



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2016) 2152 final

- English language version of the French text which is authentic -

Strasbourg, 2 February 2016

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2152nd meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill building)

on Tuesday 19 January 2016

(afternoon)

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Single sitting: Tuesday 19 January 2016 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.18 with Mr JUNCKER, President, in the chair. The discussion of item 10 was chaired in part by Mr TIMMERMANS.

Present:

Mr JUNCKER	President	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Mr TIMMERMANS	First Vice-President	
Ms MOGHERINI	High Representative / Vice-President	
Ms GEORGIEVA	Vice-President	
Mr ANSIP	Vice-President	Items 8 (in part) to 10
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Vice-President	
Mr KATAINEN	Vice-President	
Mr OETTINGER	Member	Items 1 to 9
Ms MALMSTRÖM	Member	
Mr MIMICA	Member	
Mr ARIAS CAÑETE	Member	
Mr VELLA	Member	
Mr ANDRIUKAITIS	Member	
Mr AVRAMOPOULOS	Member	
Ms THYSSEN	Member	
Mr MOSCOVICI	Member	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr STYLIANIDES	Member	
Mr HOGAN	Member	
Lord HILL	Member	
Ms BULC	Member	
Ms BIENKOWSKA	Member	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Member	
Mr NAVRACSICS	Member	
Ms CREȚU	Member	

Ms VESTAGER

Member

Mr MOEDAS

Member

Absent:

Mr HAHN

Member

The following also sat in:

Mr SELMAYR	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr ROMERO REQUENA	Director-General, Legal Service	
Mr PESONEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr SCHINAS	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Ms ANDREEVA	Commission Spokesperson's Service	
Ms METTLER	Head of the European Political Strategy Centre	
Ms MARTÍNEZ ALBEROLA	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Ms DEJMEK-HACK	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr LEPASSAAR	Chef de cabinet to Mr ANSIP	Items 1 to 8 (in part)
Ms COUSIN	A member of Ms VESTAGER's staff	Item 9

Secretary: Mr ITALIANER, Secretary-General, assisted by Mr AYET PUIGARNAU,
Director in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2016) 2152/FINAL; SEC(2016) 48/FINAL)

The Commission took note of that day's agenda and of the tentative agendas for forthcoming meetings.

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(RCC(2016) 2152)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 18 January.

3. MINUTES OF 2151ST MEETING OF THE COMMISSION (13 JANUARY)

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2151st meeting for the following week.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2016) 5)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held on Friday 15 January (RCC(2016) 5).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

i) Trilogue meetings

(point 3.1 of the IRG record)

- ‘Data Protection’ Package – Protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (Regulation) – ALBRECHT report – 2012/0011 (COD) / Protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by competent authorities for the purposes of prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties, and the free movement of such data (Directive) – LAURISTIN report – 2012/0010 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 2/2.

- Requirements relating to emission limits and type-approval for internal combustion engines for non-road mobile machinery (Regulation) – GARDINI report – 2014/0268 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 4.

ii) European Parliament dossiers – January part-session

(point 3.2 of the IRG record)

Ordinary legislative procedure – First reading

- Strengthening of certain aspects of the presumption of innocence and of the right to be present at trial in criminal proceedings (Directive) – GRIESBECK report – 2013/0407 (COD)

The Commission took note of the compromise text in SP(2016) 7, further to notes SI(2015) 396 and SI(2015) 425, which it had approved on 27 October and 11 November 2015 respectively.

- ‘Equipment’ Package – Cableway installations (Regulation) – LÓPEZ-ISTÚRIZ WHITE report – 2014/0107 (COD) / Personal Protective Equipment (Regulation) – FORD report – 2014/0108 (COD) /

Appliances Burning Gaseous Fuels (Regulation) – STIHLER report – 2014/0136 (COD)

The Commission took note of the compromise texts in SP(2016) 10, SP(2016) 8 and SP(2016) 9, further to notes SI(2015) 232 and /2, which it had already approved on 9 June 2015.

Non-legislative procedure

- Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and of Kosovo¹, of the other part (Council Decision) – LUNACEK report – 2015/0094 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2016) 11.

Delegated Acts

- Draft Commission Delegated Regulation amending Annex III to Regulation (EU) 978/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council applying a scheme of generalised tariff preferences – Objection pursuant to Rule 105

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2016) 23.

- Draft Delegated Regulation supplementing Regulation (EU) 609/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the specific compositional and information requirements for processed cereal-based food and baby food – Objection pursuant to Rule 105

¹ This designation was without prejudice to positions on status, and was in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1244/1999 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2016) 26.

4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

iii) Programming of Council business

(SI(2016) 6)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2016) 6 on the Council meetings between 21 January and 3 February.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

iv) Action taken on legislative opinions and non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its November I and II 2015 part-sessions

(SP(2016) 20)

The Commission approved for transmission to Parliament document SP(2016) 20 on the action taken on the legislative opinions and non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its November I and II 2015 part-sessions.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2016) 53)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2016) 4)

5.1. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL / STRUCTURAL REFORM SUPPORT SERVICE – APPOINTMENT OF AD14/15 DIRECTOR

(PERS(2015) 92 TO /4)

The Commission had before it the list of applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the Structural Reform Support Service in the Secretariat-General (PERS(2015) 92 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 4 December and 10 December 2015 (PERS(2015) 92/3 and /4).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. It also considered their ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr DOMBROVSKIS, it then decided to appoint Ms Mary MCCARTHY to the post.

This decision would take effect on 1 February 2016.

5.2. EUROSTAT – AMENDMENT OF ORGANISATION CHART AND APPOINTMENT OF AD15 PRINCIPAL ADVISER

The Commission, on a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms THYSSEN, and Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr KATAINEN, decided:

- to approve the creation of a temporary post of principal adviser in Eurostat; this post would be abolished upon departure of the job holder;
- to fill this post by transferring in the interest of the service under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Laurs NORLUND, currently Head of the Commission Representation in Denmark.

These decisions would take effect on 1 February 2016.

5.3. ACTIVITIES OF A MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION AFTER LEAVING OFFICE

(C(2016) 88)

The Commission adopted the decision set out in C(2016) 88.

The Commission decided that the activities started or planned by the former Member of the Commission, Mr Stefan FÜLE, as a member of the International Advisory Board of the Central European Strategy Council, as a trustee of Friends of Europe, as President of the Advisory Board of the Initiative for European Values, and as a member of the Program Council of the Forum 2000 Foundation, were compatible with Article 245(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), provided Mr FÜLE (i) refrained from lobbying the Commission and/or its departments should one of the above-mentioned entities decide to get involved in specific projects related to his former portfolio concerning enlargement and European neighbourhood policy and ask the EU for financial support, and (ii) complied with his obligations under Articles 245(2) and 339 of the TFEU and the Code of Conduct of Commissioners, in particular as regards the protection of collective responsibility and confidentiality of the matters dealt with by the Commission during his term of office.

Furthermore, the Commission took note of Mr FÜLE's intention to resume his career within the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and his appointment, from January 2016, as Special Representative of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) for the Western Balkans. The Commission reminded Mr FÜLE of the obligations he remained under, concerning the protection of collective responsibility and confidentiality of the matters dealt with by the Commission during his term of office in accordance with Articles 245(2) and 339 of the TFEU.

The Commission instructed the Secretary-General to inform Mr FÜLE of this decision and of the above conditions.

6. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING COUNCIL FRAMEWORK DECISION 2009/315/JHA AS REGARDS THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS AND AS REGARDS THE EUROPEAN CRIMINAL RECORDS INFORMATION SYSTEM (ECRIS) AND REPLACING COUNCIL DECISION 2009/316/JHA

(COM(2016) 7 AND /2; SWD(2016) 4; SWD(2016) 5; SEC(2016) 55; RCC(2016) 6)

The Commission adopted the proposal for a Directive in COM(2016) 7/2 for transmission to Parliament, the Council and the national parliaments, accompanied by the impact assessment and the summary thereof in staff working documents SWD(2016) 4 and SWD(2016) 5, the contents of which were noted.

It also took note of the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SEC(2016) 55.

7. REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COUNCIL FRAMEWORK DECISION 2009/315/JHA OF 26 FEBRUARY 2009 ON THE ORGANISATION AND CONTENT OF THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION EXTRACTED FROM CRIMINAL RECORD BETWEEN MEMBER STATES

(COM(2016) 6 AND /2; RCC(2016) 6)

The Commission approved the report from the Commission in COM(2016) 6/2, for transmission to Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments.

8. FIRST DISCUSSION ON THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

The PRESIDENT asked Mr DOMBROVSKIS to introduce the item. Mr DOMBROVSKIS said that the Commission had already had two policy debates on social policy in 2015. The most recent of these, on 6 October 2015, had paved the way for discussions concerning the definition of a Pillar of Social Rights, putting forward initial ideas on the concept and potential areas for action. He also pointed out that the PRESIDENT had given his full support to the initiative, which was considered to be a priority in the Commission's Work Programme and for which he had asked for swift follow-up.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS stressed that the adoption of a European Pillar of Social Rights should not be seen as something separate from the Union's policies or a simple declaration of intent, but as a concept which made it possible to consolidate, deepen and strengthen the internal market and the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).

He spoke of the current consensus on the need to promote upward convergence by modernising the European social acquis and identifying policies that had proved effective, working together with the Member States and social partners. He believed this process was of fundamental importance to the smooth running of the EMU. At this point he recalled that the June 2015 Five Presidents' Report on the completion of the EMU had identified two phases, the first focusing on greater use of benchmarks and best practices, and the second, during which the decision could be taken to use more binding common standards. He believed that with a Pillar of

Social Rights it would be possible to respond to both the short-term concerns and the long-term challenges facing the European social model.

He explained that the information note prepared for that day's discussion reviewed the progress made so far and outlined a course of action. However, he pointed out that the areas for action and the instruments to be used had not yet been defined.

He referred to the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers adopted in 1989 by 11 out of 12 Heads of State or Government, which could be seen as the minimum provisions common to all Member States, provisions which had since been included in the Union acquis following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

He also pointed out that Mr Jacques DELORS, who was the Commission President at the time, saw the Charter as a step forward in the social dimension and felt that it reflected the importance to be given to social aspects, as much as to economic aspects, in the creation of the Single Market, as was the case nowadays with the completion of the EMU.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS emphasised that today's reality was very different to that of the 1980s as the Union had grown from 12 to 28 Members and the socio-economic prospects had changed considerably. The future pillar should incorporate the progress made in the past and at the same time reflect the new priorities of the present Commission. He stressed that the digital economy was transforming the way we worked and that new forms of employment had been developing on the European labour market since the 2000s. These new forms of employment were characterised by different work patterns, types of temporary contracts, the increase in self-employment, the use of alternative workplaces and the irregular provision of services.

In that context, he was of the opinion that a modern pillar of social rights should strike the right balance and ensure that economic and social policy were well

coordinated, without compromising job creation or holding back investment, both of which were essential to the Union's economic recovery. With regard to financing, he mentioned the limits set by the multiannual financial framework, which meant that the Union could not promise resources it just did not have, and acknowledged how difficult it was for the Member States to increase their public spending if they did not have the necessary budgetary room for manoeuvre.

Finally he noted that the Member States' right to define their social policy must remain the fundamental principal in the development of a common pillar of social rights. As for the line to follow, he believed it was essential to begin by reaching an agreement on the main areas for action before organising a public consultation which would encourage stakeholders to take ownership of the dossier. As for the instruments, he was in favour of a step-by-step process.

Ms THYSSEN thanked the PRESIDENT for putting the Pillar of Social Rights on the agenda for the Commission's meeting in order to identify the specific actions needed to implement its Political Guidelines. The discussion that day would enable her to finalise, in agreement with Mr DOMBROVSKIS, a discussion paper for the policy debate planned for the Commission's meeting of 27 January. The document would provide a general backdrop against which to develop the proposal on the Pillar of Social Rights that the PRESIDENT had announced for the first quarter of the year.

She reiterated that the Commission, on the basis of the PRESIDENT's political guidelines, had already been able to respond to the most urgent needs, as indicated in the information note for this initial discussion. She noted, however, that achieving a social 'triple 'A' still required a reference framework based on the values and principles of the Union, as enshrined in the Treaties, to evaluate performance in terms of social rights and employment in order to adapt the relevant parameters, where necessary.

Her feeling was that the Pillar of Social Rights should provide this reference framework aimed at supporting economic growth, job creation and productivity while ensuring a modern and effective social protection environment. She also felt it appropriate for this new reference framework to allow more flexibility in managing professional careers and more allowance to be made for a greater understanding of the different phases of transition now characterising these.

This was why she felt it was necessary to evaluate the legislative and regulatory frameworks at national and European level and adapt them to today's working environment, challenges and opportunities.

She also pointed out that the EU and its Member States were not isolated in this approach, as indicated by the meeting of ministers on today's world of work just held by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a sign of the emergence of a global consensus on the fact that rising inequality was detrimental to economic growth. She concluded that, beyond the adaptation of the EU's legislative framework, parallel adaptations to the legislative framework at international level should be promoted.

Ms THYSSEN indicated how important it was for the sake of efficiency to determine this framework in partnership with all constituencies within Europe's social market economy (EU institutions, social partners, other stakeholders at national, regional or local level in the Member States).

She explained that she would spell out these ideas in the discussion paper she would submit to the College before the end of the month. This document would put forward a draft Pillar of Social Rights in accordance with the main avenues to be identified and while providing for a consultation and results analysis scenario. She added that the Commission would convert what was now only a draft into a formal proposal for a European Pillar of Social Rights, together with a set of legislative initiatives and substantive actions.

Ms THYSSEN concluded her presentation by reiterating the stated wish of the PRESIDENT, in his last State of the Union address, that the future European Pillar of Social Rights should guide the convergence process within the euro area. She explained how the initiative in this context should be established within the euro area while allowing the other EU countries to associate themselves with it if they so wished.

She also argued that the creation of a European Pillar of Social Rights did not mark a return to an idealised past, but contemplated the future of values and social principles and how citizens and businesses could derive the maximum benefit in the light of changing work patterns and societies.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following key points:

- the need to adopt an ambitious approach to develop a social protection system based on legislative action and subject to specific recommendations in the framework of the financial assistance programmes;
- the importance of the future pillar's social rights being effective rights as opposed to publicity measures;
- the need to closely involve the social partners and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the development of the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- the balance to be struck between flexibility and security in the development of a European Pillar of Social Rights;
- the fundamental role which the adaptation of social rights should play in the modernisation of the economy, notably by allowing flexible working patterns and the emergence of new activities and new forms of work like self-employed status;

- the importance of access to health as an integral part of the future Pillar of Social Rights, serving as a reference point in the process of upward convergence between Member States;
- the priority, endorsed by several speakers, to be given to those currently with only minimum social rights in order to facilitate their integration into society and the labour market; more generally, the priority to be given to job seekers and young persons in the EU social policy's overall strategy;
- the danger of the cost of upward social convergence falling more heavily on those with the fewest social rights;
- the potential role of research and innovation in the development of new social rights or in adapting existing rights;
- the importance of incorporating in the future pillar issues involving energy poverty, access to modern energy sources and mitigating the negative social impact of the energy transition under way; similarly, full integration of environmental considerations when defining social rights and as a fundamental component of social progress;
- the advisability of including vocational training in the Pillar of Social Rights, in particular to steer young people towards the occupations of the future; the need to invest in occupational skills, in particular teacher training, with the potential to impact in the long term on economic modernisation;
- the importance of not simply addressing the social pillar in terms of rights, but also in terms of all forms of education;
- the key role of the future package on labour mobility currently under preparation to ensure freedom of movement for workers;
- the importance of determining specifically whether the European Pillar of Social

Rights would apply solely to euro area members or to the whole of the EU.

The PRESIDENT ended the discussion by thanking the members of the Commission for their high-calibre interventions on this important political priority. He also specified that the European Pillar of Social Rights would only apply to Member States of the euro area, but while remaining open to other EU Member States should they wish to participate.

The Commission formally noted the results of this discussion.

9. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

9.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2016) 49 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 11 and 15 February.

9.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2016) 50 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 11 and 15 February.

9.3. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2016) 51 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 11 and 15 January, as archived in Decide.

9.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES**(SEC(2016) 52 AND /2)**

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 18 and 22 January.

Ms VESTAGER referred to EU policy on State aid in the steel industry, citing two decisions currently subject to written procedures (PE/2016/60 and PE/2016/103).

10. OTHER BUSINESS**10.1. IMPLEMENTATION DAY OF THE JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION (JCPOA) CONCLUDED IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NUCLEAR DEAL WITH IRAN****(INFO(2016) 3)**

Ms MOGHERINI reported on the major breakthrough in relations between Iran and the international community thanks to the developments on the Implementation Day (16 January 2016) of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) concluded between Iran and the E3/EU+3 group of negotiators (France, Germany and the UK, on the one hand, and China, Russia and the United States on the other) to limit Iran's nuclear programme. She reminded the meeting that the particularly laborious negotiations on this plan had started in 2003 and been endorsed by UN Security Council resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015.

The Implementation Day for the JCPOA was the date on which the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed in a report, after verification, that Iran had complied with its undertakings under the agreement, particularly by restricting the number of its centrifuges and its

stockpile of fissile material, and that as a result the economic and financial sanctions imposed by the United Nations and the European Union, connected with the nuclear programme, and the secondary economic and financial sanctions imposed by the United States, could be lifted.

Ms MOGHERINI outlined the main features of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, explaining that the lifting of the sanctions regime against Iran should take place in three conditional stages, spread over 10 years, with an automatic snap-back mechanism whereby sanctions that had been lifted could be reintroduced if Iran at any time failed to comply with its obligations.

The first stage having been reached on 16 January 2016, with Implementation Day, stage 2 would follow eight years later, in 2023, on Transition Day, once the IAEA had concluded that Iran's nuclear programme was entirely peaceful. A further series of sanctions would be lifted at that point. Finally, stage 3, which would begin 10 years after stage 1, in 2025, following Termination Day, would see the lifting of all remaining sanctions. For all of these points, guidelines had been presented in an information note intended for businesses and other stakeholders in the Union, similar to those produced by the United States for its businesses.

She pointed out that the advent of JCPOA Implementation Day opened new avenues for economic relations with Iran in sectors such as banking and finance, insurance, oil, gas and petrochemicals, ports and maritime transport, trade in gold and other precious metals, aluminium, steel, coal, IT, the automobile industry, civil aviation, the food industry and subcontracting activities related to all of these areas.

Ms MOGHERINI went on to mention a number of mechanisms put in place under the JCPOA, in particular the Joint Commission in which she, as High Representative of the Union, would have a coordinating role. This would have a consultative and dispute-resolution function.

She then outlined the follow-up to the process that started on 16 January. This involved, firstly, ensuring full compliance with and implementation of the JCPOA in order to build mutual trust between the parties, under the supervision of the IAEA, which had to ensure that Iran met its international obligations. It was also important to explore the possibilities created by the lifting of sanctions for rebuilding the European Union's relations with Iran in the fields of trade, energy, transport, as well as in terms of human rights, which would remain at the heart of any future rapprochement. Finally, she said she was willing to go to Iran, with other Members of the Commission, and hoped that this question would be considered at a future meeting of the group of Commissioners responsible for external relations, with a view to agreeing a coordinated approach.

In conclusion, she felt that it was a good time to capitalise on the positive atmosphere created by the major step forward in this initial phase of implementation of the JCPOA, partly by raising the European Union's profile in Iran and partly by seizing the opportunity to achieve progress in the political processes relating to Syria and Yemen, if possible.

She thanked the Commission Members and their staff who, over the past years and months, had contributed to a diplomatic and political breakthrough that had been long awaited by the international community.

The Commission took note of this information.

**10.2. OUTCOME OF THE 10TH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF THE
WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION (NAIROBI, 15 - 19 DECEMBER
2015)**

(INFO(2015) 114)

Ms MALMSTRÖM referred to the information note of 23 December 2015 addressed to the Members of the Commission in briefly describing the

significant breakthrough achieved during the 10th World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference, which took place in Nairobi from 15 to 19 December 2015. She welcomed the historic agreement that had been reached on a set of measures to restrict trade-distorting practices that affected agricultural exports.

Measures in favour of the least developed countries (LDCs) had also been agreed to help them integrate into the world economy, in particular by granting preferential access to their exports of services and introducing less stringent rules of origin for their exports of goods.

Lastly, in the margins of the conference, 53 WTO members had finalised the review of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA), which the EU had initiated in 1996. The review eliminated customs duties on 201 high-tech products – semiconductors, medical equipment, game consoles, GPS devices – representing an international trade volume in the order of EUR 1.3 billion a year. This should boost trade significantly in a sector in which the EU was highly competitive.

Ms MALMSTRÖM highlighted the focused and pragmatic approach taken during the Nairobi negotiations, which had borne fruit. She hoped that this success would inspire the WTO to examine the outstanding items on the Doha Development Agenda and the new trade aspects referred to in the ministerial declaration adopted in Nairobi. The EU could play a key role in this context, as pointed out in the communication adopted by the Commission in October 2015. She concluded by noting that an informal meeting of some 30 trade ministers from WTO countries would take place in the margins of the Davos forum from 20 to 23 January.

Mr HOGAN described the agricultural measures. He noted that compromises had been found in a number of areas and highlighted the particular impact of the decision on export competition, which was intended to eliminate all forms

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of export subsidy and restrict other practices likely to distort trade. He stressed the benefits of the decision, for both farmers and the agri-food sector in the EU, in so far as global competitors would be forced to end export subsidies and other such measures, thereby aligning themselves with current practice in the EU. This should create a more level playing field between the EU and non-EU countries.

He also welcomed the leading role played by the EU in the run-up to and during the Nairobi negotiations and thanked all concerned. In certain respects, the Nairobi declaration endorsed the market-based approach of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms, which had strengthened both the EU's credibility and its influence in multilateral trade negotiations.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The Commission's other deliberations during its 2152nd meeting are recorded in the ordinary minutes (PV(2016) 2152).

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The meeting closed at 14.55.