



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2023) 2466 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 8 November 2023

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

**of the 2466th meeting of the Commission
held in Strasbourg
(Winston Churchill building)
on Tuesday 12 September 2023
(afternoon)**

PV(2023) 2466 final

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Single sitting: Tuesday 12 September 2023 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.10 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Executive Vice-President	
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Mr SCHMIT	Member	
Mr GENTILONI	Member	
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	Items 11/12 (in part) and 13
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

Absent:

Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President
Ms JOHANSSON	Member
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member

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

Mr MOUTARLIER	Head of Cabinet to Mr BRETON	Items 1 to 11/12 (in part)
Mr ALASEVIČIUS	Member of Mr SINKEVIČIUS's cabinet	

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT
Mr LADENBURGER	Deputy 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 cabinet
Mr WHELAN	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Ms MICELI	Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's cabinet

Secretary: Ms JUHANSONE, Secretary-General, assisted by
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC, Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDA

(OJ(2023) 2466/FINAL)

The Commission took note of that day's agenda.

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF HEADS OF CABINET

(RCC(2023) 2466)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 11 September 2023.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2465th meeting of 6 September 2023 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2023) 151)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 8 September 2023 (RCC(2023) 151).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Common procedure for international protection in the Union and repeal of Directive 2013/32/EU (Regulation) – KELLER report – 2016/0224 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 330.

- **Asylum and migration management and amendment of Council Directive (EC) 2003/109 and the proposed Regulation (EU) XXX/XXX [Asylum and Migration Fund] (Regulation) – TOBÉ report – 2020/0279 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 331.

- **Establishment of the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (Regulation) – 2023/0140 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 291/2.

- **Amendment of Directive 2011/16/EU on administrative cooperation in the field of taxation (Council Directive) – ANDRESEN report – 2022/0413 (CNS)**

Line set out in SP(2023) 429/2.

- **Objections pursuant to Article 112 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament on genetically modified maize MON 87419 and GA21 × T25:**
 - **Authorisation for the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified maize MON87419 pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council – D090109/03 – 2023/2759 (RSP)**
 - **Authorisation for the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified maize GA21 × T25 pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council – D090110/03 – 2023/2760 (RSP)**

Line set out in SP(2023) 444.

- **Oral question O-000036/2023 – Improving firefighters’ working conditions**

Line set out in SP(2023) 445.

- **Oral question O-000039/2023 – Segregation and discrimination of Roma children in education**

Line set out in SP(2023) 446.

- **Resolution of the European Parliament under Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) – Amending the proposed mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context – GOZI report – 2022/2194 (INL)**

Line set out in SP(2023) 411/2.

The Commission approved the line proposed for the following point, for transmission to the European Parliament:

- **Commission replies to the non-legislative resolutions adopted by the European Parliament at its May II, June and July 2023 part-sessions**

Line set out in SP(2023) 436/4.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Establishment of a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amendment of Regulations (EU) 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 (Regulation) – BEER report – 2023/0079 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2023) 443.

- **Type-approval of motor vehicles and engines and of systems, components and separate technical units intended for such vehicles, with respect to their emissions and battery durability (Euro 7) and repeal of Regulations (EC)**

**No 715/2007 and (EC) No 595/2009 (Regulation) – VONDRA report –
2022/0365 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2023) 333.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2023) 30 AND /2)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2023) 30/2 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 6 September 2023.

**6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF
POWERS**

**6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2023) 280 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 4 and 10 September 2023.

**6.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2023) 281 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 4 and 10 September 2023.

**6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2023) 282 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 4 and 10 September 2023 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES
(SEC(2023) 283 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 11 and 15 September 2023.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2023) 284)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2023) 79)

DG EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN AID
OPERATIONS – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2022) 83 TO /4)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), Article 29(1)(b) and Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the 'General Affairs' Directorate in DG European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (PERS(2022) 83 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 28 June and 20 July 2023 (PERS(2022) 83/3 and /4).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr LENARČIČ, it then decided to appoint Ms Mihaela ZUPANCIC to the post.

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

- 8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – SME RELIEF PACKAGE**
(COM(2023) 535 TO /3; RCC(2023) 157)
- 9. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON COMBATING LATE PAYMENT IN COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS**
(COM(2023) 533 AND /2; SWD(2023) 312; SWD(2023) 313; SWD(2023) 314; SEC(2023) 313; RCC(2023) 157)
- 10. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DIRECTIVE ESTABLISHING A HEAD OFFICE TAX SYSTEM FOR MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES, AND AMENDING DIRECTIVE 2011/16/EU**
(COM(2023) 528 AND /2; SWD(2023) 301 AND /2; SWD(2023) 302 AND /2; SWD(2023) 303 AND /2; SEC(2023) 308; RCC(2023) 157)

The PRESIDENT invited the Members responsible to present to the College the package of measures aimed at supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in order to strengthen their competitiveness and resilience. She pointed out that Mr BRETON was unable to contribute to this presentation because he was taking part in the European Parliament's plenary debates.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS welcomed the set of initiatives to address the needs of Europe's SMEs in the current economic climate. The Communication on support for SMEs proposed new measures that would provide them with short-term relief, boost their long-term competitiveness and ensure a level playing field across the Single Market. The new Regulation on combating late payment in commercial transactions

tackled the unfair practice of late payments, which compromised cash flow in SMEs and hampered the competitiveness and resilience of supply chains.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS pointed out that, by establishing a tax system for SMEs based on the rules in the Member State of their head office, the Directive fulfilled the commitments made by the Commission in the Communication on business taxation for the 21st century and the President's State of the Union speech the previous year. An increasing number of small, medium-sized and micro enterprises operated across borders. They thus had to comply with different laws and administrative procedures, including as regards filing their tax returns. The initiative would make it easier for them to file tax returns and cut red tape and compliance costs.

He further clarified that SMEs could either continue to apply different sets of tax rules to their business activities or opt for head office tax rules. This business decision would depend on the scale of compliance costs and the administrative complexity of dealing with different tax rules.

The proposal also contained provisions on the eligibility and termination of the new system to ensure that it was not used for tax avoidance. Those provisions were designed to discourage abuse and aggressive tax planning practices, such as the deliberate transfer of the head office to a Member State with attractive features in its tax system.

As regards the next steps, Mr DOMBROVSKIS noted that in the coming weeks the Commission would present ambitious proposals to achieve the target of reducing reporting obligations by 25%. Those proposals would add to the first steps taken in that direction before the summer. He concluded by stressing the need for collegial work closely involving all Commissioners so as to reduce the regulatory burden on businesses of all sizes and thus strengthen European competitiveness.

Ms JOUROVÁ pointed out that the EU's economy and prosperity were largely based on SMEs operating smoothly. They accounted for 99% of all European companies and provided two thirds of jobs in the private sector, especially at local

level. SMEs had also been disproportionately affected by successive crises in recent years, be it the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war against Ukraine, the energy crisis or rising inflation. Ms JOUROVÁ therefore felt that the Commission should continue to do what was necessary to make life easier for SMEs, including by looking at EU legislation to reduce the administrative burden where possible.

In this regard, on top of all the efforts made in recent years, including additional funding, the Commission was proposing three new initiatives that day. With this package, the Commission was starting a comprehensive process to cut red tape and reporting obligations.

The first initiative in the package was a Communication that listed a set of measures, ranging from reducing the administrative burden to supporting SMEs in recruiting a diversity of talent.

The second initiative was a proposal for a Regulation to address late payments, which weighed heavily on SMEs by reducing their liquidity and resources. By choosing this legislative instrument – a Regulation rather than a Directive – the Commission was proposing stricter and more rigorous rules. Among the planned improvements, a fixed 30-day payment deadline was introduced.

The third initiative was a proposal for a Directive establishing a head office tax system, which should also lead to a significant reduction in compliance costs.

Ms JOUROVÁ pointed out that, despite its efforts, the Commission could not remove all regulatory constraints on SMEs and Member States also had to play their part. However, she welcomed the significant progress reflected in that day's package and stressed the need to prioritise support for SMEs in all the Commission's activities.

Mr GENTILONI highlighted the crucial role of taxation in enabling SMEs to fully benefit from the Single Market. Companies operating across borders faced a heavy

administrative burden and compliance costs that mainly penalised SMEs, limiting their expansion in other Member States.

On average SMEs spent 2.5% of their turnover on tax compliance, which was three to four times more than large companies. He added that 90% of compliance costs in the EU, amounting to EUR 54 billion a year, were borne by companies with fewer than 10 employees.

Faced with this challenge, the Commission was proposing that day that an SME with establishments in different Member States should only have to deal with the tax authorities where it had its head office. By opting for this approach, the SME's taxes would be determined solely by the rules of that Member State. This would allow it to submit a single tax return, which would then be shared with the Member States where the company had permanent establishments.

In conclusion, Mr GENTILONI considered that this system would reduce compliance costs for SMEs, freeing up resources for investment and job creation. He welcomed the initiative, which would simplify tax procedures, harmonise rules and centralise administrative dealings.

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

- the positive conclusions in the report on the first full year, in 2022, of the Commission's application of the 'one in, one out' principle, which aimed to reduce the administrative burden on businesses;
- in this context, the importance of Commission departments systematically considering the cost of reporting obligations and the administrative burden when drawing up their proposals;
- the potential benefit of increased use of artificial intelligence to reduce those administrative obligations;

- the need to also tackle the skill shortages especially affecting SMEs, in particular by investing in skills development and lifelong learning.

The PRESIDENT concluded by stressing the need for all Commission departments to work together to achieve the target of a 25% reduction in reporting obligations for businesses. In particular, she highlighted the need for an overview of the administrative burden imposed by EU legislation, along the lines of the transparency exercise already carried out by the Directorate-General for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union (DG FISMA). In future, artificial intelligence could contribute to easing these obligations, for example by filtering important information, which could then be provided a single time by companies before being disseminated to all relevant stakeholders.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- approved the Communication in COM(2023) 535/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and, for information, to the national parliaments;
- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2023) 533/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the national parliaments and, for information, to the Committee of the Regions, together with the staff working document, the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2023) 312, SWD(2023) 314, SWD(2023) 313 and SEC(2023) 313, the contents of which were noted;
- adopted the proposal for a Council Directive in COM(2022) 528/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the national parliaments and the European Data Protection Supervisor, together with the staff working document, the impact assessment and the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny

Board in SWD(2023) 301/2, SWD(2023) 302/2, SWD(2023) 303/2 and SEC(2023) 308, the contents of which were noted.

11. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DIRECTIVE ON BUSINESS IN EUROPE: FRAMEWORK FOR INCOME TAXATION (BEFIT)

(COM(2023) 532 TO /3; SWD(2023) 301 AND /2; SWD(2023) 308 AND /2; SWD(2023) 309 AND /2; SEC(2023) 308; RCC(2023) 158)

12. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DIRECTIVE ON TRANSFER PRICING

(COM(2023) 529 TO /3; SWD(2023) 301 AND /2; SWD(2023) 308 AND /2; SWD(2023) 309 AND /2; SEC(2023) 308; RCC(2023) 158)

Mr DOMBROVSKIS presented to the College the package of measures consisting of two proposals for Directives aimed at reducing tax compliance costs for large cross-border businesses in the European Union.

He explained that the first proposal, which established a framework for income taxation in Europe (BEFIT), would make life easier for both businesses and tax authorities by introducing a new, single set of rules to determine the tax base of groups of companies. These new rules were based on the international tax agreement on a global minimum level of taxation, concluded in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the G20, and on the Directive adopted by the Council on 15 December 2022 aimed at ensuring a global minimum level of taxation for multinational enterprise groups and domestic groups in the EU.

The package being tabled that day would address the challenges of digitalising the economy and resolve the resulting problems, including the global asymmetry between jurisdictions where profits were made and where they were taxed. It would also help to reduce fragmentation of the internal market along tax borders and thus close a gap in the area of corporate taxation.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS noted that, although the majority of Member States were committed to applying the OECD guidelines on transfer pricing (i.e. the pricing of transactions between companies that formed part of the same group), the status and implementation of these guidelines currently differed from one Member State to another. This created complexity and an uneven playing field for businesses, and left scope for profit shifting and aggressive tax planning. Therefore, this package of measures also included a proposal to harmonise transfer pricing rules across the EU and ensure a common approach.

Introducing the “arm’s length” principle into EU law would ensure that EU Member States applied the same principle. It would also open the way to implementing a mechanism for coordination among the Member States on the interpretation of the OECD transfer pricing guidelines.

Mr GENTILONI explained that the new rules determining the tax base for corporate groups would be mandatory for only around 4 000 groups operating in the EU, i.e. groups that had annual combined revenues of at least EUR 750 million and whose parent entity held at least 75% of the ownership rights or rights giving entitlement to profit.

He also pointed out that these rules replaced the Commission’s proposals on the Common Corporate Tax Base (CCTB) and that, once implemented, they could lead to a reduction of up to 65% in the tax compliance costs of businesses operating in the EU. He saw the proposed measures as a substantial step forward towards the introduction of a common corporate tax base. Although the measures would have to be adopted unanimously by the Member States, there was now the political will to consider concluding an agreement.

As regards the proposed transfer pricing Directive, the complexity of the rules currently in force and the lack of harmonisation caused a number of problems, including profit shifting and tax avoidance, litigation and the risk of double taxation as well as high compliance costs. More specifically, Mr GENTILONI noted that, in

2021 alone, there had been nearly 2 300 cases where disputes between Member States on transfer pricing issues had gone to a resolution procedure. The main aims of the proposed Directive were therefore to increase tax certainty and mitigate the risk of litigation and double taxation. The Directive would also further reduce the opportunities for companies to use transfer pricing for aggressive tax planning purposes.

By way of conclusion, Mr GENTILONI welcomed the fact that, with the adoption of these ambitious measures, the EU was able to take another key step towards simpler, clearer and more cost-effective tax systems.

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

- in the broader context of the package of support measures for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the need for urgent and ambitious action to support European SMEs and the importance of the systematic implementation of the “SME test” by all Commission services, in particular for initiatives identified as relevant to them;
- a reminder that the Commission’s proposals to reduce the administrative burden on SMEs were eagerly awaited, as the cumulative effect of the regulatory framework could lead to a decrease of the ability of businesses to innovate or decarbonise.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- adopted the proposal for a Council Directive in COM(2023) 532/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the national parliaments, and, for information, to the European Data Protection Supervisor, together with the staff working document, the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the

Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2023) 301/2, SWD(2023) 308/2, SWD(2023) 309/2 and SEC(2023) 308, the contents of which were noted;

- adopted the proposal for a Council Directive in COM(2023) 529/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the national parliaments and the European Data Protection Supervisor, together with the staff working documents, the impact assessment and the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2023) 301/2, SWD(2023) 308/2, SWD(2022) 309/2 and SEC(2022) 308, the contents of which were noted.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The PRESIDENT updated the College on the results of the G20 Summit held in New Delhi on 9-10 September. She highlighted the Indian presidency's skilfulness in securing a joint declaration that included a reference to the war in Ukraine and emphasised the core principle that states should abstain from using force to compromise the territorial integrity or political independence of any nation. She also informed Members of the College about the African Union being admitted as a permanent member of the G20, hinting at the possibility of it being renamed the “G21” the following year.

She noted that parallel events during the summit had played a pivotal role in strengthening diplomatic ties. Crucially, cooperation with African nations had successfully addressed Russian misinformation surrounding the Black Sea Grain Initiative. In addition, she welcomed the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding to foster the creation of an India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor. This would include a strategic railway linking key trade hubs via ports as well as the development and export of clean energy, primarily through a green

hydrogen pipeline.

The PRESIDENT further explained that the two key topics discussed during the main session of the summit had been climate finance and the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence (AI). Regarding climate finance, where discussions had focused on ways to fund developing partners' green transition as well as the issue of climate debt, she underscored the EU's commitment to working on practical solutions. In the field of AI, the accelerating pace of technological development, especially regarding generative AI, had resonated as a significant concern among partners. The G20 members had also deliberated on strategies to make digital infrastructure both affordable and universally accessible, and the EU Digital Covid Certificate had been showcased as a global standard.

Mr BORRELL then informed the College of the latest developments in external relations, specifically addressing the recent earthquakes in Morocco, the devastating floods in eastern Libya and the deteriorating situation in the Sahel region.

Morocco had already received assistance from several countries, and the EU stood ready to provide and coordinate humanitarian and rescue aid, pending an official request from the Moroccan authorities to activate the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Concerning Libya, recent information indicated that the flooding in the eastern part of the country had caused extensive damage, likely resulting in the loss of thousands of lives. Given the magnitude of the devastation, Mr BORRELL called for the same level of commitment and solidarity as that shown towards Morocco. The situation in the Sahel region also remained precarious, with several *coups d'état* having taken place recently.

Mr BORRELL then debriefed the College on his recent visit to Georgia, during which he had met with the country's President, toured the EU's 300-member mission, and visited a refugee camp. Notably, a significant portion of the Georgian population – around 80% – strongly favoured European integration. He had conveyed to Georgian officials the Union's openness to enlargement, emphasising

that Georgia should first meet all political and economic criteria.

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

- as regards the G20 Summit declaration, regret over the shift in the wording from the “Russian war against Ukraine” to the “war in Ukraine”, while recognising the need to reach a consensus and welcoming the inclusion of fundamental principles in the text;
- the reminder that several EU Member States stood ready to provide assistance to Morocco as soon as the activation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism was requested by Moroccan authorities; the need to intervene swiftly as the likelihood of rescuing people from the rubble decreased with each passing day;
- in the absence of an official request, a reference to the fact that the EU had already committed around EUR 1 million in aid and initiated a mapping exercise through the Copernicus Emergency Management Service;
- regarding Libya, the request by the Commission of an Aristotle report on the extent of the damage, and the various outreach activities involving the regional authorities in eastern Libya to assess needs and coordinate the EU response;
- the results of a recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where discussions focused on strengthening the justice system, combatting corruption, deepening economic cooperation and exploring a potential partnership on critical raw materials;
- the potential need of deploying an EU electoral observation mission in the DRC in view of the upcoming year-end elections;
- the prospect of organising an international conference on transitional justice in the DRC, jointly with the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Addressing some of the points raised during the discussion, the PRESIDENT mentioned that she had spoken directly with the Moroccan Prime Minister to assure him of the EU's readiness to coordinate humanitarian and rescue aid, and pointed out that the Union Civil Protection Mechanism would be activated promptly upon receiving an official request from the Moroccan authorities.

Highlighting a worrying trend, the PRESIDENT referred to the recent spate of natural disasters both within and outside the EU. She drew attention to the case of Greece, which had faced record wildfires, closely followed by unprecedented and devastating floods. Italy had also been hit by severe flooding. These disasters were indicative of the pervasive effects of climate change. She concluded by underscoring the pressing need to replenish the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF), to ensure the EU's preparedness in confronting such challenging natural disasters.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 14.21.