Intervention du président Charles Michel au sommet G5 Sahel par vidéo conférence

Je voudrais d'abord remercier le président Déby et je suis extrêmement heureux, en compagnie du haut représentant Borrell, de vous retrouver, même si c'est de manière virtuelle compte tenu des circonstances pour ce qui me concerne. Et je voudrais saluer tous les amis qui sont présents, soit de manière physique, soit de manière virtuelle, dans le cadre de cette réunion.

Avant cela naturellement, je souhaite saluer tout le travail et les efforts qui ont été accomplis par la Mauritanie et par le Président Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, et former tous nos vœux de succès pour le Tchad et spécialement pour le Président Déby.

Naturellement, j'ai une pensée pour toutes celles et ceux qui sont victimes du terrorisme dans le Sahel et partout dans le monde. Nous n'oublions pas que le terrorisme est un acte fondamental de négation de l'humanité. Et c'est pour cela que nous sommes rassemblés. C'est parce que nous pensons que ces valeurs de dignité pour chaque être humain doivent être défendues par cette mobilisation générale contre le terrorisme.

Alors Monsieur le Président Déby et très chers amis, quelques messages au nom de l'Union européenne.

Le premier message est clair: c'est un message de mobilisation et d'engagement de l'Union européenne en soutien au G5 Sahel, en soutien aux populations. Cet engagement, il est solide, il est durable, il est multifacettes et il est concret. Plusieurs l'ont déjà dit depuis le sommet de Pau à l'initiative de la France, qui joue un rôle extrêmement important, des engagements ont été pris spécialement afin de faire monter en puissance la mobilisation de l'Europe de manière concrète.

Quelques exemples: La MINUSMA: 19 pays européens sur 27 y participent. L'EUTM: 22 pays européens sur 27 y participent. La force Takuba qui a été mentionnée: 9 pays européens sont mobilisés et plusieurs autres sont en train d'étudier la possibilité de rejoindre et de conforter aussi le soutien à la force Takuba.

L'Union européenne, conformément aux engagements pris il y a quelques mois, a pu aussi se mobiliser pour résoudre la question de la mise à disposition d'équipements individuels de protection, de la mise à disposition aussi de véhicules blindés, de véhicules légers; pour la formation de gendarmes ou encore dans les infrastructures. Pour prendre un seul exemple: la route Nouakchott-Rosso, qui a été finalisée à la fin de l'année passée.

Ces quelques exemples concrets montrent que nous voulons être engagés, pas

simplement avec des phrases généreuses et générales, mais nous voulons être dans l'action à vos côtés.

Et puis je voudrais relever quelques points en réaction à ce qui a déjà été dit et vous l'avez indiqué vous-même, Monsieur le Président Déby, j'ai pu en parler directement avec quelques-uns de vos pairs membres du G5 Sahel durant les dernières semaines. C'est la mobilisation dans le cadre des Nations unies. Et nous sommes prêts à activer, comme le président Macron l'a d'ailleurs évoqué, toute la mobilisation politique et diplomatique européenne dans le cadre des Nations unies, avec les membres non permanents comme avec les membres permanents. Nous sommes prêts à tenter de coordonner les positions européennes au sein du Conseil de sécurité en lien avec cette question du chapitre VII et du financement pérenne. Nous voyons bien qu'il y a là un enjeu qui est important, pour lequel nous sommes prêts à être véritablement mobilisés.

Enfin, vous savez que lors de réunions précédentes, nous avons pris des engagements, l'Union européenne, en lien avec la question des dettes. Nous pensons que le débat sur des remises de dettes, partielles ou totales, sur des restructurations de dettes est un débat important. Depuis ces derniers mois, nous avons progressé puisqu'il y a un consensus de plus en plus fort sur le plan européen pour être engagés dans cette direction-là et pouvoir activer notre capacité diplomatique dans les clubs multilatéraux de bailleurs. Des premières initiatives qui vont dans le bon sens ont été prises dans le cadre du Fonds monétaire international avec, pour certains des pays membres du G5 Sahel, un impact direct sur les capacités budgétaires. Nous devons aller au-delà. Nous devons continuer ce débat et c'est aussi en cela que j'ai eu l'occasion de rencontrer des représentants de l'Union africaine pour voir comment, Union européenne, Union africaine, on peut structurer notre travail pour progresser sur ce sujet. Afin, et il y a une cohérence de mon point de vue, de donner des capacités budgétaires aux États et donc de renforcer leurs capacités sur le terrain partout dans les pays concernés et de venir davantage encore en soutien aux populations, notamment aux populations civiles.

Enfin, je conclus, en vous disant que nous sommes tous convaincus que pour les populations du Sahel, pour les populations européennes, nous avons un devoir de résultats. Nous avons une exigence de résultats. Ça doit nous mobiliser de manière totale, de manière complète. Nous apprécions le dialogue politique au plus haut niveau, qui est régulier, qui nous permet de bien comprendre la manière dont on peut progresser, dont on peut surmonter un certain nombre d'obstacles.

L'Union européenne est engagée. Nous voulons travailler pour la confiance, pour l'efficacité. Nous voulons travailler pour un développement économique, social inclusif parce que nous mesurons bien que c'est au travers des différents piliers autour desquels nous coopérons que l'on pourra progresser pour amener de la stabilité, de la sécurité. Vous pouvez compter non seulement sur l'amitié de l'Union européenne, mais aussi sur notre engagement concret pour tenter de progresser avec vous en faveur de la paix, de la sécurité et du développement. Je vous remercie.

Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain third countries concerning restrictive measures against Syria

On 15 January 2021, the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2021/30[1] implementing Council Decision 2013/255/CFSP.

The Council added one person to the list of natural and legal persons, entities or bodies subject to restrictive measures in Annex I to Decision 2013/255/CFSP.

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania[2], and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this Council Decision.

They will ensure that their national policies conform to this Council Decision.

The European Union takes note of this commitment and welcomes it.

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[1] Published on 15.01.2021 in the Official Journal of the European Union no L 12 I, p.3.
[2] The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

ESMA submits IFRS 9 and IAS 20 related questions to IFRS Interpretations Committee

The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), the EU's securities markets regulator, submitted questions related to the accounting for the third series of the European Central Bank's (ECB) Targeted Longer-Term

Refinancing Operations (TLTRO III) to the International Financial Reporting Standards Interpretations Committee (IFRS IC).

ESMA is inviting the IFRS IC to clarify the applicable requirements considering questions related to:

- accounting for the transactions according to requirements of IFRS 9 or IAS 20;
- use of discrete or "blended" effective interest rates to calculate the interest expense; and
- accounting treatment of the changes in estimates of payments due to revised assessment of meeting the eligibility criteria upon application of IFRS 9.

ESMA previously issued a public statement promoting transparency in the IFRS financial statements of banks regarding accounting for the third series of the ECB's TLTRO III. On that occasion, ESMA pointed out that, in practice, there is diversity regarding the accounting treatment of the ECB's TLTRO III refinancing transactions by banks.

Local and regional leaders are crucial to legitimate the bottom-up approach of the Conference on the future of Europe

Representatives from the European Parliament and academia confirm that the CoR should have an important role in gathering input from citizens on permanent basis because local and regional authorities are the closest and most trusted level of government

Members of the CoR commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs – CIVEX – debated on how to strengthen the role of the CoR in the EU governance system, notably for the Conference on the future of Europe in the presence of MEP Domènec Ruiz Devesa (ES/S&D) and Professor Sarah Meyer, research associate at Danube-University Krems. The European Union's democratic foundations are among the main issues that the Conference will address and local and regional authorities are the keepers of the EU's democratic foundations on a daily basis and the ones who most practise participative democracy. It came out of the discussion that the Conference is an opportunity for demonstrating and promoting the role of the CoR as the institutional representative of cities and regions in the EU decision-making process within the framework of the existing Treaties. In a

broader perspective, Treaty changes towards more legislative powers to the CoR could be considered in order to strengthen the democratic dimension of the EU.

The Conference on the future of Europe will bring together in open, inclusive and transparent debates citizens, civil society, national, regional and local authorities and European institutions in order to give a new impulse to the European project and to strengthen European democracy. It is expected to be launched on 9 May, Europe Day 2021, with a delay of one year due to the covid-19 pandemic.

The questions raised during the debate were whether the current EU legal framework allows the CoR to fully play its role of voice of cities and regions in the EU and which specific role could be foreseen in the Conference on the future of Europe for the CoR and LRAs in a process led by the 3 EU-institutions European Commission, European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

Mark Speich (DE/EPP), Secretary of State for Federal, European and International Affairs, North Rhine-Westphalia and Chair of the CoR CIVEX commission said: "We as politicians at the regional and local level must formulate concrete ideas about the European Union of the future. We need a clear vision for the future of a Europe of the regions. The clearer this vision is, the more effectively we can take the necessary steps for its realization and use the Conference on the Future of Europe as an opportunity in the process. We are constantly calling for greater consideration of local and regional authorities in European decision-making and legislation. Now it is essential to develop clear proposals so that this demand is also explicitly enshrined institutionally and procedurally."

MEP Domènec Ruiz Devesa (ES/S&D) S&D coordinator in the European Parliament AFCO Committee presented the EP pilot project on *Building Europe with local entities* and explained how CoR members could contribute: "In order to bring Europe closer to its citizens and in the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe we should strengthen the European dimension in the work with local and regional policy makers, setting up a more structured and permanent participatory way beside civil society organizations, social partners and citizens. With this goal, the Pilot Project "BELE – Building Europe with Local Entities" will be implemented to strengthen the direct communication to the citizens on political initiatives carried out by the Union through periodical declarations to media and debates led by local authorities. We have the responsibility to ensure with these initiatives that the Conference accomplishes a bottom-up approach for reaching a meaningful dialogue".

Sarah Meyer, research associate at Danube-University Krems presented the **REGIOPARL** project which aims at looking into how the regional and local level can be crucial players for democratic participation and proper functioning of effective representation and problem solving in the EU democratic system of multilevel governance said: "As the Council clearly advocates a policy-first approach towards the Conference on the Future of Europe, the CoR could devote its efforts to a consequent and systematic inclusion of the regional and

local perspective in all activities and outcomes of the Conference, topic-by-topic. When it comes to the direct involvement of citizens, expectation management will be crucial, since participation without decision-making or agenda-setting power is not likely to underpin the democratic legitimacy of EU policy-making."

Contact:
Marie-Pierre Jouglain
mariepierre.jouglain@cor.europa.eu
Mobile: +32 473 52 41 15

Remarks by Paschal Donohoe following the Eurogroup video conference of 15 February 2021

Good evening to all of you. Before I debrief you on today's Eurogroup, let me mention that we had the chance to welcome two new colleagues to our meeting today – the new Italian minister, Daniele Franco, whose government was just sworn in this weekend, and indeed, it was his first day in his new role. And the new Estonian minister, Mrs. Keit Pentus-Rosimannus, who presented the policy priorities of the new Estonian government. The Commission also presented its assessment on the updated draft budgetary plan that Lithuania presented after the formation of their new government in December.

So moving to the substance of the meeting, the Eurogroup continues to engage very closely in the health and economic situation of the euro area. We started today with an update on the health situation from Dr. Mike Ryan and Dr. Bruce Aylward of the World Health Organisation, which informed our discussions on the economic situation. The faster we can overcome this pandemic, the quicker we can deal with its economic consequences.

Dr. Ryan and Dr. Aylward both emphasised that a high level of uncertainty remains, especially with regard to the circulation of the virus and the emergence of new variants. But they also highlighted the huge progress that has been made in terms of testing, treatment and vaccination since coronavirus emerged one year ago. The steady progress of the vaccination campaigns in particular raises the prospect of gradual change. The commission's economic forecast confirms that economic growth is expected to resume in the spring after a very challenging winter. The forecast is premised on a gradual opening up of the economy in the first half of the year, and an acceleration of growth in the second half of the year.

This gradual recovery will of course be supported and reinforced by the joint Recovery Fund. The RRF, which will enter into force on the 18th of February, will play an important role in ensuring a sustained and robust economic recovery as opposed to just a temporary rebound.

But the situation remains serious. The level of employment is clearly well below where we want it to be. And while COVID-19 has affected every part of the economy of the eurozone, it has been a particular challenge for young women and men, but also those who are employed in contact-intensive parts of our economies. This reaffirms the need to continue protecting our citizens from this pandemic and for supportive economic policies to remain in place for as long as they are needed. There is an inherent risk of withdrawing support too early, as opposed to withdrawing it too late.

In light of the uncertainty and challenge, there continues to be a great need to coordinate our monetary and our budgetary efforts. From a Eurogroup perspective, it is important that we approach national budgetary preparations in a coordinated manner to help shape our policy decisions, particularly as the process of vaccination gathers steam and our recovery slowly begins.

And we have learnt so much in dealing with this disease. It is good to note that lockdowns were more targeted the second time round and that many businesses and households have been able to adapt to changing and very challenging circumstances.

And when we start to emerge from the health crisis, our policy response will need to adapt gradually. It’s something we will be talking about regularly in the coming months because we all have an interest in a successful and a united return to growth. We will soon be issuing the schedule that we have agreed for the discussions that we will be having on budgetary policy. And my aim is to reach a common understanding on the appropriate budgetary stance by the summer so that we can guide our budgetary discussions for next year.

The second main topic on our agenda concerned the international role of the euro. This discussion took place on the basis of the Commission communication of 19 January on the European economic and financial system. The aim is to reduce our dependence on other currencies and to strengthen our autonomy in various situations. At the same time, an increased international use of our currency also implies potential trade-offs which we will continue to monitor.

Ministers also agreed that our actions to support the international role of the euro should be broad-based, encompassing progress on amongst other things, Economic and Monetary Union, Banking Union, Capital Markets Union and the implementation of Next Generation EU. During the discussion, ministers also emphasised the potential of green bond issuance to enhance the use of the euro by the markets while also contributing to achieving our climate transition objectives.

Let me emphasise in conclusion that this discussion is not about rivalling other currencies, but it is instead about increasing the resilience of our own currency and giving our firms and our citizens greater choice and security. We’ll be coming back to some of these issues soon to prepare a

Leaders’ discussion on this topic in March.

Finally, we took stock of the state of play with the solvency of the corporate sector. The support that we have put in place at the national level and the framework we have agreed at the European level have all helped to keep many businesses afloat during lockdowns. This has been a success story, but we are aware that difficult times could lie ahead. Most businesses certainly have a bright future, but of course, many businesses are going to need time to repair their balance sheets and unfortunately, there could be some that will not be viable in the longer term due to changing health circumstances, and what that will mean for how economies are structured.

As the recovery phase is kicking in, we will move to a phase of more targeted measures with the difficult question of how to identify viable firms that will still need our support. Our insolvency frameworks will need to be adaptable in order to minimise economic damage. And this is a discussion that we will return to in April.

To conclude today’s discussions did acknowledge the many challenges that we are still responding to, that we are still working hard to overcome. It does come down to 3 Cs – certainty, coordination and consensus. In the face of health and economic uncertainty, we are working hard to redouble our coordination efforts to further create a consensus to help the euro area navigate through the uncertainty created by this pandemic. We will be intensifying our efforts to do this in 2021, given the value of this consensus in 2020, and I look forward to working closely, in particular with Commissioner Gentiloni and his colleagues in the Commission and all members of the Eurogroup to help us put in place the strongest policy framework to respond back to challenges which we will overcome.

Visit the meeting page