

Remarks by President Charles Michel following the second session of the video conference of the members of the European Council



Today we discussed security and defence. We want to act more strategically, to defend our interests and to promote our values. So we need to increase our ability to act autonomously and to strengthen our cooperation with our partners. We are committed to cooperating closely with NATO. A stronger Europe makes a stronger NATO.

We exchanged views with Secretary General Stoltenberg about working together to improve our collective security and the challenges ahead. We also look forward to cooperating with the new US administration on a strong transatlantic agenda, including a close dialogue on security and defence.

Last week, President Biden said: "America is back." We in Europe are ready – to do our part, to be a strong and reliable partner, not only to the US, but to all our partners, such as the UN and regional partners. We want to deepen security and defence cooperation among Member States, increase defence investment and enhance civilian and military capabilities and operational readiness.

And as cyber threats increase, we must reinforce our cyber resilience and improve our cybersecurity. In addition, we will step up our cooperation to combat hybrid threats and disinformation. In this context, the High Representative gave an update on a Strategic Compass that will guide our efforts in security and defence. We intend to adopt this by March 2022. We will continue to review security and defence on a regular basis at the level of the European Council.

We also discussed the southern partnership in strategic and political terms. This partnership is based on a shared history and likewise a shared geography.

We have a number of key priorities: to strengthen the resilience of our economies and societies, preserve our collective security, tackle the challenge of mobility and migration, and offer prospects to young people on both sides of the Mediterranean. This should be based on an upgraded and intensified political dialogue across the Mediterranean.

Finally, we look forward to the implementation of the Joint Communication from the Commission and High Representative.

On this southern partnership, this morning's discussion showed us a new horizon, a new level of ambition for political dialogue, for economic

cooperation drawing on our values, and there, too, we hope to bring our strategic interests to the fore.

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