

Speech by Vice-President Katainen on behalf of President Juncker at the Plenary Session of the European Parliament on the debate on the Future of Europe with Nicos Anastasiades, President of Cyprus

President Tajani,

President Anastasiades,

Honourable Members,

Our thoughts and hearts are with the victims of last night's horrible attack against humanity that we condemn with great firmness. We are grateful for the tireless work of the first responders, and we trust in the work of the law enforcement services to bring those responsible to justice. We will continue to defend our free and open societies by all means in our use. The city of Strasbourg is a symbol of European peace and democracy, values that we will always defend. The European Commission stands alongside France and the French people at this very difficult moment.

Honourable Members,

I wished we would have had a better situation to talk about the future of Europe than where we are today. Nevertheless we cannot give up. We need to continue building a better and safer Europe for our citizens. Intolerance and hate do not belong to our societies and they do not represent our values.

I want to thank Mr President, my good friend Nicos, for being here today to debate the future of Europe. I remember when we talked about the future of the EU in the Prime Minister's office in Finland many years ago. We have continued this discussion during all these years, and now we are here in the European Parliament to discuss with the Honourable Members on the challenges, opportunities and direction of the European Union.

Mr President,

You and your country have always shown a great European solidarity. You have shown this time and again over the years. When it comes to migration, you have always been there and taken much more than your fair share of responsibility.

The financial and economic crisis also hit Cyprus harder than most. The

effects will not go away overnight. But today, I see a recovering labour market and economy, growing by over 4% in 2017 and continuing at an impressive rate this year. I see a more stable financial sector, with a lower – although still too high – rate of non-performing loans.

I also see investment returning, thanks in part to the Juncker Plan which has helped trigger EUR 109 million of additional investment. It has also supported 125 smaller companies or start-ups to grow and create jobs locally. I will visit Cyprus at the end of January to discuss further use of the Juncker Plan in order to help boost growth and job creation. But if the situation has turned around, it is because of the strength and hard work of the Cypriot people. I want to pay tribute to them in particular for everything they have done.

I also want to pay tribute to you, Mr President, dear Nicos, for your commitment to the programme of recovery. The tough decisions made and the commitment to making them work should never be overlooked by anyone in Europe.

We know there is still a long way to go. And the Commission will assist you every step of the way, including through tailored support offered by the Structural Reform Support Service. It has already provided EUR 520 million to support the economic integration of the island and improved links and contacts between its two communities. But it also continues to support Cyprus across the board, including to meet its climate and energy targets.

The point is that as we look to our future, Europe will stand in solidarity with Cyprus, just as Cyprus has always stood in solidarity with Europe. And nowhere is that more important than when it comes to bring to an end the division of the island. The Commission will stand ready to assist any efforts. The Commission will always answer your call to support any negotiations or discussions held under the auspices of the United Nations that work towards a fair, comprehensive and viable settlement. This would be beneficial for Cyprus, for Europe and for the wider security and stability in the region. There would be no more important message for our common future.

But we must prepare that future as of today. Later this week, European leaders – including the President – will have a real discussion on our future long-term budget. This is not only about numbers or figures. It is about our future. It is about deciding what Europe should achieve. And it is about deciding where to invest in our future, on the issues that matter the most to the people of Cyprus and to the whole of Europe. This is why the Commission has put forward a fair, modern and balanced budget. A budget that is more efficient and more focused on the issues that matter the most – just as Cyprus has so long been calling for.

For instance, there will be an almost three-fold increase in funding for migration and security to make sure that Europe can protect its citizens. This will be especially important for Cyprus as a country that has taken so much responsibility in this area. Funding for research and innovation will be increased by 50%. We have also proposed to double the means of Erasmus+ and a new Digital Europe Programme worth EUR 9 billion will support Europe's

digital transformation. All of these will provide real opportunities for Cypriots and further boost the productivity of the Cypriot economy. We have also proposed an enhanced Reform Support Programme with EUR 22 billion earmarked for key reforms identified in the European Semester.

All of this will make a real difference on the ground in Cyprus and across our Union. So it is crucially important that we can agree on our new budget as swiftly as possible. Mr President, I count on your support, your counterparts' support and of course this House's support in order to make all this happen.

Thank you.

[Twelfth meeting of the Accession Conference with Montenegro at Ministerial level, Brussels, 10 December 2018](#)

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The twelfth meeting of the Accession Conference with Montenegro at Ministerial level was held today in Brussels to open negotiations on Chapter 27 – Environment and Climate change.

The European Union delegation was led by Ms Karin Kneissl, Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The European Commission was represented by Mr Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. The Montenegrin delegation was led by Prof. Dr. Srdjan Darmanović, Minister of Foreign Affairs, with line Minister Pavle Radulović, responsible for Sustainable Development and Tourism, intervening.

With today's Conference, out of a total of 35 negotiation chapters, 32 chapters have now been opened for negotiations of which 3 chapters have already been provisionally closed. Further Accession Conferences will be planned, as appropriate, in order to take the process forward in the first

half of 2019. The accession negotiations were launched in June 2012.

Chapter opened

Regarding the opening of negotiations on Chapter 27 – Environment and climate change, the Union has closely examined Montenegro's present state of preparations. On the understanding that Montenegro has to continue to make progress in the alignment with and implementation of the *acquis* in this chapter, the EU noted that there are benchmarks that need to be met for the provisional closure of this chapter.

In addition, the EU underlined that it would devote particular attention to monitoring all specific issues mentioned in its common position. Monitoring of progress in the alignment with and implementation of the *acquis* will continue throughout the negotiations. The Conference will have to return to this chapter at an appropriate moment.

The benchmarks for the chapter opened are as follows:

Chapter 27 – Environment and Climate change

- Montenegro continues to align with the horizontal Directives and demonstrates that it will be fully prepared to ensure their effective implementation and enforcement at the date of accession.
- On air quality, Montenegro fully aligns with the revised Directive on the reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants (NEC Directive 2016/2284/EU). Montenegro presents an analysis of cost-effective emission control strategies for 2020 and 2030, which shall serve as a basis for final agreement between the EU and Montenegro on its reduction obligations under the NEC Directive. Montenegro reports on an annual basis its emissions, in line with the Directive and the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and develops a National Air Pollution Control Programme. Furthermore, Montenegro enhances the preparation for the implementation of the *acquis* in this area, by regularly taking measures to reduce national air pollution, particularly in zones where EU limit values for air quality are exceeded, and by developing or updating air quality plans, as envisaged by the Directive on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe (Directive 2008/50/EC).
- Montenegro decides on its waste management system and dedicates appropriate funding to infrastructure investments, in line with relevant EU legislation, including the waste hierarchy. Montenegro establishes waste prevention programmes, prepares waste management plans (WMP), and adopts measures for the separate collection of waste for paper, metal, plastic and glass.
- Montenegro makes significant progress on *acquis* alignment in the water sector, including drinking water legislation, and Directive 2008/56/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of marine environmental policy. Montenegro designates the competent drinking water authorities and develops river basin management plans for each river basin district lying entirely within its territory, including the

portions of international river basin districts falling within its territory.

- In the area of nature protection, Montenegro submits the list of proposed Natura 2000 sites, sufficiently covering the habitat types and species in line with the requirements of the Birds and Habitats directives, to the Commission. Montenegro demonstrates the capacity to manage the Natura 2000 network, including by affording the Ulcinj Salina the appropriate protection status and effectively implementing the necessary conservation measures leading to the improvement of its conservation status.
- Montenegro continues its alignment with the *acquis* in the chemicals, noise and civil protection sectors, and demonstrates that it will be fully prepared to ensure the implementation and enforcement of the EU requirements at the date of accession.
- On climate change, Montenegro continues its alignment with the *acquis*, notably by adopting legislation on the functioning of the European Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), in line with the EU ETS Directive 2003/87/EC and its successive amendments. Montenegro further aligns with relevant secondary legislation on monitoring and reporting, accreditation and verification, the Union Registry, free allocation, and auctioning. Montenegro makes sure that the appropriate framework is in place to implement the EU ETS in its entirety regarding the monitoring, reporting, and verification of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Montenegro, in line with the Action Plan for the transposition, implementation and enforcement of the EU *acquis* on environment and climate change, significantly enhances the capacity of the administrative bodies at all levels, including inspection services, further improves coordination of work and demonstrates that all appropriate administrative structures and adequate training will be in place in good time before accession to enable implementation and enforcement of the *acquis* in all sectors of this chapter.

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[#COP24: EESC president Luca Jahier calls for new EU governance on climate action](#)



Non-state and subnational actors have so far played a decisive role in action on climate, but they often face unsurmountable obstacles. At the COP 24 climate change conference in Katowice, Poland, on 2-14 December 2018, the president of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Luca Jahier, stressed how urgent it was to tackle climate change and underlined the fact that Europe needed to embrace a new mechanism for sustainability that included multi-stakeholder governance.

“When we look at where we are today,” said **Mr Jahier**, “seeing how strong the disconnect is between the absolute urgency to act now and the slow pace in which the governments are moving or even regressing in some cases, we understand how important it is for others to assume leadership and demonstrate the strong determination and huge potential from the bottom-up movement.” Sending a clear message at COP 24, the EESC president highlighted the absolute necessity of urgent climate action: “We either invest in concrete action against climate change or we will have to bear serious consequences. It will be too late to save our planet and our future generations. We need to involve civil society. We have to act now and we have to do it quickly!”

It is essential to embrace a new EU governance structure on climate action and sustainability by adopting a coordinated and multi-stakeholder approach. “Europe must be sustainable – or it will simply cease to be,” declared **Mr Jahier**, adding that only by combining efforts from local communities, non-governmental and civil society organisations, businesses, researchers and

multi-level governments would it be possible to spur robust climate action and effect positive change and thus speed up both low-carbon development and sustainable development. "Climate action must become the new 'business as usual' and must involve all actors in the transformation," **Mr Jahier** went on to note. "Nobody must be left behind. We cannot develop solutions without including the voices of those who are most impacted and vulnerable."

The EESC delegation at COP 24 also included EESC vice-president for communication **Isabel Caño** and EESC members **Stefan Back**, **Rudy De Leeuw**, **Tellervo Kylä-Harakka-Ruonala**, **Cillian Lohan** and **Mindaugas Maciulevičius**. They discussed the vital contribution of bottom-up initiatives and how to fund climate action with representatives of civil society and other organisations from all over the world.

- **Permanent involvement of grass-roots organisations**

Local governments, business and civil society networks have played a central role in the shift towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy through their bottom-up initiatives. They have made commitments in a number of areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They should therefore be continuously involved in climate change negotiations and in the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

These non-state and subnational actors face many difficulties when it comes to stepping up climate action. For this reason, the EESC has called for a "[European Dialogue on Non-State Climate Action](#)" to strengthen such climate action by European non-state organisations. Multi-stakeholder dialogue, policy instruments and toolkits, for instance through the [International Climate Governance Coalition \(ICGC\)](#), could help their climate action to take place worldwide.

- **Funding a sustainable Europe**

In order to guarantee the appropriate funding needed to achieve the transition to a zero-carbon economy and a sustainable Europe by 2050, we need to support projects that can unite Europe's strengths in the interests of workers, businesses and all Europeans. The EESC has recently proposed a finance-climate pact for high-quality jobs. The aim is to redirect the money that could otherwise bring about a new financial bubble towards the fight against climate change and the real economy, providing a new roadmap and an integrated plan. In the words of **Mr De Leeuw**, author of the [EESC opinion](#): "40% of the EU budget should be devoted to the fight against climate change and its consequences from the environmental, economic and social perspective."

It is important not only to provide financial support, but also to make existing financing mechanisms accessible for non-state climate actors. "We need to unlock more and better climate action by shifting the approach to climate finance access," said **Mr Lohan**, who drafted the [EESC opinion](#) that will be put to the vote at this week's plenary session. He went on to conclude: "It is crucial to develop and adapt financial mechanisms, provide access to information and knowledge sharing on sources of finance, adapt

finance allocation criteria to the specific needs of local actors and, finally, propose a strategy for financing micro-projects.”

Background

For further information on the work carried out by the EESC on climate change, please consult our website:

[Ninth meeting of the Accession Conference with Serbia at Ministerial level, Brussels, 10 December 2018](#)

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The ninth meeting of the Accession Conference with Serbia at Ministerial level was held today in Brussels to open negotiations on Chapter 17 – Economic and monetary policy and Chapter 18 – Statistics.

The European Union delegation was led by Ms Karin KNEISSL, the Austrian Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The European Commission was represented by Mr Johannes HAHN, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. The Serbian delegation was led by Ms Jadranka JOKSIMOVIĆ, Minister of European integration.

With today’s Conference, 16 negotiation chapters have now been opened for negotiations out of a total of 35, of which 2 chapters have already been provisionally closed. Further Accession Conferences will be planned, as appropriate, in order to take the process forward in the first half of 2019. The accession negotiations were launched in January 2014.

Chapters opened

Regarding the opening of negotiations on Chapter 17 – Economic and monetary policy and Chapter 18 – Statistics, the Union has closely examined Serbia’s present state of preparations. On the understanding that Serbia has to continue to make progress in the alignment with and implementation of the *acquis* in these chapters, the EU noted that there are benchmarks that need to

be met for provisional closure of these chapters.

In addition, the EU underlined that it would devote particular attention to monitoring all specific issues mentioned in its common positions. Monitoring of progress in the alignment with and implementation of the *acquis* will continue throughout the negotiations. The Conference will have to return to these chapters at an appropriate moment.

As regards the benchmarks, the opened chapters may only be provisionally closed once it is agreed by the EU that the following benchmarks are met:

Chapter 17 – Economic and monetary policy

- Serbia has aligned its legal framework with the *acquis* in order to ensure full central bank independence, the prohibition of monetary financing of the public sector, the prohibition of privileged access by public authorities to financial institutions, and the full integration of its central bank into the European System of Central Banks.
- Serbia has aligned its legal framework to comply with requirements for national budgetary frameworks as laid down in Council Directive 2011/85/EU.
- Serbia has fulfilled the criterion of being a functioning market economy.

Chapter 18 – Statistics

- Serbia submits key national accounts data in accordance with European System of National and Regional Accounts (ESA) 2010 and other relevant requirements together with the required detailed description of the methodology used. Eurostat has verified the data and the descriptions presented, and confirmed appropriate alignment with the EU rules.

Serbia presents to the Commission a road map for the transmission of the remaining tables from the ESA 2010 Transmission Programme and the not yet implemented methodological issues.

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[Remarks by Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos during the Opening Plenary of the Intergovernmental Conference on the Global Compact for](#)

Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

Distinguished Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would first like to thank Morocco for hosting this important event in this beautiful and historical city, Marrakesh.

I would like to thank Secretary-General Guterres for his wise, courageous and visionary words.

I would also like to thank Louise Arbour for organising not only today's conference but for pushing this entire process forward.

It is an honour for me to address this Conference today.

In our globalised world, human mobility can only be addressed effectively by the international community as a whole.

It is a global phenomenon that requires global solutions.

Building strong partnerships with countries of origin, transit and destination to address migration challenges is a key element of the European Union's comprehensive migration policy.

The objective of the European Union is to prevent uncontrolled migration flows, while continuing to work towards better management of global migration and mobility.

In this respect, neither a single country, nor a region such as Europe, can address migratory challenges alone.

The added-value of the Global Compact is to create a cooperative framework for all States to manage migration together.

It offers an unprecedented and unique framework to share responsibility for improving global migration management in full respect of the sovereignty of each State.

The European Union is already implementing many actions contained in this Compact through the comprehensive migration policy it has put in place over the past few years.

Notably we have supported actions in and outside Europe to:

- (i) protect the human rights of all migrants with particular attention to children and the most vulnerable groups;
- (ii) address the root causes of irregular migration;
- (iii) break the business model of smugglers and traffickers;

(iv) better manage borders;

(v) facilitate effective return and readmission and support sustainable reintegration;

(vi) create the conditions for legal pathways.

Of course, we also know that better managing migration and mobility requires action *beyond* the measures listed in the Global Compact.

There is notably a strong link between migration and development and between this Compact and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Trust Fund for Africa, through which we have mobilised €4 billion, is a good example of this link.

Among other priorities, it has allowed us to finance projects to address the root causes of irregular migration and to help to ensure the successful socio-economic reintegration of returning migrants in their countries of origin or transit.

More generally, we see migration in a broader context whereby Europe forges equal and strong partnerships to deepen economic relations and to boost investments and jobs.

The New Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs, presented by the European Commission in September, is a good example of the EU's commitment to bring our partnerships to a higher level with the ambitious objective of creating 10 million jobs in Africa in the next five years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Migration is an important challenge for all of us.

The European Union will continue working closely with all the United Nations bodies to better manage it at global level.

Thank you for your attention.