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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	European Council meeting (15 and 16 October 2026) – Draft conclusions

In accordance with Article 3(1) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Council, delegations will find attached the draft conclusions prepared by the President of the European Council, in close cooperation with the member of the European Council representing the Member State holding the six-monthly Presidency of the Council and with the President of the Commission.

I. COMPETITIVENESS

1. Recalling its previous conclusions in March and June 2026, the European Council addressed ongoing efforts to strengthen EU competitiveness in all its dimensions in the challenging geoeconomic context.
2. The European Council reviewed the implementation of the ‘One Europe, One Market’ agenda in line with the interinstitutional Roadmap, and welcomed the progress already achieved on key proposals. At the same time, the European Council called for additional progress by the co-legislators and Commission both on the level of ambition and on the agreed timelines.
3. The European Council reconfirms the urgency of making decisive progress on deepening the Single Market; on simplification and reducing administrative burdens, including as regards gold-plating and planning and permitting procedures; on affordable energy prices and the Energy Union 2030; on fostering Europe’s industrial renewal and innovation and reducing dependencies; and on mobilising investment.
4. The European Council discussed the impact of the current geopolitical context on global supply chains, energy security, and energy and fuel prices, including the effects on citizens, in particular the most vulnerable, industry and the wider economy.
The European Council emphasises the importance of internationally coordinated measures to stabilise energy supplies, and calls for unrestricted trade in energy and energy products between partner countries.
5. Recalling the need to continue reducing dependence on volatile fossil fuel markets, the European Council underlines that the current situation requires a coordinated European response, mobilising all available instruments, taking into account the Member States’ specific circumstances and safeguarding the Single Market. [*p.m. Commission proposal for a stop-the-clock amendment to the Methane Regulation and possible Commission proposals for other targeted and temporary measures*]

6. The European Council took stock of global macroeconomic imbalances, and invites the Commission to enhance the EU toolbox to better address these imbalances.

II. UKRAINE

7. [The European Council held an exchange of views with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine.]
8. The European Council reaffirms its continued firm and unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The European Union will continue to provide, in coordination with like-minded partners and allies, comprehensive political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people.
9. Russia has escalated its large-scale, deliberate and systematic missile and drone attacks against Ukraine's civilians and civilian infrastructure, including energy and transport systems, and healthcare and educational facilities. The European Council strongly condemns these brutal attacks and commends the fortitude, determination and resilience of the Ukrainian people and their leadership in resisting Russian aggression and defending their land. Exercising its inherent right of self-defence, Ukraine has managed to stand its ground and push back against Russia's enormous pressure, preventing Russia from achieving its military and strategic objectives.
10. To help Ukraine prepare for winter, the European Council calls for further intensified efforts and coordination to strengthen the resilience of Ukraine's critical infrastructure and energy system, including through the Ukraine Energy Support Fund, and to address other immediate needs. Enhanced regional energy cooperation and cross-border electricity interconnections play a pivotal role in this regard. The European Union remains committed to supporting Ukraine's repair, recovery and reconstruction, in coordination with international partners.

11. By targeting Ukraine's agricultural infrastructure, Black Sea and Danube ports, border crossing points, export facilities and vessels, by blocking shipping lanes, and by destroying grain storage facilities, Russia is once again weaponising food and undermining global food security in particular in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. To avoid a further deterioration of the situation, the European Council calls for the immediate restoration of safe passage for grain cargo ships in the Black Sea, which is vital for sustainable grain exports. The European Council reaffirms the strategic importance of security, stability and freedom of navigation in the Black Sea. The European Council also recalls the importance of measures aimed at further consolidating the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes.
12. The European Union supports a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law and underpinned by robust and credible security guarantees for Ukraine. Only a solution that respects Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity can bring about a just and lasting peace. Borders must not be changed by force, the aggressor cannot be rewarded and Ukraine's long-term security and ability to defend itself must be guaranteed. The path to peace in Ukraine cannot be decided without Ukraine. The European Union will decide on matters of its competence or affecting its security.
13. Therefore, in accordance with the Union's aim to promote peace, as enshrined in the Treaties, the European Council reiterates its support for diplomatic efforts to bring Russia's war of aggression to an end, and underlines the EU's readiness to step up its engagement in that context. Europe has a key role to play in a future settlement and will defend its interests. The European Council urges Russia to show genuine willingness regarding peace, agree to a full, unconditional and immediate ceasefire and engage in meaningful negotiations towards a just and lasting peace. Humanitarian relief efforts and confidence-building measures, notably the exchange of prisoners of war and the return of civilian detainees, in particular children, must continue as part of the pathway to peace.

14. The European Union and Member States stand ready to contribute to robust and credible security guarantees for Ukraine, notably through the Coalition of the Willing and in cooperation with the United States. This will include supporting Ukraine's ability to deter aggression and defend itself effectively, also in the long term. The contribution of the European Union and Member States will be based on their respective competences and capabilities and in line with international law. In this context, the European Council welcomes the agreement on the extension and revision of the mandate of the European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine). Member States are committed to contributing to training and equipping the Ukrainian Armed Forces.
15. The European Council welcomes the start of disbursements to Ukraine from the EUR 90 billion Ukraine Support Loan for 2026 and 2027, including the recent disbursements of EUR 5.34 billion. It welcomes that the means to cover Ukraine's budget and defence needs for 2026 have been identified. It calls on all actors, notably Ukraine, to intensify efforts, including to fulfil the requirements of the Ukraine Plan, to allow the timely disbursement of all the commitments from the Ukraine Support Loan and Ukraine Facility for 2026. The European Council recalls the importance of Ukraine continuing its reform efforts and upholding the rule of law.
16. The European Council remains committed to addressing Ukraine's pressing financing needs, together with international partners, and in this regard looks forward to the updated assessment by the Commission and IMF. In this context, the European Council calls on international partners to swiftly step up their support to help meet Ukraine's pressing financing and military needs.

17. The European Council underlines the importance of further sustained efforts to provide military support to Ukraine. In this respect, it welcomes the agreement to release EUR 6.6 billion under the European Peace Facility. The European Council also welcomes recent bilateral aid provided by Member States and progress made in EU-Ukraine defence industrial cooperation. In view of Russia's escalating missile and drone attacks, the European Council stresses the need to urgently help address Ukraine's air and missile defence needs.
18. All military support as well as security guarantees for Ukraine will be provided in full respect of the security and defence policy of certain Member States and taking into account the security and defence interests of all Member States.
19. The European Union remains determined to further increase pressure on Russia so that it stops its brutal war of aggression and engages in meaningful negotiations towards peace. The European Council welcomes the recent adoption of the 21st sanctions package [and of a substantial number of further listings of individuals and entities]. It calls for the swift implementation of the measures concerning Russian ex-combatants and for further measures, including to reduce Russia's energy revenues, and to effectively close loopholes and fight circumvention, and to curb shadow fleet operations and undermine their business model. This requires a 'whole of route' approach and coordination among Member States and with partners, including a common approach to addressing the significant environmental, security and maritime safety risks posed by such vessels, in particular through more voluntary boarding operations. The European Council reiterates that, as long as there is no just and lasting peace in Ukraine, there should not be a normalisation of Russia's participation in international sports and cultural events.
20. The European Council strongly condemns the illegal organisation by Russia of so-called 'elections' in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, which represents yet another blatant violation by Russia of international law, including the UN Charter, and of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

21. The European Council reiterates its call on all countries to immediately cease any assistance to Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine, whether direct or indirect, and notably through the provision of dual-use goods and components. In particular, it strongly condemns the deployment of the DPRK's military forces in the war against Ukraine as well as the continued military support provided to Russia by Iran, Belarus and the DPRK, among others.
22. The European Union remains committed to ensuring full accountability for war crimes and the other most serious crimes committed in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and fully supports ongoing efforts within the framework of the Council of Europe towards the operationalisation of the International Claims Commission for Ukraine and the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. The European Council urges Russia and Belarus to immediately ensure the safe and unconditional return to Ukraine of all unlawfully deported and transferred Ukrainian children and other civilians.
23. The European Council welcomes the extension of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine until March 2028.
24. [*p.m.: accession negotiations*]
25. The European Council will revert to this issue at its next meeting.

III. NEXT MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

26. [Following the presentation of an updated draft Negotiating Box by the Irish Presidency,] the European Council discussed the key elements needed for a balanced compromise on the next Multiannual Financial Framework.
27. The European Council invites its President to take the negotiations forward with the aim of reaching a final agreement by the end of the year.

IV. MIDDLE EAST

28. The European Council expresses its grave concern about the current security situation and the continuing military escalation in the region. The European Union will continue to engage, in close coordination with regional partners, in diplomatic efforts to de-escalate and ensure peace and stability in the Middle East.
29. The European Council calls on all actors to cease destabilising activities and reiterates the vital need to ensure freedom of navigation and maritime security in accordance with international law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The current situation risks leading to lasting disruptions to global supply chains, especially with regard to energy, fertilisers and food, which would be highly detrimental to economies and vulnerable populations around the world.

Iran

30. The European Council reiterates its strong condemnation of Iran's attacks against countries in the region and its solidarity with countries affected. It calls on Iran and its proxies to refrain from such attacks and any destabilising activities, and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region.
31. The European Council also strongly condemns any acts that threaten navigation or prevent commercial vessels from entering and exiting the Strait of Hormuz. Any arrangement related to the Strait of Hormuz must be in line with international law and UNCLOS, and not limit freedom of navigation or alter its governance in any way.

Yemen

32. The European Council strongly condemns the Houthis' continued military escalation in Yemen and their strikes against Saudi Arabia, in particular those affecting civilians and civilian infrastructure, and expresses its solidarity with the legitimate government of Yemen and with Saudi Arabia. It underlines the need to avoid aggravating the already dire humanitarian situation, and calls for increased international assistance in this regard.
33. The European Council calls on the Houthis to immediately cease all military action and all attacks against civilian shipping, which threaten maritime security in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab Strait.
34. The European Council recalls the role of the EU maritime defensive operation EUNAVFOR ASPIDES, highlights its potential to contribute to stabilising the region, and calls for its reinforcement, in line with its mandate. In this respect, it underlines the importance of complementarity of international initiatives to ensure freedom of navigation.

Gaza/West Bank

35. Recalling its previous conclusions, the European Council reaffirms the European Union's commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the two-state solution in accordance with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions where two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, live side-by-side in peace within secure and recognised borders. It strongly condemns actions, policies and rhetoric that undermine the viability of the two-state solution. The European Union will continue to support the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution.

36. The European Council reiterates its grave concern over developments in Gaza and in the West Bank. It urges Israel to allow immediate, unimpeded access and sustained distribution of humanitarian assistance at scale into and throughout Gaza, including via the Cyprus Maritime Corridor to supplement land routes, as well as to reopen Gaza border crossings and the medical corridor between Gaza and the West Bank. Israel must enable the UN and its agencies, and humanitarian organisations, to work independently and impartially to save lives and reduce suffering, and comply with all its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. The protection of civilians must be ensured at all times.
37. The European Council expresses its concern about the lack of progress in the implementation of the ceasefire and all other provisions of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2803. It calls on all actors to fully implement them without delay, in line with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and international political and legal principles, in particular the permanent decommissioning of weapons from Hamas and other non-state armed groups, the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the civilian transition in Gaza.
38. The European Union will continue to contribute to the implementation of UNSCR 2803, as well as to the reconstruction and redevelopment of Gaza, in line with international law. In this context, the European Council welcomes the renewal of the mandates of the European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (EU BAM Rafah) and the European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS). The European Council welcomes the launch of the Team Gaza Initiative and calls for close coordination with international partners on the early recovery and reconstruction of Gaza.

39. The European Union will continue to support the Palestinian Authority, including in its reform agenda. The European Council calls again on Israel to urgently release all withheld clearance revenues and extend the correspondent banking services between Israeli and Palestinian banks, both being necessary to ensure the proper functioning of the Palestinian Authority and the delivery of essential services to the population. It looks forward to the upcoming Palestinian elections as a unique opportunity to renew the legitimacy of the Palestinian institutions, pave the way for the Palestinian Authority's return to Gaza and strengthen its position as an interlocutor in peace negotiations.
40. The European Council reiterates its condemnation of Israel's unilateral actions aiming to expand its presence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion of 19 July 2024 declared to be unlawful. It also strongly condemns the continued and growing settler violence against Palestinian civilians and calls for accountability. The European Council urges Israel to immediately reverse the expansion of settlements, which are illegal under international law, including by withdrawing its tender for construction in the E1 area. It reiterates that businesses should not bid for construction contracts for E1 or other settlement developments and underlines the legal, economic and reputational consequences for businesses participating in settlement construction, including the risk of serious breaches of international law.
41. The European Council underlines the importance of having diplomatic presence of EU Member States in the occupied Palestinian territories, in order to engage with the Palestinian Authority and thereby contribute to the two-state solution.

Lebanon

42. The European Council welcomes the framework agreement signed by Lebanon and Israel in June 2026. It urges all actors to fully abide by the terms of the agreement and to engage constructively in further talks with a view to a permanent end to hostilities, in full respect of international law, including international humanitarian law.
43. The European Council calls on all parties to fully implement UNSCR 1701, on which any lasting solution must be based. It reiterates its call for the full disarmament of Hezbollah. It calls on Israel to respect Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to withdraw its forces from Lebanon, in line with UNSCR 1701. The European Council recalls the crucial importance of a continued international presence in Lebanon in a post-UNIFIL context.
44. The European Union will continue to support the Lebanese people, including over the long term, in close coordination with international partners. The European Council reiterates the EU's full support for the Lebanese government's efforts to strengthen the Lebanese Armed Forces in view of gaining control of the whole Lebanese territory and to establish the state's monopoly on holding weapons. [The European Council welcomes the establishment of the European Union Support Mission in Lebanon.]

V. EUROPEAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY

45. In an environment where Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine remains an existential challenge for the European Union, the intensification of hybrid attacks against the European Union and its Member States and the repeated violations of Member States' airspace and territorial waters in recent months reinforce the importance and the urgency for Europe to deliver on its objective to decisively ramp up its defence readiness.

46. The European Council strongly condemns the escalating and increasingly reckless behaviour by Russia, and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the security of all Member States. Russia's actions will not remain unanswered. In view of such intensified hybrid campaigns by Russia and other hostile actors, the European Council calls for additional efforts to urgently strengthen resilience, enhance preparedness, protect critical infrastructure, and prevent, deter and respond to hybrid attacks. The European Union and the Member States will act resolutely and in a coordinated manner to address these actions, making full use of all tools and mechanisms available. Additional measures will be considered, including further restrictive measures and reviewing visa requirements and policy regarding Russian nationals. The European Council calls on the Council to accelerate work on all relevant work strands and in particular on the Action Plan on Drone and Counter-Drone Security. The European Union will also continue to work closely with partners to detect and counter hybrid activities by third countries.
47. The European Council reiterates its commitment to deliver at pace and at scale on its 2030 defence readiness objective, so that Europe is better equipped to act and deal autonomously, in a coordinated way, and with a 360° approach, with immediate and future challenges and threats. It also stresses the importance of ensuring the defence of all EU land, air and maritime borders. It encourages continued work on the 'Eastern Flank Watch' project and other initiatives that contribute to the protection of all EU borders.

48. In this context, recalling its conclusions of March and June 2026, the European Council welcomes the presentation of the first annual defence readiness report prepared by the European Defence Agency (EDA) with the support of the Commission and the High Representative and agrees with the overall assessment it presents. The European Council highlights the importance of stepping up efforts to reduce strategic dependencies and calls on Member States to accelerate work to address critical capability gaps. It welcomes progress in the priority capability areas identified at EU level in full coherence with NATO, and calls on Member States to redouble their efforts in all capability coalitions with a view to urgently advancing existing joint projects and launching new ones.
49. Further efforts are also required to strengthen the European defence technological and industrial base, so that it is able both to support Europe's defence readiness and to supply, at the necessary speed and scale, the priority equipment required to support Ukraine. This implies adapting and ramping up production capacities and delivering, through research, new technologies and innovation, as well as ensuring resilient supply chains. This will also contribute to boosting European industrial and technological competitiveness, including for SMEs. The European Council recalls that demand aggregation on the basis of standardised requirements and economies of scale are key to providing predictability to industry, lowering costs and fostering interoperability, and that Member States should therefore increasingly gear defence investment towards joint development, production and procurement, with the support of the EDA. The European Council also recalls the need to continue to facilitate the defence industry's access to finance and invites the European Investment Bank to continue its efforts in this regard.
50. The European Council stresses the importance of defence industrial cooperation with Ukraine, which contributes to strengthening Europe's defence readiness, building on all existing initiatives and drawing on Ukraine's unique experience and know-how. It underlines the need to deepen defence industrial partnerships with Ukraine by integrating its defence industry into the European defence technological and industrial base.

51. Full use should be made of available instruments for capability development and industrial reinforcement. The European Council welcomes in that regard the identification by the Council of European Defence Projects of Common Interest, introduced in the framework of the European Defence Investment Programme, and the agreement reached by the co-legislators on the Programme for agile and rapid defence innovation. The European Council calls on the co-legislators to agree on the military mobility proposal by the end of the year. The European Council looks forward to upcoming proposals from the Commission on defence procurement.
52. The European Council recalls that a stronger and more capable European Union in the field of security and defence will contribute positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to NATO, which remains, for those States that are members of it, the foundation of their collective defence. The European Council underlines the importance of working together with like-minded partners, who share the EU's foreign and security policy goals.
53. The above is without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States, and takes into account the security and defence interests of all Member States, in accordance with the Treaties.

VI. MIGRATION

54. The European Council held a strategic discussion on the EU's comprehensive approach to migration and took stock of progress in the implementation of its previous conclusions[, including in the light of the recent letter from the President of the Commission].
55. The European Council recalls the importance of the implementation of adopted EU legislation and welcomes the sustained progress achieved in significantly and consistently reducing the number of irregular border crossings into the European Union to the lowest level since 2021.

56. Recalling that migration is a European challenge that requires a European response, the European Council calls for intensified work to continue on all strands, including on the external dimension and comprehensive partnerships with countries of origin and transit, following a whole-of-route approach, to address root causes and to fight human trafficking and smuggling with a view to preventing loss of life and irregular departures, in line with EU and international law.
57. Making full use of the recent EU rules on return, the European Council calls on the Council, Commission and Member States to improve effective returns, including by increasing scrutiny over third countries which do not cooperate sufficiently on return and readmission. All relevant EU policies, instruments and tools, including diplomacy, development, trade and visas, should be used as leverage.
58. The European Council underlines the need to enhance the fight against migrant smuggling, as well as to prevent and counter irregular migration, including through new ways in line with EU and international law.
59. The European Council reaffirms the European Union's determination to ensure effective control of the EU's external borders. It stresses the importance of improving situational awareness, including by enhancing social media monitoring capabilities. It strongly condemns all forms of instrumentalisation of migrants.
60. The European Council underlines the importance for the European Union to be in a position to anticipate, prevent and respond to situations of crisis in the field of migration, including all cases of instrumentalisation. [*p.m. possible Commission initiatives*]

VII. ENLARGEMENT AND REFORMS

61. In light of the new impetus in the enlargement process, and recalling the Granada Declaration, the European Council held a strategic discussion on the way forward on enlargement and internal reforms.
62. Recalling its previous conclusions, the European Council stresses the continued importance of enlargement as a geostrategic investment in peace, security, stability and prosperity. It is a driver for improving the economic and social conditions of European citizens, reducing disparities between countries, and must foster the values on which the Union is founded. Looking ahead to the prospect of a further enlarged Union, both future Member States and the EU need to be ready at the time of accession. Aspiring members need to continue their reform efforts, notably in the area of rule of law, in line with the merit-based nature of the accession process and with the assistance of the EU. In parallel, the Union needs to lay the necessary internal groundwork and reforms. This will make the European Union stronger and enhance European sovereignty.
63. [In that light, the European Council takes note of the Commission's Communication on 'Preparing for a wider Union' and calls on the Council to take work forward on all strands.]
64. The European Council welcomes the ongoing work on drafting the accession treaty with Montenegro and notes the intention of the Council Presidency to close all negotiating chapters by the end of this year.

VIII. OTHER ITEMS

The Arctic region

65. The European Council underlines the strategic importance of the Arctic region for European and global security and prosperity and the need to further step up EU engagement to promote a secure, peaceful and resilient Arctic. In this context, the European Council takes note of the holding of the European Arctic Summit in Rovaniemi on 13-14 September 2026 and looks forward to the upcoming Joint Communication by the Commission and the High Representative on Europe's Northern Neighbourhood.

Ceuta and Melilla

66. The European Council underlines the specific situation of Ceuta and Melilla as having the only EU land borders on the African continent. It expresses its solidarity with and support for Spain in relation to the sudden mass influx of migrants in Ceuta on 30 and 31 July 2026, and welcomes EU financial and operational support given their specific situation.

A safer digital sphere

67. In the face of foreign information manipulation and interference, the European Council recalls the importance of strengthening Europe's democratic resilience and the legal responsibility of online platforms to fight the dissemination of disinformation and illegal content.
68. To protect minors in the digital sphere, the European Council calls for the development of a clear, robust, effective and proportionate EU framework, which sets out a harmonised minimum age for access to social media, while preserving the privacy of users and respecting national competences. It welcomes in that context the presentation by the Commission of the proposal for an EU KIDS Act and invites the co-legislators to examine it swiftly.