



European Council
The President

Brussels, 13 December 2023

Dear colleagues,

24 February 2022 marked a turning point in Europe's history. Since the outbreak of war on our continent, we have taken a number of unprecedented decisions in support of Ukraine and to strengthen in parallel Europe's sovereignty. Nineteen months on, we are faced once again with the need to take bold decisions. They require our collective strength and determination, and the audacity to make the right choices.

We need to live up to our commitments on Ukraine and continue to be a reliable and strong partner. We must provide Ukraine with continued and sustainable political, financial and military support and, in particular, come to an agreement on providing EUR 50 BN for its long term stability. We also have to agree to open accession negotiations with Ukraine, thereby giving it a necessary signal and bringing it yet closer to our European family.

We need to take significant decisions for other aspiring members while, in parallel, working to make our Union fit for the future and ready to take on new members.

New challenges bring new obligations. The revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework has proceeded intensively and unabatedly. I have taken good note of all your concerns and priorities and have put forward a proposal that seeks to reconcile the differing positions around the table. As with any compromise solution, I appeal to your readiness to build compromise for the sake of unity. Achieving consensus will indeed require a decisive joint effort and strong political commitment from you all.

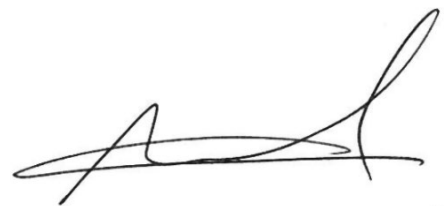
On security and defence, we will continue implementing our ambition of building a stronger geopolitical union, giving guidance on key strands of work and building on the Versailles Declaration and the Strategic Compass. More needs to be done to swiftly fulfil the Union's objectives of increasing defence readiness. We must also work on creating an internal market for defence, which is crucial to strengthening our Union in this area.

Developments in the Middle East will also be a prominent item on our agenda. We must call for all hostages to be released and vigorously address the alarming humanitarian situation in Gaza. We have to be strong in supporting Israel's right to exist and to defend itself against Hamas, as well as in unequivocally defending international law and international humanitarian law. Our broader reflection will include working towards security and stability in the region and prospects for lasting peace based on the two-state solution.

We should also address all forms of hate, antisemitism, intolerance, racism and xenophobia, including anti-Muslim hatred.

A pivotal European Council lies ahead of us. Now is the time for decision-making. I call on you all to come equipped with a spirit of compromise, a sense of collective responsibility, with the Union's interests and values at the forefront of your minds.

I look forward to seeing you in Brussels.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of fluid, overlapping loops and strokes, characteristic of Charles Michel's signature.

Charles MICHEL