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**“Citizens’ Panels’ Recommendations on Values & Rights, Rule of Law,
Security”**

Plenary Session of Conference on the Future of Europe

Citizens are “first responders” in keeping our values alive

Brussels (online), 21 January 2022

I am convinced somebody has already said that values are like fingerprints. We leave them over everything we do. I believe that we as the European Union have always taken a great care of our fingerprints. They are easily identified as ours in the world beyond our borders. And we are proud of them.

Unfortunately, we live in times when some members of European community test the limits of our democratic values and principles. This is dangerous for our common future. If values are lost, we are lost.

And it comes without saying that if values are to be effective, they have to be grounded in a conducive structural framework. The Union must become more assertive and credible in defending its values at home.

The citizens are the „first responders” when it comes to holding the line and keeping our values alive. The Citizens’ Panels’ recommendations show it clearly.

I would point to three of them:

amending the conditionality regulation so that it applies to all breaches of the rule of law, not just to breaches affecting the EU budget,

reopening the discussion about the Constitution of Europe, which should be perceived as a safeguard of European fundamental principles and shared values regarding democracy and human rights, and as an instrument to make sure that they are implemented in an equal way across all member states.

And the third recommendation I would like to support is about making the Citizens' Assemblies a permanent feature in the life of the Union, based on law and accountability.

These are not wishy/washy recommendations. They are very straightforward and very brave. If enacted, they have a potential of bringing a real change toward the EU that is not only citizen-oriented, but the Union that truly benefits from the citizens' ownership, the Union for citizens and by citizens.