



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2025) 2536 final

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Strasbourg, 21 October 2025

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2536th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 3 September 2025

(morning)

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Single sitting: Wednesday 3 September 2025 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.08 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Ms RIBERA	Executive Vice-President	
Ms VIRKKUNEN	Executive Vice-President	
Mr SÉJOURNÉ	Executive Vice-President	
Ms KALLAS	High Representative / Vice-President	
Ms MÎNZATU	Executive Vice-President	
Mr FITTO	Executive Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Member	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member	
Ms ŠUICA	Member	
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	
Mr KUBILIUS	Member	
Ms KOS	Member	Items 1 to 13
Mr SÍKELA	Member	Items 1 to 13
Mr KADIS	Member	
Ms ALBUQUERQUE	Member	
Ms LAHBIB	Member	
Mr BRUNNER	Member	
Mr SERAFIN	Member	Items 1 to 23 (in part)
Mr JØRGENSEN	Member	
Ms ZAHARIEVA	Member	
Mr McGRATH	Member	
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member	
Mr HANSEN	Member	
Mr MICALLEF	Member	

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Absent:

Mr HOEKSTRA	Member
Ms ROSWALL	Member

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service	
Ms PINHO	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Mr ADAM	Deputy Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr SALMI	Deputy Director-General, DG Human Resources and Security	Item 1
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Ms BUKA	Secretariat-General	

Secretary: Ms JUHANSONE, Secretary-General, assisted by Mr TAQUET-GRAZIANI, Acting Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General.

1. SECURITY COLLEGE

The Commission held the fourth meeting of its Security College, with the participation of high-level experts from the Netherlands' general intelligence and security service, the Finnish armed forces, and the Lithuanian national security department. The meeting was dedicated to an exchange of views and information on recent developments in international relations.

2. AGENDAS

(OJ(2025) 2536/FINAL; SEC(2025) 2536/FINAL)

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

3. WEEKLY MEETING OF HEADS OF CABINET

(RCC(2025) 2536)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 1 September 2025.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

(PV(2025) 2530; PV(2025) 2530, PART II; PV(2025) 2531; PV(2025) 2531, PART II)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2530th and 2531st meetings of 25 June and 2 July 2025, and held over approval of the minutes of its 2532nd, 2533rd, 2534th and 2535th meetings of 8, 16 and 28 July and 20 August 2025 for a later date.

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5. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (RCC(2025) 187)

The Commission took note of the outcome of the written exchange of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) for the week from 25 to 29 August 2025 (RCC(2025) 187).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Amendment of Directive (EU) 2015/2302 to make the protection of travellers more effective and to simplify and clarify certain aspects of the Directive (Directive) – AGIUS SALIBA report – 2023/0435 (COD)**

Line set out in SP(2025) 239.

- **Oral question O-000022/2025 – Taxation of large digital platforms in light of international developments**

Line set out in SP(2025) 307.

- **Conclusion, on behalf of the EU, of the Amending Protocol to the Agreement between the EU and Switzerland on the automatic exchange of financial account information to improve international tax compliance (Council Decision) – 2025/0199 (NLE) / Signing, on behalf of the EU, and provisional application of the Amending Protocol to the Agreement between the EU and Switzerland on the automatic exchange of financial account information to improve international tax compliance (Council Decision) – 2025/0200 (NLE)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 253.

**6. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2025) 226)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2025) 226 of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) covering the period from 17 July to 29 August 2025.

7. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

**7.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2025) 205 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 14 July and 31 August 2025.

**7.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2025) 206 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 14 July and 31 August 2025.

**7.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2025) 207 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 14 July and 31 August 2025 archived in Decide.

**7.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED
(SEC(2025) 208 AND /2)**

The Commission took note of the written procedures specifically identified for which the time limit expired between 1 and 5 September 2025.

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**7.5. COMMISSION DECISION ON REPEALING CERTAIN OBSOLETE DECISIONS GRANTING EMPOWERMENTS AND DIRECT DELEGATIONS OF POWERS, AND AMENDING CERTAIN DECISIONS AS REGARDS OBSOLETE EMPOWERMENTS AND DIRECT DELEGATIONS OF POWERS
(C(2025) 5627)**

The Commission adopted the decision in C(2025) 5627, repealing or amending, for reasons of legal certainty and the smooth running of the Commission, 44 decisions granting empowerments and direct delegations of powers which had become obsolete.

**7.6. COMMISSION DECISION GRANTING AN EMPOWERMENT AND A DELEGATION OF POWERS RELATING TO THE ADOPTION OF CERTAIN MEASURES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REGULATION (EU, EURATOM) 2024/2509 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AND REPEALING COMMISSION DECISION C(2023) 4867
(C(2025) 5239)**

The Commission decided:

- to empower the Member of the Commission responsible for budget to adopt measures for the implementation of the Financial Regulation, on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility, and subject to the conditions laid down in Article 2 and Articles 5 to 7 of the Decision;
- to empower the Member of the Commission responsible for crisis management to reject or accept, in exceptional circumstances, donations in kind to the EU, on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility, and subject to the conditions laid down in Articles 5 to 7 of the Decision;

- to grant a delegation to the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Budget and the Director-General of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations to adopt preparatory and precautionary measures relating, respectively, to donations and donations in kind to the EU, on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility, and subject to the conditions laid down in Articles 5 to 7 of the Decision;
- to repeal Commission Decision C(2023) 4867.

The Commission adopted the Decision in C(2025) 5239.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2025) 209)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2025) 71)

8.1. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – EUROPEAN COMMISSION DECISIONS ON POST TERM-OF-OFFICE ACTIVITIES OF FORMER MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

(C(2025) 9023; C(2025) 9024)

The Commission decided that the professional activities envisaged by Mr Johannes HAHN and Mr Nicolas SCHMIT after leaving office as Members of the Commission were compatible with Article 245(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and with the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, subject to certain conditions and obligations.

The Commission adopted the Decisions set out in C(2025) 9023 and C(2025) 9024.

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8.2. AUTHORISATION TO APPEAR AS A WITNESS IN AN INVESTIGATION AND REQUEST FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE OF A FORMER COMMISSIONER

(C(2025) 6028)

The Commission adopted the Decision in C(2025) 6028.

9. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ESTABLISHING THE SINGLE MARKET AND CUSTOMS PROGRAMME FOR THE PERIOD 2028-2034 AND REPEALING REGULATIONS (EU) 2021/444, (EU) 2021/690, (EU) 2021/785, (EU) 2021/847 AND (EU) 2021/1077

(COM(2025) 590 TO /3; SWD(2025) 592; SWD(2025) 593; SEC(2025) 592; RCC(2025) 81)

10. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ESTABLISHING THE JUSTICE PROGRAMME FOR THE PERIOD 2028-2034 AND REPEALING REGULATION (EU) 2021/693

(COM(2025) 463 AND /2; SWD(2025) 550; SWD(2025) 551; SEC(2025) 547; RCC(2025) 81)

11. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION ESTABLISHING THE RESEARCH AND TRAINING PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN ATOMIC ENERGY COMMUNITY FOR THE PERIOD 2028-2032, COMPLEMENTING HORIZON EUROPE, THE FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION, AND PROVIDING FOR THE COMMUNITY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE ITER PROJECT, AND REPEALING REGULATION (EURATOM) 2025/1304

(COM(2025) 594 AND /2; SWD(2025) 594; SWD(2025) 595; RCC(2025) 82)

- 12. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION ESTABLISHING THE INSTRUMENT FOR NUCLEAR SAFETY COOPERATION AND DECOMMISSIONING FOR THE PERIOD 2028-2034 AND REPEALING REGULATIONS (EURATOM) 2021/100 AND (EURATOM) 2021/948 (COM(2025) 598; SWD(2025) 254; RCC(2025) 82)**
- 13. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DECISION AMENDING DECISION (EU) 2021/1764 ON THE ASSOCIATION OF THE OVERSEAS COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION INCLUDING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION ON THE ONE HAND, AND GREENLAND AND THE KINGDOM OF DENMARK ON THE OTHER (COM(2025) 599 AND /2; SWD(2025) 625; SWD(2025) 626; RCC(2025) 83)**

The PRESIDENT introduced the second package of sectoral proposals complementing the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) proposal for 2028-2034, and invited the Members responsible to present those proposals.

Mr SÉJOURNÉ first mentioned the Single Market and Customs Programme. He pointed out that the proposed approach involved creating a single and cohesive framework to bring together several existing instruments, namely the Single Market Programme, the Customs Programme, the Customs Control Equipment Instrument, the Fiscalis Programme and the Union Anti-Fraud Programme. This would make it possible to speed up the completion of the Single Market, remove cross-border barriers and strengthen cooperation between national administrations.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ added that the Single Market and Customs Programme would also help to improve consumer protection, develop common standards within the EU and cut red tape with respect to customs, taxation and the fight against fraud. The proposed budget stood at EUR 6.2 billion, making it twice the size of the current envelope.

With regard to the Justice Programme, Ms VIRKKUNEN noted that, although it was an autonomous programme, there were significant synergies with other

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initiatives, particularly the AgoraEU Programme. She also stressed the importance of ensuring that suppliers that were deemed high risk were excluded from EU-funded programmes.

Mr McGRATH pointed out that the Justice Programme was a key tool for safeguarding the rule of law in the face of emerging threats and criminality. He highlighted the focus on strengthening judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters, training judges and ensuring equality of access to justice for citizens and businesses, especially in a cross-border context. He noted that the programme's budget came to almost EUR 800 million, nearly double the allocation under the current financial framework, and stressed that a sufficiently resourced justice system was a cornerstone of the EU's competitiveness. Major investments in digitalisation were also planned under the programme to speed up procedures and modernise access to justice.

Ms ZAHARIEVA then presented the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). She noted that the programme had evolved considerably over the last decade, with renewed interest in emerging technologies and their market uptake. While Member States were still free to choose their own energy mix, the programme supported nuclear safety, safeguards, radiation protection and radioactive waste management, as well as non-energy applications of nuclear science, in particular in the field of health.

Moreover, the programme helped to conserve the critical skills that Europe needed to allow the sector to progress and contributed to developing fusion energy as a viable, large-scale and carbon-free energy source, thus stimulating innovation and industrial development. In a context where the EU's competitors were investing heavily in small modular reactors, Ms ZAHARIEVA considered it particularly noteworthy that funding for the programme had been doubled, with a substantial portion allocated to the ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor) project, the most ambitious fusion project in the world.

Mr JØRGENSEN felt that nuclear energy would continue to play a major role in Europe's energy supply over the coming decades. It was projected that production capacity would increase steadily, owing mainly to small modular reactors, and he stressed that there could be no compromise on safety and that strict safety requirements needed to remain in place.

With reference to ITER, he explained that the aim of the project was to reproduce the energy generated by the sun on Earth, which required specific facilities to be installed. While fusion was a long-term objective, considerable investment had already been made and other foreign powers were also investing heavily in this area, thus underscoring the need for continued commitment from Europe. Over the next seven years, the European Union would make a significant financial contribution to ITER, which brought together more than 530 companies and many subcontractors.

Presenting the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation and Decommissioning, Ms KALLAS stressed the importance of supporting international partners with regard to nuclear decommissioning, in particular Ukraine, where the need was urgent, as well as the Western Balkans, Türkiye, West Africa and potentially Iran.

Mr SÍKELA pointed out that, since the Chernobyl and Fukushima disasters, the EU had established itself as a global leader on nuclear safety. The proposed programme introduced greater flexibility and would boost international cooperation.

Ms KALLAS then said that support for the thirteen overseas countries and territories (OCTs), which included Greenland and New Caledonia, would continue to be covered by a separate instrument that would receive a higher allocation under the next financial framework thanks to an envelope of almost EUR 1 billion for 2028-2034. OCTs were of major geopolitical and strategic importance to Europe as they played a vital role as critical outposts of the EU in their geographical areas. She stressed the importance of maintaining this support.

Mr SÍKELA added that the current funding programme was coming to an end at the same time as the current financial framework, making it essential to prepare for the

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next cycle. The OCTs were listed in the EU Treaties and were home to around one million people, but they were not European territories and were not subject to the *acquis communautaire*. He also stressed that, in its proposal of 16 July, the Commission had proposed that support for the OCTs be incorporated into the Global Europe Instrument, while ensuring that OCTs remained eligible for EU programmes.

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

- the College’s support for this second set of sectoral proposals complementing the next Multiannual Financial Framework;
- the importance of providing specific support for Greenland in the light of recent foreign interference.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2025) 590/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Court of Auditors, the European Economic and Social Committee, the national parliaments, and, for information, to the Committee of the Regions, together with the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2025) 592, SWD(2025) 593 and SEC(2025) 592, the contents of which were noted;
- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2025) 463/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments, together with the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2025) 550, SWD(2025) 551 and SEC(2025) 547, the contents of which were noted;

- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2025) 594/2, for transmission to the Council, and, for information, to the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the national parliaments, together with the impact assessment and the summary thereof in SWD(2025) 594 and SWD(2025) 595, the contents of which were noted;
- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2025) 598, for transmission to the Council, the European Parliament and, for information, to the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2025) 254, the contents of which were noted;
- adopted the proposal for a Council Decision in COM(2025) 599/2, for transmission to the Council, the European Parliament and the national parliaments, together with the impact assessment and the summary thereof in SWD(2025) 625 and SWD(2025) 626, the contents of which were noted.

14. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ON THE SIGNING, ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, AND PROVISIONAL APPLICATION OF THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES, OF THE ONE PART, AND THE COMMON MARKET OF THE SOUTH, THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC, THE FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL, THE REPUBLIC OF PARAGUAY AND THE ORIENTAL REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY, OF THE OTHER PART (COM(2025) 356 TO /3; RCC(2025) 79)

15. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ON THE CONCLUSION, ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, OF THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES, OF THE ONE PART, AND THE COMMON MARKET OF THE SOUTH, THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC, THE FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL, THE REPUBLIC OF PARAGUAY AND THE ORIENTAL
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REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY, OF THE OTHER PART

(COM(2025) 357 TO /3; RCC(2025) 79)

- 16. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ON THE SIGNING, ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, OF THE INTERIM AGREEMENT ON TRADE BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION, OF THE ONE PART, AND THE COMMON MARKET OF THE SOUTH, THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC, THE FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL, THE REPUBLIC OF PARAGUAY AND THE ORIENTAL REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY, OF THE OTHER PART**

(COM(2025) 338 TO /3; RCC(2025) 79)

- 17. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ON THE CONCLUSION, ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, OF THE INTERIM AGREEMENT ON TRADE BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION, OF THE ONE PART, AND THE COMMON MARKET OF THE SOUTH, THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC, THE FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL, THE REPUBLIC OF PARAGUAY AND THE ORIENTAL REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY, OF THE OTHER PART**

(COM(2025) 339 TO /3; RCC(2025) 79)

- 18. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ON THE SIGNING, ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, AND PROVISIONAL APPLICATION OF THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND COOPERATION STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES, OF THE ONE PART, AND THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES, OF THE OTHER PART**

COM(2025) 809; RCC(2025) 80)

- 19. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ON THE CONCLUSION, ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, OF THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND COOPERATION STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

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**BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES, OF THE
ONE PART, AND THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES, OF THE OTHER
PART**

COM(2025) 810; RCC(2025) 80)

- 20. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ON THE SIGNING, ON BEHALF
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, OF THE INTERIM AGREEMENT ON
TRADE BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED
MEXICAN STATES**

COM(2025) 811; RCC(2025) 80)

- 21. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ON THE CONCLUSION, ON
BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, OF THE INTERIM AGREEMENT
ON TRADE BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED
MEXICAN STATES**

COM(2025) 812; RCC(2025) 80)

The PRESIDENT presented the proposals on EU trade agreements with Mercosur and Mexico. She first referred to the history of the negotiations with the Mercosur countries, which had lasted for more than 25 years, and stressed the need for new political momentum to complete them. She highlighted the scale of the agreement, covering around a quarter of the world's population and GDP.

Acknowledging the continuing concerns, especially in the agricultural sector, the PRESIDENT noted that the Commission was preparing additional flanking measures to address them. A legislative proposal on safeguard clauses would thus be tabled, highlighting the EU's commitment to protecting its farmers in case of market disruption. She also announced that the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) would include an EU financial safety net, and referred to strengthened sanitary and phytosanitary checks to ensure a level playing field for all producers.

Mr SÉJOURNÉ highlighted the geopolitical dimension of the agreements, which he placed in the broader context of the EU's trade diversification strategy. He stressed the need to recreate a strong partnership with Latin America, a region with which Europe had deep linguistic, historical and cultural ties. As regards agriculture, he felt that political acceptability would depend on effective additional guarantees when the Mercosur agreement was concluded.

Ms KALLAS hailed the considerable efforts made by the Commission to conclude the two agreements, noting that they sent a strong signal to the international community and boosted the EU's credibility as a reliable global partner. Beyond trade, she pointed to the impact of the agreements on extending political dialogue, especially in areas such as the digital and green transitions, and the tangible benefits the agreements would bring to European citizens.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ then referred to the key figures in the Mercosur agreement, which he said was the largest ever negotiated by the EU and four times bigger than the agreement with Japan. He stressed the economic significance of the agreement, noting that it would create a market of more than 700 million consumers and bolster Europe's position as the main source of foreign direct investment in Mercosur countries. The agreement was expected to increase EU exports by almost 39%, benefit more than 30 000 European SMEs already operating in the region, support around 430 000 jobs and save more than EUR 4 billion annually in customs duties across all sectors.

By way of example, he mentioned the scrapping of the current 35%-tariffs on automotive equipment and 20% on machinery, as well as much better access to the Latin American market for many European agri-food products such as wine, spirits, olive oil, malt and chocolate, which should increase agricultural exports to Mercosur by around EUR 1.2 billion. In addition, 344 European geographical indications would be protected in Mercosur countries. The agreement would thus help to halt the decline in the EU's market share in the region, particularly compared with China.

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- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

EN

As regards the concerns raised, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stressed that the agreement that had been negotiated included well-calibrated tariff quotas and gradual market opening, together with flanking measures to support farmers. Without reopening the agreement, the Commission would adopt a legal act to clarify the implementation of the safeguard clauses. The clauses would be monitored on a six-monthly basis in full transparency with the European Parliament, the Council and Mercosur partners. Interim measures could then be quickly triggered in the event of a proven risk, such as a sudden rise in imports or a sharp fall in prices in a sensitive sector.

As regards the agreement with Mexico, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ pointed out that Mexico was the EU's second biggest trading partner in Latin America, a major food importer and a key supplier of critical raw materials. EU agri-food exports to Mexico had already amounted to EUR 2.3 billion in 2022, and the agreement would phase out 99% of Mexican tariffs on EU exports, notably for poultry, cheese and pork, generating estimated annual tariff savings of more than EUR 100 million. Furthermore, 336 additional geographical indications would be protected, bringing the total to 567, and new opportunities created for EU firms in services, investment and public procurement. In that regard, the EU had for the first time gained access to public procurement markets at both national and state level. This was unprecedented advantage that no other trading partner of Mexico enjoyed.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ concluded by referring to the aim of signing the Mercosur agreement by the end of the year, and of finalising the Mexico agreement within the same time frame, with a view to signature at the Mexico summit at the beginning of the following year.

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

- the geopolitical and strategic value of both agreements, seen as boosting the EU's resilience, diversifying its partnerships and reducing excessive dependence, in a context of increased global competition;

- the political nature of the agreements, which were welcomed as a major milestone and a strong signal of reliability and solidarity at a time when Europe had to assert its role as a democratic and credible partner on the international stage;
- while recognising the expected benefits, the need to take into account the sensitivities surrounding the Mercosur agreement, especially in the European Parliament and the agricultural world, and to ensure that credible and operational safeguards could be implemented;
- the importance, therefore, of complementing the agreements with clear measures to address the sector's concerns, especially as regards pesticides, meat labelling and promoting European products;
- the need to ensure proper application of the safeguard clauses, supported by clear political messages highlighting the EU's determination to act swiftly when needed;
- the strengthening of sanitary and phytosanitary checks, both in exporting countries and at EU points of entry, to ensure that imported products fully complied with European standards, including a ban on importing prohibited substances into the EU;
- the importance of positive and targeted communication to respond to farmers' concerns and highlight the benefits for European consumers;
- lastly, the expected benefits for the fisheries sector, the Mercosur agreement making it possible to protect tuna processing activities in the EU, facilitate access for European products to those markets and provide greater leverage to promote the sustainability of the sector's activities.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- adopted the proposal for a Council Decision set out in COM(2025) 356/3 for transmission to the Council and, for information, to the European Parliament and the national parliaments;
- adopted the proposal for a Council Decision set out in COM(2025) 357/3 for transmission to the Council and the European Parliament and, for information, to the national parliaments;
- adopted the proposal for a Council Decision set out in COM(2025) 338/3 for transmission to the Council and, for information, to the European Parliament and the national parliaments;
- adopted the proposal for a Council Decision set out in COM(2025) 339/3 for transmission to the Council and the European Parliament and, for information, to the national parliaments;
- adopted the proposal for a Council Decision set out in COM(2025) 809 for transmission to the Council and, for information, to the European Parliament and the national parliaments;
- adopted the proposal for a Council Decision set out in COM(2025) 810 for transmission to the Council and the European Parliament and, for information, to the national parliaments;
- adopted the proposal for a Council Decision set out in COM(2025) 811 for transmission to the Council and, for information, to the European Parliament and the national parliaments;
- adopted the proposal for a Council Decision set out in COM(2025) 812 for transmission to the Council and the European Parliament and, for information, to the national parliaments.

22. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION ON THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE 'COHESION POLICY FOR THE EQUALITY OF THE REGIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE REGIONAL CULTURES' (C(2025) 6015; RCC(2025) 84)

Mr FITTO presented to the College the Commission's response to the European Citizens' Initiative entitled, in the authentic language (English), 'Cohesion policy for the equality of the regions and sustainability of the regional cultures'.

This initiative, initially introduced in 2013, sought to obtain specific recognition and support for regions with distinct national, ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics, described by the organisers as 'national minority regions'.

Several of the proposals put forward by the organisers went beyond the scope of the Commission's remit, given that the EU had to respect the sovereignty and institutional frameworks of the Member States and could not intervene in how such regions were defined or recognised. Moreover, cohesion policy had been strengthened significantly since the initiative's initial submission. Cohesion policy now offered many funding options for minorities, culture and heritage, and incorporated additional legal guarantees to ensure compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights and to prevent all kinds of discrimination.

Reiterating the Commission's commitment to the principles of non-discrimination and protection of minorities, Mr FITTO stated that the current acquis already provided the necessary tools to respond to the concerns expressed by the organisers, both for the current programming period and for the next Multiannual Financial Framework, when the link between EU funding and respect for the rule of law would be strengthened.

He concluded that new EU legislation was neither necessary nor appropriate.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in C(2025) 6015 (i) for notification, in the authentic language (English), to the

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organisers of the initiative, (ii) for publication, for information, in the *Official Journal of the European Union*, and (iii) for transmission, for information, to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

23. OTHER BUSINESS

23.1. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Ms KALLAS briefed the College on the latest developments in the EU's external relations.

She referred first to the recent informal meetings of EU Defence and Foreign Ministers, which had been held in Copenhagen from 28 to 30 August, and to the preparations for the meeting of the Coalition of the Willing in support of Ukraine, scheduled for 4 September in Paris.

In this connection, the consensus of the Member States on the EU's contribution to Ukraine's security guarantees rested on three points. First, support for the Ukrainian armed forces, in particular through the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) in support of Ukraine, the mandate of which would be expanded to allow training on Ukrainian soil, and the efforts under way to reach an agreement on the European Peace Facility. Second, the strengthening of Ukraine's internal security and resilience through the expansion of the EU civilian mission. Third, investment in Ukraine's defence industry, by making use of the windfall profits generated from frozen Russian assets and by encouraging the Member States to use the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) instrument to support Ukraine.

Ms KALLAS stressed that Russia was showing no desire for peace; on the contrary, it was stepping up its attacks on Ukraine, as seen in particular by the substantial damage to the building of the EU Delegation in Kyiv. In this

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context, she noted that the EU Foreign Ministers had agreed on the importance of maintaining pressure on Russia, and that a 19th sanctions package was being prepared. With regard to frozen Russian assets, there was currently no agreement on their use; it would be necessary to examine the legal options to ensure that these assets could eventually be used for Ukraine's reconstruction.

Ms KALLAS also underlined the importance of strengthening dialogue with non-EU countries, in particular at the United Nations General Assembly, in order to build a range of alliances and to consolidate the EU's role as a credible and reliable partner.

On the situation in the Middle East, she noted that it had not yet been possible to reach an agreement in the Council, while stressing the EU's steadfast commitment to diplomatic efforts in the region, its support to the Palestinian Authority, and the humanitarian aid it was providing as the leading donor to the Palestinian people. She also highlighted the broad consensus of the Member States for the two-state solution, and underlined the need to make clear what the EU's role was in the face of perceived inaction.

On Iran, she noted that a new phase had begun with the activation of the 'snapback' mechanism, which set off a 30-day period that could lead to suspended international sanctions being reimposed. This period would be critical for attempts to reach a diplomatic solution. She remained committed to engaging with all parties to give diplomatic channels every chance of success.

On Moldova, Ms KALLAS considered that the legislative elections of 28 September would be crucial and noted that the authorities remained on high alert in the face of all the threats from Russia's hybrid arsenal. She pointed out that, at Moldova's request, the EU had deployed a second rapid

reaction team to boost Moldova's strategic communication capacities ahead of the elections.

Lastly, on Georgia, Ms KALLAS noted that the campaign for the municipal elections of 4 October was being held against a difficult backdrop, marked by the absence of independent observers and the regular dissemination of disinformation by the authorities and pro-government media.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission referred mainly to the recent attacks targeting the Druze community in Syria, which had resulted in heavy civilian losses and the taking of hostages, and the need for an EU response, in particular guaranteeing the delivery of vital humanitarian aid.

In response to the points raised, Ms KALLAS confirmed that the situation was very worrying and emphasised that the EU was already taking measures to address it.

The Commission took note of this information.

23.2. EU-US TRADE RELATIONS

As regards the trade agreement recently concluded between the EU and the US, the PRESIDENT reiterated the importance of maintaining the EU's regulatory sovereignty and of guaranteeing European unity. She stressed that, in the current circumstances, the agreement represented the best possible result.

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

- an acknowledgement of the complexity and volatility of the discussions and a call to preserve unity and collegiality;

- a reminder that the stability created by the agreement was an essential *quid pro quo* for the asymmetrical tariffs and a valuable selling point to companies and citizens;
- a call to stand firm in defending the EU's regulatory autonomy by refusing to water down EU rules in response to outside pressure;
- the need to boost competitiveness and speed up the modernisation of the EU's internal market to compensate for the imbalances created by higher tariffs and bring about sustainable growth;
- the importance for the EU to speed up, in parallel, its defence and security-related investments and ensure its full technological sovereignty;
- the need to supplement the agreement with concrete measures to shield Europe's citizens economically and socially from any negative impact, making the most, in particular, of the ongoing budgetary discussions and the experience with crisis mechanisms such as the European instrument for temporary support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE);
- a reference to ongoing discussions within the International Maritime Organization (IMO) on decarbonising maritime transport, and to the importance of all College Members actively setting out the EU's position in their bilateral and multilateral contacts.

In response to some of the points made, the PRESIDENT underlined that European sovereignty and autonomy, which were red lines for the EU, had not been compromised during the negotiations. She also reminded the College that EU's negotiators had had a clear mandate from Coreper, namely not to exceed 15% customs duties and to exclude sensitive agricultural products, two conditions that were strictly adhered to.

The PRESIDENT therefore welcomed the results obtained, which she considered the best possible outcome when compared to the concessions made by other partners in their bilateral negotiations with the United States. She believed that a trade war would have had a far more significant negative impact. She concluded by pointing out that, in the end, the cost of these increased tariffs on imported goods would be borne by American consumers.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ explained that his US counterparts were deeply convinced that tariffs were a key tool for bringing manufacturing back to the United States, relaunching industry and improving the US budgetary and trading position. This conviction rested on an internal analysis of the US economy, which was deemed to be characterised by job losses, deindustrialisation, the decline of rural communities and a loss of technological edge. Although the EU saw things differently, it had been necessary to take these factors into account in order to reach a compromise.

In the absence of an agreement, the United States would have imposed far higher tariffs, most likely in the region of 30-50%, which would have had serious economic consequences, regardless of any countermeasures taken by the EU. By contrast, the agreement reached had made it possible to avoid further escalation, safeguard 5 million European jobs linked to transatlantic trade, and provide greater stability and predictability for companies and citizens.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ added that this outcome, when seen in conjunction with the success of the NATO summit in The Hague, had strengthened the credibility of the EU and paved the way for a broader dialogue with the US, including on Ukraine, in a more constructive atmosphere.

With regard to implementation, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ indicated that, in the aftermath of the Turnberry agreement, the United States had introduced an all-inclusive tariff ceiling of 15% on EU goods which, until then, had been

subject to reciprocal tariffs. This ceiling would also apply to strategically important sectors, such as pharmaceutical products, semi-conductors and construction lumber.

As regards cars and car parts, the reduction from 27.5% to 15% would apply from the initiation of US legislative procedures, with retroactive effect from 1 August. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ considered this an excellent outcome for the European car industry, with over EUR 500 million in tariffs saved in just one month. He hoped that this measure would soon be formalised by Executive Order, paving the way for new exemptions, notably for aircraft and aircraft parts, unavailable natural resources such as cork, generic pharmaceuticals and their active ingredients, and chemical precursors. He indicated that he would continue to work to secure the future inclusion of additional products, such as wine, spirits and beer, and medical devices.

As regards steel, aluminium and their derivatives, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stressed that the text of the agreement included references to the fight against overcapacity and the search for solutions on tariff quotas. A public consultation had been launched on this topic, with a view to replacing the current steel safeguard, which was due to expire in June 2026.

The agreement imposed no new commitments on non-tariff barriers, and the EU had only committed itself to continuing its current simplification efforts. The concessions granted to the United States did not extend beyond the removal of already low tariffs on certain industrial goods and the introduction of quotas for non-sensitive agri-food products.

He also reminded the College that, although the United States was the EU's main trading partner, it accounted for only 20% of EU exports. The EU should therefore diversify its partnerships and conclude new agreements to boost its resilience.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ concluded by mentioning the multilateral system. He argued that, while the World Trade Organization (WTO) remained an important framework, it displayed serious shortcomings in the way it currently functioned, which benefited some actors, such as China, more than others. He therefore considered that the EU should push for reform and reopen certain controversial questions, such as decision-making by consensus, the classification of China and other countries as ‘developing countries’, or the current rules on subsidies. He would pursue these objectives at both the bilateral and multilateral levels.

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 13.04.