Honourable Chairs, Honourable Members,

Five years ago, the European Parliament confirmed me as European Commissioner for Competition. It was one of the proudest moments of my life. I was given an opportunity to work for European citizens, with this Parliament, for the values that have guided my work in politics for thirty years.

I have always worked for a fair and just society, where people can make their own choices, and follow their dreams, with proper respect for those around them. If I am confirmed, I will continue to do so in my role as Executive Vice-President for making Europe fit for the Digital Age.

I firmly believe that we best achieve our common goals when we work together. That was my belief, when I first walked through the doors of this Parliament as a trainee. And in the years since then, I have seen what our European democracy has done to build a society that works for and represents its people.

And Europe will strive for more. I am very happy that we will now have the first gender-balanced Commission.

**Building a society that works for people**

We face great challenges ahead. Just to name a few: Climate change, and the digital transformation, will affect every single part of our lives. And as global competition gets tougher, we will need to work harder than ever to preserve a level playing field.

We have what it takes to face those challenges – if we work together. We have values that we can be proud of – values of freedom, and
fairness, and democracy. These have made Europe the best place to live in history. Europe is filled with highly skilled people, we have excellent infrastructure, fair and effective laws. Our Single Market gives European businesses the room to grow and innovate, and be the best in the world at what they do.

So my pledge is not to make Europe more like China, or America. My pledge is to help make Europe more like herself. To build on our own strengths and values, so our society is both strong and fair. For all Europeans.

**Competition policy**

In the last five years, I’ve seen how enforcing competition rules can make markets work for people, not the other way round. I’m proud of the work we’ve done. But there’s still a lot to do. So I’m deeply honoured that the President-elect has asked me to continue my work on competition.

I will do that with the same energy and dedication as ever. And with the same commitment to independence and impartiality as I gave to this Parliament five years ago. Because independence in law enforcement is non-negotiable.

The competition rules don’t make it a crime to be big. But dominant companies have a special responsibility not to use their power to harm consumers.

Companies are also free to merge. Just as long as they still remain subject to challenge.

Because companies cannot deny consumers the benefits of effective competition. Affordable prices. A choice of products. And innovation for better products serving their needs.

We must also make sure that State aid doesn’t harm competition. Because Europeans deserve an economy where companies compete to serve customers better – not just to get bigger subsidies from government.
These are challenging times for competition enforcement. Markets are changing fast – and there are even bigger changes ahead. But human nature – basic motives like greed and fear – don’t change. And so the principles that guide our competition rules are as relevant today as they were when the Treaty of Rome was signed, more than sixty years ago.

But we need to make sure that the way we apply those principles is fit for a world that’s changing fast. So I will move forward with the review that we’ve started of our rules on antitrust, mergers, and state aid. In the process, we’ll be helped by the insights we’ve gained from studying how digitisation affects competition – including the independent report which three special advisers delivered to us earlier this year.

**An industrial strategy for all of Europe**

I believe that fair competition is important to prepare our economy for the challenges ahead.

But competition is not enough. We need a strategy for Europe’s industrial future that is based on what makes Europe strong: our openness and diversity.

The industrial strategy must be for everyone; it must be green and it must be based on fair competition.

This work will include coming up with a new strategy to support the heart of Europe’s economy – the small and medium-sized businesses. Together they account for more than half of Europe's business income, they employ nearly two thirds of our business workers and they offer much needed training for our young people.

Fundamentally, what these companies ask of us is to create a fair marketplace and to remove the barriers that stop them from growing.

Our public and private sectors also need to team up to get the best out of each other. That means a more strategic use of public procurement. More research funding for our innovative businesses. And it means working together with Member States on important projects of common European interest. We will bring together entire value chains –
universities, suppliers, manufacturers – all the way to those who recycle the raw materials that are used in manufacturing.

And our strategy needs to reach beyond the Single Market. As we get more interconnected, we’re also more affected by the decisions of others. Europe is the biggest trading partner for some 80 countries, including the US and China. So we’re in a strong position to work for a global level playing field. This includes pursuing our proposals to reform the World Trade Organization. And giving ourselves the right tools to make sure that foreign state ownership and subsidies don’t undermine fair competition in Europe.

**The challenges of digitisation**

A good industrial strategy also has to make Europe fit for the Digital Age. Because there are only two types of business today: those that are already digital and those that soon will be.

Digitisation has enormous potential to make our lives better. But to unlock that potential, we need the right rules, to give people confidence that the digital transformation serves citizens and respects our fundamental values. I want to emphasise three values in particular – trust, humanity, and fairness.

Let me give you some examples of what I plan to do in the five years ahead, if confirmed:

**On trust** – We need to engage with people’s concerns about technology, and build trust. I will work on a Digital Services Act that includes upgrading our liability and safety rules for digital platforms, services and products. We may also need to regulate the way that companies collect and use and share data – so it benefits the whole of our society.

**On humanity** – We need rules to make sure artificial intelligence is used ethically, to support human decisions and not undermine them. I will put forward proposals developing the European approach for Artificial Intelligence within the first hundred days of my term in office.
And on fairness – fair working conditions and fair taxation are amongst the foundations of a decent society. So, we need to make sure that platform workers enjoy fair conditions. We also need to make sure that digital companies pay their fair share of tax. We want these taxation rules to be based on a global agreement. But if that’s not possible by the end of 2020, then we are prepared to act.

So we face a challenging task – to set and apply the right rules, so these fast-moving markets respect our fundamental values. And unlock the potential of digitisation to make our lives better – be it in healthcare, transport, or the fight against climate change.

**Relationship with the European Parliament**

For this task, I also hope and trust that I can call on the support and cooperation of this Parliament.

In the past five years, I have often discussed proposals and ideas with Honourable Members. Our truly open dialogue made it possible for new legislation to be adopted very quickly.

If confirmed, I will continue to work openly and cooperatively with you at every step of the legislative process. And I very much look forward to continue working with your committees.

After all, Europe is all about teamwork. And today, when we face some of the biggest challenges of our lifetimes, we need more than ever to work together. So we can make sure that Europe remains the best place to live in all of history.

Thank you.