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MISSIONS FOR GROWTH

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Destinataires : Membres de la Commission
Directeurs généraux et chefs de service

Note to the College

VP Tajani's Missions for Growth

We are now in 2014, the year of new elections for the European Parliament and the year in which the mandate of this Commission ends.

The crisis affected Europe's business image in the world. Entrepreneurs in uncertain product markets, and employees and job seekers in fragile labour markets want to see policy makers take a more active lead in restoring growth and confidence. With this in mind, and concerned by economic data and forecasts showing that whilst 60 % of world GDP in 2030 will be generated in emerging and developing economies and only 13 % of our Small and Medium-sized Enterprises are doing business beyond the borders of the European Union, I developed the Missions for Growth.

I can look back at more than two years of successful Missions for Growth, in which I travelled with groups of business leaders and industrial associations to third countries. My objective with these Missions is to increase the chances of success for our companies in third countries, by opening doors for them to take part in political meetings with the authorities, by organising business-to-business meetings for them and by giving them an insight into the administrative and regulatory environment of these countries.

Just as importantly, I have undertaken these visible and large economic missions to third countries, to do some external marketing for our European internal market.

With the Missions for Growth, I also send a confidence boosting message to the outside world: Europe is in business and will remain in business.

Ten Missions for Growth have been conducted to seventeen different countries, in the Americas (US, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Uruguay), Asia (China, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand), North Africa and the Middle East (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Israel) as well as the Russian Federation. More than 800 participants representing more than 570 companies and business associations from 26 Member States have so far joined me on these Missions. What I have noticed, last year in particular, is that a growing number of companies from a growing number of Member States are joining me in these Missions. A Mission now usually has a delegation of 60-120 companies from around 20 different countries.

I am also pleased that the initial dominance of bigger companies in the delegations has been rectified. At the moment, the business delegation consists of 42 % large companies, 36 % SMEs and 17 % European and national business associations. Given the fact that only 13% of SMEs are active outside the EU, their growing share is particularly encouraging. And for me, this shows that we have responded to a real need of this sector.

All manufacturing sectors are represented in these Missions, in particular the construction, transport and real estate sector (10%), oil, gas and renewables (7%), medical devices and pharmaceuticals (6%) and key enabling technologies (5%). Tourism makes up 8 % of the delegation. I am always keen to include this sector, as it not only brings people to people contacts, but it can also create new customers for European brands, and new investment opportunities for the European tourist industry around the world.

On these Missions for Growth, I have signed more than 70 Letters of Intent and Joint Declarations with my counterparts, to enhance co-operation and to work on common objectives, particularly in the area of SME policy, tourism, regulatory issues and standards, raw materials policy, industrial policy co-operation, satellite navigation systems, space policies and others.

The Commission's Enterprise and Industry Directorate General (DG ENTR), is now working on their implementation. Director General Daniel Calleja Crespo has led several follow-up missions to the countries which I visited. These missions focus on supporting SMEs' internationalisation, since they should be the first beneficiaries of this European engagement.

In addition, DG ENTR is liaising with our counterparts in the visited countries, in order to launch activities foreseen in the letters of intent and joint declarations. We have already seen progress, ranging from the nomination of SME Envoys in countries such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Uruguay, to an acceleration of the adoption of European industrial standards as national standards, for example in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. For our raw materials policies, we are now organising the first regional EU-Latin America dialogue on raw materials in Peru in February 2014. This will not only be an opportunity to exchange expertise on topics such as mining technologies, but will also allow us to put on the table our concerns on issues such as export restrictions and licensing. In the area of space and satellite navigation, in order to make Galileo successful we want to work with as many countries as possible and, as an example, the setting up of the Galileo Euro-MED co-operation office in Tunisia in October of last year, will, I'm sure, be instrumental in achieving such goals. I am also pleased that Tunisia created the Council on Entrepreneurship, allowing a number of EU business leaders to now advise the government on business environment reform.

Increasingly, we can also use some of our financial instruments to translate our intentions into concrete co-operation. I could mention the special call which we launched last year, to exchange 50 new European entrepreneurs and 50 new Brazilian entrepreneurs, to give these companies the benefit of secondments of 1-6 months, with hosting companies on the Brazilian and European side respectively. This is a contribution to creating a more outward looking new business generation, with experience of doing business in emerging economies. It will ultimately enhance our competitiveness and business intelligence around the world.

I have had the opportunity to meet many political leaders at these Missions, from Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi to Vice Premier Ma Kai of China, from President Shimon Peres to President Dilma Rousseff and many Prime Ministers, Ministers for Industry, Trade, Economic Development, Tourism and other policy areas. And I have been able to meet these political leaders with business leaders from the European Union.

Many of these companies are also starting to show results of these Missions. In China I attended the signing ceremony for a cooperation agreement between five Danish companies and their Chinese counterparts in the bio-mass and bio-energy sector. The cooperation has already generated € 1, 2 million in orders, in less than 6 months following the Mission. In Tunisia, long term partnership agreements (2015-2020) worth more than 480 million euros were signed in the aeronautics sector on the purchase of ten airplanes. For many companies, the Mission has led to new contacts for subsequent commercial negotiations. For others, existing negotiations were brought forward, in order to reach a good result at the occasion of a Mission for Growth. I am quite sure that for many smaller companies, who lack the credentials and recognition of well-established European household names and brands, participation in a European business mission gives them more credibility and reliability in the eyes of potential business partners in third countries. In addition, the advocacy during these missions has led to the resolution of issues faced by European companies in the host countries.

In 2013, we took Missions for Growth to Greece and Portugal and we brought more than 300 companies to these Member States. I want to use the coming months to concentrate more on such Missions for Growth within the European Union. I will conduct such Missions to a number of European regions, marked by economic difficulties and high youth employment, and in particular to the south of Belgium on 18-19 February, to be followed by Italy in March (Campania on 13-14 March, Sicily on 27-28 March) and Spain in April (Andalucia on 3 April, Extremadura on 4 April), as well as a return to Greece on 10-11 March.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues Catherine Ashton and Janez Potočnik, who joined me on the Missions to Egypt, Myanmar and China. I also want to thank the EEAS and the other Commission DG's for their support.

Baroness Ashton asked me to co-lead her own missions to Egypt and Myanmar; and we combined, extremely well, a political Task Force and an economic delegation to reach out to these countries in transition. Commissioner Potočnik joined the Mission for Growth to China, to strengthen our message on the need for green growth models in countries with the largest carbon footprints.

I remain totally committed to repeating similar exercises in other countries or for other policy goals.