346)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms GABRIEL, the Commission decided:

- to derogate from the provisions of Communication C(2017) 5231 of 31 July 2017 on organisation charts of Commission Directorates-General and Services as regards the creation of departments in services other than the Joint Research Centre (JRC), linguistic services, Administrative Offices and Executive Agencies;
- to approve the creation of a ‘Common IT Service’ department (RTD.H.DEP.IT) in DG Research and Innovation;
- to approve the creation of a temporary post of Principal Adviser ‘President of the Board of the European Innovation Council (EIC)’ in DG Research and Innovation;
- to authorise the external publication, with immediate effect, at grade AD14, of the vacancy notice set out in PERS(2021) 93 for the newly created post of Principal Adviser ‘President of the Board of the European Innovation Council (EIC)’, to be recruited as a member of the temporary staff, under Article 2 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union;
- to approve the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 346.

Following the reorganisation, the total number of directorates would remain unchanged. The total number of departments and units would increase from 0 to 1 and from 43 to 44 respectively.

The decision to create a department was subject to the commitment by DG Research and Innovation to review the need to maintain the structure by the end of 2023.

These decisions would take effect on 16 October 2021.

**7.11. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPOINTMENT OF A SPECIAL MEDICAL ADVISER TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
(PERS(2021) 94)**

The Commission took note of the information in point 11 of PERS(2021) 84 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided:

- to appoint Mr Luigi MARIONI to the post of Special Medical Adviser to the European Commission, in Ispra;
- to authorise Mr HAHN, the Member of the Commission responsible for the budget and human resources, by derogation from point 6(2) of Commission Decision C(2007) 6655, to amend Mr Luigi MARIONI's contract in the event of duly justified and urgent needs, subject to the availability of sufficient budgetary appropriations;
- to authorise the Director-General of DG Human Resources and Security to implement this decision by signing the contract on behalf of the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment.

Unless indicated otherwise, these decisions would take effect on 1 October 2021.

**7.12. DG BUDGET – COMPLEMENTARY ALLOCATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND DECENTRALISED ADMINISTRATIVE APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2021
(SEC(2021) 344)**

The Commission adopted the communication in SEC(2021) 344.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**7.13. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – 2020 GENERAL ACTIVITY REPORT OF
THE MEDIATION SERVICE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
(SEC(2021) 343)**

The Commission took note of the 2020 General Activity Report of the Mediation Service of the European Commission distributed as SEC(2021) 343.

- 8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS –
REPORT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM
(COM(2021) 590 TO /3; RCC(2021) 185)**
- 9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – A
RENEWED EU ACTION PLAN AGAINST MIGRANT SMUGGLING (2021-
2025)
(COM(2021) 591 TO /3; RCC(2021) 185)**
- 10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ON
THE APPLICATION OF DIRECTIVE 2009/52/EC OF 18 JUNE 2009
PROVIDING FOR MINIMUM STANDARDS ON SANCTIONS AND
MEASURES AGAINST EMPLOYERS OF ILLEGALLY STAYING THIRD-
COUNTRY NATIONALS
(COM(2021) 592; RCC(2021) 185)**

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At the invitation of Mr TIMMERMANS, Mr SCHINAS presented to the College the various initiatives put forward that day, namely (i) a Report on Migration and Asylum, (ii) a renewed Action Plan against migrant smuggling (2021-2025) and (iii) a Communication on the application of Directive 2009/52/EC of 18 June 2009 providing for minimum standards on sanctions and measures against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals. He added that there was also a proposal for a Commission decision to suspend the Agreement with Belarus on the issuance of short-term visas for Belarusian officials, which would be adopted that day by written procedure (PE/2021/7293).

He stressed the timeliness of these initiatives, in line with the timeframe set out by the PRESIDENT in her State of the Union address on 15 September 2021, in which she had called on the co-legislators to speed up the work to adopt the Pact on Migration and Asylum proposed by the Commission a year ago.

He considered that these initiatives would relaunch efforts to reach an overall political agreement on the EU's migration policy. Member States had so far used the tools at their disposal in piecemeal fashion, whereas the Pact on Migration and Asylum offered a framework for organised, orderly and permanent European solidarity.

He concluded his presentation by saying that the current weaponisation of human suffering at the borders of the European Union was unacceptable, and welcomed the fact that the Member States' response to this new tactic, used in this case by Belarus, was one of solidarity.

Ms JOHANSSON began by reporting on current migratory flows and stressed that the situation varied from one Member State to another. She also pointed out the importance of adopting the Pact on Migration and Asylum in order to manage these flows and their consequences.

She then presented the initiatives proposed that day. Pointing out that undeclared work represented 17% of the European labour market, particularly in the construction, transport and care sectors, she considered that the Directive providing

for minimum standards on sanctions and measures against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals had so far not been properly implemented by the Member States. Almost half of the migrant smuggling networks were involved in other criminal activities and too many migrants died each year in the hands of those networks.

Furthermore, Ms JOHANSSON perceived the exploitation of migratory flows as a weapon designed to undermine the European Union. She referred in this regard to Belarus, which was bringing migrants by plane from certain third countries, notably Iraq, in order to destabilise the EU and some of its Member States, as was currently the case in Lithuania, Latvia and Poland. She considered this to be a blatant act of aggression, which had also led to the deaths of several migrants at the Polish border, and indicated that similar attempts would target other Member States. The seriousness of the acts justified the proposal to suspend the short-term visa facilitation agreement with Belarus that the Commission was also proposing to adopt that day.

A brief discussion followed, in the course of which the following points were raised:

- the constant geographical evolution of the borders where migrants congregate;. this was a phenomenon that was now affecting Member States that had previously been spared;
- Belarus's criminal liability for the migrant smuggling at the eastern borders of the European Union, which affected in particular Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, and the need to recognise these acts as hybrid attacks;
- the Commission's very rapid response to the arrival en masse of the migrants from Belarus, with the deployment of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the increase in funding to support the Member States concerned and the suspension of flights from Iraq following European approaches to the Iraqi government;
- the terrorist risk associated with this migratory flow through Belarus;

- the need, in the short, medium and long term, to systematically support Member States confronted with ever-changing and increasing migration challenges;
- the importance of proper implementation by Member States of the Directive providing for minimum standards on sanctions and measures against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals, including as regards platform work;
- the recognition of the effectiveness of the various sanctions regimes put in place by the EU to combat the weaponisation of migration.

In response to these remarks, Ms JOHANSSON highlighted the delicate balance to be struck between the need to protect the EU's external borders from migratory pressure and the need for a reception policy that was in line with European values.

Mr TIMMERMANS considered that the actions taken by Belarus to undermine the European Union called for a very firm response from the bloc, both in order to denounce such practices, and to dissuade other third countries which – sometimes under acute migratory pressure themselves – could be tempted to follow suit. He also noted that no Member State could now claim to be unaffected by migration issues and considered that this situation could help to give rise to common and truly European solutions.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the communications in COM(2021) 590/3, COM(2021) 591/3 and COM(2021) 592, 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.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Mr TIMMERMANS invited Mr BORRELL to brief the College on the latest developments in the EU's external relations.

Mr BORRELL first of all mentioned the main current global issues on which he had had exchanges of views on the fringe of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, held on 21 to 27 September. He referred in particular to relations with the United States, the situation in Afghanistan, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme and relations with the Western Balkans.

With regard to **relations with the United States**, he mentioned the discussions that had followed the conclusion of the AUKUS security pact between the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia and the cancellation of a major contract to purchase submarines that Australia had concluded with France. He highlighted the important joint declaration of the French and US presidents, Emmanuel MACRON and Joe BIDEN, calling for stronger relations between the EU and the United States, including on defence and security. He noted with satisfaction that the declaration supported the idea of an enhanced EU defence capacity to supplement that of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). He would return to Washington in mid-October to continue discussions on the various issues with the US Secretary of State, Antony BLINKEN. He also said that the EU would shortly present a policy document entitled ‘Strategic Compass’, which would define the EU’s security and defence objectives. Finally, he emphasised that, like the EU’s new dialogue with the United States, conducted within the Trade and Technology Council, or the strategic dialogue between the EU and China, which had just been held for the eleventh time, it would be advisable to put in place with the United States the structured dialogue on security and defence issues that had been approved in principle at the summit between the EU and the United States at the beginning of the year.

With regard to **Afghanistan**, he stressed the EU’s three priorities, which were the operations to evacuate and protect persons, the humanitarian aid and the efforts to prevent a collapse of the country’s economy. He stressed, first, the difficulty of helping the Afghan population without recognising the new Taliban government and, secondly, the need for international coordination of aid to the people of Afghanistan, who were facing the risk of a serious humanitarian crisis. He

mentioned his talks with a number of regional, international and institutional actors, and added that in addition to the humanitarian aspect, the international community must also mount a coordinated response to the common challenges of terrorism, organised crime, drug trafficking and migration, which could be exacerbated by the crisis in Afghanistan.

On the subject of the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme**, Mr BORRELL announced that in New York he had met the Iranian Foreign Minister, who had confirmed that Iran would soon return to the negotiating table in Vienna.

He said that he had also met the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey LAVROV, for talks on important issues in the interest of global security and stability and that in particular he had raised with him the possible deployment of the Russian Wagner group in Mali. He had also warned the Malian Government about the dangers of the deployment.

With regard to the **Western Balkans**, he reported on his exchanges with the region's six leaders in New York. He mentioned the disappointment expressed by his interlocutors over the progress of the accession process. He considered that the EU must send positive signals of its determination and its commitment to the region's European perspective at the EU-Western Balkans Summit on 6 October 2021.

At the same time, he noted the heightened tension currently dividing **Serbia** and **Kosovo***. The two negotiators were due to meet in Brussels that same day as part of the dialogue facilitated by the EU, and it was to be hoped that the discussions would allow the current conflict to be defused.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Secondly, Mr BORRELL briefly drew attention to other relevant developments in the EU's external relations.

With regard to **Ethiopia**, he noted the reluctance of EU Member States to impose sanctions against the government for the serious breaches of human rights committed in the country. The situation was very worrying and could cause major migratory flows in the region and beyond.

He also said that in **Libya** the elections had been postponed and the fighting had temporarily ceased. An international conference on the country would be held in Paris on 12 November 2021.

With regard to **Tunisia**, he noted the popular support enjoyed by the current president, who had suspended parliament and amended the constitution by decree to expand his powers.

To conclude, he reported some recent positive developments in Latin America. **Chile** was currently drafting a new constitution while **Peru** was experiencing a peaceful transition following its presidential elections, and in **Venezuela** there would be local elections with the opposition's participation to which the EU could send an observer mission.

Ms URPIILAINEN returned to some of the points mentioned. With regard to Ethiopia, she recalled that budget support to the country had been frozen in December 2020 in response to the government's breaches of human rights but that the EU was continuing to provide humanitarian aid to the local populations. She said that neither the EU Member States nor the international financial institutions could agree on the approach to take and that there was therefore a need to work on a common strategy. She would visit Ethiopia soon to inform the authorities of the conditions on which European aid could be released.

On the subject of Afghanistan, she confirmed the appeals made, in particular by the United Nations, to prevent a complete collapse of the economy and the stoppage of the supply of basic services to the Afghan population. She reported on the work of

the high-level humanitarian donor roundtable that met on 23 September 2021 at the request of USAID. All the participants had announced an increase in their humanitarian aid donations. She said that, for its part, the EU had increased its aid from EUR 50 million to EUR 200 million when the Afghan crisis erupted and announced a forthcoming initiative as part of the Team Europe effort.

For the rest, the EU had suspended its development cooperation with Afghanistan since the Taliban had come to power, and it would have to take a sensitive political decision determining the channels through which and the forms in which it could provide aid that would benefit the population. She advocated holding a College discussion beforehand on the basis of a document presenting the different options that could be envisaged.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission raised mainly the Afghanistan situation, i.e.:

- the difficulty of providing aid to a population that was suffering without however recognising the new Taliban government;
- the announcement of a high-level resettlement forum dedicated to Afghanistan to be held on 7 October 2021 to help those in particular need of protection, bearing in mind that the EU Member States had already evacuated and protected 22 000 Afghans so far;
- the need to provide support for Afghans who had fled within the country fearing major humanitarian and economic crises and who were now returning home;
- the risk posed by the current situation in Afghanistan for the security of the country, the region and the world, in particular in terms of terrorism and drug trafficking; the extreme vigilance necessary in the security checks carried out on the arrival of persons fleeing Afghanistan to ensure that new terrorist threats were not imported into the EU.

Mr TIMMERMANS thanked Mr BORRELL and the College for the overview of the salient points of current developments in the EU's external relations, to which the Commission would return soon.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 10.21.