



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2022) 2407 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 23 March 2022

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

**of the 2407th meeting of the Commission
held in Strasbourg
(Winston Churchill building)
on Tuesday 15 February 2022
(afternoon)**

PV(2022) 2407 final

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Single sitting: Tuesday 15 February 2022 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.02 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	Items 1 to 12 (in part)
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Ms GABRIEL	Member	
Mr GENTILONI	Member	
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

Absent:

Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President

Mr SCHMIT	Member
Ms JOHANSSON	Member
Ms VÁLEAN	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Ms URPILAINEN	Member

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

Mr MES	A member of Mr TIMMERMANS's staff
Ms CANENBLEY	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms VESTAGER
Ms BERTULESSI	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr SCHMIT
Ms PETSCH	A member of Mr VÁRHELYI's staff
Mr SAVIGNAT	A member of Ms URPILAINEN's staff

The following also sat in:

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	
Mr WHELAN	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 1 to 11
Ms SCHULTZ	Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office	

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2022) 2407/FINAL; SEC(2022) 2407/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(2022) 2407)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 14 February 2022.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

(PV(2022) 2403; PV(2022) 2403, 2ND PART)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2403rd meeting of 18 January 2022 and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2404th, 2405th and 2406th meetings of 26 January and 2, and 8 February 2022 until a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2022) 67)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 11 February 2022 (RCC(2022) 67).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union, and repeal of Directive (EU) 2016/1148 (Directive) – GROOTHUIS report – 2020/0359 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 15.

- **Objection pursuant to Rule 111(3) of Parliament’s Rules of Procedure – Commission delegated regulation amending the Annex to Regulation (EU) 2021/953 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the acceptance period of vaccination certificates issued in the EU Digital COVID Certificate format indicating the completion of the primary vaccination series – C(2021) 9920 – 2021/3056 (DEA)**

Line set out in SP(2022) 86.

- **Genetically modified soybean and cotton products:**
 - **Objection pursuant to Rule 112(2) and (3) of Parliament’s Rules of Procedure to a draft Commission Implementing Decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified soybean GMB151 (BCS-GM151-6), pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council**
 - **Objection pursuant to Rule 112(2) and (3) of Parliament’s Rules of Procedure to a draft Commission Implementing Decision renewing the authorisation for the placing on the market of products containing genetically modified cotton GHB614 (BCS-GHØØ2-5), pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council**

Line set out in SP(2022) 78.

- **Genetically modified cotton and oilseed rape products:**
 - **Objection pursuant to Rule 112(2) and (3) of Parliament’s Rules of Procedure to a draft Commission Implementing Decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified cotton GHB811 (BCS-GH811-4), pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council – D077486/02 – 2021/3057 (RSP)**
 - **Objection pursuant to Rule 112(2) and (3) of Parliament’s Rules of Procedure to a draft Commission Implementing Decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing genetically modified oilseed rape 73496 (DP-Ø73496-4) pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council – D077485/02– 2021/3058 (RSP)**

Line set out in SP(2022) 82.

- **Strengthening coherence between the Green Deal, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and trade policy**

Line set out in SI(2022) 23.

- **Temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restriction, and amendment of Council Recommendation 2020/912 (Council Recommendation) – 2021/0397 (NLE)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 30/2.

- **Major interpellation G-001004/2021 – ‘The surge in commodity and input prices in the agricultural sector’**

Line set out in SP(2022) 68.

- **Major interpellation G-001003/2021 – ‘Strengthening the system for protecting PDO and PGI denominations in the EU after the Prosecco/Prošek case’**

Line set out in SP(2022) 79/2.

- **Implementation of the Kimberley Process certification scheme for the international trade in rough diamonds (Regulation – Recast) – WINKLER report – 2021/0060 (COD)**

Line set out in SP(2022) 70/2.

- **Resolutions of the European Parliament under Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) – Digitalisation of the European reporting, monitoring and audit – GRAPINI report – 2021/2054 (INL)**

Line set out in SP(2022) 71.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Objection pursuant to Rule 111(3) of Parliament’s Rules of Procedure – Commission delegated regulation supplementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund as regards the periods of time and the dates for the inadmissibility of applications for support – C(2021) 7701 – 2021/2961 (DEA)**

Information set out in SP(2022) 69.

- **Amendment of Directive 2013/34/EU, Directive 2004/109/EC, Directive 2006/43/EC and Regulation (EU) No 537/2014, as regards corporate sustainability reporting (Directive) – DURAND report – 2021/0104 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 24.

The Commission approved the line set out for the following point, for transmission to Parliament:

- **Commission replies to the legislative resolutions (and list of non-legislative resolutions without formal reply) adopted by Parliament at its January I 2022 part session**

Line set out in SP(2022) 66.

The Commission noted that the following point had been postponed:

- **Commission replies to non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its October II 2021 part-session (second and last part)**

Note SP(2022) 67/3.

The Commission approved the line set out for the following point, for transmission to the Committee of the Regions:

- **Follow-up to opinions of the Committee of the Regions – Plenary session of October 2021**

Line set out in SR(2022) 3/3.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2022) 9)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2022) 9 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 9 February 2022.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2022) 102 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 7 and 13 February 2022.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2022) 103 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 7 and 13 February 2022.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2022) 104 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 7 and 13 February 2022 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2022) 105 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 14 and 18 February 2022.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2022) 106)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2022) 11)

**7.1. EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE – PROCEDURE FOR APPOINTING MEMBERS AND DESIGNATING ALTERNATE MEMBERS OF THE SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE
(PERS(2022) 75)**

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

- to approve the appointment of the following members of the Supervisory Committee of the European Anti-Fraud Office, from the date of entry into force of this decision, to replace the members whose term of office ended in July 2021:
 - Mr Dusan STERLE,
 - Mr Carsten ZATSCHLER;
- to approve the appointment, from 23 September 2022, of the following members, to replace the members whose term of office ended in January 2022:
 - Ms Teresa ANJINHO,
 - Ms Marita SALGRAVE,
 - Mr Angelo Maria QUAGLINI;
- to approve the appointment of the following alternate members (by order of priority):
 - Mr Thierry CRETIN,
 - Mr Ilias KONSTANTAKOPOULOS,
 - Ms Maria STYLIANIDI,
 - Mr Andrei Atila Luca CHENDI,
 - Ms Sophie DE Wael,
 - Mr Igors LUDBORŽS,
 - Ms Gabriella NAGY,

- Mr Joaquin SILGUERO ESTAGNAN;
- to endorse the draft Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council in SEC(2022) 75;
- to authorise Mr HAHN, the Member of the Commission responsible, to sign the draft Decision on behalf of the Commission.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

7.2. *DG INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS – EXTENSION OF THE SECONDMENT OF AN AD15 OFFICIAL IN THE INTEREST 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 URPILAINEN, the Commission decided to further extend the secondment in the interest of the service, under Articles 37 and 38 of the Staff Regulations, of Mr Anders HENRIKSSON to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs for another year.

This decision would take effect immediately.

- 8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – COMMISSION CONTRIBUTION TO EUROPEAN DEFENCE (COM(2022) 60 TO /3; RCC(2022) 72)**
- 9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS –**

ROADMAP ON CRITICAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR SECURITY AND DEFENCE**(COM(2022) 61 AND /2; RCC(2022) 72)**

The PRESIDENT opened the discussion on the Communication presenting the Commission's contribution to European defence and the roadmap on critical technologies for security and defence.

She pointed out that the defence capabilities and the defence industry market in the EU were limited. Moreover, the Member States acquired their defence equipment all over the world, which was why this market was particularly fragmented. Yet the EU's autonomy was at stake here.

She therefore welcomed the new European Defence Fund as a powerful incentive to develop European defence capabilities and ensure their interoperability. However, she noted that not all Member States taking part in the projects to be developed in this framework would derive the same benefits, as each had different skills and strengths.

The PRESIDENT also mentioned the question of arms export controls, on which the Member States held very different positions, which would cause difficulties for the Commission in the context of the European decision-making process.

Mr BRETON confirmed that the new initiatives being proposed that day were practical steps towards establishing a more integrated and more competitive European defence market, in particular through greater cooperation within the EU. The aim was thus to develop the multinational dimension of projects to build up defence capabilities, keep down costs and improve overall operational efficiency. This was where the Commission was making its contribution to establishing the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, which was a real ambition shared by the 27 Member States, and also to the debate on resilience to be held by the EU leaders at the forthcoming European Council in March.

He explained that the Commission's approach was based on three priorities.

The first priority was to step up the development and joint procurement of defence capabilities. In this respect the European Defence Fund represented real progress as it enabled investment in key capabilities, such as drones, artificial intelligence and cyber. The Fund also significantly opened up transnational value chains, in particular to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which accounted for 30% of the budget allocation.

Mr BRETON considered that the European Defence Fund should become a real European tool for financing defence capabilities, intervening upstream to better jointly define the priority capacities that should be the subject of European financing, and downstream to encourage joint procurement of capabilities developed in an EU cooperative framework. The questions of joint investment and the quality of public expenditure would be addressed in the annual report on the internal market submitted as part of the European Semester of macroeconomic and fiscal policy coordination.

He turned to the second priority, which was to reduce the EU's strategic dependence, particularly as regards technology. It was now no longer possible to talk about semiconductor technologies, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, quantum computing, supercomputers, space and cybersecurity without thinking in terms of defence and security. All these technologies were defining factors in the EU's technological sovereignty, which required more synergy between civilian and military investment efforts. Every two years the Commission, together with the Member States, would take stock of the EU's strategic dependence and draw up a plan for existing security capabilities. This approach would serve to encourage the aforementioned synergy between civilian and military research, while also helping organise Europe's defence innovation capacity in the most effective way, around an incubator.

Mr BRETON then came to the third and last priority, which was to protect space, cyber and the hybrid domain, which were new, emerging fields of conflict that would redefine the security architecture in Europe. It was precisely in these areas that action by the Commission had the most added value, particularly for operational matters in which the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) had little or no presence.

On the subject of space, he noted that much of the EU's economy, its communication systems and its security depended on space systems, a trend that was set to increase. Space had become a strategic area for the major powers. At European level, there were real examples of strategic infrastructure, such as Galileo and Copernicus, and new ones would soon be added. The idea was therefore to give European defence cooperation a real space dimension by (i) widely incorporating defence-related elements in infrastructure and applying the 'dual use by design' principle across the board in new projects, (ii) providing for a system of governance that enabled all players, whether industrial or institutional, to respond to the real threats that existed, starting with the European Space Agency, and (iii) setting the medium-term objective of establishing a common threat awareness capability, or even a space command.

On cyber, which was now at the heart of defence policy, Mr BRETON noted the growing need for cooperation at European level. The EU should organise its response to large-scale cyberattacks given that, in such an interconnected space, overall resilience depended on the strength of the weakest link. He stressed that the EU had already done a great deal in terms of legislation, contributing to the resilience of the internal market through the security of networks, information systems and critical infrastructure. Further steps now had to be taken, in particular by adopting legislation on the cyber resilience of products. The EU would also develop a European infrastructure of security operations centres that would act as a 'border guard' in cyberspace. He felt that the Member States were now ready to take further steps to coordinate cyber defence at European level.

Finally, Mr BRETON also called for better organisation in the hybrid sphere, while pointing out that the EU had early warning systems in civilian fields such as energy, transport, telecommunications and disinformation.

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

- a reference to the current geopolitical context and the important contribution this package of measures on European defence would make to the Strategic Compass by stimulating or strengthening innovation, critical technologies, joint public procurement, military mobility and environmental aspects of defence;
- mention of the profound change in the very concept of defence which, beyond the purely military aspects, now encompassed a wide range of civilian fields such as space and cyber, and new forms of confrontation, which were based increasingly on cyberattacks or immersion operations in the civilian sphere;
- the need for the EU to gain more autonomy from third countries in the design and production of capabilities and critical technologies;
- the importance of ensuring that initiatives adopted at European level were consistent with those of the Member States acting individually in order to carry out joint projects, build a European defence identity and achieve emblematic success in this industry;
- the risk that the development of European defence projects might be seen as running counter to certain aspects of EU regulations, such as the taxonomy of sustainable activities; in this context, a reminder that the defence industry was not included in the taxonomy and that it received enough investment;
- the constant strengthening of the EU's security infrastructure, the role played by the EU institutions in these developments and the administrative cooperation established to that end between the EU level and the Member States.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr BRETON for his presentation.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communications in COM (2022) 60/3 and COM (2022) 61/2, for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and, for information, to the national parliaments.

10. JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – AN EU APPROACH FOR SPACE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT – AN EU CONTRIBUTION ADDRESSING A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

(JOIN(2022) 4 AND /2; RCC(2022) 71)

11. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ESTABLISHING THE UNION SECURE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAMME FOR THE PERIOD 2023-2027

(COM(2022) 57 TO /3; SWD(2022) 30; SWD(2022) 31; SEC(2022) 77; RCC(2022) 71)

Mr BORRELL briefly introduced the Commission proposals in the field of space, namely a joint Communication on an EU approach for space traffic management and a proposal for a Regulation on secure space-based connectivity.

He explained that the EU, as a major space power, needed a strategy to move its policy forward and adapt it to the challenges posed by congestion in space and the issue of space debris which needed to be addressed. That day's initiatives would help safeguard the efficiency and security of the EU's current assets while developing cutting-edge European space technology that would benefit the EU's citizens and economy.

Mr BORRELL stressed that outer space was a new battleground between powers. With that in mind, the EU and its Member States needed to be able to respond in a

coordinated manner and increase their space capabilities.

Mr BRETON said that the EU had an annual space policy budget of around EUR 10 billion, compared with the US's budget of EUR 24 billion. The EU had two world-class pieces of infrastructure, Galileo and Copernicus, and managed a EUR 15 billion space programme, meaning it carried a lot of weight when it came to European decisions on space.

However, he felt that the EU should not rest on its laurels, since its competitors were making rapid progress and space was now an integral part of Europe's economic, technological, geostrategic and military power. The EU could lose this power if it failed to adapt, which was why it needed ambitious initiatives. This was the aim of that day's proposals, which complemented the EU space programme and sought to take immediate action on two fronts, namely (i) space observation, which was vital for reasons of autonomy, defence and security, and (ii) space-based connectivity, another central aspect, given that the EU's international competitors were occupying a growing number of orbits and frequencies.

Mr BRETON noted that space was becoming increasingly congested and disputed, which was why the EU wanted to have its own space traffic management strategy as a means of contributing to the safe, secure and viable use of space while protecting the EU's strategic autonomy and the competitiveness of its industry.

As an illustration of the growing problem of space congestion, he said that since the start of space exploration, 11 800 satellites had been launched, of which only 4 500 were still active and operational, and more than 20 000 additional satellites would be launched in the next ten years. It was becoming increasingly difficult to reserve orbital slots and frequencies were becoming scarce, while pieces of debris were piling up in their millions, posing a significant risk to European infrastructure.

Mr BRETON said that space was also a highly disputed area for the major military powers that had a presence there. The EU therefore needed to further develop its burgeoning space surveillance capabilities, including in a dual form, i.e. developing

its civilian capabilities for debris and its military capabilities for surveillance of manoeuvres carried out by its competitors. In his view, this was imperative in terms of European sovereignty and protecting the EU's critical infrastructure. The aim was thus to set out a European approach to cover all aspects of space traffic management.

As part of this approach, the EU would regularly take stock of its civilian and military requirements and would boost its operational capabilities based on a technology roadmap. In order to do so, the EU would focus its efforts on the gradual adoption of regulations and would continue cooperating with its international partners, particularly the United States, to develop systems that were interoperable but could operate independently if required.

The second pillar of the strategy was to establish a satellite-based secure connectivity system; this had four objectives focusing on connectivity, resilience, security and geostrategy.

With regard to connectivity, the aim was to provide very high-speed internet access throughout the EU by eliminating 'dead' zones thanks to technical advances such as Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites. As regards resilience, the aim was to ensure redundancy for the current internet infrastructure, given the significant risk of network overload and cyberattacks, by creating a sort of back-up system for terrestrial networks so that the EU would stay connected at all times. With regard to security, the EU intended to create ultra-secure infrastructure using quantum cryptography, a cybersecurity application that would ensure the technological sovereignty of the future. Lastly, as regards the geostrategic dimension, the EU was aiming to limit its dependence on non-European systems in the future thanks to a constellation that would be interoperable with constellations of third countries, but could operate independently if required.

Mr BRETON also referred to the potential of this project in terms of infrastructure of the 'Global Gateway' strategy. The constellation was a very powerful tool in the

context of the EU's partnership with Africa, since it could enable the EU to provide the whole of Africa with secure connectivity. This would be an excellent means of accelerating Africa's economic development and would allow the EU to strengthen its ties with Africa, while ensuring that Africa did not suffer from excessive dependence in terms of its connectivity infrastructure with other countries.

Looking beyond these objectives, he stressed that this constellation was intended to be a digital rather than traditional space infrastructure. This infrastructure would use cutting-edge technology, and start-ups would be involved; it would also be dual by design, as it would take military specifications into account from the outset. Lastly, he stressed that this approach would be implemented by means of a public-private partnership and under a concession contract. The budget structure was such that, out of a total of EUR 6 billion, the EU would contribute EUR 2.4 billion and the remainder would be divided between the Member States and industry.

Mr BRETON concluded his presentation by indicating that, if negotiations with the co-legislators progressed well, the first services should be launched in 2024 and full deployment would take place between 2025 and the first quarter of 2027. As 2022 was the European Year of Youth, a competition would be held in collaboration with Ms URPILAINEN and Ms GABRIEL for young people in Europe and Africa to choose the name of this constellation.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr BORRELL and Mr BRETON for their presentation and welcomed the important proposals for the future they had presented that day.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- approved the joint Communication in JOIN(2022) 4/2 for transmission to Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments;
- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2022) 57/3 for transmission to Parliament, the Council and the national parliaments, together with the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny

Board in SWD(2022) 30, SWD(2022) 31 and SEC(2022) 77, the contents of which were noted.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

12.1. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION

The PRESIDENT introduced the College's discussion on the latest developments in the geopolitical situation and referred in particular to the **situation on the Russia-Ukraine border**. She stressed that it was important for the EU to present a united front, together with its partners, in drawing up robust sanctions in the event of a Russian invasion of Ukraine.

She then turned to the issue of the EU's energy security, pointing out that 24% of its energy mix was based on gas, 40% of which was gas imported from Russia, although the composition of this mix varied considerably from one Member State to another. She stressed that the current crisis once again highlighted the need to make the EU less dependent on Russian gas supplies and that intensive efforts had been made in recent weeks to diversify sources of supply.

Ms SIMSON explained that, unlike in previous crises, the EU now had a wide range of options to source energy. Liquefied natural gas terminals were at 100% of their capacity and management of these terminals was coordinated at EU level. However, on this global market, the EU was competing with a large number of purchasing countries.

Mr BORRELL said the EU's approach should combine diplomacy and deterrence. He confirmed that should the EU be faced with the decision to impose sanctions, the European Council would be called to take the political decision and these sanctions would have to be adopted unanimously by the Council.

Concerning the current tensions, he ended by stressing the importance of the EU's macro-financial assistance to Ukraine, as a sign of support, and of keeping its diplomatic staff on the ground.

Mr BORRELL then briefly referred to the **situation in the Sahel** and the likely withdrawal of the Barkhane and Takuba operations from the region. These issues would necessarily have an impact on discussions at the European Union-African Union summit on 17 and 18 February.

The Commission took note of this information.

12.2. COMMISSION RESPONSE TO A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 225 OF THE TREATY ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (TFEU) (SP(2022) 71)

The PRESIDENT asked Mr HAHN to present the Commission's draft response to a European Parliament resolution pursuant to Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Mr HAHN explained that the European Parliament resolution on the digitalisation of European reporting, monitoring and audit called on the European Commission to establish, as part of the targeted revision of the Financial Regulation, an integrated and interoperable electronic information and monitoring system and a single data mining tool, for the common agricultural policy and other funds under shared management.

Despite the apparently technical nature of this dossier, it was in fact a good example of close cooperation with the European Parliament. The issue of interoperability and digital exchanges between different administrations had already been addressed in the negotiations on the multiannual financial framework. An agreement in principle had been reached, but no reference had subsequently been made to it when the sectoral proposals were negotiated.

In its reply to the European Parliament, the Commission confirmed that the forthcoming revision of the Financial Regulation would provide an opportunity to digitalise and improve the transparency of public scrutiny of beneficiaries of EU funding, which was an important contribution to the EU's work on preventing and detecting irregularities, corruption and conflicts of interest from the outset.

In conclusion, Mr HAHN took the opportunity to express his regret that the budget discharge did not take place until one and a half years after the end of the budget year.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr HAHN and noted the College's approval of the line proposed in SP(2022) 71, including the draft letter to be sent to the European Parliament by Mr ŠEFČOVIČ.

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 14.48.