



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2020) 2328 final

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

Brussels, 8 April 2020

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

**of the 2328th meeting of the Commission
held in Brussels
(Berlaymont)
on Wednesday 4 March 2020
(morning)**

PV(2020) 2328 final

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

EN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attendance list	4-7
1. AGENDAS (OJ(2020) 2328/FINAL; SEC(2020) 2328/FINAL)	10
2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET (RCC(2020) 2328)	10
3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2325 TH , 2326 TH AND 2327 TH COMMISSION MEETINGS (11, 19 AND 26 FEBRUARY 2020) (PV(2020) 2325)	11
4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (RCC(2020) 26/2)	11
4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS	11
4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL	12
4.3. OTHER BUSINESS.....	12
5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2020) 30).....	12
6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS.....	12
6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2020) 91 ET SEQ.).....	12
6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2020) 92 ET SEQ.)	13
6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2020) 93 ET SEQ.)	13
6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2020) 94 AND /2)	13
7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2020) 95 AND /2).....	13
7.1. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR- GENERAL BY TRANSFERRING AN AD16 OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS.....	14

7.2. DG FINANCIAL STABILITY, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND CAPITAL MARKETS UNION – APPOINTMENT OF AN AD15/16 DIRECTOR-GENERAL (PERS(2019) 112 TO /4).....	14
7.3. COMMISSION DECISION ON THE PURSUIT BY A FORMER MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION OF A PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY AFTER LEAVING OFFICE (C(2020) 9007)	15
8. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ESTABLISHING THE FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING CLIMATE NEUTRALITY AND AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2018/1999 (EUROPEAN CLIMATE LAW) (COM(2020) 80 TO /3; INFO(2020) 4; RCC(2020) 33).....	15
9. JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY WITH AFRICA (JOIN(2020) 4 TO /4; RCC(2020) 34).....	21
10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – A UNION OF EQUALITY – GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY 2020- 2025 (COM(2020) 152 AND /2; RCC(2020) 32).....	25
11. OTHER BUSINESS.....	33
11.1. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE PROPOSED CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'VOTERS WITHOUT BORDERS, FULL POLITICAL RIGHTS FOR CITIZENS OF THE UNION' (C(2020)1298).....	33
11.2. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING THE EUROPEAN UNION'S RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) EPIDEMIC (INFO(2020) 7)	34
11.3. SITUATION OF MIGRANTS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN	38

Single sitting: Wednesday 4 March 2020 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.24 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President	Items 1 to 11 (in part)
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Ms GABRIEL	Member	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Mr SCHMIT	Member	
Mr GENTILONI	Member	Items 1 to 11 (in part)
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	Items 1 to 11 (in part)
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	Items 1 to 11 (in part)
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	

Absent:

Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES

High Representative/
Vice-President

Mr HOGAN

Member

Mr LENARČIČ

Member

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

Ms BERGENFELT	A member of Mr BORRELL's staff
Ms SIRACUSA	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr HOGAN
Mr MALGAJ	Chef de cabinet to Mr LENARČIČ

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr ROMERO REQUENA	Director-General, Legal Service	
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr MAMER	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Mr LEARDINI	Deputy Secretary-General	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Ms GAUER	Deputy Secretary-General	Items 1 to 10
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 1 to 9, and 11 (in part)
Mr FLOSDORFF	Executive Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr VANDENBERGHE	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 1 to 8
Mr USTUBS	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Item 9
Ms CABRAL	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 9 (in part) and 10
Mr HAUGAARD	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 10 (in part) and 11 (in part)
Ms HILI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 10 (in part) and 11
Ms VILA NUÑEZ	Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr SAMSOM	Chef de cabinet to Mr TIMMERMANS	Items 1 to 8
Ms NIKOLAY	Chef de cabinet to Ms JOUROVÁ	Item 10 (in part)
Ms SPANOU	Chef de cabinet to Mr SCHINAS	Item 11 (in part)
Mr ROSSIDES	Chef de cabinet to Ms KYRIAKIDES	Item 11 (in part)
Mr KERR	Chef de cabinet to Ms DALLI	Item 10

Mr LAHTI	Chef de cabinet to Ms URPILAINEN	Item 9
Mr VALERO LADRÓN	Secretariat-General	
Ms SPINANT	Commission Spokesperson's Service	Items 1 to 11 (in part)
Mr DOENS	Director-General, DG International Cooperation and Development	Item 9

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

Before opening the sitting, the PRESIDENT invited Greta Thunberg¹ to share her views on combating climate change with the Commission.

Greta Thunberg thanked the College for inviting her and said she was honoured to speak on the day when the Commission's proposal for the first ever European climate law was adopted.

However, she expressed doubts as to whether this law would really make it possible to limit global warming to less than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, as provided for in the Paris Agreement on climate change. Based on figures from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), she pointed out that if carbon dioxide emissions remained constant the already limited window of opportunity for meeting that target would close within eight years.

In these circumstances it was not appropriate, in her view, to set targets for 2030 or 2050 and those targets were, in any case, too modest. However, she was convinced of the vital need to set annual targets starting in 2020, to avoid passing the point of no return and have some hope of ensuring a future for young generations. She also insisted that a radical change of economic model was needed immediately aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, particularly given that the negative emission technologies needed to achieve the target, where they existed at all, could not be deployed on a large enough scale.

Finally she urged the Commission to ensure fairness and climate justice in the implementation of the Climate Law.

Mr TIMMERMANS thanked Greta Thunberg for the key role she had played in raising awareness of the climate emergency, an emergency which had led the European Union to take unprecedented measures, starting with its decision to set the target of achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

¹ Greta Thunberg was accompanied by Erika Jangen, who also attended the discussion with the Commission.

He stressed both the ambitious nature of the target, given the scale of the transformation required, and the binding nature that would be conferred on it by including it in the Climate Law that the Commission was presenting that day.

He explained that the law aimed to create the framework to enable the Union to keep to its goal of climate neutrality, by closely monitoring progress, taking appropriate corrective measures and, if necessary, adjusting the course adopted, at Union or Member State level.

While not underestimating the challenge they faced, Mr TIMMERMANS felt that it was up to political leaders to show people the direction to take in order to limit the most devastating effects of global warming and to support them in the transition that had to be made. Encouraged by practical examples, particularly on the African continent, he was confident that there was a rich potential that could be tapped to rapidly develop technologies to bring about a fundamental transformation. On this point he also stressed that the world's most developed regions had a responsibility to help the rest of the planet along the path to climate transition, a role the Commission intended to embrace wholeheartedly.

He thanked Greta Thunberg for calling for vigilance to ensure that we never lost sight of the absolute priority of the climate emergency.

Mr SINKEVIČIUS said that, by making climate neutrality a binding objective, the Union was guarding against the risks of slippage and giving economic operators the predictability that would incentivise them to engage actively and confidently in the green transition. He added that it was also essential to encourage ordinary citizens to participate in this great project for the future. In this connection he highlighted the importance of the European Climate Pact proposed by the Commission and praised Greta Thunberg's role in stimulating debate, inspiring commitment and fostering new ideas.

In the course of the brief discussion that followed, the Commission warmly thanked Greta Thunberg for her visit, recognising the undoubted influence she and her

movement were having on decision-makers, not through the ballot box but by demonstrating the potential of democratic renewal through genuine collective mobilisation.

The PRESIDENT concluded by reiterating the Commission's determination to make action to combat global warming a priority and to support the green and digital transitions. She recognised that this was in part thanks to the relentless pressure exerted by Greta Thunberg and the young people she had mobilised over the past months. Keeping the attention of the whole world focused on this priority, regardless of other crises emerging elsewhere, had been a tremendous achievement and she thanked her for it.

The Commission applauded.

* * *

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2020) 2328/FINAL; SEC(2020) 2328/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(2020) 2328)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 2 March 2020.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2325TH, 2326TH AND 2327TH COMMISSION MEETINGS (11, 19 AND 26 FEBRUARY 2020)
(PV(2020) 2325)**

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2325th meeting, and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2326th and 2327th meetings until a later meeting.

**4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
(RCC(2020) 26/2)**

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held on Friday 28 February 2020 (RCC(2020) 26/2).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

i) European Parliament dossier – March 2020 part-session
(point 3.2 of the IRG record)

Special legislative procedure

- Automated data exchange with regard to dactyloscopic data in the United Kingdom (Council Implementing Decision) – LÓPEZ AGUILAR report – 2019/0819 (CNS)

The Commission took note of document SP(2020) 87.

ii) Council dossier
(point 3.3 of the IRG record)

- Implementation of enhanced cooperation in the area of financial transaction tax (Council Directive) – ex-PODIMATA report – 2013/0045 (CNS)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 69/2.

4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

iii) Programming of Council business

(SI(2020) 75)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2020) 75 on the Council meetings between 5 and 18 March 2020.

4.3. OTHER BUSINESS

iv) Use of lump sums for the EU support projects under the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (Regulation (EU) 2018/1092 of 18 July 2018)

(point 7.2 of the IRG record)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2020) 54.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2020) 30)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2020) 30 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 26 February 2020.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2020) 91 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 24 and 28 February 2020.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2020) 92 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 24 and 28 February 2020.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2020) 93 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 February 2020 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES
(SEC(2020) 94 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 2 and 6 March 2020.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2020) 95 AND /2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2020) 12)

At the PRESIDENT's invitation, Mr HAHN presented two proposals for decision concerning the senior management of the institution, which were directly submitted to the College for adoption.

Mr HAHN explained that the first proposal was to appoint Mr John BERRIGAN, currently Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Financial

Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, to the post of Director-General of that Directorate-General with immediate effect.

He added that there was also a proposal to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Ms Gertrud INGESTAD, currently Director-General of the Directorate-General for Informatics, to the post of Director-General of Human Resources and Security. He specified that the decision would take effect on 16 March 2020.

Mr HAHN highlighted the considerable skills, excellent career and recognised expertise of both Mr John BERRIGAN and Ms Gertrud INGESTAD, who would be valuable assets in their new posts.

7.1. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR-GENERAL BY TRANSFERRING AN AD16 OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Ms Gertrud INGESTAD, currently Director-General of the Directorate-General for Informatics, to the post of Director-General of Human Resources and Security.

This decision would take effect on 16 March 2020.

7.2. DG FINANCIAL STABILITY, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND CAPITAL MARKETS UNION – APPOINTMENT OF AN AD15/16 DIRECTOR-GENERAL (PERS(2019) 112 TO /4)

The Commission had before it an application under Article 29(1)(a)(i) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director-General of the Directorate-General for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union (PERS(2019) 112 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 24 January and 6 February 2020 (PERS(2019) 112/3 and /4).

The Commission proceeded to consider the applicant's qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and having consulted Mr DOMBROVSKIS, the Commission decided to appoint Mr John BERRIGAN, currently Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union to the post of Director-General of that Directorate-General.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**7.3. COMMISSION DECISION ON THE PURSUIT BY A FORMER MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION OF A PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY AFTER LEAVING OFFICE
(C(2020) 9007)**

The Commission adopted the Decision set out in C(2020) 9007.

The Commission specifically decided that the professional activities envisaged by Sir Julian KING after leaving office as a Member of the Commission were compatible with Article 245(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and with the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, subject to certain specific conditions and obligations.

**8. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ESTABLISHING THE FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING CLIMATE NEUTRALITY AND AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2018/1999 (EUROPEAN CLIMATE LAW)
(COM(2020) 80 TO /3; INFO(2020) 4; RCC(2020) 33)**

At the PRESIDENT's invitation, Mr TIMMERMANS and Mr SINKEVIČIUS presented the proposal for a European Climate Law to the Commission for approval.

Mr TIMMERMANS pointed out that this proposal – a cornerstone of the European Green Deal – converted the Union’s political commitment to achieving climate neutrality by 2050 into a legally binding objective enshrined in the *acquis*.

He explained that the proposed law established a framework to monitor the progress made over three decades and to adapt the measures taken as a result at Union level and in the Member States on the basis of existing systems. He also presented a solid methodology for achieving the objective set for 2050, which would strengthen the credibility of the Union’s political commitment.

He said that by September 2020 the Commission would propose a new greenhouse gas emissions reduction target for 2030 in the light of the results of the comprehensive impact assessment that was due to be carried out. He added that between 2030 and 2050, the Commission would be given the responsibility for setting out the trajectory using delegated acts. Based on scrupulous follow-up of the progress made, it would be possible to make readjustments in order to stay on course for the objective of climate neutrality.

He also highlighted the fact that this law sought to clarify the interaction between this framework and other instruments, in particular the European Semester of economic and budgetary policy coordination in the Union, governance of the Energy Union and taxonomy, in order to integrate sustainable development considerations into all the Commission's policies and initiatives without duplication.

Finally, Mr TIMMERMANS stressed that all the Commission’s departments had been involved in the preparation of this proposal for a regulation and had worked actively on it, for which he was extremely grateful.

Mr SINKEVIČIUS pointed out that the objective of climate neutrality by 2050 was a collective objective that required commitment from everyone as it was the last chance to stem global warming before we reached the point of no return. This was the reason for the invitation to each Member of the Commission to set out along the path towards climate neutrality and to contribute to it within their area of

responsibility.

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

General considerations

- commendation of this legislative proposal that put the Commission at the forefront and laid the foundations for future generations;
- hope that this climate law would indeed deliver certainty and clear direction without adding an additional level of constraints to the Union’s climate policy;
- the advantage of presenting this proposal, on the one hand, at the beginning of the term of office, thereby reaffirming the Commission’s determination to achieve the objectives set out in the Paris Agreement on climate change and, on the other hand, just before the presentation of the Union’s industrial strategy which would be closely linked to the European Green Deal;
- the fact that the new European Climate Law provided a clear direction for citizens, set a firm goal of climate neutrality for decision-makers and ensured the transparency investors and economic operators needed;

The inclusive nature of the process

- the need for the Member States, economic operators, civil society and citizens to take ownership of the transition to climate neutrality – an essential prerequisite for achieving it;
- the importance of actively involving the Member States in the transition so that they would draw up their national plans with a view to achieving the objective of climate neutrality, which once legally binding would be non-negotiable;
- the duty to inform citizens of the consequences, particularly the financial ones, of the proposed law, and a reminder of the need to ensure a fair transition that

left no one behind, starting with women, who were more severely affected by the direct and indirect consequences of the climate emergency than men;

- the inclusive nature of the transition brought about by the objective pursued, and the support that the digital strategy for Europe could provide, particularly in the training and employment markets;

The Union's leading role on the international stage

- the reaffirmation of the Union's role in leading and setting an example on the international stage; hence an invitation to promote the first proposal for a Climate Law amongst the Union's partner countries through climate diplomacy;
- a call for a degree of vigilance, nevertheless, as to the risks of carbon leakage and job losses; the consequent importance of working towards a possible border adjustment mechanism to guarantee a level playing field, which would reassure economic operators, for whom this was a major concern;
- the advisability of drawing attention to the effect that the accession of the Western Balkans to the Union – a plausible prospect by 2050 – could have on achieving the objective of climate neutrality;
- the counter-productive nature of a policy subjecting countries that were strongly dependent on carbon to the ambitions of the European Green Deal without interim stages;

The planned framework and method

- the importance of reviewing the interim objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and of addressing the work still to be done to make progress towards the objective pursued, particularly revision of the Union's emissions trading system;
- the support for the proposed dynamic approach, on the basis of regular assessment of the progress made;

- a warning, nonetheless, against the reservations that the proposal to revise the path to be followed between 2030 and 2050 by means of delegated acts could come up against in the course of negotiations with the co-legislators, given its eminently political nature; a recommendation, therefore, clearly to explain the reasons for using this instrument;
- announcement of the launch that day, in parallel with the adoption of the proposal for a European Climate Law, of the initial impact assessments on the carbon border adjustment mechanism and on the revision of the Energy Tax Directive; mention of the evidence that these concomitant procedures provided of a global approach entirely focused on achieving climate neutrality and of the credibility of the Commission's proposal;
- the concern to ensure consistency between the European Climate Law and the country-specific recommendations issued during the European Semester of economic and budget policy coordination in the EU, so that they reinforced one another;
- a mention of taxonomy as an important method for developing an internal market for renewable energy;
- an invitation to identify in advance, using forecasting tools, the new jobs that would emerge with the climate transition, in order to establish the conditions for development of the skills required;

Communication

- a recommendation that special attention be given to communication, so that all sections of society and of the economy would take ownership of the Union's climate ambitions;
- the benefit of consulting the factsheets provided to the Members of the Commission to respond to the criticism and resistance that the European Climate Law would encounter in view of the profound change it would bring about.

Mr SINKEVIČIUS reminded the meeting of the importance of the future European Climate Pact, on which the Commission was that day opening a wide-ranging twelve-week public consultation, which would foster the desired collaborative and participatory approach by enabling citizens and stakeholders to express and discuss their views, and to take part in designing new climate-related measures, in implementing activities on the ground, and in presenting solutions that could be reproduced elsewhere. This public consultation would also provide a useful forum for raising specific sectoral or territorial matters. Finally, all the contributions submitted within this framework would influence the preparatory work of the United Nations Climate Change Conference to be held in Glasgow in November (COP26).

Mr TIMMERMANS noted that by providing predictability and a stable objective over three decades, the law proposed that day was particularly innovative and met economic operators' need for certainty.

He highlighted the leverage that this could also provide with regard to third countries. The carbon border adjustment mechanism was essential to preserving the Union's competitiveness if third countries did not engage in the climate transition at the same pace as the Union.

All the Commission's future proposals would be subject to an impact assessment with the results made public, such that no one could be unaware of the effects of the changes brought about by the climate neutrality objective.

The PRESIDENT returned to the issue of the Western Balkans, which she considered required special examination.

To fine-tune the types of skills to be developed to adapt to the new profiles that would be required for the Union's climate transition, she recommended referring to the well-documented studies published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and by national employment agencies.

The PRESIDENT concluded the debate by warmly thanking all the departments that

had contributed to drawing up this legislative proposal and commending them on the significant task that they had accomplished. The proposal for the first European Climate Law placed the Commission at the forefront of the fight against climate change; the College should show that they were proud of this. Criticism was to be expected, but she stressed that there could be no justification for sitting on the sidelines of the climate emergency and doing nothing about it.

The Commission adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2020) 80/3 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

It also took note of the information in INFO(2020) 4.

**9. JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL – TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY WITH
AFRICA
(JOIN(2020) 4 TO /4; RCC(2020) 34)**

In the absence of Mr BORRELL, who was currently on a visit to Turkey, the PRESIDENT invited Ms URPILAINEN to present the joint communication entitled ‘Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa’, submitted for approval by the College that day.

Ms URPILAINEN recalled that the PRESIDENT’s very first official visit outside the Union, to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 7 December 2019, just a few days after her investiture, had launched the development process for this strategy. The process had also drawn on the meeting between the College and the African Union Commission, held in Addis Ababa on 27 February. She stressed that this initiative would help reaffirm the importance of the relationship between Europe and Africa and lay the groundwork for it to be reshaped from a ‘donor-beneficiary’ approach to peer-to-peer cooperation.

She welcomed the positive atmosphere that had characterised the discussions between the Commission and the African Union, which had touched upon crucial matters such as growth, employment, the green transition, digital issues, peace and security, governance, mobility and migration.

On the EU side, Member States had been regularly consulted on the work undertaken, such as two Foreign Affairs Council meetings held since last December, and a civil society consultation had also been arranged with the aim of gathering contributions with a view to the modernisation of relations between Europe and Africa. This inclusive approach would continue in the coming months up to the EU-AU Summit in October 2020.

Turning to the content of the comprehensive strategy with Africa, Ms URPIILAINEN explained that it addressed the need to adapt the cooperation developed over several decades to new realities with a view to grasping opportunities and tackling emerging threats together. She referred to demographic change in Africa, where 60-70% of the population was under thirty, which made the continent one of the world's most dynamic regions but also raised significant challenges. She also noted that the EU Member States were taking a close interest in Africa, going as far as devising national cooperation strategies, which raised the issue of consistency with the strategy devised jointly by the EU and the African Union.

In political terms, while members of the public understood the importance of cooperation with Africa for development purposes, they also expected the Union to address the root causes of migration flows to Europe.

Ms URPIILAINEN explained that the communication presented that day would serve as a foundation for consulting members of the public, stakeholders, and above all, the EU's African partners. In conclusion, she invited each member of the College to become personally involved in the process in order to initiate dialogue with the African partners in their respective fields of responsibility.

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

- the closeness of the economic, political, historic and cultural ties that linked Africa with Europe and should allow the latter to play a key role in modernising relations between the two continents and in establishing shared priorities to meet global challenges;
- the demographic dynamism of Africa, whose young population opened up huge opportunities while also constituting a formidable challenge;
- the key role that would be played in the future of Africa by education and research and the opportunities that would be created by enhanced cooperation in these areas with the EU thanks to the Erasmus+ programme and Marie Curie actions;
- the pool of expertise in Africa, particularly in science and the digital sector; hence the value of paying particular attention to the innovation policies of African countries and the digitisation of their economies;
- the fundamental importance of developing transport infrastructure in Africa, which would require considerable investment and EU support so that African nations could access the funding it could offer them;
- the importance of establishing common standards to facilitate the development of transport networks that would be durable and comply with climate change targets;
- African countries' considerable potential in terms of renewable energy sources and helping to combating climate change in partnership with the European Union;
- a dialogue should be established with the African Union on the rule of law, particularly with regard to the introduction of transitional justice mechanisms

following conflicts, and pilot initiatives should be envisaged with the aim of developing tools suited to that purpose;

- the desirability of working in partnership with the African Union to devise a migration and mobility policy that would take into account the interests of both parties and be mutually beneficial;
- the full support of the College for the promotion of gender equality as part of the overall strategy, supported by investment specifically targeting the role of women in the economy and society;
- the attention to be paid to protecting the rights of children and lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual people;
- the value of taking into consideration these numerous shared interests into account and incorporating them into a long-term vision favouring a regional approach to relations between the African Union and the EU;
- the need to take account of the historical links between Africa and Europe, the perception of Europe among African people, and the specific nature of the relationship as compared with the more recent relationships developed with certain African countries by China and the United States;
- a reminder that for every euro invested by China and the United States, the European Union and its Member States invested 5 euros in Africa;
- the need, therefore, for the EU to be able to draw political capital from its relationship with Africa commensurate with its investment in the continent, and to place conditions on the financial support it awarded.

Ms URPILAINEN wound up the discussion by noting that, in addition to the United States and China, there were now a large number of stakeholders in Africa, none of which had yet envisaged the joint definition of a partnership covering all political fields. She therefore highlighted the special nature of the approach

proposed that day and encouraged the members of the College to contribute to delivering on its promises. To this end, she added that her cabinet would contact other cabinets and ask them to identify specific follow-up actions in the framework of implementation of the strategy.

On a proposal from the PRESIDENT, the Commission agreed that the communication currently set out in JOIN(2020) 4/4 would be formally adopted by finalisation written procedure, the deadline for which was set at 10.00 on Thursday 9 March 2020 (PE/2020/1246).

10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – A UNION OF EQUALITY – GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY 2020-2025 (COM(2020) 152 AND /2; RCC(2020) 32)

The PRESIDENT opened the debate on the gender equality strategy 2020-2025, tabled that day with the general title ‘A Union of Equality’, and began by highlighting the originality and ambition of the strategy.

As an illustration of women’s progress towards equality over the last few decades, she reminded the College that, when she herself was born, women needed to have their husband’s permission in order to work. When she obtained her degree in medicine, women were banned from forming football teams. When her first child was born, while she herself was practising medicine in a hospital, some people presumed that she would waste her many years of study and did not consider it was possible to combine a family and a career.

She gave these examples as they showed how much progress had been made. However, she had observed a backwards trend in women’s emancipation over the last fifteen years or so. She was worried by the significant increase in the number of women currently forced to wear the veil in the European Union, the decrease in the

number of female MPs in national and regional parliaments and the number of women in elected positions of all kinds, as well as the very low number of female heads of large companies or administrations.

The PRESIDENT therefore considered that presenting a strategy designed to improve gender equality was not only timely but also more necessary than ever.

Ms JOUROVÁ echoed these sentiments, stating that there was still work to be done to move towards full gender equality, while acknowledging that the European Union was, nevertheless, a good place for women compared to other parts of the world.

She noted that encouraging gender equality was not only a question of fairness, since equality was a fundamental right in the EU, but was also driven by economic considerations, given the declining population. That was why the strategy proposed emphasised those two aspects.

She gave a quick overview of the current structural imbalances handed down from previous generations. On average, women still earned 16% less than men – with pay gaps of between 2 and 32% depending on the Member State – despite there being more female university graduates than male graduates. Women also received pensions that were 30% lower due to career breaks.

In addition to these inequalities, another serious matter requiring concerted action was the issue of violence towards women, which one third of women in Europe still experienced simply because of their gender. She reminded the College that the legislation proposed by the Commission on this fundamental issue had not been adopted because the EU had not signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, the so-called Istanbul Convention, as certain Member States continued to oppose the idea.

Ms JOUROVÁ explained that the gender equality strategy was a roadmap to follow to ensure that, during the current Commission's term of office, it tabled proposals to tackle violence against women and to address women's participation in the labour

market and in decision-making, by presenting new legally binding initiatives, for example on wage transparency. She considered that legislation was only part of the solution to the current problems, but that it was an indispensable part.

She added that the Commission would mainstream gender equality in all of its policies, including the green and digital transitions.

Lastly, she stressed that the Commission wanted to set an example by continuing its efforts, begun during the previous Commission's term of office, to ensure that half of the Commission's management posts at all levels were filled by women by the end of 2024; this figure currently stood at 41%. She reminded the College that the PRESIDENT was the Commission's first female president.

Ms DALLI welcomed the fact that the PRESIDENT had made gender equality one of her priorities for the next five years, as indicated in her political guidelines, and that she had decided to present this strategy during the first 100 days of the current Commission's term of office. She felt that there was a real collective commitment to the cause and thanked all the members of the College and their cabinets, who had demonstrated their willingness to help achieve this aim through their respective policies.

She proposed that the Commission use the current momentum to move forward decisively, by heeding the calls from the Member States, the European Parliament and civil society organisations.

That was why the Commission was presenting a vision for Europe in which women and men would have the freedom to thrive from a very early age, as well as an ambitious strategy that would tackle head-on the barriers, discrimination and violence that women still faced.

She explained that the gender equality strategy included a series of proposed measures with the aim of (i) helping to eradicate sexually motivated and gender-based violence, (ii) combating gender stereotypes, (iii) addressing gender inequalities in the labour market, (iv) achieving equal participation by men and

women in the various sectors of the economy, (v) addressing pay and pension gaps, (vi) reducing disparities between men and women in terms of dealing with family responsibilities, (vii) achieving a gender balance in decision-making and in political bodies, (viii) including an equality dimension in the EU's financing and budgetary guarantee instruments.

She added that the strategy would be implemented in a coherent manner within the EU and in external relations.

Lastly, she pointed out that the process, which was about to be launched, would lead to an annual progress review.

Ms DALLI highlighted some of the new features of the strategy, such as the inclusion of gender equality issues in different policies (gender mainstreaming), on the one hand, and an awareness of the crossover between gender-based discrimination and other types of discrimination (intersectionality), on the other hand.

Lastly, she referred to some of the measures that the Commission planned to implement over the next five years. She mentioned the measures that would be presented at the end of 2020 to lay the groundwork for binding wage transparency measures, with the launch of a public consultation on the issue. She also referred to the implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive, as well as other laws designed to close the gap between men and women and tackle discrimination in the labour market. Other measures would involve finalising the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention or, if appropriate, proposing alternative legislative measures to prevent and combat specific gender-based forms of violence. She also announced an initiative to extend the scope of criminal offences to cover these specific forms of abuse, a legislative act on digital services that would set out online platforms' responsibility for content shared by their users, as well as a communications campaign throughout the EU to counter gender-based stereotypes. Lastly, she explained that the Commission would do everything in its power to encourage the

adoption of the 2012 proposal for a Directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies.

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

- the full support of the College for the gender equality strategy, which some considered to be the goal of a generation in the same way as the fight against climate change;
- the excellent roadmap provided by the strategy for the next five years, on the initiative of the PRESIDENT;
- the importance of implementing the strategy, in the light of the current backwards trend;
- its ambition and appropriateness, a few days before International Women's Day on 8 March, which must be for the EU as important as its founding date of 9 May, Europe Day; the invitation to give visibility to a Commission online exhibition to promote four European women;
- the importance of the strategy also in terms of major demographic trends in the Union;
- the call to all Members of the Commission to help implement the strategy and to participate in the actions on 8 March;
- the value of a dynamic diversity in European society, hence the need to unlock the major potential still untapped, the participation of women;
- the recognition of resources which have proved to be effective in promoting equality between men and women, namely legislation, quotas and wage transparency;

- the need to increase, through the Union’s education and research programmes, the proportion of women in science and in information and communication technologies;
- the suggestion to step up efforts to encourage the adoption of the Directive on improving the gender balance on company boards;
- the need to make the balance between professional and private life a reality in order to empower women, and also to encourage support for young families;
- the invitation to persuade the Member States that still had reservations to approve the Union’s accession to the Istanbul Convention; the existing alternative legislative means to achieve the same effects, such as the Victims’ Rights Directive;
- the ideological nature of these reservations, on the part of movements that sought to restore or justify a ‘natural’ order in favour of men; a reminder that whatever vision a society may have of the family, domestic violence and violence against women could not be tolerated and prosecution of such crimes had to be increased;
- the worrying realisation that this trend was part of a broader context of reaction to the achievements of the fight against discrimination and racism; the very serious concern about the instrumentalisation of LGBTBI (lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and intersex) people in certain Member States;
- the action the Union must take to put an end to these breaches of fundamental rights;
- the attention to be paid, in the context of migration policy, to women in so-called hotspots, who were the most vulnerable, and the need to train doctors about the sexual mutilation that they increasingly saw, especially in migrant women of African origin;

- in the context of protecting women against domestic violence, the need to consider the response to be given to the concept of institutional violence, for example when, as a result of court rulings relating to the custody of children, women who were victims of violence by their spouse had to return to their homes, where they were again exposed to the risk of aggression;
- the initiatives taken to combat new online violence against women;
- the new barriers to equality between men and women caused by voice recognition and artificial intelligence – technologies which, at the present stage, reproduced gender and racial bias; the role of audio-visual regulators in combating gender stereotypes in legislation, advertising, video games, etc.;
- the good results shown by the digital scoreboard for the situation in the Member States;
- the leading role of the European Union in the movement towards gender equality for other continents and other cultures;
- the value of the example the Commission wished to set and the observation that it was on course to achieve its objective of parity in the representation of women in head-of-unit posts.

Ms JOUROVÁ thanked the College for its clear support on this complex subject, which combined a cultural dimension, referring to the concept of identity, and an economic dimension, as had been emphasised.

Although legislation was an effective way of providing responses and punishing infringements in the economic sphere, she acknowledged that it was less suitable in the cultural sphere, where it was not about dictating to citizens how they should live but rather offering them choices, as could be done by legislating on work-life balance.

She added that gender equality policies should also provide for the financial means to implement them. She did not see it as a cost, but an investment in the future, especially in the priority area of education. She also recommended continuing to allocate budgetary resources to social services under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).

Ms DALLI thanked the College for the fruitful debate and took up some of the issues raised.

As regards the cultural dimension of the campaign for equality between men and women, she acknowledged that this was the most difficult to move forward, but she also stressed in the clearest of terms that violence against women could in no way be blamed on any culture and constituted a violation of fundamental rights.

She also referred to the argument that the strategy proposed by the Commission did not address the issue of institutional violence. She replied that, on the one hand, the strategy was intended to be comprehensive, and, on the other, that it was precisely to cover the institutional dimension that the European Union should accede to the Istanbul Convention.

Finally, she pointed out that the EU's planned efforts to promote access for women to scientific professions were also part of a worldwide awareness-raising campaign, as the United Nations had established the International Day of Women and Girls in Science on 11 February each year.

On a proposal from the PRESIDENT, the Commission agreed that the communication currently set out in COM(2020) 152/2 would be formally adopted by finalisation written procedure, the deadline for which was set at 10.00 on Thursday 5 March 2020 (PE/2020/1205).

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE PROPOSED CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'VOTERS WITHOUT BORDERS, FULL POLITICAL RIGHTS FOR CITIZENS OF THE UNION' (C(2020)1298)

Ms JOUROVÁ presented a draft decision for approval by the Commission on the registration of a European citizens' initiative entitled 'VOTERS WITHOUT BORDERS, Full political rights for EU citizens', which essentially called on the Commission to adopt reforms to strengthen the existing rights of EU citizens to vote and stand in European and municipal elections in their country of residence, and new legislation to extend those rights to regional and national elections and referendums.

She pointed out that the College's task that day was to decide only on the registration of the proposal and not at that stage to analyse its substance or political advisability.

She explained that the conditions for registering European citizens' initiatives were set out in Article 6(3) of Regulation (EU) 2019/788 of 17 April 2019 on the European citizens' initiative, which, since 1 January 2020, had repealed and replaced Regulation (EU) 211/2011. One of these conditions was the requirement that no part of the citizens' initiative should manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for an EU legal act for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

The request by the proponents of the initiative in question fell within the Commission's powers to propose legal acts for the purpose of implementing the Treaties, in particular Articles 22, 25(2) and 79(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

If, within a period of twelve months, the proposal gathered the minimum support required, in other words at least one million signatures from citizens

of at least a quarter of the Member States, the Commission would then analyse the substance of the proposal.

In accordance with the new Regulation (EU) 2019/788, proposed initiatives registered now benefited from more user-friendly arrangements for organisers to gather support and easier access for European citizens. The Commission would have a period of six months to submit its reasoned decision whether or not to take any action.

In accordance with Article 6(3) of Regulation (EU) 2019/788 of 17 April 2019 on the European citizens' initiative, which had repealed and replaced since 1 January 2020 Regulation (EU) 211/2011, the Commission confirmed that the conditions for registration of the proposed citizens' initiative entitled 'VOTERS WITHOUT BORDERS, Full political rights for EU citizens' were fulfilled.

Following this presentation, the Commission adopted the implementing decision on the registration of the initiative, as set out in C(2020) 1298.

The Commission authorised Ms JOUROVÁ to sign the decision on its behalf, to notify it, in the authentic language (English), to the organisers of the initiative, and to publish it, for information, in the Official Journal of the European Union.

The Commission also agreed to transmit the decision for information to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

**11.2. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING THE EUROPEAN UNION'S RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) EPIDEMIC
(INFO(2020) 7)**

The PRESIDENT gave the floor to Ms KYRIAKIDES to take stock of the

COVID-19 outbreak in the EU and worldwide, as well as the measures put in place by the Member States in coordination with the Commission.

Ms KYRIAKIDES started by pointing out that COVID-19 not only had an impact on health, but could also affect all economic sectors and policies, which was why the Union and the Member States were working on responses and solutions to minimise all possible repercussions of the epidemic.

The situation was evolving from one hour to the next, with confirmed cases of infection increasing rapidly in 20 Member States, according to the figures from 3 March. In the majority of cases, the priority was to stem the spread of the virus; a policy which was bearing fruit, as the spread was slowing down, but which also had its limits, since it was not succeeding in bringing it to an end.

It was now advisable to prepare for a substantial increase in the number of countries affected by internal transmission of the virus.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) had published its latest risk assessment on 2 March and presented five scenarios, which Member States were already in or had to prepare for. At present, the risk of infection with COVID-19 for people living in the Union was thus considered to be moderate to high. Most Member States were in scenario 1, where virus transmission was localised and limited, with an emphasis on early detection to prevent or delay the spread of infection.

However, an increasing number of Member States would move to scenario 2, as was already the case in Italy, where the virus was transmitted locally from person to person.

She reported on her contacts in recent days with almost all EU health ministers to discuss the situation, the update of the risk assessment, their state of preparedness, their coordination with the European response and the preparation of the extraordinary meeting of the Employment, Social Policy,

Health and Consumer Affairs Council on 6 March. In her view, at this stage the Member States should start considering activating their preparedness and contingency plans to deal with a pandemic, and the Commission should be ready to support them in this new phase.

In view of the extraordinary meeting referred to, Ms KYRIAKIDES said that she would listen to health ministers to find out where they felt they needed additional support, and that this would then have to be addressed in a very practical way. The Commission needed to be present and active alongside the Member States in the difficult situation they faced, which was likely to get worse before it got better.

She was certain that there would be a need at some point to move from containment to risk mitigation measures, which was why her departments and those of Mr LENARČIČ were currently drawing up emergency assistance scenarios. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control would thus deploy emergency support teams on the ground to help Member States' health services. Contact would be established with the economic operators in the sector to encourage them to provide protective equipment and, if necessary, medicines which might be in short supply.

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

- the measures taken by the Commission to provide decision-makers with reliable information from authorised sources; the arrangements agreed with online platforms to ensure that this information was more visible and available in all languages with the aim of avoiding a fake news campaign on COVID-19;
- the discussions started on that day with the Eurogroup on how to manage the economic repercussions of the current crisis, which would affect European and global growth and jobs too;

- the possibility of the Eurogroup asking the Commission to prepare plans to address those repercussions; it would be useful to make provision for economic support to limit the short and long-term effects of the downturn in activity and growth linked to the current crisis;
- the risk of the future recovery, once the epidemic had come to an end, being very unevenly spread between the Member States and accentuating divergences within the Union;
- the need for unwavering unity between the 27 Member States and for a message to be sent that efforts were being coordinated at EU level with a view to avoiding financial market jitters;
- particular attention should be given to the already difficult situation of SMEs in the Union as a result of the epidemic; in particular, short-term payment difficulties, especially in the services sector;
- the arrangements being put in place in the Member States and at the Commission to deal with these problems, mobilise all players and avoid a domino effect;
- the repercussions of the current crisis on the air, rail and maritime transport sectors;
- the measures and working arrangements put in place for Commission staff by the Directorate-General for Health and Consumers, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and the Belgian authorities, acting together; the role assigned to the institution's medical service as the first point of contact for officials;
- in that context, a request to make hydro-alcoholic solutions available in Commission buildings and step up hygiene measures .

The PRESIDENT thanked Ms KYRIAKIDES for her presentation. The

College would be kept informed of the situation, which was evolving day by day, indeed hour by hour.

The Commission took note of this information and of note INFO(2020) 7.

11.3. SITUATION OF MIGRANTS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

The PRESIDENT briefed the College on her visit to Greece where, together with the President of the European Parliament, David SASSOLI, the President of the European Council, Charles MICHEL and Mr SCHINAS, she had met the Greek Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, before travelling to the border between Greece and Turkey where she had seen with her own eyes the pressure created by the arrival of a new wave of migrants.

Migration between the two countries had resumed following the bombing of the Syrian city of Idlib, which had caused a new exodus of Syrian nationals and had led the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, to declare that the border with Greece was now open on the Turkish side, in other words that he would cease complying with the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement on migration.

During her visit, she had noted that although the numbers of migrants arriving had still been modest a few days previously, they had increased, partly as a result of the logistical support and encouragement of the Turkish authorities. Although the migration flow could not be compared with that of 2015, the situation on the ground remained very tense; however, the pressure was concentrated on the Greek border for the time being. She had assured the Greek authorities that the European Union fully supported their efforts to protect the country's border, which was also an external border of the Union.

At the request of the Greek authorities, a Rapid Border Intervention Team had been mobilised and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) would deploy 100 extra guards on the land and sea borders in addition to the 530 already there. The agency also needed equipment and had contacted the Member States, which would have to provide practical assistance in response

to the requests for support made by the Greek government.

The PRESIDENT added that the situation of the refugee reception centres in the Greek islands, most of which were overcrowded, was still very difficult, and that living conditions there were getting worse. She confirmed that the Commission had promised the Greek government EUR 700 million of aid, half of which was available immediately, to manage the new wave of migration and deal with the urgency of the situation. She was particularly concerned about the fate of unaccompanied minors, which required an appropriate response.

On a more general note, she regretted that the Turkish government had chosen to exploit vulnerable populations for political purposes. For its part, the Union had scrupulously and fully applied the provisions of the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement. An amount of not less than EUR 4.7 billion had already been deployed on the ground. Lastly, many of the migrants massing on the border between Turkey and Greece did not come from Syria and Iraq, but from other countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan or Iran.

Mr SCHINAS said that this field trip by top EU representatives had enabled the Union to express its solidarity with the Greek authorities and to highlight the fact that the Greek border was also an external border of the Union and, as such, of concern to all the Member States. An informal meeting of EU ministers for the interior had been scheduled for that day with a view to producing a coordinated response to the crisis. On the political front, he urged the College to reflect on sustainable solutions to the migration phenomenon.

Ms JOHANSSON said that the deployment of Frontex staff had helped the Greek authorities to maintain control of the border and that the Greek authorities and the Turkish authorities continued to deal with each other on a regular basis notwithstanding the situation. She echoed concerns about the dire humanitarian situation at the refugee reception centres in the Greek islands and said that the EU should address this problem as a matter of

urgency to prevent the recent waves of migrants developing into a long-term humanitarian crisis.

A brief discussion ensued during which the Commission referred to the increase in migration flows to other Member States, including Cyprus, and the communication measures needed to ensure that the populations of the countries most affected heard the Union's message of solidarity.

The Commission took note of this information.

*

* *

The meeting closed at 13.09.