European Council

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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	European Council meeting (24 and 25 June 2021) – Conclusions

Delegations will find attached the conclusions adopted by the European Council at the above meeting.

I. COVID-19

1. The European Council welcomes the good progress on vaccination and the overall improvement in the epidemiological situation, while stressing the need to continue vaccination efforts and to be vigilant and coordinated with regard to developments, particularly the emergence and spread of variants.

2. The agreements reached on the EU Digital COVID Certificate and on the revision of the two Council Recommendations on travel within the EU and on non-essential travel into the EU will facilitate safe cross-border travel. Member States will apply them in a manner that ensures the full return to free movement as soon as the public health situation allows.

3. The European Council reaffirms the EU's commitment to international solidarity in response to the pandemic. Ongoing work to help boost global production of vaccines and universal access to them, in particular through COVAX, should be swiftly taken forward. All producing countries and manufacturers should actively contribute to efforts to increase worldwide supply of COVID-19 vaccines, raw materials, treatments and therapeutics, and coordinate action in case of bottlenecks in supply and distribution.

4. The European Council welcomes the decision adopted by the 74th World Health Assembly to set up a special session of the World Health Assembly in November 2021 on a Framework Convention on Pandemic Preparedness and Response. The EU will continue working towards an international treaty on pandemics.

5. The European Council discussed the initial lessons that can be learned from the pandemic on the basis of the report by the Commission. It invites the incoming Presidency to take work forward in the Council to enhance our collective preparedness, response capability and resilience to future crises and to protect the functioning of the internal market.

II. ECONOMIC RECOVERY

6. The European Council reviewed the state of play of the implementation of Next Generation EU. It welcomes the timely entry into force of the Own Resources Decision, which enabled the Commission to start borrowing resources for Next Generation EU to support a full and inclusive recovery and the Union's green and digital transitions.

7. The European Council encourages the Commission and the Council to take work forward on the National Recovery and Resilience Plans with a view to their approval so that Member States can make full use of the potential of the Recovery and Resilience Facility funding, and underlines the importance of full and timely implementation of the plans while protecting the financial interest of the Union.

8. In this context, the European Council welcomes the EU headline targets of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, in line with the Porto Declaration.

9. The European Council endorses the draft Council recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area.

10. The European Council looks forward to swift progress on global corporate tax reform on a consensual basis within the G20/OECD framework.

III. MIGRATION

11. The European Council discussed the migration situation on the various routes. While the measures taken by the EU and Member States have brought down the overall irregular flows in recent years, developments on some routes give rise to serious concern and require continued vigilance and urgent action.

12. In order to prevent loss of life and to reduce pressure on European borders, mutually beneficial partnerships and cooperation with countries of origin and transit will be intensified, as an integral part of the European Union's external action. The approach will be pragmatic, flexible and tailor-made, make coordinated use, as Team Europe, of all available EU and Member States' instruments and incentives, and take place in close cooperation with the UNHCR and IOM. It should address all routes and be based on a whole-of-route approach, tackling root causes, supporting refugees and displaced persons in the region, building capacity for migration management, eradicating smuggling and trafficking, reinforcing border control, cooperating on search and rescue, addressing legal migration while respecting national competences, as well as ensuring return and readmission. To this end, the European Council:

– calls on the Commission and the High Representative, in close cooperation with Member States, to immediately reinforce concrete actions with, and tangible support for, priority countries of origin and transit;

– calls on the Commission and the High Representative, in close cooperation with Member States, to put forward action plans for priority countries of origin and transit in autumn 2021, indicating clear objectives, further support measures and concrete timelines;

– invites the Commission to make the best possible use of at least 10% of the NDICI financial envelope, as well as funding under other relevant instruments, for actions related to migration, and to report to the Council on its intentions in this respect by November.

13. The European Council condemns and rejects any attempt by third countries to instrumentalise migrants for political purposes.

IV. TURKEY

14. The European Council reverted to the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean and the European Union's relations with Turkey, and recalled the EU's strategic interest in a stable and secure environment in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the development of a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with Turkey. It welcomes the de-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean, which needs to be sustained in line with the statement by the Members of the European Council of 25 March 2021.

15. The European Council reiterates the EU's readiness to engage with Turkey in a phased, proportionate and reversible manner to enhance cooperation in a number of areas of common interest, subject to the established conditionalities set out in March and in previous European Council conclusions.

16. In line with this framework, it takes note of the start of work at technical level towards a mandate for the modernisation of the EU-Turkey Customs Union and recalls the need to address current difficulties in the implementation of the Customs Union, ensuring its effective application to all Member States. Such a mandate may be adopted by the Council subject to additional guidance by the European Council.

17. It also takes note of the preparatory work for high level dialogues with Turkey on issues of mutual interest, such as migration, public health, climate, counterterrorism and regional issues.

18. The European Council calls on the Commission to put forward without delay formal proposals for the continuation of financing for Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and other parts of the region, in line with the statement of the Members of the European Council of March 2021 and within the context of the EU's overall migration policy.

19. The European Council recalls its previous conclusions and remains fully committed to the comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem on the basis of a bicommunal, bizonal federation with political equality, in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. It underlines the importance of the status of Varosha and calls for full respect of UN Security Council Resolutions, in particular Resolutions 550, 789 and 1251. It regrets that the informal meeting in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations did not pave the way for the resumption of formal negotiations. The European Union will continue to play an active role in supporting the process.

20. Rule of law and fundamental rights in Turkey remain a key concern. The targeting of political parties, human rights defenders and media represents major setbacks for human rights and runs counter to Turkey's obligations to respect democracy, the rule of law and women's rights. Dialogue on such issues remains an integral part of the EU-Turkey relationship.

21. In line with the shared interest of the EU and Turkey in regional peace and stability, the European Council expects Turkey and all actors to contribute positively to the resolution of regional crises.

22. The European Council will remain seized of the matter.

V. LIBYA

23. The European Council confirms its commitment to Libya's stabilisation process under the auspices of the United Nations. Elections should take place as agreed in the Roadmap on 24 December 2021 and their results accepted by all.

24. The European Council calls for progress on the inclusive and Libyan-owned political dialogue and for the withdrawal without delay of all foreign forces and mercenaries.

VI. RUSSIA

25. In line with its conclusions of 24-25 May 2021, the European Council discussed relations with Russia, taking into account the report by the High Representative and the Commission.

26. The European Union is committed to a united, long-term, and strategic European approach based on the five guiding principles. The European Council invites the Council, the Commission and the High Representative to continue to implement them fully, with due regard to the European Union's values, principles and interests.

27. The European Council expects the Russian leadership to demonstrate a more constructive engagement and political commitment and stop actions against the EU and its Member States, as well as against third countries.

28. The European Council calls on Russia to fully assume its responsibility in ensuring the full implementation of the Minsk agreements as the key condition for any substantial change in the EU's stance.

29. Regarding the strengthening of our resilience, the European Council stresses the need for a firm and coordinated response by the EU and its Member States to any further malign, illegal and disruptive activity by Russia, making full use of all instruments at the EU's disposal, and ensuring coordination with partners. To this end, the European Council also invites the Commission and the High Representative to present options for additional restrictive measures, including economic sanctions.

30. The European Council stresses the need to further deepen and intensify political, economic and people-to-people ties and cooperation with the Eastern Partners with a view to increasing their resilience. In this context, it recalls the 2017 Eastern Partnership Summit declaration which acknowledges the European aspirations and European choice of the Eastern Partners concerned, as stated in the Association Agreements, and in the context of their entry into force. It also underlines its commitment to deepening relations with Central Asia.

31. The European Council reiterates the European Union's openness to a selective engagement with Russia in areas of EU interest. It invites the Commission and the High Representative to develop concrete options including conditionalities and leverages in this regard, with a view to their consideration by the Council, on topics such as climate and the environment, health, as well as selected issues of foreign and security policy and multilateral issues such as the JCPoA, Syria and Libya. In this context, the European Council will explore formats and conditionalities of dialogue with Russia.

32. The European Council condemns the limitations on fundamental freedoms in Russia and the shrinking space for civil society. It stresses the need for people-to-people contacts and continued EU support to Russian civil society, human rights organisations and independent media. It invites the Commission and the High Representative to put forward proposals in this regard.

33. The European Council reiterates its full support for all efforts to establish truth, justice and accountability for the victims of the downing of MH17 and their next of kin and calls on all States to cooperate fully with the ongoing legal case.

34. The European Council will come back to this issue, assess implementation and provide further guidance as necessary.

VII. BELARUS

35. The European Council welcomes the timely implementation of the measures concerning Belarus, in line with its conclusions of 24-25 of May 2021.

36. The European Council reiterates its call for the immediate release of all political prisoners and arbitrarily detained persons, including Raman Pratasevich and Sofia Sapega, and for an end to repression of civil society and independent media. It reiterates the democratic right of the Belarusian people to elect their president through new, free and fair elections.

VIII. SAHEL

37. The European Council reaffirms its call on the Malian transition authorities to fully implement the Transition Charter. It welcomes the conclusions of the ECOWAS summit held on 19 June.

38. The EU and its Member States will continue to support the stabilisation of G5 Sahel countries, in particular the G5 Sahel Joint Force, through the continuation of EU CSDP missions and engagement in the Takuba Task Force.

39. The European Council reaffirms the EU's support to the G5 Sahel countries' efforts to strengthen governance, the rule of law and the provision of public services in their territories.

IX. ETHIOPIA

40. The European Council condemns the ongoing atrocities, ethnic-based and sexual violence and other human rights violations in Ethiopia's Tigray region and welcomes the ongoing investigations to bring accountability and justice. The European Council calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities, unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas and the immediate withdrawal of Eritrean forces.

41. The EU and its Member States reiterate their commitment to support Ethiopia in the implementation of democratic reforms and reconciliation efforts.

X. CYBERSECURITY

42. The European Council condemns recent malicious cyber activities against Member States, including in Ireland and Poland. It invites the Council to explore appropriate measures within the framework of the cyber diplomacy toolbox.

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The European Council held an exchange of views with United Nations Secretary-General Guterres.