



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2021) 2370 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 14 April 2021

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2370th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Tuesday 9 March 2021

(afternoon)

PV(2021) 2370 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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The 2370th meeting of the Commission was held in two parts:

- on Tuesday 9 March 2021, from 13.06 to 14.35
- on Tuesday 9 March 2021, from 14.47 to 16.28

First sitting: Tuesday 9 March 2021 (afternoon)

The first sitting opened at 13.06 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President	
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr HAHN	Member	Items 1 to 10.2
Ms GABRIEL	Member	
Mr SCHMIT	Member	
Mr GENTILONI	Member	
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	

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Ms VĂLEAN	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	Items 1 to 10.2
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

Absent:

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

Mr KRISTÓFFY	Chef de cabinet to Mr VÁRHELYI
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The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Director-General, DG Communication
Mr MAMER	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's Office
Mr FLOSDORFF	Executive Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office
Ms SCHULTZ	Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office
Ms SPINANT	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General
Mr HEMMELGARN	Secretariat-General

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2021) 2370/FINAL; SEC(2021) 2370/FINAL)

The Commission took note of that day's agenda and of the tentative agendas for forthcoming meetings.

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(RCC(2021) 2370)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 8 March 2021.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2367TH, 2368TH AND 2369TH MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (17 AND 24 FEBRUARY, 3 MARCH 2021)

(PV(2021) 2367)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2367th meeting, and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2368th and 2369th meetings for a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2021) 74)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 5 March 2021 (RCC(2021) 74).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Integrated Border Management Fund – Instrument for financial support for customs control equipment 2021–2027 (Regulation) – POSPÍŠIL report – 2018/0258 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 61/3.

- **Regulation amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 and Council Regulations (EC) No 768/2005, (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1005/2008, and Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards fisheries control (Regulation) – AGUILERA report – 2018/0193 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 120/2.

- **Amendment of Directive 2011/24/EU on health technology assessment (Regulation) – WÖLKEN report – 2018/0018 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 69.

- **Oral question – O-000007/2021 – Commission strategy on children’s rights**

Line set out in SP(2021) 134/3.

- **Oral question – O-000010/2021 – Evaluation of the Geo-blocking Regulation**

Line set out in SP(2021) 160.

- **Replies to the legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its session of February 2021**

Line set out in SP(2021) 133, for transmission to Parliament.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 – Customs programme for cooperation in the field of customs (Regulation) – GRAPINI report – 2018/0232 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2021) 158, further to note COM(2021) 99, which the Commission had already approved on 2 March 2021.

- **Objection pursuant to Rule 112 (2) and (3) of Parliament's Rules of Procedure – Extension of the approval periods of the active substances benfluralin, dimoxystrobin, fluazinam, flutolanil, mecoprop-P, mepiquat, metiram, oxamyl and pyraclostrobin – 2021/2552 (RSP)**

Information set out in SP(2021) 138.

- **Objections pursuant to Rule 112 (2) and (3) of Parliament's Rules of Procedure:**
 - **Placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified cotton GHB614 × T304-40 × GHB119 – 2021/2553 (RSP)**
 - **Placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified maize MZIR098 (SYN-ØØØ98-3) – 2021/2554 (RSP)**

Information set out in SP(2021) 139.

- **Council Regulation (EU) 2020/521 of 14 April 2020 activating the emergency support under Regulation (EU) 2016/369, and amending its provisions taking into account the COVID- 19 outbreak – OJ L 117 of 15.04.2020**

Information set out in SPI(2021) 10.

- **Draft Joint Declaration to be signed by the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council – Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – Shaping the Conference on the Future of Europe – COM(2020) 27 final**

Information set out in SI(2021) 71/2; the Commission endorsed the Draft Joint Declaration.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2021) 18)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2021) 18 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held by videoconference on Wednesday 3 March 2021.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2021) 119 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 1 and 5 March 2021.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2021) 120 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 1 and 5 March 2021.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2021) 121 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 1 and 5 March 2021 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES
(SEC(2021) 122 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 8 and 12 March 2021 and of the finalisation written procedure initiated following the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet on Monday 8 March 2021.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2021) 123 AND /2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2021) 20 AND /2)

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Mr HAHN presented four proposals for administrative decisions that were being submitted directly to the College for approval.

Mr HAHN first explained that it was proposed to appoint Mr Mário CAMPOLARGO to the post of Director-General of DG Informatics, Ms Elisabeth WERNER to the post of Deputy Secretary-General in charge of Policy Coordination at the Secretariat-General, and Ms Elena FLORES GUAL to the post of Deputy Director-General 'Investment and International (in charge of Directorates D and L)' in DG Economic and Financial Affairs.

Mr HAHN highlighted the great skills, outstanding career and recognised expertise of Mr Mário CAMPOLARGO, Ms Elisabeth WERNER and Ms Elena FLORES GUAL, which would be valuable assets in their new posts.

He added that it was also proposed to terminate with immediate effect the selection procedure for the post of Director-General of the Publications Office, without making an appointment, and to authorise a new internal and interinstitutional publication of the corresponding vacancy notice.

**7.1. DG INFORMATICS – APPOINTMENT OF AD15/16
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
(PERS(2021) 14 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 DG Informatics (PERS(2021) 14 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 17 and 25 February 2021 (PERS(2021) 14/3 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, it decided to appoint Mr Mário CAMPOLARGO to the post.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**7.2. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – APPOINTMENT OF AD15/16 DEPUTY
SECRETARY-GENERAL
(PERS(2021) 23 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it the list of applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Deputy Secretary-General in the Secretariat-General in charge of Policy Coordination (PERS(2021) 23).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 17 and 28 February 2021 (PERS(2021) 23/2 and /3).

The Commission then examined the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, it decided to appoint Ms Elisabeth WERNER to the post.

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

**7.3. DG ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS – APPOINTMENT OF
AD15/16 DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL
(PERS(2020) 92 TO /4)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Deputy Director-General 'Investment and International (in charge of Directorates D and L)' in DG Economic and Financial Affairs (PERS(2020) 92 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 1 and 12 February 2021 (PERS(2020) 92/3 and /4).

The Commission then examined the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr GENTILONI, it then decided to appoint Ms Elena FLORES GUAL to the post.

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

**7.4. PUBLICATIONS OFFICE – TERMINATION OF THE SELECTION
PROCEDURE AND AUTHORISATION FOR THE INTERNAL AND
INTERINSTITUTIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE AD15/16 POST OF
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
(PERS(2021) 24)**

(9 March 2021)

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

- to terminate, with immediate effect, internal selection procedure COM/2020/272 for the post of Director-General of the Publications Office, without making an appointment;
- to authorise a new internal and interinstitutional publication at grade AD15/16 of the vacancy notice set out in PERS(2021) 24, in accordance with Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) and Article 29(1)(b) of the Staff Regulations.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

7.5. DG MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS – SECONDMENT OF AN AD15 OFFICIAL IN THE INTERESTS OF THE SERVICE UNDER ARTICLES 37 AND 38 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS

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

- to end the secondment in the interests of the service of Mr Simon MORDUE to the European External Action Service (EEAS) and to reinstate him to the temporary post of Adviser Hors Classe in DG Migration and Home Affairs; this post would be suppressed upon the departure of the jobholder;
- to second Mr Simon MORDUE in the interests of the service, under Articles 37 and 38 of the Staff Regulations, to the Cabinet of the President of the European Council until the end of his term of office; all expenses would be borne by the European Council during his secondment.

These decisions would take effect on 16 March 2021.

7.6. DG COMMUNICATION – APPOINTMENT OF AD14/15 PRINCIPAL ADVISER
(PERS(2021) 21 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 for the Relations with stakeholders, civil society, think tanks and outreach in DG Communication (PERS(2021) 21).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 16 March and 16 April 2020 (PERS(2021) 21/2 and /3).

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

This decision would take effect immediately.

7.7. DG COMMUNICATION – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART AND TRANSFER OF AN AD14 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 interests of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Stefaan DE RYNCK, currently Principal Adviser for the Relations with stakeholders, civil society, think tanks and outreach, in DG Communication, to the post of Head of the European Commission's Representation in Brussels, Belgium.

Consequently, by derogation from the Commission Decision on middle management staff (C(2016) 3288), the post of Head of the European Commission's Representation in Brussels, Belgium, would be upgraded to the level of senior management for the duration of Mr Stefaan DE RYNCK's

posting.

This decision would take effect on 16 March 2021.

**7.8. DG TRANSLATION – APPOINTMENT OF AD14/15 DIRECTOR
(PERS(2021) 22 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the ‘Translation’ Directorate (DGT.B) in DG Translation (PERS(2021) 22).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 11 and 14 January 2021 (PERS(2021) 22/2 and /3).

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

This decision would take effect on 16 March 2021.

**7.9. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE – APPOINTMENT OF AD14/15
PRINCIPAL ADVISER
(PERS(2020) 90 TO /4)**

The Commission had before it the list of applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Principal Adviser for Relations with internal and external stakeholders in the Internal Audit Service (PERS(2020) 90 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 11 January and 14 February 2021 (PERS(2020) 90/3 and /4).

The Commission then examined the applicants’ qualifications for the post. It also considered their ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a

proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr REYNDERS, it then decided to appoint Ms Michelle SUTTON to the post.

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

7.10. DG COMMUNICATION – APPOINTMENT OF A HEAD OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION’S REPRESENTATION

The Commission took note of the decision taken by the Appointing Authority to appoint Ms Niovi RINGOU to the post of Head of the European Commission’s Representation in Athens, Greece.

This decision would take effect on 16 May 2021.

**8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – 2030 DIGITAL COMPASS – THE EUROPEAN WAY FOR THE DIGITAL DECADE
(COM(2021) 118 TO /3; RCC(2021) 80)**

The PRESIDENT introduced the Communication ‘2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade’, saying that she was proud of this ambitious but realistic roadmap, which would guide the digital transformation of the EU. She asked Ms VESTAGER and Mr BRETON to present this Communication to the College.

Ms VESTAGER said that this was not a new digital strategy that would replace the one approved a year ago, but rather a Communication aimed at opening a debate with the European Parliament, the Member States and citizens with a view to

agreeing on where the EU wanted to be by 2030 in terms of the digital transformation.

The Communication would lead to two initiatives. The first would be a solemn declaration by the three EU institutions on the digital principles agreed at political level, which was expected to be co-signed by the end of that year. The second would be a legislative proposal establishing a robust governance framework to monitor progress. It was called the ‘digital compass’ and it would be proposed to the co-legislator in a few weeks’ time.

This compass would translate the EU’s vision into clear objectives, grouped around four key areas: skills, infrastructure, the digital transformation of businesses and the digitalisation of public services. At the same time, citizens would be invited to identify benchmarks to assess how they perceived the digitalisation of European society.

Ms VESTAGER stressed that the proposal fully took into account the international dimension, adding that Europe was competing with other global players with regard to technology.

She added that 20% of the funding from the Recovery and Resilience Facility would be allocated to the digital transition.

She concluded her presentation by saying that even if considerable efforts were needed to achieve the digital transition, all stakeholders would need to work together to achieve this.

Mr BRETON mentioned the challenge of implementing the objectives set for the digital transition. Moreover, he stated that the evaluation of the national recovery and resilience plans was a good opportunity for the Commission to engage with the Member States with regard to the development of the digital space and a common vision, in close cooperation with the European Parliament.

He stressed that the EU would not be able to successfully achieve its digital transition if it lacked sufficient skills. There were currently approximately 8 million information and communication technology experts in the EU, and the Communication set the target of reaching a pool of 20 million experts by 2030 and bridging the gender gap.

He also stressed the importance of developing sustainable, secure and efficient digital infrastructure, including by encouraging the development of gigabit connectivity, 5G, semiconductor production, cloud computing and the first state-of-the-art quantum computer.

Mr BRETON also noted that economic actors, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, needed to be more ambitious in their digitalisation efforts and make greater use of cloud computing services, big data and artificial intelligence. To achieve this, they required support.

Finally, the aim was to digitalise public administrations and services, for example by putting all essential public services online, by enabling electronic access to medical records and by introducing a digital identity.

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

- the broad support of the College for this Communication, which was considered timely and necessary;
- the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic had led to an acceleration of the digitalisation of society, bringing with it both positive and negative aspects;
- the close link between digitalisation on the one hand and the green transition and environmental protection on the other, as digitalisation was one of the key factors in achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal;

- the Communication’s focus on people and fundamental rights, one of its main objectives being to adapt democracy to the digital age and to democratise digital technology;
- the opportunities for financing digitalisation, not only under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, but also under cohesion policy; in this regard, the need to provide timely guidance to the Member States so that they could apply for grants and to steer them towards digitalisation, given that they were currently preparing their national recovery plans;
- a reminder of the still too high and unsustainable carbon and energy footprint of the digital economy;
- the relevance of the four key areas of the digitalisation strategy to open up opportunities for a multitude of sectors, including transport, health, justice, and better links for rural areas;
- the importance of bridging the digital divide and including accessibility aspects in the design of digital tools and services; the need, moreover, for these tools and services to be quick and secure to access, but also affordable for citizens;
- the need to overcome gender bias and to bridge the gender employment gap in the digital sector, as well as the need to increase investment in digital education and infrastructure;
- the geopolitical importance of digitalisation: the idea of building partnerships with like-minded international actors to create a digital level playing field, address shared security interests, and promote fundamental rights, access to education and employment opportunities in third countries;
- the collegial approach taken when drawing up the Communication, leading to joint ownership of the initiative.

The PRESIDENT closed the discussion by thanking Ms VESTAGER and Mr BRETON for presenting this particularly important file.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2021) 118/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and, for information, to the national parliaments.

**9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL ON THE EU'S HUMANITARIAN ACTION – NEW CHALLENGES, SAME PRINCIPLES
(COM(2021) 110 TO /3; RCC(2021) 79)**

The PRESIDENT opened the College's discussion on the Communication entitled 'The EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles' by highlighting the task that the EU had set itself in this field for the years ahead, at a time when the shortcomings of humanitarian aid efforts worldwide were acknowledged and the COVID-19 pandemic made it necessary to reorganise aid to the most vulnerable countries.

Mr BORRELL began by saying that the previous Communication setting out the main objectives of the EU's humanitarian aid policy had been published in 2006; fifteen years on, there had been a significant increase in the number of countries and regions of the world needing assistance. This situation had been further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The approach proposed that day closely linked humanitarian aid, development and peace, while continuing to have as its foundation a sound legal basis and a set of basic humanitarian principles and common objectives that were a faithful reflection of the universal principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence as enshrined in international law.

He noted the growing number of situations in which conflicts were combined with the consequences of climate change, environmental degradation, population growth and weak governance, while the gap between humanitarian needs and available resources was widening. According to the United Nations, some 235 million people would need humanitarian assistance in 2021, i.e. one in every 33 people worldwide.

Against this backdrop, the pool of humanitarian aid donors was increasingly unable to meet these needs and had to be expanded, given that just 10 countries provided 83% of global humanitarian aid. Furthermore, the resources allocated to humanitarian aid needed to be stepped up significantly. On average, humanitarian crises now lasted over nine years and some of them, such as the crisis in Darfur, lasted considerably longer.

Mr BORRELL also referred to the multilateral dimension of humanitarian aid and the need to work together with the EU's main partners in this field - the United States, Norway and the United Kingdom. He emphasised the particular importance of enhanced coordination between donors so as to prevent any politicisation of humanitarian aid, while rigorously applying the EU's principles and values to the financing mechanisms for any aid provided.

Mr LENARČIČ explained that the rationale behind the Communication was the fact that humanitarian aid requirements had increased by 40% since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, having already increased threefold since 2014, against a backdrop of conflicts, population displacement and disasters caused by climate change.

He noted that, despite this staggering increase in aid requirements, the resource base had not been expanded and, unlike the EU, certain donors had even reduced the amount of aid they provided. The combination of these two trends gave rise to major challenges, which would be exacerbated unless concerted action was taken at global level. A further challenge was the persistent disregard for international humanitarian law in certain conflicts in recent years; this had led to attacks on

humanitarian and medical workers and restrictions on getting aid to the people for whom it was intended.

The Commission was therefore proposing to reaffirm basic humanitarian principles as well as the principle of needs-based humanitarian aid. With this in mind, it advocated cooperating closely with actors working in the field of humanitarian aid, development and peace.

The Communication proposed a five-pronged approach in order to do more and better with regard to humanitarian aid.

The first line of action focused on making more efficient use of the resources at the EU's disposal in order to develop a European humanitarian response capacity that would address gaps in areas such as logistics or emergency medical response.

Second, there was a need for a greater focus on the climate and environmental factors that led to humanitarian crises. This would entail efforts to enhance resilience, working with development actors whenever possible, and would involve redirecting funding rapidly, or even in advance, to areas where climate-related disasters were likely to strike.

Third, Mr LENARČIČ referred to the need to improve interaction between humanitarian aid, development policy and conflict management, bearing in mind that humanitarian aid alone could not provide a long-term solution to crises, nor was it designed to address their root causes.

Fourth, it was essential to make efforts to broaden the donor base for humanitarian aid, inside and outside the EU. Together, four Member States and the Commission accounted for 90% of the EU's total humanitarian funding. He suggested reaching out to the Gulf States and China, while working closely with the new US administration.

The fifth line of action was to create a more favourable environment for delivering humanitarian aid; this included compliance with international humanitarian law,

which needed to be at the heart of the EU's external relations. It was also necessary to ensure that the use of sanctions did not have an adverse impact on the delivery of humanitarian aid.

A further proposal set out in the Communication was to work even more closely with the Member States on concrete initiatives such as the European Humanitarian Response Capacity and to make more extensive use of externally assigned revenue to allow Member State funding to be used as part of EU programmes.

In conclusion, Mr LENARČIČ said that once the Communication had been approved by the Commission, it would be presented to Parliament and the Council, which could adopt conclusions at the Foreign Affairs and Development Council to be held on 25 May.

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

- the relevance of the framework proposed by the Commission as a means of renewing the EU's role as a world leader in humanitarian aid;
- the importance of actively communicating – inside and outside the EU – on humanitarian aid challenges and needs in order to create fresh momentum commensurate with the challenges to be met;
- the growing complexity of humanitarian crises, particularly in conflict situations, and their profound impact at local and regional level, which made it necessary to mobilise the donor community;
- the need to acknowledge that there could be no peace without development, and no development without peace;
- hence the importance of creating close links between humanitarian aid, development policy and conflict prevention, drawing on the wide range of

instruments at the EU's disposal, in order to develop solutions that were appropriate for each situation.

Following these presentations, the Commission, on a proposal from the PRESIDENT, confirmed the approval of the Communication in COM(2021) 110/3 by the finalisation written procedure, the deadline for which was set at 10.00 on Wednesday 10 March 2021 (PE/2021/1501).

10. OTHER BUSINESS

10.1. AGREEMENT ON THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE EUROPEAN ATOMIC ENERGY COMMUNITY

The PRESIDENT raised the matter of the recent developments in EU-UK relations. She invited Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, in his capacity as co-chair, representing the EU, of the Joint Committee responsible for implementing the UK Withdrawal Agreement, to brief the College on the state of play.

The Commission took note of this information.

10.2. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The PRESIDENT asked Mr BORRELL to brief the College on the latest developments in external relations.

Mr BORRELL focused on the possibility of relaunching the talks begun under the auspices of the United Nations with a view to resolving the situation in Cyprus. Mr BORRELL had visited Cyprus on 5 March, where he had met the Cypriot President, Nicos ANASTASIADIS, and the President of the northern part of the island, Ersin TATAR. The two had agreed to a 'five-plus-

one' meeting, i.e. a meeting between the two Cypriot parties and the three guarantor countries, Turkey, Greece and the UK, with the EU attending as an observer. The meeting would be held from 27 to 29 April in Geneva.

He emphasised that settling the matter of the division of the island of Cyprus was important for security in the region and for EU-Turkey relations; both issues would be on the agenda of the European Council meeting to be held on 25 and 26 March.

The Commission took note of this information.

10.3. PREPARATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE FACILITY – STATE OF PLAY

Mr DOMBROVSKIS briefed the College on the outcome of the sixth meeting of the Steering Board of the Recovery and Resilience Facility held on 5 March to discuss the preparations of the national recovery and resilience plans, in particular those of Germany, Finland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary. The Steering Board had examined the plans of France, Slovakia, Greece, Spain and Portugal the previous week, which were more advanced, but not yet ready for formal submission to the Commission.

Generally speaking, the development of national plans was not progressing fast enough. Member States therefore needed to speed up their work and heed the Steering Board's advice to ensure that plans were of sufficient quality and approval went smoothly.

The Steering Board's view was that the next meeting of the European Council on 25 and 26 March would be a good opportunity to convey messages to EU leaders on the national recovery and resilience plans. In the meantime, contacts at political level would be held in order to raise awareness among the Member States of the areas of the national plans where more work was needed.

Returning to the Member States whose draft national plans had been examined on 5 March, they continued to make progress on achieving the green and digital targets and the balance of reforms and investments. At the same time, the next set of draft national plans for submission to the Steering Board should contain more ambitious reforms. The Regulation on the Recovery and Resilience Facility required Member States to align these reforms with the country-specific recommendations or a significant subset of them. In other words, there could be some prioritisation.

As at its previous meetings, the Steering Board was well aware of the political difficulty of introducing reforms and had agreed to focus on those that were likely to have the most economically relevant effects in the long term.

A large number of Member States should focus, for example, on the quality of the institutions that would administer funding under the Facility and on the absorption capacity for these funds. They needed to create the right business and administrative environment for economic growth and put in place the necessary control and audit systems to avoid fraud in the use of the Facility's funds. For example, this involved reforms of procurement rules, of administrative and judicial procedures, and of rules on regulated professions.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS specified that the Steering Board had also referred to the social dimension of the national recovery and resilience plans. Some of the measures envisaged at this stage were not eligible for funding from the Facility, such as extending the schemes financed by the temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE) and by the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU). However, the Recommendation on an effective active support to employment following the COVID-19 crisis (EASE) presented by the Commission on 3 March had called on the Member States to use the Facility, in conjunction with other EU funds, to deliver ambitious and coherent labour-market support measures and skills reforms.

Lastly, all the Member States still had work to do on the aspects of the national plans linked to milestones and targets, to the setting of costs, and to audits and controls. The Recovery and Resilience Facility was performance-based throughout the entire process and the Member States therefore had to set out balanced sets of milestones and targets that were precise enough to track progress, in terms of both investments and reforms, and justify disbursements in due course.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS ended by saying that the Steering Board would convene again on 17 March to focus on the examination of the draft plans of a third set of Member States, to be determined depending on their progress.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr DOMBROVSKIS for his briefing and closed the agenda item before welcoming Mr John KERRY, the US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The first sitting closed at 14.35.

Second sitting: Tuesday 9 March 2021 (afternoon)

The second sitting opened at 14.47 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President	
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr HAHN	Member	Item 11 (in part)
Ms GABRIEL	Member	
Mr SCHMIT	Member	
Mr GENTILONI	Member	
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	Item 11 (in part)
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

Absent:

Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member

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

Mr KRISTÓFFY	Chef de cabinet to Mr VÁRHELYI
Mr VAŠČEGA	Chef de cabinet to Mr SINKEVIČIUS

The following also sat in:

Mr KERRY	United States Special Presidential Envoy for Climate	
Mr LIBBY	Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the US Mission to the European Union	
Mr SEIBERT	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	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	
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr FLOSDORFF	Executive Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Ms SCHULTZ	Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr VANDENBERGHE	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr SAMSOM	Chef de cabinet to Mr TIMMERMANS	
Mr GOLUBIEWSKI	Chef de cabinet to Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Item 11 (in part)
Ms SPINANT	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General	
Mr HEMMELGARN	Secretariat-General	

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

11. VISIT TO THE COMMISSION OF JOHN KERRY, UNITED STATES SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY FOR CLIMATE

The PRESIDENT warmly welcomed John KERRY, the United States Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, both personally and on behalf of the College. She thanked him for his kindness in paying the Commission a visit after taking up his new duties.

She expressed the satisfaction felt by Europeans that the new US Administration had rejoined the Paris Climate Agreement as soon as it had taken up office. She said that the EU, for its part, had worked hard on the European Green Deal and had committed about a year ago to becoming the first continent to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. Looking beyond Europe, she stressed that all the countries on the planet had common cause in combating climate change and would have to show vision and determination.

Mr KERRY thanked the PRESIDENT and the College for receiving him that day. As the US President's Special Envoy for Climate, he was eager to start his new mission, which was to tackle not a mere political issue but a vital question facing the planet. Tackling this dangerous scourge would lead to the greatest economic transformation since the industrial revolution in the 19th century. It was therefore a matter of urgency to change the current trend and embrace the huge possibilities offered in terms of technology by following the roadmap set out up to and beyond the Glasgow conference to meet the target of a maximum temperature increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius over time.

After a rich exchange of views, the PRESIDENT warmly thanked Mr KERRY for this dialogue, which would serve as a source of inspiration to the Commission in its future work and which inspired confidence and optimism in a context still unsettled by the pandemic and ahead of a transformation full of challenges whose outcome was as yet unknown.

The Commission took note of this information.

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

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The meeting closed at 16.28.