

Remarks by President Charles Michel after the Eastern Partnership leaders' video conference



Good afternoon. Because of the COVID-19, it was impossible to have a physical meeting with the Eastern Partnership countries, but we had a video conference and we discussed different topics today. The first one is COVID-19, and the consequences of the crisis. The second one is the strategic partnership, and the third one is the future of our partnership.

About COVID-19: we have demonstrated our solidarity. Very quickly, the European Union reacted by providing support and means for our partners in the region. One billion euros has been mobilised in order to support those countries in the region. We have also provided medical equipment like gloves, masks and respirators.

About the strategic partnership: this strong European support clearly shows the importance we give to the Eastern Partnership. Leaders expressed the political will to continue building an area of shared democracy, prosperity and stability, anchored in our shared values, through a rules-based international order and international law. The Eastern Partnership is a foreign policy priority for the European Union, and it will continue to be one, along with our European priorities of democracy, human rights, rule of law, gender equality, structural reforms and fighting disinformation.

Over the last decade, our cooperation has flourished. Trade between the EU and its six partners has doubled. Together, the Eastern Partnership countries are now the EU's 10th largest trading partner. The EU is the number one trading partner for four Eastern Partnership countries and the second trading partner for the other two.

Our association agreements with Ukraine, Georgia and Republic of Moldova provide for accelerating the political association and economic integration with the EU. Millions of these countries' citizens have benefitted from short-term visa-free travel to the EU. The Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with Armenia is being provisionally applied. Negotiations on a new comprehensive agreement with Azerbaijan are at an advanced stage. And we just concluded visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Belarus, which will enter into force on 1st July.

The third topic is the preparation of the physical summit that we will organise in Brussels in March 2021. We have identified five priorities, five important topics that we will tackle together in order to be well prepared and in order to adopt next year a joint declaration.

Je termine ce message en indiquant que cette réunion a été l'occasion de mettre en lumière l'importance stratégique de ce partenariat. Je considère

que nous allons, sur le moyen et sur le long terme, continuer à travailler activement de manière régulière afin de préparer politiquement le sommet qui aura lieu de manière physique à Bruxelles au mois de mars 2021 et qui sera l'occasion de consolider, de conforter ce partenariat qui est essentiel pour des raisons géopolitiques.

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