

Remarks by President Charles Michel after the EU-Japan summit via video conference



It was a pleasure to speak with Prime Minister Suga today. Japan is a like-minded partner, and a key ally for the EU. Values of multilateralism, democracy and the rule of law unite us. And this year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of our strategic partnership. In a couple of weeks, we will meet at the G7 summit in the UK. Today we had the opportunity to focus on three key areas: first, the global issues like COVID-19 and climate change; second, our bilateral relationship with Japan; and third, foreign and security policy.

Our first common priority is to defeat covid-19 and to ensure a sustainable and inclusive recovery. The European Union is playing a major role. We are the largest exporter of vaccines and with Japan we are firmly committed to COVAX. Prime Minister Suga will host the COVAX pledging summit next week, and we hope these efforts will help secure sufficient resources to vaccinate 30% of the world's population by the end of this year. And the EU plans to share at least 100 million doses of vaccines this year. It is key to keep supply chains open.

We must also be ready for future pandemics. I have proposed with Dr Tedros, an international treaty on pandemics in the framework of the WHO. I want to thank Prime Minister Suga for his support.

We also discussed the great challenges of climate change and loss of biodiversity. And today we reached a new important milestone: the EU-Japan Green Alliance. It is our commitment to be a leader in climate neutrality by 2050 and this ambitious alliance will boost cooperation in many areas: energy transition, business, regulatory cooperation, innovation, environmental protection or sustainable finance.

We also discussed the digital transformation of our societies. The EU wants to make the next 10 years our digital decade. We will work with Japan on emerging technologies, critical materials, 5G, 6G, artificial intelligence, data and platforms. And this will boost the competitiveness of both the EU and Japan and set standards in multilateral fora.

We also discussed our bilateral relations. The full implementation of our economic partnership agreements to boost bilateral trade investment should remain our joint priority. Japan is the EU's first connectivity partner and must continue to make concrete progress on high standard infrastructure projects in third countries.

We should complete our negotiations of the so-called "horizontal agreement" on air transport as soon as possible. And we are fostering cooperation in the

industrial research and innovation and space sectors. This includes the possibility for Japan to be associated with the Horizon Europe research programme.

We have also strengthened our security and defence cooperation. The EU decided to reinforce its strategic focus on the Indo-Pacific region. We have a strong interest to intensify, with Japan, our cooperation in maritime security, technology cooperation, cyber security, disinformation, and to promote fundamental values and principles in the region. As human rights and democracy are attacked around the world, the EU and Japan need to coordinate our actions.

We also discussed a range of regional affairs, including the situation in the East and South China Sea, DPRK, Iran and JCPOA, Myanmar, Ukraine, Russia or China. We look forward to our next meeting in Tokyo to further strengthen our EU-Japan relationship.

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