

Address of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland during the meeting with the Heads of Missions of the EU Member States on the occasion of the inauguration of Finland's Presidency in the Council of the European Union

Warszawa, 22 July 2019 r.

Your Excellencies,

Let me begin by expressing words of gratitude to Ambassador Ottman for his kind invitation. I appreciate the opportunity to exchange views with you, Excellencies, at the beginning of each Presidency. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Romania for its excellent achievements and leadership during the EU Council Presidency until July.

Let me briefly outline the Polish views on the Presidency priorities.

The beginning of the new institutional and political cycle, which we have been witnessing since the elections to the European Parliament, is an incentive for the EU to recalibrate its goals.

The European Council set out – already last month – the Strategic Agenda for the EU for 2019-2024, to which Poland contributed with a detailed input in 6 key areas: Single Market, sustainable migration policy, realistic climate policy, digitalization, defence and the role of the national parliaments.

We are satisfied that the new Strategic Agenda clearly points out the objectives related to ambitious Single Market agenda and the development of transatlantic relations. We will support the Finnish Presidency in the ambitious process of the Agenda's implementation.

These works should be guided by the spirit of the Warsaw Declaration on the reunification of Europe – *Our Union, our future*, adopted on May 1. Only by acting together, in unity, the EU can tackle a wide range of current challenges. All Member States must rest assured that their vital interests are taken into account in the EU decision making process. Basic treaty principles of unity, loyalty and subsidiarity should guide our future work. If we are to succeed, we also need an excellent cooperation among EU institutions.

Our support for the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, means an investment in a better future for the EU. We hope that President of the European Commission's political guidelines will be developed into the Working Program of the new Commission in the spirit of compromise, taking into consideration also the interests of Central Europe.

As regards pending legislative proposals, we encourage the Finnish Presidency to reconsider the possible compromises on the most controversial initiatives, such as the Mobility Package. The initiatives which divide Europe and are harmful to the economic growth and competitiveness of the EU should be modified.

Another pending challenge is Brexit. The new British Prime Minister is due to be announced in the upcoming days and he will soon present his view on the next steps in this process. We want to avoid a no-deal scenario, which would be the worst outcome for all Member States and the UK. It is the Withdrawal Agreement which secures the best citizens' rights and provides predictability for business. Brexit and its consequences prove that the EU needs unity more than ever.

Let me now refer to priorities highlighted in the Presidency programme and the EU's current agenda.

The Finnish Presidency presented a comprehensive set of priorities – to strengthen common values and the rule of law, to make the EU more competitive and socially inclusive, to strengthen the EU's position as a global leader in climate action and to protect the security of citizens comprehensively.

From Poland's perspective, the Finnish Presidency is rightly putting special focus on EU competitiveness. We support the Presidency's intention to launch discussions on a vision for a long-term strategy on sustainable growth, encompassing *i.a.* the Single Market, modern industrial policy, research and innovation. It should be an important input to European Commission's works on a long-term vision for the EU's industrial future, as well as on an Action Plan for better implementation and enforcement of Single Market rules to be elaborated in line with March European Council conclusions. Poland is ready to fully engage in this process. We consequently underline a need to further liberalize the Internal Market, in particular in the services sector. We are also in favour of an in-depth reflection on EU competition policy and its possible modernization in order to strengthen European companies at a global level and ensure a level playing field within the Single Market and vis-à-vis third countries.

It is also necessary to further adapt the Single Market to the challenges of the digital age and ensure that the benefits of digitization are evenly distributed across the Union. To this end, we should develop EU Artificial Intelligence Strategy and broaden the 5th freedom – free flow of data –

which is the fuel for advancing new technologies. We appreciate the emphasis put by the Presidency on data economy.

Growing tensions in trade represent a huge challenge to the European economy. Poland recognizes the need for ensuring reciprocity in this area. Appropriate trade defense instruments are essential to secure our interests with third countries. We support the promotion of trade multilateralism as the first best option – as much as possible should be done to secure the leading role of the WTO. In parallel, we should strive to open foreign markets through bilateral trade negotiations.

Moreover, we need to continue discussions on strengthening the EU's trade relations with the United States. Protection of unprecedented and valuable transatlantic relations should be crucial. In our trade relations with China, we must secure a level playing field and limit unfair trade practices. Pragmatism and a good balance between pressure and cooperation with China are required.

The Finnish Presidency is determined to make the EU more socially inclusive. We don't oppose this objective, as long as all EU actions fully respect the division of competences between the Member States and the EU, as well as principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. Poland's main goal is to counteract any initiatives that could lead to discrimination against enterprises and employees.

We call on the Finnish Presidency to act as an honest broker during the negotiations of the Mobility Package. This dossier is highly divisive in the Council and in the European Parliament. The recent position of the Parliament contains restrictive and protectionist measures, which run

against fundamental internal market freedoms. Moreover, some of the EP proposals are even contradictory to the ambitious EU climate policy. Such provisions as obligatory return of the vehicle (which will result in a steep growth of lorries' empty runs), cooling off in cabotage operations, artificial division of international transport operations into a simple bilateral and cross-trade operation are a step back from liberalization of the internal market, but also a significant increase of the transport carbon footprint.

Referring to another Finnish key priority – EU as a global leader in climate action – it must be underlined that for Poland it is of the utmost importance that transition to a climate-neutral EU, in line with the Paris Agreement will fulfill the conditions set out in June European Council conclusions – will preserve European competitiveness, be just and socially balanced. Achieving climate neutrality collectively by the EU will require differentiation of goals among the Member States, as well as recognition of different conditions and starting points of the Member States. It will also give them the right to decide on their own energy mix.

It is a bottom-up process, which builds the EU's long-term strategy on national energy and climate plans to be adopted by each Member State by the end of 2019. Proper compensation mechanisms for regions and countries most exposed to costs of transformation should be introduced. We count that the Finnish Presidency will advance work on the conditions, the incentives and the enabling framework to be put in place so as to ensure a transition to a climate-neutral EU, in line with June European Council conclusions.

Updating EU's Nationally Determined Contribution in view of UN Secretary General Climate Summit in September would be premature. The EU has already a clear position in this regard. We have put in place a robust legislative framework to deliver our climate, energy and mobility targets for 2030, which are so far the most ambitious worldwide.

The Finnish Presidency will pursue work on the Multiannual Financial Framework post 2020. From Poland's perspective, we should focus on delivering a well-planned, long-term budget. Crucial elements of the MFF package still need to be discussed and resolved. This concerns in particular sufficient financing of the Cohesion Policy and the Common Agriculture Policy. The EU budget should be in line with the political ambitions of the EU and not limit them.

Poland takes due note of the priority given by the Finnish Presidency to the protection of the cornerstones of European integration: peace, security, stability, democracy and the strengthening of the rule of law. Our position toward the proposed regulation on the protection of the Union's budget in case of generalized deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States remains skeptical. Similarly to the Council Legal Service, we have many legal doubts concerning the draft regulation. The only Treaty procedure for addressing alleged violations of the rule of law in Member States - except for the infringement procedure - is laid down in art. 7 TEU procedure, the provisions of which cannot be circumvented, amended or bypassed by secondary legislation. The discussion between Member States shows clearly that this draft regulation is politically-motivated, controversial and full of fundamental legal flaws.

When it comes to migration policy, Poland believes that a key element of a secure and stable EU asylum and migration policy and a condition essential to ensuring the undisturbed functioning of the Schengen area is proper external borders management, without prejudice to the Member States competences. Regarding the shape of the future European asylum system, Poland supports the Presidency's idea of thematic discussions on the most controversial topics within the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) reform and is ready to take an active part in these deliberations. However, we maintain our opposition to obligatory relocation measures.

The Finnish Presidency is right to put a strong effort on strengthening the EU's role on the international stage and increasing the effectiveness of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Global challenges in security and defence require unity from the Western world. The EU-NATO cooperation needs to be comprehensive. The success of the EU's defence initiatives such as PESCO and EDF implementation rests on EU Members' ability to generate and procure resources.

At the same time, we underline the need for further implementation of the EU Global Strategy. In our opinion, the insufficient effectiveness of the CFSP does not result directly from the weakness of procedural mechanisms, but from the political reasons. Detailed solutions indicated by the Finnish Presidency regarding the extension of qualified majority voting and the more frequent use of constructive abstention in the field of the CFSP pose significant risks that outweigh the potential benefits.

Hybrid threats are a persistent challenge to the EU and its Member States. We agree with the Finnish Presidency that building resilience, as well as

detecting, preventing and responding to these threats, can be best achieved through close engagement with international partners, notably NATO and the Helsinki-based European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats.

Stabilization and prosperity in the EU's neighbourhood remains a central priority of Poland's foreign policy. Therefore, we continuously advocate a balanced development of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in Southern and Eastern geographic dimensions. The priority importance of the Neighbourhood should be reflected in the new EU Financial Framework for 2021-27. Therefore, Poland insists on preserving the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) as a separate tool in the EU financial architecture.

We are in favour of further development of Eastern Partnership post-2020, matching the ambitions of our partners. We propose to concentrate our cooperation on three main areas: 1) regulatory approximation, 2) sectoral cooperation and 3) institutionalisation. We hope that those proposals will be a good basis for a discussion on the perspectives and the future of the Eastern Partnership.

Finally, enlargement policy, which is a strategic investment in peace, stability and development in Europe. We support the European aspirations of our Western Balkans partners. Poland, as the presidency in the Berlin Process, organised the successful Western Balkans Summit in Poznań. We should appreciate Albania's and Northern Macedonia's efforts aimed at harmonizing national legislation with EU policy and open accession negotiations with these two countries in October 2019. We also

support the opening and closing of subsequent chapters in negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro.

I would like to stress my full commitment to constructive cooperation with the Finnish Presidency. We wish you success in promoting compromise and building consensus among Member States.