

**Professor Danuta Hübner**

**“Strengthening the EU’s role as a global power through trade”**

**Conference on the Future of Europe, Inaugural Meeting of the Working Group  
on “EU in the World”**

**European Parliament, Strasbourg (online), 22 October 2021**

I would like to first of all thank Mr Boland who spoke on behalf of Irish citizens that he raised the importance of strong, but also fair, trade agreements.

I have found in the report from the Citizen Panel debating “Europe in the world” many direct and indirect references to the role of trade in our life.

EU always spared no efforts trying to ensure that trade functions in a rules-based environment, founded on predictable norms and stable procedures. Only such environment can create a win-win situation across the world. Trade based on power, which I think creates a big risk on having only zero sum games, hurts especially the weaker.

Trade is a policy area where Member States willingly pool their sovereignty recognizing that their collective power is far greater than the sum of parts. Unfortunately, we see that Member States and national parliaments do not ratify our free trade agreements, even with partners like Canada. This undermines our credibility as trade partners globally. This must change.

It is important because trade is not only about growth and jobs creation, as important as they are. We know that it helps combat climate change, promote labor rights globally. Today these broad objectives matter more than ever in the global context.

We as EU have instruments to make trade an accelerator for positive change. We know their limits. That is why we need allies and partners. That is why our position in the global world matters.

The Citizen Panel on “Europe in the World” has identified many issues related to European international trade policy. Let me mention some examples because I find them important for our debates.

What comes first on the list is the need to strengthen the EU's role as a global power through trade. Citizens they see the importance of strategic autonomy but also the dependence on the rest of the world in many areas crucial for our life quality and security. Citizens are also concerned about the ethical dimension of trade and point to the need of looking at the EU's relations with China and US.