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***“Geopolitically the world will become a different place”***

**Presentation of a Manifesto - The EU at the time of the new “cold war”**

**“Europe and geopolitics “**

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Global world is crumbling before our eyes, not to say under our watch. And the West, as well as the globalization it had designed are challenged by other global players that happen to be authoritarian leaders and regimes.

But it is also true that the order that has been floating away for a while now brought the world many benefits. We assumed that globalization would in a way automatically spread and solidify democratic values. It did not. Today, we face in our democratic societies internal tensions because we missed the warning signals and we face global geopolitical fragmentation combined with aggression and war. Even though we do it too late, we focus on an effort to change the negative course we are on and we take this mission seriously.

There are various defining processes behind this global pivot to the new era, pushing the world toward instability and disorder, and making the economy a space for geopolitical competition.

What can be taken for granted is that global geopolitics will remain on shifting sands for a while. And throughout these transformative times Europe has to be at the heart of the new global world. It has to be politically proactive as a geopolitical actor instead of waiting for what can come next.

A lesson already learned is that the European Union has to continue developing political culture based on strategic thinking. We can see that in some policy areas common strategies are feasible, in others, fundamental for the competitiveness of European economy and financial markets national interests prevail, undermining our global competitiveness and future proofing of the economy.

Europe needs to beef up its open strategic autonomy, including credible military power and bring a strong global geopolitical angle to its strategic and policy choices. This can help making the EU's geopolitical power sustainable.

We face diversity of national situations, including state aid related fiscal space, diverging opinions on industrial policy, diverging national dependencies on the Chinese market, make the policy choices preparing the EU for the geopolitical challenges of the future often subject to a political struggle in the time when changes to business and production model are on their way forward.

The external challenges are bigger than ever and to cope with them the EU must become stronger not only economically but also institutionally and politically. The question is whether our political model is fit for so strongly and deeply transforming times. Another question is whether the unity of the EU is truly advancing, or, as others say, the Union survives thanks to the national ownership of decision making where the weakest link decides.

Again, a good news is that currently, strategic leadership comes to a large extent from the European institutions. With the world becoming a different place, the European Commission, supported by majorities in the European Parliament, has transformed itself into a political institution capable to navigate new geopolitically transforming world which is a moving target.

The Commission has become as pragmatic as it takes and in key strategic moments facilitated and pushed towards unity and solidarity and away from a number of taboos, orthodoxies and principles cherished before.

It found new balances when stretching the existing rules, better responses to counter external pressures, reaching out to new ways and means to invest in competitiveness while looking for new approaches to cope effectively with the risks to the single market and the euro.

Europe has never faced so many supranational goals, as a result of challenges not respecting national borders. These goals have refocused what Europeans think and expect from the Union. The list has been growing. We see truly geopolitical projects with strategic leadership from the European institutions. I think here of New

generation EU, linking energy security and green transition, ambitious responses to the war, and, of course, enlargement.

Both the Commission and the Parliament have been pushing toward the first ever framework of economic security, assertiveness building defensive and offensive policy instruments implemented through the international trade policy and aiming at defending the EU's strategic interests, including coping with international dependencies and their weaponisation. These instruments, however, continue to be deeply submerged in the logic of national interests and should be moved toward European interest logic.

All these new policy frameworks combined with further changes to production models can build security and resilience based on efficiency, sustainable in the long run.

Geopolitical resilience requires a stronger role of the EU, hopefully working in tandem with the US, in international standard setting organizations. And we need a geopolitically assertive Union, hopefully again standing shoulder to shoulder with the US, to ensure that internationally agreed and enforced rules are in place. In general, I would say that for Europe, to be a geopolitically meaningful partner, avoiding any temptations of inward looking will be fundamental.

To future-proof its geopolitical soundness, the EU should continue investing in mechanisms allowing to reconcile its domestic strategic priorities with international policy agenda.

More than ever, the geopolitics implies this link and it is fundamental for the reasons of political accountability and ensuring synergy.

There are many forecasts and visions with options for 2024 election year which has a big chance to be an *annus horibilis* rather than an *annus mirabilis*. The 2024 started already on October 15, 2023 with the election in Poland and it will end in January 2025 with the American president sworn in.

The 70 national election envisaged for this year, and the European ones, engaging between 2 and 4 billions of people, might bring new threats to peace. Unpredictability will be skyrocketing. And of course our geopolitical reflection should not only take into

account the global pivot to the new world I talked about, but also the possible political situation unfolding after the 2024 elections.

They can bring risk of a strengthened power based globalization, power based choices for supply chains and trade. They can affect centrist majorities in the EP. And, last but not least, new conflicts and wars might come.

We all know that the fast rebooting of the enlargement policy after the aggression of Russia had a geopolitical logic. It is an unprecedentedly tough process. There is a symbolism there, there is a politically legitimate ambition and political ethics. There is democracy at stake, engagement of the civil society as the guardians of democracy.

This is without doubt a geopolitically charged enlargement. And there are risks. After European and American elections the Ukrainian momentum might be lost. There is the funding issue where the most important action on the US side is desperately needed now. New risk for the international solidarity with Ukraine is the Middle East war. With all its consequences.

And a big European challenge is whether member states will find the right balance between this geopolitical enlargement and the deepening of the European integration.

What I can say today is that the war goes on and its potential end is not predictable. But there are two issues that make me worry. First, there is a visibly declining support for Ukraine in the West. The second is that the project to isolate Russia globally has failed. Putin's aggressive and destructive power can expand. Countries that do not identify themselves as western democracies, even if they do not support Russia, they have not strengthened their trust toward the West.

Another geopolitically defining factor is the American election. Whoever wins the American election, the situation for the EU will change. We have our preferred option but we will work with whoever American people choose to elect. There are many conversations about future proofing the transatlantic partnership as much as possible. The TTC, unfortunately, never institutionally anchored in administrative structures continues to be exploited as a key vehicle to coordinate sanction against Russia, intensify necessary coordination and cooperation, and as a channel for communication.

We assume that the next Donald Trump presidency will be equally traumatic as the previous one. Donald Trump relations with NATO will not be constructive. We also know that no one can force American President to defend another country. So, it will be a different alliance. Substantially weaker and European security will become more uncertain. Unfortunately there will be cost for Americans too. It is not a consolation, though.

Lack of US commitment to European security will be devastating for Ukraine. My major worry is that the most dramatic impact of the new Presidency will be on democracy. Trade protectionism will skyrocket. Regarding global world, there will be a less engaged US. In general, the EU will no longer rely on the US as a consistent and predictable partner.

Geopolitically the world will become a different place.

To conclude, there are political decisions taken by the EU which demonstrate that EU is ready to spare no effort to further strengthen its position on the international stage. 10 days ago it found a way to overcome Orban's veto regarding the 50 billion euro funding for Ukraine, de facto moving toward qualified majority voting. Bypassing unanimity and fireproofing the funding against the potential geopolitical changes between now and 2027 the Union showed its geopolitical commitment.