



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

**PV(2023) 2469 final**

*- English translation of the French version which is authentic -*

Brussels, 15 November 2023

# TEXTE EN

## MINUTES

of the 2469<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 11 October 2023

(morning)

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**PV(2023) 2469 final**

*- English translation of the French version which is authentic -*

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**Single sitting: Wednesday 11 October 2023 (morning)**

The sitting opened at 9.02 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

**Present:**

Ms von der LEYEN	President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Executive Vice-President
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President
Mr HAHN	Member
Mr SCHMIT	Member
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member
Mr BRETON	Member
Ms FERREIRA	Member
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member
Mr REYNDERS	Member
Ms DALLI	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Ms McGUINNESS	Member
Ms IVANOVA	Member
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member

**Absent:**

Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President
Mr GENTILONI	Member
Ms JOHANSSON	Member

Mr LENARČIČ	Member
Ms VÁLEAN	Member
Ms URPILAINEN	Member
Ms SIMSON	Member
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member

The following sat in to represent absent Members of the Commission:

Mr VILLARINO	Head of Cabinet to Mr BORRELL
Ms LLANO CARDENAL	Expert in Mr SCHINAS' cabinet
Ms MAGERIT	Deputy Head of Cabinet to Mr GENTILONI
Ms WEBBER	Head of Cabinet to Ms JOHANSSON
Ms SIMKIĆ	Head of Cabinet to Mr LENARČIČ
Ms NALIN	Policy Coordinator in Ms VÁLEAN's cabinet
Mr LAHTI	Head of Cabinet to Ms URPILAINEN
Mr KADARIK	Deputy Head of Cabinet to Ms SIMSON
Ms PREISING	Head of Cabinet to Mr SINKEVIČIUS

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service	
Ms SPINANT	Acting Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr MAMER	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Mr FLOSDORFF	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Ms CABRAL	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	Item 9
Ms HOPMEIER	A member of the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Ms PODESTA	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	

(11 October 2023)

Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC

Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General

Mr REGEV

Ambassador of Israel to the European Union

Opening of the  
sitting

Secretary: Ms JUHANSONE, Secretary-General, assisted by Ms DEPREZ, Director in the Secretariat-General.

The PRESIDENT opened the sitting by welcoming Mr Haim REGEV, Ambassador of Israel to the European Union. She stressed that the EU strongly condemned the recent terrorist attack perpetrated by Hamas against Israel. This was a heinous crime and an unprecedented act of war. She confirmed the EU's unfailing solidarity towards Israel, and emphasised Israel's right to defend itself. She had communicated her full support to Mr HERZOG, the Head of State of Israel, and that weekend the Berlaymont building and other European monuments, such as the Eiffel Tower and the Brandenburg Gate, had been lit up with the colours of Israel as a sign of solidarity. She then asked the College to observe a minute's silence in memory of the victims.

The PRESIDENT considered that this was a tragedy for Israel, for the Jewish people and for Europe, calling to mind the darkest moments of our history. This terrorist act could not be justified in any way by the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people; on the contrary, this appalling attack, for which Hamas alone was responsible, would bring more suffering upon innocent Palestinians. Whilst the EU's humanitarian aid was in no way being called into question, it was nonetheless necessary to carefully review financial assistance to Palestine, since the EU had never financed and would never finance any terrorist group.

This terrorist attack would also have a major impact on the region. It would be crucial to minimise its destabilising effects, including on the ongoing rapprochement between Israel and its Arab neighbours. The PRESIDENT concluded by reiterating the EU's unwavering support for its friend and partner Israel.

Mr REGEV thanked the PRESIDENT and the College for having invited him that day. He reminded the meeting of the tragic number of victims of the terrorist attack, a number which continued to grow, and noted that numerous citizens of other countries, including European citizens, were amongst the victims of the massacres and kidnappings. He asked the EU to fully support the State of Israel in its current and future actions, and to implement all the means at its disposal to free the hostages held by Hamas. He concluded by noting that Israel was not asking the EU for military or financial aid, but for its solidarity and moral support.

The PRESIDENT then welcomed Mr HOEKSTRA, the Commissioner responsible for climate action, who was attending his first meeting of the College.

Mr HOEKSTRA thanked the PRESIDENT for her words of welcome and said that he was honoured to be part of the College and of the Commission. He also thanked all the Members who had supported him during the investiture procedure. He was eager to start work on implementing the political priorities for which the PRESIDENT had given him responsibility.

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**1. AGENDAS**

**(OJ(2023) 2469/FINAL; SEC(2023) 2469/FINAL)**

The Commission took note of that day's agenda and of the tentative agendas for forthcoming meetings.

**2. WEEKLY MEETING OF HEADS OF CABINET**

**(RCC(2023) 2469)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 9 October 2023.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2465<sup>th</sup>, 2466<sup>th</sup>, 2467<sup>th</sup> and 2468<sup>th</sup> meetings of 6, 12 and 27 September, and 3 October 2023 for a later date.

**4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS**

**(RCC(2023) 166)**

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 6 October 2023 (RCC(2023) 166).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Transparency and targeting of political advertising (Regulation) – GOZI report – 2021/0381 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 376.

- **Amendment of Council Directive 98/24/EC and Directive 2004/37/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the limit values for lead and its inorganic compounds and diisocyanates (Directive) – VILLUMSEN report – 2023/0033 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 344.

- **Establishment of a framework for setting ecodesign requirements for sustainable products and repeal of Directive 2009/125/EC (Regulation) – MORETTI report – 2022/0095 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 375.

- **Position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the Specialised Committee on Participation in Union Programmes (Council Decision) – 2023/0319 (NLE)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 372.

- **Position to be taken on behalf of the European Union within the Trade Specialised Committee on Administrative Cooperation in VAT and Recovery of Taxes and Duties established by the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part (Council Decision) – 2023/0309 (NLE)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 380.

- **Barcelona Joint Tripartite Statement on the European Year of Skills**

Line set out in SI(2023) 374.

- **2021 discharge – EU general budget – European Council and Council – PEKSA report – 2022/2083 (DEC)**

Line set out in SP(2023) 506.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Establishment of the Ukraine facility (Regulation) – GAHLER & GARDIAZABAL RUBIAL report – 2023/0200 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2023) 505.

- **Amendment of Regulations (EC) N° 767/2008, (EC) N° 810/2009 and (EU) 2017/2226 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Regulations (EC) N° 1683/95, (EC) N° 333/2002, (EC) N° 693/2003 and (EC) N° 694/2003 and Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement, as regards the digitalisation of the visa procedure (Regulation) – NEMEC reports – 2022/0132A & 2022/0132B (COD)**

Compromise texts in SP(2023) 515, further to note SI(2023) 230, which the Commission had already approved on 20 June 2023.

- **Amendment of Council Regulation (EC) N° 1217/2009 as regards conversion of the Farm Accountancy Data Network into a Farm Sustainability Data Network (Regulation) – DECERLE report – 2022/0192 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2023) 516, further to note SI(2023) 301 already approved by the Commission on 18 July 2023 by written procedure.

- **Amendment of Regulations (EU) 2016/424, (EU) 2016/425, (EU) 2016/426, (EU) 2019/1009 and (EU) No 305/2011 as regards emergency procedures for the conformity assessment, adoption of common specifications and market surveillance due to a Single Market emergency (Regulation) – SCHWAB report – 2022/0279 (COD) / Amendment of Directives 2000/14/EC, 2006/42/EC, 2010/35/EU, 2013/29/EU, 2014/28/EU, 2014/29/EU, 2014/30/EU, 2014/31/EU, 2014/32/EU, 2014/33/EU, 2014/34/EU,**

**2014/35/EU, 2014/53/EU and 2014/68/EU as regards emergency procedures for the conformity assessment, adoption of common specifications and market surveillance due to a Single Market emergency (Directive) – SCHWAB report – 2022/0280 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2023) 363.

– **Results of Parliament’s October I 2023 part-session**

Information set out in SP(2023) 489.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION  
(RCC(2023) 34)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2023) 34 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 4 October 2023.

**6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS**

**6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED  
(SEC(2023) 322 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General’s memoranda recording decisions adopted between 2 and 8 October 2023.

**6.2. EMPOWERMENT  
(SEC(2023) 323 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General’s memoranda recording decisions adopted between 2 and 8 October 2023.

**6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS**  
**(SEC(2023) 324 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 2 and 8 October 2023 archived in Decide.

**6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES**  
**(SEC(2023) 325 AND /2)**

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 9 and 13 October 2023.

**7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS**  
**(SEC(2023) 326 AND /2)**

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**  
**(PERS(2023) 93 AND /2)**

During the meeting, Mr HAHN presented an additional proposal for an administrative decision, which was tabled directly to the College for approval.

He said that it was proposed that Mr Ilkka SALMI be appointed to the post of Deputy Director-General – Security, Workplace and Wellbeing in the Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security. Mr HAHN highlighted the great skills, outstanding career and recognised expertise of Mr SALMI, which would be valuable assets in his new post.

**7.1. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPOINTMENT OF A  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL AT GRADE AD15/16**  
**(PERS(2023) 69 TO /4)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Deputy Director-General – Security, Workplace and Wellbeing (in charge of Directorates D and DS) in DG Human Resources and Security (PERS(2023) 69 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 21 and 26 September 2023 (PERS(2023) 69/3 and /4).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, it then decided to appoint Mr Ilkka SALMI to the post.

This decision would take effect on a date to be determined.

**7.2. DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY – APPOINTMENT OF A  
DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15  
(PERS(2023) 94 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the Food Safety, Sustainability and Innovation Directorate in DG Health and Food Safety (PERS(2023) 94).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 31 March and 8 June 2023 (PERS(2023) 94/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms KYRIAKIDES, it then decided to appoint Mr Klaus BEREND to the post.

This decision would take effect on a date to be determined.

**7.3. DG COMMUNICATION NETWORKS, CONTENT AND TECHNOLOGY – CLOSURE OF THE SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR A POST OF DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15, INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL PUBLICATION (GRADE AD14/15) AND EXTERNAL PUBLICATION (GRADE AD14) OF THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR A POST OF DIRECTOR (PERS(2023) 95)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr BRETON, the Commission decided:

- to terminate the selection procedure for the post of Director of the Digital Excellence and Science Infrastructure Directorate in DG Communication Networks, Content and Technology, without making an appointment;
- to authorise the publication, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), (1)(b) and (2) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2023) 95 for the post of Director of the Digital Excellence and Science Infrastructure Directorate in DG Communication Networks, Content and Technology.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**8. DECISION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AMENDING DECISION P(2019) 1 OF 1 DECEMBER 2019 ON THE ORGANISATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION (P(2023) 6)**

The Commission took note of the decision of the PRESIDENT set out in P(2023) 6.

**9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN EUROPE – A TOOLBOX FOR ACTION (COM(2023) 577 AND /2; RCC(2023) 168)**

The PRESIDENT introduced the Communication on demography, which offered Member States a set of tools with which to respond to the challenges of demographic change and its consequences for the Union's society and economy. She pointed out that demographic challenges called for a long-term perspective.

While welcoming the additional choices that education offered individuals, she highlighted the negative correlation that could be observed between a society's levels of development and education and its birth rate. The number of children that families decided to have was largely influenced by societal norms with regard to reconciling work and family life. Young couples tended to have more children in societies that promoted a balance in this area by encouraging the active participation of fathers in family life.

The PRESIDENT stressed the importance of striking a balance between the needs of the younger generations, a pillar of the future, and those of older people in need of care, not forgetting the middle generation that was taking on the responsibility of caring for them. Although there were differences between Member States, Europe's population as a whole was ageing, living both longer and healthier lives. Working lives would therefore have to be extended. In this context, the PRESIDENT referred to recent studies on the potential impact of increased longevity on the employment prospects of older people.

At the same time, it was important to ensure that young people were offered educational and professional opportunities, while promoting legal migration, which had a key role to play in overcoming labour shortages across the continent. She pointed out that Europe had welcomed 3.7 million legal migrants last year,



compared to the arrival of around 330 000 irregular migrants. She added that skilled people from around the world chose where to live on the basis of the opportunities available to them.

Finally, the PRESIDENT praised the remarkable work done by Ms ŠUICA and asked her to present the Communication in more detail.

Ms ŠUICA introduced the Communication, emphasising its cross-cutting nature, which had required the collaboration of many Commission departments. It was a response to the call made by the European Council in June 2023 to present a toolbox to address demographic challenges and mitigate their impact on Europe's competitiveness.

It highlighted a number of demographic factors that could weigh heavily on the EU's economic growth and competitiveness due to their impact on investment, productivity and entrepreneurial activity in the Union. These factors included (i) a significant decline in birth rates, (ii) rapid population ageing and a shrinking working-age population, (iii) difficulties in reconciling private and working life, (iv) labour and skills shortages at record levels, (v) considerable pressure on public budgets, which could reduce the fiscal space available for investment in other priorities, (vi) a 'brain drain' resulting in depopulation in the regions concerned, (vii) territorial disparities seriously undermining social cohesion, and (viii) the erosion of trust in democratic institutions and processes in Europe.

Ms ŠUICA pointed out that the Communication was not a one-size-fits-all action plan, but rather a set of tools at the disposal of the Member States to complement their own national strategies and measures. She pointed out in this regard that the drafting of the Communication and the creation of the toolbox had been preceded by a demographic mapping exercise and a Eurobarometer survey. The mapping exercise, which was aimed at raising awareness of the main demographic challenges in the EU, had revealed marked differences in the situations faced by Member States. The survey had sought to assess the extent to which citizens' perceptions of

these demographic changes corresponded to reality. It had highlighted the need to debunk a number of persistent demographic myths.

Ms ŠUICA then explained that the toolbox was structured around four key pillars: (i) parents, (ii) young people, (iii) older people and (iv) migration.

With regard to the first pillar, the key message was that parents should not be required to choose between being active in the labour market and starting a family.

The second pillar consisted of empowering young people to have a skills mix that matched real labour market needs, in order to effectively support the twin green and digital transitions.

The third pillar sought to change the narrative by focusing on a ‘longevity’ economy and society rather than an ‘ageing’ society. Ms ŠUICA stressed that a 60-year-old today was radically different from a 60-year-old 20 years ago and that they could make a significant contribution to society. Thanks to medical and technological advances, half of the children born in Europe today had a life expectancy of 95 years. Ms ŠUICA explained that the current political and institutional structures were not designed to meet the changing needs of this population and would therefore need to be rethought.

Finally, the fourth pillar focused on existing labour market gaps that could not be filled solely by intra-EU mobility, and which therefore required migration from third countries to Europe. She pointed out that even a significant increase in the fertility rate in Europe would not be sufficient to meet current needs. Moreover, the gap between the immediate needs of businesses and the time taken by policies to increase birth rates was too wide. As far as the impact on countries of origin was concerned, she rejected the idea of a ‘brain drain’. On the contrary, the aim was to create a mutually beneficial exchange: highly qualified and experienced individuals would eventually return to their country of origin and enrich it with their skills and expertise.

Ms ŠUIČA then noted that putting the toolbox into operation would involve three main strands of action: (i) strengthening data and statistics on the issue, (ii) mainstreaming the demographic dimension at all levels, and (iii) ensuring that no individual or region was left behind.

In conclusion, she pointed out that it was crucial to give Europe the means to continue to exert global influence despite its dwindling share of the world's population, compensating quantity with quality.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- full backing for the Communication, which supplemented and brought together several initiatives of this Commission aimed in particular at achieving a proper work-life balance, revising the Barcelona targets on early childhood education and care, deinstitutionalising the elderly care sector, and addressing migration including via the anti-racism action plan;
- a reminder of the fact that more than eight million women in the EU with professional qualifications in various sectors of the labour market stayed at home to look after children or the elderly, which represented a wasted investment in their education and contributed to the gender pay gap;
- the observation that demographics was a key factor in a whole series of challenges currently facing the Member States, such as the financing and the fairness of social welfare systems, and labour market shortages;
- in this context, the need for the EU to find solutions to maintain its economic base, e.g. through legal migration coupled with an effective policy to integrate migrants, investment in technological development and in education and lifelong learning, innovative approaches that allowed people to stay in the labour market for as long as possible, increasing the employment rate of women, and offering affordable housing and quality jobs to young people;

- the importance of the territorial aspect of these policies, of the organisation of the labour market and the average wage level in the different regions of the EU, and of the increased need for small towns and villages struggling with depopulation to use the Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund to create a family-friendly environment and reduce the exodus of young people;
- recognition of how the debate had shifted from placing an emphasis on an ageing society to focusing on a longevity society in Europe, and, in this connection, the vital importance played by health – from childhood and throughout life;
- the different connotations of the words ‘migrant’ and ‘immigration’ in public opinion and the instruments available to the Member States to pursue a more active migration policy.

In conclusion, the PRESIDENT stressed that the EU had to take firm action against irregular migration, because entry into Europe had to be controlled by national authorities, not traffickers.

As regards the work-life balance, she pointed out that the measures should be aimed at all young parents and potential parents, guaranteeing everyone access to quality services in early childhood education and care.

Lastly, as regards the brain drain, she recognised the difficulties experienced by some EU Member States and regions, especially in the wake of successive EU enlargements. It was therefore important for the EU to support these areas to improve quality of life and offer new opportunities to the people concerned.

Following the presentation, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2023) 577/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions and, for information, to the national parliaments.

## 10. OTHER BUSINESS

### *LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS*

By way of introduction, the PRESIDENT noted that, on Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 October, the Balticconnector gas pipeline linking Estonia and Finland and a submarine telecommunications cable had suffered serious damage. Initial investigations suggested sabotage. She roundly condemned any act of deliberate destruction of critical infrastructure and pointed out that this was the second time in a little over a year that infrastructure of this kind had been damaged. Attacks on undersea connections linking citizens and businesses throughout Europe and beyond represented a threat to the very stability of European democracies.

A very brief discussion followed, during which the Commission welcomed – in the context of the recent increase in gas prices after this incident – the measures taken at European level to facilitate the joint purchasing of gas and to encourage Member States to fill their gas reserves as much as possible.

The College then held an exchange of views on the situation in Israel, following the interventions of the PRESIDENT and Mr REGEV at the opening of the sitting. During this exchange of views, in which all the Members present took part, the Commission raised the following main points:

- the need for the EU's full and unequivocal support for Israel and, in this connection, the important signal given by having the Israeli Ambassador to the EU present at the start of the College meeting;
- the exceptional gravity of the current events, which, for some, were far more than another episode in the complicated history of the Middle East, because the brutality of these acts of terrorism targeting the Jewish people was unprecedented since the creation of the state of Israel;

- the humanitarian support that had to be provided to the affected people in the weeks to come, in close cooperation with the Member States and under a Team Europe approach;
- the careful assessment that had to be made of the financial support provided to Palestine, in particular to ensure that it did not contribute indirectly to financing terrorist organisations;
- the additional need to ensure that European funds were not used to promote anti-Semitism by any means whatsoever;
- in this context, the importance of prioritising direct support to beneficiaries;
- the possibility of providing EU repatriation and transport assistance to and from the region;
- the security situation in the EU that also had to be closely monitored, in particular to prevent an increase in the anti-Semitic and Islamophobic abuse that was beginning to emerge;
- the prominent role played by online platforms in preventing the spread of hateful content, and the importance of providing guidance to these platforms during the transition period pending the strict enforcement of the Digital Services Act;
- the value of pursuing proactive diplomatic relations with the countries of the Arab world, against a backdrop of great domestic and geopolitical uncertainty;
- the importance of a unified and collegiate Commission approach, and the need to ensure coordination with the European External Action Service to promote the preparation of joint positions, given the increasingly complex geopolitical picture;
- the importance of keeping attention on other existing geopolitical issues, particularly support for Ukraine and tensions in Africa.

The PRESIDENT concluded by underlining how vital it was to make a clear distinction between the perpetrators of terrorist acts and their victims. Clear guidance would be issued to the College in this respect, in particular in the context of the EU-US Summit on 20 October. She pointed out that the EU's position would have to develop in line with circumstances and the sequence of events, which was impossible to predict at present while the situation remained volatile.

On the question of finance, the PRESIDENT stressed the need to guarantee the strict traceability of EU funds, in order to ensure that no support, even indirect, reached Hamas. Such an approach required the same degree of transparency as that imposed on Member States. She also welcomed the EU initiatives on tackling anti-Semitism, noting that the current Commission had been particularly proactive on this matter. She called for continued efforts in this regard, and for a summary of the measures taken to date.

Lastly, she stressed the need to keep a permanent light shone on Ukraine and Armenia, even if other conflicts were covered more widely by the media. She noted in particular that Armenia, after being dependent on Russia for years, was taking significant risks by seeking to diversify its alliances, as exemplified by its recent signing of the Rome Statute.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The Commission's other discussions on certain agenda items are recorded in the special minutes.

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The meeting closed at 10.33.