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“Remarks on citizens’ recommendations regarding the EU’s global soft power”

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

Strasbourg (online), 11 March 2022

Citizens are right to point out in recommendation 18 that “the EU should be closer to the citizens”. This exercise demonstrates that a lot more needs to be done in terms of communication on foreign, security and trade policy.

Actually recommendations that matter for our working group can be seen across the whole work of citizens, in all groups, panels, and on the digital platform. This is because the international dimension of our functioning as the Union cuts across everything we do.

So in my comments, I would like to raise broader issues, which take into account discussions across all panels and platforms and support all recommendations that take us in this direction.

I think we all agree that the future of the European Union remains strongly linked to the strength of our international economic, financial and trade relations, our position and role in the global world, our commitment to world of peace and prosperity for all and our accountability. All citizens recommendations pointing to it should be our joint recommendations.

The Russian aggression on Ukraine demonstrates that trade and economic policies – reflected in our sanctions on Russia and Belarus – are today the EU’s main geopolitical tool to respond to economic and military coercion.

The EU has a meaningful executive power but our global agency means more if we stand together.

Working together with all democracies of the world to cope effectively with global challenges is a must.

The importance and effectiveness of sanctions depend on how strong the rules-based international architecture is. So we must protect it and reform it.

Abiding by the rule of law contributes to a stable global environment that creates win-win situations for all its participants. The disrespect of the rule of law and power-based policies must not be tolerated. So we must have effective tools to protect rule of law at home and globally.

The EU has chosen the path of openness and transparency.

In these difficult times – after a pandemic and during an insane war – we need to double our integration efforts to achieve our open strategic autonomy, which expands our space of choice. All recommendations in various panels point to this need.

Our businesses should continue to enjoy a level-playing field with binding guarantees of our trading partners.

Our cooperation agreements on trade and investment should be ratified by member states.

I also believe that much more can be done to enhance and improve our communication with citizens regarding our global role, the benefits brought by a vast network of trade and investment agreements and better explain why ratifying our concluded agreements matters.