



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2019) 2279 final

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

Brussels, 6 February 2019

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2279th meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill building)

on Tuesday 15 January 2019

(afternoon)

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Single sitting: Tuesday 15 January 2019 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.24 with Mr JUNKER, President, in the chair. The discussion of item 9 was chaired in part by Mr TIMMERMANS.

Present:

Mr JUNKER	President	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr TIMMERMANS	First Vice-President	
Ms MOGHERINI	High Representative / Vice-President	
Mr ANSIP	Vice-President	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Vice-President	
Mr KATAINEN	Vice-President	
Mr OETTINGER	Member	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Ms MALMSTRÖM	Member	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr MIMICA	Member	
Mr ARIAS CAÑETE	Member	
Mr VELLA	Member	
Mr ANDRIUKAITIS	Member	
Mr AVRAMOPOULOS	Member	
Ms THYSSEN	Member	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr MOSCOVICI	Member	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr STYLIANIDES	Member	
Mr HOGAN	Member	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Ms BULC	Member	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Ms BIENKOWSKA	Member	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Member	
Mr NAVRACSICS	Member	
Ms VESTAGER	Member	
Mr MOEDAS	Member	
Sir Julian KING	Member	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Ms GABRIEL	Member	

Absent:

Ms CREȚU

Member

The following sat in to represent an absent Member of the Commission:

Mr LATOUDIS Deputy 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	
Mr PESONEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr SCHINAS	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Ms ANDREEVA	Commission Spokesperson's Service	
Mr MOTOC	European Political Strategy Centre	
Mr THOLONIAT	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Ms ARKI	PRESIDENT's Office	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr WYNANDS	Chef de cabinet to Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Items 8 and 9.3
Mr SKORPEN ANDERSSON	Ms MALMSTRÖM's Office	Item 9.1
Mr BOUBLIL	A member of Mr MOSCOVICI's staff	Item 8
Ms JUUL-JØRGENSEN	Chef de cabinet to Ms VESTAGER	Items 9.2 and 9.3
Mr BENGTSSON	A member of Ms VESTAGER's staff	Items 9.2 and 9.3
Ms VILA NUÑEZ	Secretariat-General	
Mr ESTEVA MOSSO	Deputy Director-General, DG Competition	Items 9.2 and 9.3

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2019) 2279/FINAL; SEC(2019) 2279)

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) 2279)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 14 January 2019.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2277TH AND 2278TH MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (19 DECEMBER 2018 AND 9 JANUARY 2019)

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2277th and 2278th meetings for a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2019) 1/2)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held on Friday 11 January 2019 (RCC(2019) 1/2).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. HORIZONTAL MATTERS

i) 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework – Trilogues

(point 1.1.1 of the IRG record)

- Space programme of the Union and the European Union Agency for the Space Programme, and repeal of Regulations (EU) 912/2010, (EU) 1285/2013, (EU) 377/2014 and Decision 541/2014/EU (Regulation) – SALINI report – 2018/0236 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 7/2.

- European Defence Fund (Regulation) – KRASNODEBSKI report – 2018/0254 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 18/2.

ii) 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework – January 2019 part-session

(point 1.1.2 of the IRG record)

Ordinary legislative procedure – First reading

- European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) (Regulation) – ARENA report – 2018/0202 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2019) 5 and /2.

- European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) (Regulation) – LOPE FONTAGNE report – 2018/0206 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2019) 9 and /2.

- ‘Fiscalis’ programme for cooperation in the field of taxation (Regulation) – GIEGOLD report – 2018/0233 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2019) 6.

- ‘Customs’ programme for cooperation in the field of customs (Regulation) – GRAPINI report – 2018/0232 (COD)

The Commission took note of SP(2019) 7.

- Establishment, as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, of the instrument for financial support for customs control equipment (Regulation) – POSPÍŠIL report – 2018/0258 (COD)

The Commission took note of SP(2019) 8.

- ‘Rights and Values’ programme (Regulation) – VALERO report – 2018/0207 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2019) 10.

- Protection of the Union's budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States (Regulation) – GARDIAZABAL RUBIAL & SARVAMAA report – 2018/0136 (COD)

The Commission took note of SP(2019) 11.

- Specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments (Regulation) – ARIMONT report – 2018/0199 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2019) 12.

Non-legislative procedure

- Nuclear decommissioning assistance programme of the Ignalina nuclear power plant in Lithuania (Ignalina programme), and repeal of

Council Regulation (EU) No 1369/2013 (Council Regulation) –
HARMS report – 2018/0251 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2019) 15.

- Dedicated financial programme for decommissioning of nuclear facilities and management of radioactive waste, and repeal of Council Regulation (Euratom) No 1368/2013 (Council Regulation) –
KOUROUMBASHEV report – 2018/0252 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2019) 18.

- European Instrument for Nuclear Safety complementing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument on the basis of the Euratom Treaty (Council Regulation) –
URUTCHEV report – 2018/0245 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2019) 16 and /2.

- Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for the period 2021-2025 complementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (Council Regulation) – KUMPULA-NATRI report – 2018/0226 (NLE)

The Commission took note of SP(2019) 17.

4.2. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

iii) Trilogues

(point 3.1 of the IRG record)

- Rules and procedures for compliance with and enforcement of Union harmonisation legislation on products, and amendment of Regulations (EU) 305/2011, (EU) 528/2012, (EU) 2016/424, (EU) 2016/425, (EU) 2016/426 and (EU) 2017/1369 of the

European Parliament and of the Council, and Directives 2004/42/EC, 2009/48/EC, 2010/35/EU, 2013/29/EU, 2013/53/EU, 2014/28/EU, 2014/29/EU, 2014/30/EU, 2014/31/EU, 2014/32/EU, 2014/33/EU, 2014/34/EU, 2014/35/EU, 2014/53/EU, 2014/68/EU and 2014/90/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (Regulation) – DANTI report – 2017/0353 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 8.

- Marketing and use of explosives precursors, amendment of Annex XVII to Regulation (EC) 1907/2006 and repeal of Regulation (EU) 98/2013 on the marketing and use of explosives precursors (Regulation) – MAMIKINS report – 2018/0103 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 14/2.

- Amendment of Regulation (EU) 1343/2011 on certain provisions for fishing in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Agreement area (Regulation) – ENGSTRÖM report – 2018/0069 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 9.

- Multiannual recovery plan for Mediterranean swordfish, and amendment of Regulations (EC) 1967/2006 and (EU) 2017/2107 (Regulation) – AFFRONTÉ report – 2018/0109 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 13/2.

- Transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain, amendment of Regulation (EC) 178/2002 [on general food law], Directive 2001/18/EC [on the deliberate release into the environment of GMOs], Regulation (EC) 1829/2003 [on GM food and feed], Regulation (EC) 1831/2003 [on feed additives], Regulation (EC) 2065/2003 [on

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smoke flavourings], Regulation (EC) 1935/2004 [on food contact materials], Regulation (EC) 1331/2008 [on the common authorisation procedure for food additives, food enzymes and food flavourings], Regulation (EC) 1107/2009 [on plant protection products] and Regulation (EU) 2015/2283 [on novel foods] (Regulation) – AYUSO report – 2018/0088 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 15/2.

- Emission performance standards for new passenger cars and for new light commercial vehicles as part of the Union's integrated approach to reduce CO₂ emissions from light-duty vehicles, and amendment of Regulation (EC) 715/2007 (Regulation – recast) – DALLI report – 2017/0293 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 22.

- Copyright in the Digital Single Market (Directive) – VOSS report – 2016/0280 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 24/2.

- Amendment of Regulation (EC) 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems and Regulation (EC) 987/2009 laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EC) 883/2004 (Regulation) – BALAS report – 2016/0397 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 25.

- European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (Regulation – recast) – PETERSEN report – 2016/0378 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 10.

- Internal market for electricity (Regulation – recast) – KARIŇŠ report – 2016/0379 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 11/2.

- Common rules for the internal market in electricity (Directive – recast) – KARINŠ report – 2016/0380 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 12.

iv) European Parliament dossiers – January 2019 part-session

(point 3.2 of the IRG Record)

Ordinary legislative procedure – First reading

- Apportionment of tariff rate quotas included in the WTO schedule of the Union following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union and amendment of Council Regulation (EC) 32/2000 (Regulation) – QUISTHOUDT-ROWOHL report – 2018/0158 (COD)

The Commission took note of SP(2019) 13, further to note SI(2018) 673/3, which it had already approved on 5 December 2018.

- Implementation of the safeguard clauses and other mechanisms allowing for the temporary withdrawal of preferences in certain agreements concluded between the European Union and certain third countries (Regulation) – FJELLNER report – 2018/0101 (COD)

The Commission took note of SP(2019) 14, further to note SI(2018) 628, which it had already approved on 28 November 2018.

Non-legislative procedure

- EU Emergency Travel Document and repeal of Decision 96/409/CFSP (Council Directive) – GÁL Report – 2018/0186 (CNS)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2019) 19.

Non-legislative procedure and own-initiative report

- Conclusion of the agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco on the amendment of Protocols 1 and 4 to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Kingdom of Morocco, of the other part (Council Decision) – SCHAAKE Reports (formerly LALONDE report) – 2018/0256 (NLE) / 2018/0256M (NLE)

The Commission took note of document SP(2019) 20.

v) Council dossiers

(point 3.3 of the IRG Record)

- The protection of persons reporting on breaches of Union law (Directive) – ROZIÈRE report – 2018/0106 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 20.

- Amendment of Regulation (EC) 469/2009 concerning the supplementary protection certificate for medicinal products (Regulation) – DE GRANDES PASCUAL report – 2018/0161 (COD)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2019) 26.

- Respect for private life and protection of personal data in electronic communications and repeal of Directive 2002/58/EC (Regulation) – SIPPEL report – 2017/0003 (COD)

The Commission took note of SI(2019) 27 and /2.

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- Signature, on behalf of the European Union and of the European Atomic Energy Community, and the conclusion of the Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community (Council Decisions) – 2018/0426 (NLE) and 2018/0427 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2019) 28.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

vi) Programming of Council business

(SI(2019) 29)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2019) 29 on the Council meetings between 17 and 30 January 2019.

4.4. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

vii) Action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its October II 2018 part-session

(point 5.6.2 of the IRG Record)

The Commission approved document SP(2019) 4/2 on the action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its October II 2018 part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2019) 42 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 7 and 11 January 2019.

5.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2019) 43 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 7 and 11 January 2019.

5.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2019) 44 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 7 and 11 January 2019 archived in Decide.

5.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2019) 45)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 14 and 18 January 2019.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2019) 46)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2019) 1)

6.1. DG INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT –
AMENDMENT OF ORGANISATION CHART AND APPOINTMENT OF
AN AD15 TEMPORARY PRINCIPAL ADVISER

On a proposal from Mr OETTINGER, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr MIMICA and Ms MOGHERINI and Ms BIENKOWSKA, the Commission decided:

- to approve the creation of a temporary post of principal adviser in the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, attached to the Deputy Director-General responsible for Directorates B, C and R and the Knowledge, Performance and Results Task Force; this post would be abolished upon departure of the job holder;
- to transfer to that post, in the interests of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Philippe BRUNET, an AD15 official, currently Director of the Space Policy, Copernicus and Defence Directorate of the Directorate-General for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs.

These decisions would take effect on Wednesday 16 January 2019.

6.2. DG EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORT AND CULTURE – APPOINTMENT
OF AN AD14/15 PRINCIPAL ADVISER
(PERS(2018) 62 TO /3)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Principal Adviser seconded, in the interest of the service, as Director of the Education, Audiovisual and

Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture for a term of four years (PERS(2018) 62).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 8 and 15 November 2018 (PERS(2018) 62/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to consider the applicant's qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr OETTINGER, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr NAVRACSICS and also Mr ANSIP, Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr KATAINEN, the Commission then decided to appoint Mr Roberto CARLINI to the post.

This decision would take effect on 16 February 2019.

6.3. DG EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORT AND CULTURE – AMENDMENT OF ORGANISATION CHART AND APPOINTMENT OF AN AD14 TEMPORARY PRINCIPAL ADVISER

On a proposal from Mr OETTINGER, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr NAVRACSICS and also Mr ANSIP, Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr KATAINEN, the Commission decided:

- to approve the creation of a temporary post of principal adviser at the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture; this post would be abolished on departure of the job holder.
- to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Brian HOLMES, an AD14 official, to the newly created temporary Principal Adviser post.

These decisions would take effect on 16 February 2019.

7. OTHER BUSINESS***LATEST DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE UNITED KINGDOM FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION***

The PRESIDENT briefly informed the Commissioners about the latest developments concerning the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union shortly before a vote on the issue was to take place in the UK parliament.

**8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL – TOWARDS A MORE EFFICIENT AND DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING IN EU TAX POLICY
(COM(2019) 8 TO /3; RCC(2019) 2)**

Mr MOSCOVICI presented the Communication he was submitting to the College for approval, entitled ‘Towards a more efficient and democratic decision-making in EU tax policy’.

He considered the Communication to be both modest in its legal form and ambitious in its substance, in that it raised important questions for the future of taxation in the EU and could help to significantly change the way in which the Union took decisions on tax matters. It recognised that taxation had become a key theme in European public debate and a global challenge for businesses and the EU Member States. For this reason the Commission wanted to ask the Member States to examine ways of making decision-making more efficient in this sensitive and strategic area, by making increasing use of qualified majority voting, a possibility created by the ‘passerelle clause’ in the Treaty on European Union.

He explained that activating this clause for certain tax questions would make it possible to use qualified majority voting within the framework of the powers laid down by the Treaty and fully respecting both the principle of subsidiarity and the

prerogatives of the Member States, while at the same time enhancing the role of the European Parliament in decision-making.

He also noted that the prerequisite for activating this clause was the unanimous agreement of the European Council after consulting national parliaments and with the approval of the European Parliament. The Communication accordingly sought to convince Member States that it was in their interests to move progressively to qualified majority voting for four simple but vital reasons.

Mr MOSCOVICI felt, first, that the move to qualified majority voting would reflect the direction of European history and that the time had come to learn from 60 years of action based on the Treaties. When they signed the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the Member States had decided to pool their sovereignty over certain aspects of taxation. Since then, however, they had been reluctant to consider extending the use of qualified majority voting, to the point where taxation remained one of the last bastions of unanimous voting, whereas qualified majority voting had now become the norm even in such sensitive areas as police and judicial cooperation.

Secondly, he felt that the move to qualified majority voting would make the European Union more efficient and more responsive at a time when its tax policy needed to be adapted and modernised. He pointed out that in the last four years, prompted by tax scandals uncovered by the press, the Commission had secured the adoption of no fewer than 14 directives, 8 of which related to combating tax evasion and tax avoidance. However, during the same period, 7 directives essential to the proper functioning of the internal market had remained blocked in the Council.

Unanimity was also an obstacle to decision-making in the EU's sectoral policies, as demonstrated by the Council's inability to adopt the Commission proposal on energy taxation, which the Commission had finally decided to withdraw in 2016. There was also a cost to this inability to take collective decisions because, in the absence of an agreement on intra-Community VAT, EUR 147 billion of such tax went uncollected each year. In addition, the introduction of a consolidated corporate tax base would deliver an increase in growth of 1.2 % in the Union.

Thirdly, he considered it an illusion to think that unanimous voting protected the tax sovereignty of the Member States, because in an integrated economic area the coordination of tax policies and cooperation between tax administrations was vital for collecting the taxes due to each Member State. He said that unanimous decision-making often prevented Member States from reaching agreement on the measures needed, or resulted in solutions that were less than optimal.

A fourth and final reason for using qualified majority voting more extensively was that it would reinforce the democratic legitimacy of the Union's tax decisions because of the shift to the ordinary legislative procedure which entailed the full involvement of the European Parliament.

For all of these fundamental reasons Mr MOSCOVICI believed the Commission should propose a communication to launch a debate with the Member States on the steps and means for moving progressively to qualified majority voting in various areas of EU tax policy.

He explained that the first step would apply to the most consensual matters, such as combating tax evasion and tax avoidance, while the second step would concern cases where tax measures served other policy objectives, such as environmental protection, health protection or action on climate change. The third step would relate to areas of taxation that were already largely harmonised, such as VAT and excise duties, but where efforts at modernisation were stalled because of unanimous decision-making. Finally, the last step would concern the other proposals needed to establish a genuine internal market in tax matters, such as the common consolidated corporate tax base and digital taxation. Because each step would be phased in over time, Member States would be asked to discuss the first two steps soon and to consider the two others over the longer term, by 2025. The timetable was indicative and the European Council had the last word on the timing and the fields where it might like to see a move to qualified majority voting.

Mr MOSCOVICI concluded his presentation by pointing out that, according to the latest Eurobarometer poll, 74 % of Europeans believed that combating tax evasion

and tax avoidance should be a priority for the European Union. On the eve of the European elections, the debate which the Commission Communication aimed to launch was an opportunity to show Europe's citizens that the Union could respond to this expectation.

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

- the impossibility of adopting important and high-quality initiatives when decisions were taken by unanimity, an inefficient form of decision-making in a Union of 28 Member States;
- the particular relevance of the debate proposed by the Commission in the context of the European electoral campaign, which should be one of the main fora in which citizens could debate the future of EU tax policy;
- the support already expressed by the Member States for the principle of the '*passerelle* clause' inserted into the Treaty on European Union with their full agreement, to allow a move to qualified majority voting in the field of taxation;
- the need for a debate on the merits of extending qualified majority voting to include the Union's social policy; this issue would in fact be the subject of a Commission communication in the weeks to come;
- more generally, the importance of a wider analysis of the notion of sovereignty and how it applied at different levels, matters which deserved an extensive public debate in the context of the forthcoming European elections;
- on the other hand, the question of whether such an initiative was appropriate in the middle of the election campaign, given the sensitivity of tax matters for the Member States and the fact this could be exploited by anti-European parties.

The PRESIDENT wound up the discussion by recalling that in his State of the Union addresses in September 2017 and 2018 he had announced the Commission's

intention of launching a debate on the need to make the decision-making process in tax policy more efficient and more democratic. He also noted that in the last campaign for the European elections in 2014 all of the parties took the same position on the problem of unanimity in the field of taxation.

He stressed once again that there were no plans for any major proposal in the field of taxation before the end of the current Commission's term of office and that the Communication therefore aimed to start a much-needed debate in a field that was essential for the efficiency of the EU's policies, to avoid the Union being hamstrung by unanimity. He also pointed out that the need to achieve consensus on all matters relating to taxation meant a great deal of work for the Member States.

The PRESIDENT said that ensuring tax justice within the Union meant fighting the injustice of unfair tax competition and ending tax tourism. For all of these reasons he believed the Member States should be made to face up to their responsibilities so that they contributed to building an ethical European future.

At the end of the discussion, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2019) 8/3, for transmission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments.

9. OTHER BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

9.1. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN TRADE RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES

The Commission reviewed the latest developments in trade relations between the European Union and the United States and agreed to the rapid adoption of two recommendations for Council Decisions authorising the opening of negotiations with the United States.

9.2. COMPETITION MATTERS

The Commission considered two merger cases under examination and held an initial discussion on the conditions for fair competition at global level.

9.3. SITUATION OF AN ITALIAN BANK

The Commission described the situation of the Italian bank *Banca Carige - Cassa di Risparmio di Genova e Imperia*.

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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 15.55.