

Remarks by President Charles Michel at the opening session of the European Political Community

Prime Minister, thank you, dear Pedro. First of all, let me thank you for hosting us in such a beautiful location. Thank you for your warm welcome, and I think we are all impatient to discover, tonight, the Alhambra.

This is already the third meeting of our European Political Community, since we launched it one year ago in Prague. I think this shows the relevance of this unique, intergovernmental leaders platform. A unique initiative for boosting cooperation, increasing our collective intelligence, and addressing today's challenges: COVID-19, climate change, energy security, cyber and hybrid threats, and, on top of this, Russia's war against Ukraine. These challenges are too large for one nation to tackle alone. That's why — now more than ever — we must confront them together and take a strategic approach.

Dear Volodymyr, I would like to start by addressing you personally. I would like to repeat again: we stand with you and we stand with the Ukrainian people. We are impressed by your courage and by the courage of the people of Ukraine. We are impressed by your strong words, and we will continue to back you with strong military, political and financial support. The EU has already mobilised 82 billion euros to support your country, and we are preparing an additional substantial package to assist Ukraine.

We will also continue to pile the pressure on Russia to end this war. For instance, we strongly support efforts, with the G7, to ban the imports of Russian diamonds, starting next year. We continue to actively work with international partners to prevent the circumvention of sanctions. We also fully support your Peace Formula, based on the principles of the UN Charter, based on the principle of no impunity, and based on the principle of territorial integrity.

Since the start of the war, the Kremlin has threatened many of us with energy blackmail. This clearly shows the need for more continental cooperation. In the EU, for instance, we are tripling our renewables capacity and doubling our energy efficiency, and we intend to continue to strengthen our energy sovereignty. We must invest more, innovate more and work together more. We are all working together, for instance, to boost our energy connectivity. Just two examples: the North Sea Energy Cooperation will harness the power of offshore wind, and the Trans-Balkan Electricity Corridor will help to integrate renewable energy sources.

Migration is a difficult global challenge. It is a challenge we all must face together, and that means building more cooperation between us, in the EU, in Europe, and more cooperation with third countries. I welcome the proposal of British Prime Minister Sunak to work more closely together on this important topic, and just yesterday, the EU Member States took an important step forward on the Migration Pact.

We will also continue to engage with countries of origin and transit to build comprehensive partnerships and address the root causes of migration. Because one thing is clear: we must break the business model of smugglers. They cannot be the ones deciding who comes to the EU. We need to dismantle their criminal networks, and this will require a more intergovernmental approach in the field of policing and justice. We should also look at the opportunities for legal migration, on the one hand, but on the other hand, we need to work for more effective returns.

I sincerely believe this political community platform can play, and should play, an important role in defusing conflicts and in helping to resolve them — notably in the South Caucasus and between Serbia and Kosovo. Because conflicts are not only a problem for those directly involved; they are a problem for the region and for our continent. We should use this unique platform to build more confidence among ourselves. More confidence, more peace, more stability, more predictability.

The world is watching our European continent. Some hope we will fail. But many others hope we will succeed. Our citizens want us to lead and to be a force for change in improving their daily lives. It is our responsibility, as leaders, to show that we can work together to ensure peace and security, to improve wellbeing, and to bring the four corners of our continent closer together. And I think that this political community is a vision for the future. A vision for a Europe that is united, peaceful, stable and prosperous.

