

Remarks by President Charles Michel after the EU-Western Balkans Zagreb summit

We have had the occasion this afternoon to have the video conference with the Western Balkans partners. As you probably know, we intended to have this summit in Zagreb, under the Croatian presidency, but because of the COVID-19 it was not possible. It was very important, twenty years after the first Zagreb summit, to have this video conference, to have this occasion to tackle very important challenges that we need to face together. And of course, the first important topic is COVID-19, because it is important for the European member states, but also in partnership with the partners in the Western Balkans region to overcome this very difficult challenge. And that is why we have taken, as the European Union, some very important decisions which show our solidarity with this region.

We provide 3,3 billion euros in assistance in the short term, in the mid-term to support the recovery strategy in this region.

It's also very important to repeat, as the European Union, that it is essential for us to work in the framework of the G7 and the G20. I mean, at the global level, because this crisis is global and it requires a global solution. That is why we consider this international cooperation is so important.

The second important topic that we have discussed during this summit this afternoon is the European perspective of the Western Balkans partners. It is a very important signal. It is a very important message that we have reaffirmed, that we have reconfirmed. It's essential to give this strong position, to express this strong position.

It means that it is important to continue the reforms, to implement the reforms, the rule of law, the democratic values, and the fight against corruption. Those topics are essential for the benefit of the citizens, for the benefit of the people, but also to strengthen the partnership between this region and the European Union. I would also like to use this occasion to welcome the decision that we have taken, regarding the opening of the negotiations talks with North Macedonia and with Albania.

Je voudrais aussi saisir cette occasion pour indiquer que durant cette rencontre par vidéoconférence, nous avons eu l'occasion de réaffirmer au plus haut niveau politique la perspective européenne pour cette région. Et cela signifie que la poursuite des réformes, notamment en lien avec l'État de droit, en lien avec les valeurs démocratiques, la lutte contre la corruption, la lutte contre le crime organisé doivent rester des priorités tout à fait essentielles. Nous avons eu l'occasion de le rappeler.

Nous avons aussi salué les avancées qui ont été faites afin de réduire des

tensions dans la région, notamment dans le cadre de l'accord Prespa entre la Macédoine du Nord et la Grèce ou dans le cadre de l'accord d'amitié qui concerne la Macédoine du Nord et la Bulgarie. L'implémentation de ces accords est aussi un point important pour pouvoir continuer à mettre en place une dynamique positive et à pouvoir délivrer des résultats. Voilà les quelques éléments que je voulais partager avec vous.

Une déclaration a été validée qui exprime cette ambition de rester très engagés sur le plan international et spécialement pour ce qui concerne la relation avec cette région dont la perspective, nous l'avons affirmé encore ce soir, est une perspective européenne.

[Visit the meeting page](#)