



Statement by President von der Leyen with Egyptian President El-Sisi

Cairo, 15 June 2022

Thank you very much, Mr President, for the warm welcome. I am very pleased to visit you here in Cairo to discuss indeed, what we did today, how to broaden and intensify a very good cooperation we do have already. There is a strong basis and foundation of different files, on which we are working together. And there is a strong commitment and the knowledge of trust and reliability between both sides. And this is a very good and substantial foundation to increase the cooperation and to strengthen the bonds between us. There are many topics that are indeed the proof of the intense cooperation we have. And they are reflected in the joint statement that is being prepared for the Association Council that is upcoming in the next days. And it reflects the width and the depth of our cooperation

I want to focus today on, of course, two main topics that we have been discussing intensively. The first one is, of course, the topic of food security. And we see that Ukraine, that used to be the granary of the world before the war, is now in a very difficult situation. And we have to do everything so that the supply of grain, that is trapped in Ukraine because of the Russian war, is being exported to the world, so that Russia is no more blockading the export of Ukrainian grain via the Black Sea. At the moment being, 20 million tonnes of grain are stuck, are trapped in Ukraine. And we have seen that food prices have been skyrocketing in many countries. 80% of your wheat imports are coming from Russia and Ukraine. So this is a concern about food security and food prices that is real. And therefore, let me reassure you again that we stand by your side also concerning this topic. We will provide an immediate relief of EUR 100 million to Egypt for the immediate situation now of food security. This will hopefully help to increase the grain storage capacity and will provide finance for rural businesses and farmers. But that is only for the short term.

And the two of us have intensively discussed that, in the mid and long term, we will also have to completely renew and boost the local food production. And therefore, the European Union is very interested in investing in the local food production. We will devote EUR 3 billion to agriculture and nutrition, water and sanitation programmes over the next years, here in the region. These investments will support food systems in your region and elsewhere, so that we can together discuss how to develop solutions and technologies that are fit for purpose here in Egypt. These are the modern technologies of precision farming, you mentioned artificial intelligence, the new crops adapted to climate change. Because it is so important for us that, in the region, the production of food is improved and increased, and thus the dependency from other regions is reduced. Over time, this will ensure stable supplies of quality and affordable food for all. And this is the common interest that we do have. Egypt will be at the heart of this major shift. I am very much looking forward, Mr President, to working with you on this, also to mobilise together a strong international response.

I think – and we have discussed that – that it is very important that here we stand together globally to manage this food security crisis; that we find solutions that are fair for everybody; that we look at the distribution of grain, for example, worldwide; and that we really have an emphasis on vulnerable countries that are dependent on the daily food, so that here solidarity is globally organised. And this is a task that we want to approach together.

Then, of course, we want to extend our cooperation on energy. It is known that Russia's war against Ukraine has exposed our European dependency on Russian fossil fuels. And we want to get rid of this dependency. We want to diversify to trustworthy suppliers. And Egypt is a trustworthy partner. For us is important that we really discuss the whole width of energy supply that is possible.

Today, we are already taking a very important step, as we have signed in the morning a Memorandum of Understanding of natural gas delivery from Israel to Egypt. Here, gas will be liquefied and then transported to the European Union. This is a big step forward in the energy supply to Europe, but also for Egypt to become a regional energy hub. It is for us also very important to look forward into the new forms of energies. And these are, of course, the renewable energies. And here, I must say that you are in a very lucky position as you have the resources that are necessary for renewable energies in abundance – the sun, the wind. So these will be the energies of the future. And the demand will be enormous. And therefore, it is in our common interest to explore together

how to put the infrastructure and the technologies in place that are fit for renewables. We are, for example, working together on a hydrogen partnership. It is moving nicely forward. And we are both looking forward to launching it at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh.

And this brings me indeed to the point: COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh. Egypt has the potential to be a leader in renewable energy production and export. And therefore, we all know that your country will play a crucial role in COP27 to keep the global community on track towards our climate goals, but also to boost the modern technologies for clean energy that is so necessary.

So, Mr President, thank you again for welcoming me here. We have made enormous progress on the one hand, but we also see the width of topics that we have to work on together. And I am very much looking forward to that.

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