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European Council
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The events in Russia have raised a number of questions relating to its internal dynamics and the fragility of their systems as well as its effects on the invasion of Ukraine and on European security as a whole.

Solidarity with Ukraine must remain at the top of our agenda. It is as existential to Ukraine as it is to Europe. We need to hold steady - even if in the coming months things get harder for Ukraine.

In this respect, I welcome the 11th package of sanctions and the additional €50 billion in support for Ukraine's repair, recovery and reconstruction announced last week.

Stepping up will require that we deliver on the promises we have made on opening EU membership negotiations. Ukraine's commitment and substantial efforts on its path for reform, including on meeting the requirements for its EU candidate status, have been extraordinary. We must be ready to take membership negotiations to the next stage when the reform criteria have been sufficiently met - and I hope it will happen sooner rather than later.

Strengthening our defence-related industrial base, improving innovation, reducing our dependencies, becoming more autonomous and building trust must be central to our new security and defence policy. The political agreement we reached this week on the joint procurement in defence will help Member States restock their defence needs and become more interoperable. It will also help Ukrainians, who count on our delivery of weapons and ammunition.

The progress on our negotiations on the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP) is also encouraging and I remain convinced that, after the Parliament adopted its position a month ago, we will reach a political agreement in the coming weeks.

Together we are matching demand with supply. We are matching rhetoric with action. We are delivering.

And now we need to deliver on a new security and defence architecture where we ensure that the EU and NATO are able to complement each other, without creating duplications or giving the impression of competition.

We also have to deliver on migration. It is urgent. Last week the cemetery of the Mediterranean claimed the lives of another 300 people, many of whom will never be identified. That's another 300 dreams shattered. Another 300 families forever broken.

We have made important progress. The European Parliament stands ready to work - constructively - to find a way forward by the end of this legislature that respects borders, that is fair with those in need of protection, firm with those who are not eligible, and that breaks the business model of traffickers preying on the vulnerable. It must be our laws and legal framework that create the rules, not trafficking networks. The longer we wait, the stronger the networks become and the more lives will be lost. Frontex plays an important and crucial role here.

We also cannot ignore the external dimension of this issue. We have a role that allows us to invest and cooperate more with countries in Africa. However, we cannot make the age-old mistake of talking to Africa only when it comes to migration. We need to engage strategically on investments, on joint projects and in a spirit of partnership. We must talk with, not talk to, and understand that if we withdraw then countries in Africa will simply seek other partners.

We have to re-evaluate the way we interact around the globe. Re-balancing our political and economic relations with key partners across the world. With Latin American democracies on critical raw materials and trade deals that are crucial in advancing our digital and green transition.

We also need to engage more with countries like India.

The European Union is India's third largest trading partner and second largest export destination. We share many priorities, including the fight against climate change, technology and security. There are so many opportunities that are untapped.

Europe has been the most influential global actor in advancing the international agenda on decarbonisation, energy diversification and the fight against climate change. This is important. But we need to become better at cushioning the economic and social impact of all these decisions. We have to better explain how we are doing this and why it matters.

People must have confidence in the process and they must be able to afford it. We need to listen more and listen harder to our citizens, to our businesses, to our young people. We have to have the foresight to know how to keep people with us.

Inflation remains persistent. Households are faced with a real-wage decline. The European Central Bank is helping to tackle this through increasing interest rates. But that too has a social impact that we would be wrong to ignore.

That is why, if we want to be serious about implementing our priorities and remaining credible, we need an EU budget that is fit for purpose.

It is time to put in place new own resources. As we re-pay NextGenerationEU debt, new sources of revenue must be made available. It cannot come at the expense of long-standing Union policies and programmes.

Tied to this is the need to adapt our long-term EU budget to reflect our current reality. There can be no doubt that, since the adoption of the current Multiannual Financial Framework in 2020, the world has changed and we must change with it. We have been calling for a revision of the MFF for years and the Parliament stands ready to play its part. This - incidentally - is also critical for infrastructure projects that can help in defence and security terms - like railways that also double as critical military mobility lines. Some of these decisions require unanimity and we will all have a role to play.

It is about future proofing our economies. And how we return this project of ours stronger than we found it.

The coming months need to be about delivery. The process for us to agree on an election period already proved difficult. The default date is based on a 1979 reality when the Union only had nine Member States. We need a collective rethink on how the date is identified. We are now discussing the composition of Parliament - you have our proposal on the electoral law, but coming to a position in Council is proving too difficult. The one thing we know about our project is that if we standstill, we will stagnate.

We have a proposal for a convention building on our extensive Conference on the Future of Europe. We need to be ready for enlargement so while Moldova, Ukraine and others in the Western Balkans are reforming and getting ready – we need to do the same.

It is time for a collective shift in thinking. Many have already positioned themselves in this geopolitical change. We must be ready to do the same.

Thank you.