



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2015) 2144 final

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

Brussels, 11 November 2015

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2144th meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill Building)

on Tuesday 27 October 2015

(afternoon)

PV(2015) 2144 final

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Single sitting: Tuesday 27 October 2015 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 12.49 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 KATAINEN	Vice-President	
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	Item 8 (in part)
Ms THYSSEN	Member	
Mr MOSCOVICI	Member	
Mr STYLIANIDES	Member	
Lord HILL	Member	
Ms BULC	Member	
Ms BIENKOWSKA	Member	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Member	Items 1 to 8 (in part)
Mr NAVRACSICS	Member	
Ms CREȚU	Member	
Mr MOEDAS	Member	

Absent:

Mr ANSIP	Vice-President
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Vice-President
Mr HOGAN	Member
Ms VESTAGER	Member

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

Mr SCHØNBERG	Expert from Ms VESTAGER's cabinet	Items 7 and 8
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The following also sat in:

Mr SELMAYR	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr ROMERO REQUENA	Director-General, Legal Service	
Mr PESONEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Ms ANDREEVA	Commission Spokesperson's Service	
Ms METTLER	Head of the European Political Strategy Centre	
Ms MARTÍNEZ ALBEROLA	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Ms ASTERIADI	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr AVRAMOPOULOS	
Ms NIKOLAY	Chef de cabinet to Ms JOUROVÁ	Item 8 (in part)

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2015) 2144/FINAL; SEC(2015) 423)

The Commission took note of that day's agenda and of the tentative agendas for forthcoming meetings. It also took note of the addition of items 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 (regarding administrative decisions) to that day's agenda.

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(RCC(2015) 2144)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 26 October.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES AND SPECIAL MINUTES OF THE 2143RD MEETING OF THE COMMISSION (21 OCTOBER)

(PV(2015) 2143; PV(2015) 2143, PART II)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2143rd meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2015) 87)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held on Friday 23 October (RCC(2015) 87).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. HORIZONTAL ISSUES

- i) Council Regulation (EC) 920/2005 of 13 June 2005 amending Regulations No 1 (EEC) and No 1 (EAEC) of 15 April 1958 – Extension of the derogation concerning the Irish language**

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2015) 213/3.

- ii) Accession of the European Union to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR)**

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2015) 405 and /2.

4.2. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

- iii) Trilogue meetings**

(point 3.1 of the IRG record)

- Protection of undisclosed know-how and business information (trade secrets) against their unlawful acquisition, use and disclosure (Directive) – LE GRIP report – 2013/0402 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2015) 382/2.

- Medical devices – Amendment of Directive 2001/83/EC, Regulation (EC) 178/2002 and Regulation (EC) 1223/2009 (Regulation) – WILLMOTT report – 2012/0266 (COD) / In vitro diagnostic medical devices (Regulation) – LIESE report – 2012/0267 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2015) 410.

- Strengthening of certain aspects of the presumption of innocence and of the right to be present at trial in criminal proceedings (Directive) – GRIESBECK report – 2013/0407 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2015) 396.

iv) European Parliament dossier – October III part-session

(point 3.2 of the IRG record)

Ordinary legislative procedure – Second reading

- Amendment of the Protocol on the Statute of the Court of Justice of the European Union with a view to increasing the number of judges at the General Court (Regulation) – MARINHO E PINTO report – 2011/0901B (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2015) 607 and /2.

Empowerment

The Commission empowered the PRESIDENT, under Article 13 of its Rules of Procedure, in agreement with Mr TIMMERMANS and any associated Members, to adopt and transmit to the Council its opinion on the amendments, in accordance with Article 294(7)(c) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, once Parliament had been consulted, and if necessary to attach to its opinion an amended proposal, on the basis of the line set out in SP(2015) 607 and /2.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

v) Programming of Council business

(SI(2015) 412)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2015) 412 on the Council meetings between 29 October and 11 November.

vi) Non-legislative dossiers

(point 4.1 of the IRG record)

- Position to be adopted by the European Union at the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation on the accession of the Republic of Liberia to the World Trade Organisation (Council Decision) – 2015/0230 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2015) 407.

- Valletta Summit on migration (Valletta, 11 and 12 November)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2015) 408.

4.4. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

vii) Non-legislative dossiers – Preparations for October III part-session

(point 5.1.1 of the IRG record)

- Draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016 – General introduction – General statement of revenue – General statement of revenue and expenditure by section – FERNANDEZ & DEPREZ report

The Commission (i) approved the line set out in SP(2015) 641 and /3, (ii) authorised the Member of the Commission with responsibility for the budget to take all the necessary initiatives with a view to reconciling the positions of the European Parliament and the Council in accordance with Article 314(5) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and (iii) empowered the Member of the Commission with responsibility for the budget, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, to modify, where necessary, in the context of the conciliation procedure, the decision on mobilising the flexibility instrument, pursuant to the conditions laid down in Article 11 of the Council Regulation on the multiannual financial framework 2014-2020, and point 12 of the

interinstitutional agreement between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, cooperation in budgetary matters and sound financial management.

- Reform of the electoral law of the European Union – HÜBNER and LEINEN report – 2015/2035 (INL)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2015) 645.

- Oral question O-000107/2015 – ‘Smart borders’ package

The Commission took note of SP(2015) 661.

viii) Action taken on legislative opinions and non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its September I and II part-sessions
(point 5.6.2 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved document SP(2015) 649 on the action taken on the legislative opinions and non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its September I and II part-sessions, for transmission to Parliament.

5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED **(SEC(2015) 424 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 19 and 23 October.

5.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2015) 425 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 19 and 25 October.

5.3. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2015) 426 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 19 and 23 October, as archived in Decide.

5.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2015) 427 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 26 October and 6 November and of the finalisation written procedure initiated following the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet on Monday 26 October.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2015) 428 AND /2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2015) 97 AND /2)

The PRESIDENT presented three further decisions for adoption by the Commission on the appointment of three Deputy Secretaries-General: Mr Jean-Eric PAQUET and Ms Paraskevi MICHOU, with effect from 1 November 2015, and Ms Ilze JUHANSONE, with effect from 16 November 2015.

As a result of these appointments, the Secretariat-General now had a strong leadership team, under the direction of Mr Alexander ITALIANER, made up of individuals from both within and outside the Commission who had a wide range of skills, expertise and experience in the European Union's key policy areas.

He welcomed these decisions, which enhanced the pivotal role of the Secretariat-General in the political reorganisation of the current Commission, reflecting its determination to emphasise tangible results and teamwork.

The PRESIDENT looked forward to working closely with the new Deputy Secretaries-General.

6.1. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – APPOINTMENT OF AD15/16 DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL
(PERS(2015) 85 TO /3)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Deputy Secretary-General (DSG1) in the Secretariat-General (PERS(2015) 85).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 15 and 20 October (PERS(2015) 85/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, it then decided to appoint Mr Jean-Eric PAQUET to the post.

This decision would take effect on 1 November 2015.

**6.2. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – APPOINTMENT OF AD15/16 DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL
(PERS(2015) 86 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Deputy Secretary-General (DSG2) in the Secretariat-General (PERS(2015) 86).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 15 and 20 October (PERS(2015) 86/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, it then decided to appoint Ms Paraskevi MICHOU to the post.

This decision would take effect on 1 November 2015.

**6.3. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – APPOINTMENT OF AD15 DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL
PERS(2015) 74 TO /4)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), (1)(b) and (2) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Deputy Secretary-General (DSG3) in the Secretariat-General (PERS(2015) 74 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 15 and 20 October (PERS(2015) 74/3 and /4).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, it then decided to appoint Ms Ilze JUHANSONE to the post.

This decision would take effect on 16 November 2015.

**6.4. DG INFORMATICS – INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF VACANCY
NOTICE FOR AD15/16 DIRECTOR-GENERAL
(PERS(2015) 101)**

On a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr OETTINGER and also Mr ANSIP and Mr KATAINEN, 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(2015) 101 for the post of Director-General of the Directorate-General for Informatics.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**6.5. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL / DG BUDGET / DG HUMAN RESOURCES
AND SECURITY – OPENING OF A EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION
IN IRAN
(PERS(2015) 102)**

The Commission took note of the information in point 2 of PERS(2015) 97 and, on a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and having consulted Mr MIMICA, Ms MALMSTRÖM, Mr STYLIANIDES and Mr HAHN, and also Ms MOGHERINI, decided:

- to agree to the opening of a European Union delegation in Iran, based in Tehran;
- to take note of the financial statement in PERS(2015) 102 evaluating the budgetary impact of this measure, while underlining that its implementation would have to take into account existing budget constraints;

- to note that any decision connected with the above decision to open the delegation and relating to the adoption of new organisation charts or amendments to existing ones, and any decision to (re)deploy Commission resources, would have to be taken in accordance with the cooperation procedures put in place by the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and with internal Commission procedures.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**6.6. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL / DG BUDGET / DG HUMAN RESOURCES
AND SECURITY – RELOCATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION IN SOMALIA
(PERS(2015) 103)**

The Commission took note of the information in point 3 of PERS(2015) 97 and, on a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and having consulted Mr MIMICA, Ms MALMSTRÖM, Mr STYLIANIDES and Mr HAHN, and also Ms MOGHERINI, decided:

- to agree to the relocation of the European Union delegation in Somalia from Nairobi, where it was currently based, to Mogadishu;
- to take note of the financial statement in PERS(2015) 103 evaluating the budgetary impact of this measure, while underlining that its implementation would have to take into account existing budget constraints;
- to note that any decision connected with the above decision to relocate the delegation and relating to the adoption of new organisation charts or amendments to existing ones, and any decision to (re)deploy Commission resources, would have to be taken in accordance with the cooperation procedures put in place by the Commission and the High Representative

of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and with internal Commission procedures.

These decisions 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 – COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2016 – NO TIME FOR BUSINESS AS USUAL
(COM(2015) 610 TO /3; RCC(2015) 88)**

Without entering again into the content of the Communication and the annexes, which had already been approved, Mr TIMMERMANS outlined his political reading of the exercise that had led to the adoption that day of the Commission Work Programme for 2016.

He began by expressing satisfaction that the programme had been drawn up in a very constructive spirit of internal cooperation. He took the opportunity to praise the excellent work done by the cabinets of the Members of the Commission and by the Secretariat-General, which he particularly thanked. Furthermore, he stressed that the preparation of the 2016 Work Programme had been just as constructive with the European Parliament, thanks, in particular, to a new organisation of the work.

On the substance, he observed that the Commission's Work Programme for 2016 was continuing to translate the Commission's ten political priorities by addressing the major challenges facing the Union - the refugee crisis and migration, growth and jobs, the need to deepen the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), the social dimension and sustainable development, and also stability and security, in particular in Europe's neighbourhood.

However, he highlighted the declared intention of the 2016 Work Programme, as indicated by its title, to do things differently and step up a gear in order to achieve swift and concrete results in the areas that were important for the Union and its citizens. For this reason, the programme remained focused on sustainable economic, social and environmental development, which, however, did not prevent it from being ambitious.

He also pointed out an important new feature, namely the fact that smart regulatory measures (REFIT) would in future be fully integrated in the work programme. He also drew attention to the need to publish the roadmaps on the measures set out in this programme as soon as possible so that the follow-up to the work could be planned.

In conclusion, Mr TIMMERMANS stressed that as the first anniversary of the present Commission (1 November) approached, the 2016 Work Programme demonstrated that the Commission was meeting its commitments, in particular by channelling all its political will and determination to act into major projects and tangible results for Europe and Europeans.

Following this presentation, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2015) 610/3 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.

8. THE REFUGEE CRISIS – LEADERS' MEETING ON REFUGEE FLOWS ALONG THE WESTERN BALKANS ROUTE (SI(2015) 414)

The PRESIDENT reported on the main results of the leaders' meeting – arranged on his initiative – in Brussels on 25 October to find urgent operational solutions to the

influx of refugees along the Western Balkans route. The meeting had brought together the Heads of State or Government of the Member States and the neighbouring countries most directly affected by this situation – Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia – in the presence of the Presidents of the European Council and of the European Parliament, current and future Presidencies of the Council of the European Union, as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the external borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex) had also been represented.

He welcomed the fact that, for the first time that Sunday, the leaders of the Western Balkan countries had sat down at the same table as the Heads of State or Government of the most affected EU Member States to discuss the challenges they faced and possible practical solutions to manage more effectively in the very short term a situation of such exceptional seriousness. The outcome was the adoption by the participants of a statement with a 17-point plan of action.

The three main challenges on which they had decided to act were (i) emergency humanitarian aid – shelter, food, water, hygiene, health care – and increasing the reception capacity by 100 000 additional places for refugees in Greece and in the Western Balkans, (ii) coordinated management of migratory flows by registering refugees and also continuously exchanging information between the countries concerned by setting up national contact points to be monitored by the Commission, and (iii) strengthening the management of the EU's external borders, stepping up coordinated actions at these borders – in particular with regard to Greece, Croatia, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania –, the deployment of 400 extra police officers in Slovenia as well as Frontex support to assist with the registration of migrants in Greece by the end of the week.

On the Union side, the PRESIDENT stated that it would be necessary at the same

time to redouble efforts to implement the measures already agreed as soon as possible. In particular, he highlighted the need to expedite matters – so that support teams managing the reception and registration of refugees (hotspots) were fully operational and the relocation mechanism working as soon as possible. It was also necessary to ensure that the Member States fulfilled the pledges, not just of financial support but also of provision of expertise on the ground, made by them on 23 September at the informal European Council meeting.

He urged all stakeholders to do more to ensure that the EU as a whole rose to the challenge. On a more political level, he regretted the lack of unity and, in some cases, of any sense of responsibility between Member States so vividly illustrated by this crisis. It was to avoid divisions that would be damaging to the EU as a whole that he had taken the initiative of bringing the leaders together to allow a dialogue between them.

He concluded his summary by highlighting the extremely difficult situation now facing Slovenia in particular, the urgent need to plug the gaps in financial contributions announced by the Member States and whether it was appropriate to initiate a debate with the Member States on the implementation of new funding methods.

Ms MOGHERINI pointed to the significant progress represented by the operational measures agreed at the Leaders' Meeting the previous Sunday. She noted in particular the major contribution of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr António Guterres. While openly admitting that some aspects of the discussions had been difficult, she noted a firm willingness to cooperate on the part of the leaders of the non-EU countries in the Western Balkans.

Now was the time for effective implementation of the operational measures designed to ease the exceptional pressures on this migration route. In passing, she drew attention to the potential spill-over effect of any emergency measures taken unilaterally in a particular country along the route followed by migrants, as had been

the case in recent days and weeks, and to the fact that Member States less affected today could soon find themselves facing large flows of refugees.

She also stressed the need to continue at the same time the operational efforts and policies in relation to Africa. This other migration route would be addressed at the Valletta Conference between the EU and its African partners on 11 and 12 November next.

Mr TIMMERMANS outlined the progress of negotiations with Turkey with a view to finalising the agreement on the joint action plan between Turkey and the EU. He was conducting these negotiations on behalf of the Union together with Mr HAHN. Close cooperation with Turkey was essential for the Union's overall response to the migration crisis. Although a number of elements had yet to be finalised, the Commission was sparing no effort to ensure that the Agreement came into force as quickly as possible.

Regarding the joint declaration by the leaders gathered in Brussels on 25 October, he mentioned in particular the operational support provided to Greece, including increasing its reception capacity by 50 000 places by the end of the year, with Greece taking responsibility for correctly registering all asylum seekers arriving on its soil, to ensure in particular that the relocation mechanism ran smoothly. While EU solidarity was necessary, the Greek authorities had to take their share of responsibility too.

He ended by highlighting the interdependence of the different pillars of the global agenda on migration and the need to step up efforts towards returning and re-admitting to third countries persons not entitled to EU protection.

Referring once again to the geopolitical complexity of the current crisis, Mr HAHN said everything possible should continue to be done to promote a political solution in Syria. The latest UNHCR analyses suggested that another significant wave of Syrian refugees could arrive in Europe following the escalation of the conflict in the aftermath of Russian military intervention. As Syria's immediate neighbours had no

more reception capacity, he had high hopes that a robust agreement could rapidly be reached between the EU and Turkey to improve the reception of refugees on the ground.

He thanked Ms GEORGIEVA for having succeeded in releasing extra funds to part-finance the operational measures agreed at the Leaders' Meeting on Sunday. However, the increasing gap between commitment appropriations and payment appropriations in the EU budget was not sustainable.

Lastly, the erroneous ideas held in certain quarters should be corrected by explaining that many refugees from Syria were seeking refuge in Europe precisely because of the convergence of values and lifestyles that they expected to find here.

Mr STYLIANIDES was convinced of the importance of reaching agreement on the action plan between the EU and Turkey, as Ankara was a key player in any attempt to resolve the current crisis. While not minimising the political difficulties that had to be overcome, he favoured demonstrating a degree of flexibility to secure its involvement.

He agreed with Ms MOGHERINI and Mr HAHN that European public opinion should be better informed and, in particular, made aware of the objective facts about the reception of refugees: the numbers arriving in the EU represented less than 1 % of its population, compared with 12 % in Turkey, more than 20 % in Jordan and more than 30 % in Lebanon.

With the current influx of refugees on European soil representing less than 1 % of the population, it was hard to explain to the EU's partners why reaching joint solutions appeared to be so elusive.

Mr AVRAMOPOULOS went further, saying that what had initially been a humanitarian crisis had now developed into a political crisis that was testing the capacity of the EU's institutions and its commitment to its own values. He welcomed the PRESIDENT's initiative of organising a Leaders' Meeting between

the leaders of the Member States and the countries along the Western Balkans Route. With a view to encouraging these countries to better share political and operational responsibility for managing the influx of refugees and also to demonstrating the leading role of the Commission, which was also monitoring the effectiveness of this management on the ground, he planned to visit each of the countries concerned in the very near future.

He briefed the meeting on the measures currently being implemented, such as mobilising teams to manage reception and registration of refugees in Italy and Greece. It was also vital to establish a dialogue between the EU and Turkey. He ended by expressing his deep concern at rising xenophobia, nationalism and populism in Europe.

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

- the initiative of organising a high level meeting on 25 October on refugee flows along the Balkans Route was welcomed; the positive and tangible results for the countries of the region were emphasised;
- concerns were raised that the EU could be politically divided by the refugee crisis;
- the leading role played by the Commission was mentioned, as was the need for it to raise awareness of its work to promote rapprochement and solutions between Member States in the face of an influx of refugees;
- at EU level, a call for Member States to act with responsibility and solidarity; in the Balkans, a call for neighbouring countries to share responsibility and engage in dialogue;
- a call for the active, non-partisan mobilisation of movements and ordinary people attached to European values to combat the rather polarised perception of

this crisis in European public opinion; deep regret in the face of the rejection and violence experienced by some refugees; a warning was given that these reactions threatened to undermine the principles of the rule of law;

- mention was made of the operational contacts already engaged in by the Commission with international financial institutions in accordance with point 7 of the Leaders' Statement following their meeting on 25 October in Brussels;
- more generally, an in-depth debate should be held on a medium-term budget strategy and on how best to use the Structural Funds creatively to maximise their impact; the reluctance of Member States to use the Structural Funds to manage the refugee crisis was referred to; a warning was given against the temptation facing Member States to allocate national funding for development aid to deal with the refugee crisis.

The PRESIDENT wrapped up the discussion by expressing regret that the EU institutions were sometimes perceived as too bureaucratic, whereas in the current refugee crisis governments had praised the Commission's contribution to solving the problems faced, which was impressive in terms of both its quality and rapidity, with staff often working day and night.

He accepted that the Commission had taken a risk in organising, for the first time, a Leaders' Meeting between the leaders of certain Member States and third countries and welcomed the good outcome that it had produced. The great achievement of this meeting was that it had changed the perception of the refugee influx from a purely national issue to a European one.

He wound up by noting once again that it was vitally important for Greece and Turkey to reach agreement on protecting their common border.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 14.03.