

**Professor Danuta Hübner**

**“Preparing Europe for a challenging future”**

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

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I would like to strongly support the need to structure our debates. And I would like to raise two points.

First, let me say that we are talking about Europe in the world we not only have opportunities but also major threats ahead of us and for the world we would like to live in.

Our task in this conference is to prepare Europe to confront those threats but also to develop its ability to be a leader in this complex and challenging world.

This will not be easy because we will be facing a world with a big gap between well and less vaccinated regions. And, this will be a world where democracies and autocracies will be struggling for the global dominance of their governing models.

Secondly, talking about the content of our debate, I would like to say that I see trade as an important issue deserving a hard look at in our recommendations.

Trade policy is an area where member states willingly pool their sovereignty recognizing that their collective power is far greater this way.

Unfortunately, we see a growing list of free trade agreements that are not ratified by member states and national parliaments. This is our common concern.

Trade can be an accelerator for positive change to achieve bigger goals, like climate transformation. We share this approach with citizens.

I would also like to see us committed to ensuring that global trade functions in a rules based environment. This is a big challenge today. It is the only way to make trade a win-win relationship.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that I also share citizens' concerns about the ethical dimension of trade.