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**“Time to start working on meaningful results in the Conference on the Future of Europe”**

**Meeting of the European Parliament’s Delegation to the Conference on the Future of Europe**

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I would like to speak in the context of my experience with the Working Group on “EU in the World” and I would like to raise three issues.

First, on the work of the Working Group. During our first meeting, the Working Group did not have a defined agenda and had an open and unstructured discussion on the main topics identified by citizens for the Working Group.

The acting Chair at the time strongly encouraged the citizens who were present to take the floor and have the priority over the Members of Parliaments that were present. Seven citizens took the floor, and some did it several times.

While we had good debate, all participants felt that having an unstructured dialogue would not be the best way to conduct productive exchange of views. Participants expressed their preference with creating sub-groups for each of the identified blocks. We agreed that each debate should be informed by citizens, who would report on what was discussed during citizens' panels.

Second, I would like to zoom in on the issue of trade within the scope of the Working Group.

I strongly believe in the importance of trade in our work within this Working Group. And I see an important role of the European Parliament in shaping the debate and also the future of European trade policy.

It 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, the fact that some of our concluded free trade agreements are still not ratified undermines our credibility as a trade partner globally. This sends bad signals to citizens.

The EU has instruments to make trade an accelerator for positive change to achieve other bigger trends. I think here of our digital and green transformations, but also about the role of Europe in global geopolitics.

There is a need to get all of us Europeans engaged in the path of openness toward the world. We must do more to communicate the benefits brought by our vast network of trade agreements.

Finally, the third issue, in more general terms, I believe that it is important that we focus on deliverables of the Conference starting now.

In March, we should aim at having a major skeleton that would present recommendations from all the working groups. This would be the moment for an important European Parliament resolution.

This skeleton could be a kind of an explanatory statement of intentions on where Europe should go. We will have to assess whether this vision would require a change in our treaties or not.

Nonetheless, this conference cannot only be a forum to exchange ideas. It needs to be solution-oriented and have in mind the type of outputs that we will need to define.

It is time to start thinking about our final products now.