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Agence Europe

Draft**Strategic Agenda 2024-2029**

The European Union was founded on the imperative of securing peace in Europe, building on cooperation, solidarity and common economic prosperity. This original promise still guides us and serves as the basis for our vision for a strong and sovereign Europe.

The global political landscape is being reshaped by geopolitical competition and attempts to undermine the rules-based international order. Russia has brought war back to our continent. In our neighbourhood, the situation in the Middle East is dramatic. Our natural environment is facing increasing damage and disruption due to climate change and biodiversity loss. The fast development of new technologies brings opportunities and potential risks.

These unprecedented challenges have led the European Union to break new ground in our cooperation and integration in the past five years. Together, we have fixed key goals to fight climate change and put in place an ambitious framework for the digital transition. Together, we developed and distributed vaccines across Europe and beyond and set up a major recovery fund in response to the pandemic that affected our societies in unforeseeable ways. Together, we protected our economies during the energy crisis. And together, we have been providing Ukraine with significant military and economic support as it defends itself against Russia's war of aggression. But we will not rest here. We will live up to the call of the Union's founders and ensure that the creativity of our responses matches the size of the challenges ahead of us.

As the Union and Member States, we will combine our strengths and resources to face the coming years with unity and resolve. We will address the aspirations of our citizens. We will strengthen our competitiveness, and become the first climate-neutral continent, making a success of the climate and digital transitions, leaving no one behind. We will take the necessary responsibility for our security and defence and become more influential in the world. We will take the lead in addressing global challenges, championing international law and institutions, fair global governance, inclusive multilateralism and sustainable growth and development.

Strong and competitive social market economies will be the driving force in achieving our ambitions. In today's hypercompetitive world, we need to unleash the European spirit of entrepreneurship. Europe is a continent of doers, makers and innovators. Trusting our companies to turn risks into opportunities will spur investment, boost economic growth and make Europe a world leader in green and digital industries and technologies.

Our values and the rule of law are our compass, both internally and externally. They are the foundation for a stronger, more prosperous and more democratic Union for our citizens.

The European Council agrees on the following priorities and invites the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission to put them into action during the next institutional cycle, respecting the institutional balance of powers as set out in the Treaties and the principles of conferral, subsidiarity and proportionality. The next Multiannual Financial Framework for the Union will have to reflect these priorities, ensuring that the EU budget is fit for the future and that European responses are given to European challenges. In this respect, we will work on introducing new own resources.

A free and democratic Europe

Upholding European values within the Union

Our values are our strength. We will protect and promote our founding values – respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights – which remain the cornerstone of our Union.

We will promote and safeguard respect for the rule of law, which is the basis of European cooperation, upholding the principles of objectivity, non-discrimination and equal treatment of Member States. We will strengthen our democratic resilience, including by deepening citizen engagement, strengthening democratic discourse, protecting free and pluralistic media and civil society, tackling foreign interference and countering attempts at destabilisation, including through disinformation and hate speech.

Living up to our values at global level

The European Union shall continue to be the strongest supporter of the international legal order, steadfastly upholding the United Nations and the principles enshrined in the UN Charter. In particular, the European Union will pursue efforts to promote global peace, justice and stability, as well as democracy and universal human rights in all international fora. We will strive for a reformed multilateral system, making it more inclusive and more effective.

A strong and secure Europe

Ensuring coherent and influential external action

The world around us has become more confrontational, transactional and uncertain. We will adapt to the ever-evolving circumstances, asserting the European Union's ambition and role as a strategic global player in the new multipolar geopolitical context.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine is also an attack on a free and democratic Europe. The European Union will stand by Ukraine as it fights to retain its independence and sovereignty and regain its territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. We will also support its reconstruction and the pursuit of a just peace. We will intensify our work to promote security, stability, peace and prosperity in our neighbourhood and beyond.

We will closely engage with partners and develop mutually beneficial strategic partnerships to address shared challenges. We will leverage both internal and external EU policies in the best interests of the Union in a well-coordinated manner.

Strengthening our security and defence and protecting our citizens

Europe must be a place where people are and feel free and safe. The European Union and Member States have taken bold steps to strengthen the Union's defence readiness and capacity, including increased defence spending. Going forward, we will invest substantially more and better together.

Increasing our security requires a solid economic base. We will mobilise the necessary instruments to bolster our security and the protection of our citizens, and to respond to new emerging threats. We will enhance interoperability between European armed forces. We will urgently improve conditions for scaling up the European defence industry by creating a better integrated European defence market and promoting joint procurement and flagship projects of common interest across the EU. We will also improve access to public and private finance, exploring innovative options, including through the enhanced role of the European Investment Bank Group as a catalyst.

Strengthening our security and defence will be done in cooperation with NATO without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States and taking into account the security and defence interests of all Member States.

We will strengthen security within the Union. We will fight crime offline and online and prevent and tackle corruption, using all the law enforcement and judicial cooperation tools of our Union. We will be resolute against organised crime and disrupt the flow of illicit profits from cross-border criminal activity. We will fight attempts to sow division, radicalisation, terrorism and violent extremism.

The European Union will strengthen its resilience, preparedness, crisis prevention and response capacities, in an all-hazards and whole-of-society approach, to protect our citizens and societies against different crises, including natural disasters and health emergencies. We will step up our collective response to cyber and hybrid warfare, foreign manipulation and interference and threats to our critical infrastructure. We will pay particular attention to enhancing societal resilience.

Preparing for a bigger and stronger Union

The new geopolitical reality underscores the importance of enlargement as a geostrategic investment in peace, security, stability and prosperity. There is new dynamism in the enlargement process. Both the EU and aspiring members now have a responsibility to make the most of this opportunity and communicate this clearly.

The European Union will follow a merit-based approach to accession with tangible incentives. It will support aspiring members in meeting the accession criteria through established and new instruments and will use all possibilities for gradual integration. It will also encourage reform efforts, regional integration, good neighbourly relations, reconciliation and the resolution of bilateral disputes.

In parallel, the European Union will undertake the necessary internal reforms to ensure that our policies are fit for the future and financed in a sustainable manner and that the EU institutions continue to function and act effectively.

Pursuing a comprehensive approach to migration and border management

Ensuring that citizens can move freely within the EU is a fundamental achievement of the European Union and requires the proper functioning of the Schengen area. With this freedom comes the shared responsibility to effectively protect the EU's external borders and fulfil common obligations. It is a prerequisite for guaranteeing security and upholding law and order in line with our principles and values.

Through its comprehensive partnerships approach, the European Union will continue to cooperate in a mutually beneficial way with countries of origin and transit and consider new ways to prevent and counter irregular migration. Together, we will address the long-term challenges of irregular migration and its root causes and work on returns. We will also explore the opportunities of migration, including through legal pathways. We will fight smuggling networks and break the business model of those who profit from this inhumane trade. We will find joint solutions to the security threat of instrumentalised migration.

A prosperous and competitive Europe

Bolstering our competitiveness

We are determined to strengthen the basis of our long-term competitiveness and improve citizens' economic and social wellbeing. We will work to increase their purchasing power, create good jobs and guarantee the quality of goods and services in Europe. We will reinforce our sovereignty in strategic sectors and close our growth, productivity and innovation gaps with international partners and main competitors. This requires a significant collective investment effort, mobilising both public and private funding, including through the European Investment Bank.

Our greatest asset in that endeavour is the Single Market, the long-term engine of prosperity and convergence that enables economies of scale. We will therefore deepen it further, notably in the areas of energy, finance and telecommunications. We will systematically remove barriers, particularly in relation to services and essential goods, and ensure equal access to the Single Market through improved connectivity. We will ensure a balanced state aid policy to preserve the integrity of the Single Market and a level playing field.

To unlock the necessary investment potential, we will gear up financial integration by achieving the Capital Markets Union and completing the Banking Union. This will create truly integrated European capital markets, which are accessible and attractive to all citizens and businesses and benefit all Member States.

Learning from our experience, we will not allow the undermining of our open markets. We will strongly promote the central role of the WTO and pursue an ambitious, robust, open and sustainable trade policy that allows fair trade agreements, opens third country markets to EU companies, defends EU interests, allows resilient and reliable supply chains to develop, guarantees a true level playing field and creates reciprocal market access opportunities. We will strengthen our economic security, reduce harmful dependencies and diversify and secure strategic supply chains, including by enhancing our maritime security. We will build up our own capacity in sensitive sectors and key technologies of the future, such as defence, space, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, semiconductors, 5G/6G, health, biotechnologies, net-zero technologies, mobility, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and advanced materials. Promoting innovation and research is crucial in this endeavour.

Making a success of the green and digital transitions

On our path towards climate neutrality by 2050, we will harness the potential of the green and digital transitions to create the markets, industries and high-quality jobs of the future. We will create a more supportive environment for scaling up Europe's manufacturing capacity for net-zero technologies and products. We will invest in an ample cross-border infrastructure for energy, water, transport and communications.

We will pursue a just and fair climate transition, with the aim of staying competitive globally and increasing our energy sovereignty. Accelerating the energy transition, we will build a genuine energy union, securing the supply of abundant, affordable and clean energy. This will require ambitious electrification, and investment in grids, storage and interconnections. We will develop a more circular and resource-efficient economy, driving forward the industrial development of clean technologies, reaping the full benefits of the bioeconomy, embracing clean and smart mobility with adequate network infrastructure. This will increase real income and purchasing power, thereby improving living standards for all EU citizens.

We will exploit the untapped potential of data and encourage investment in game-changing digital technologies in Europe, promoting their application throughout the economy, while ensuring privacy and security. Building on the EU digital identity, we will create new EU-wide high-quality e-services.

The European Union will promote a competitive, sustainable and resilient agricultural sector that continues to ensure food security, and champion vibrant rural communities. We will continue to protect nature and reverse the degradation of ecosystems, including oceans.

Promoting an innovation- and business-friendly environment

In an increasingly knowledge- and data-driven economy and a global and competitive market, Europe will accompany, nurture and grow its businesses and industry, attract and retain talent, and remain an attractive location for investment.

We will boost Europe's research and innovation capacity in emerging and enabling technologies, including for dual use. Achieving industrial strength in key sectors also requires the Union to safeguard fair competition, fight unfair practices, promote reciprocity and ensure a level playing field both internally and globally.

For businesses to flourish, we will ambitiously reduce the bureaucratic and regulatory burden and reform administrative procedures, including permitting, to reflect the needs of a modern, dynamic and consumer-friendly investment environment. We commit to better regulation, including by making the best use of digital government and taking into account the needs of SMEs and start-ups. We will work in an integrated, coordinated and coherent way across all policy areas and put special focus on implementation and enforcement of agreed policies.

Advancing together

Economic growth needs to benefit all citizens. We will uphold the social dimension of the Single Market so that everyone can seize the opportunities offered by the green and digital transitions. In view of demographic challenges, we will ensure that the European economic model and welfare systems support a thriving longevity society. In this context, we will further strengthen health cooperation at European and international level and improve access to medicines across the Union.

We will invest in people's skills, training and education throughout their lives and encourage talent mobility within the European Union and beyond. Recalling the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU and Member States will aim to strengthen social dialogue, uphold equal opportunities and reduce inequalities. Increasing participation in the labour market and promoting youth employment will be of key importance in the coming years.

To promote the overall harmonious development of the EU, we will enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion, aiming for continuous upward convergence, reducing disparities, increasing our resilience and competitiveness and stimulating long-term growth across the Union.

Our destiny is in our own hands. We have the talent, courage and vision to successfully shape our future. This Strategic Agenda is our joint pledge to unequivocally serve our citizens and fulfil our founding objective of peace and prosperity.