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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee
Subject: Special meeting of the European Council (25 and 26 February 2021)
– Annotated draft agenda

In accordance with Article 3(1) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Council, the President of the European Council, in close cooperation with the member of the European Council representing the Member State holding the six-monthly Presidency of the Council and with the President of the Commission, is to submit an annotated draft agenda to the General Affairs Council.

Delegations will find attached the annotated draft agenda submitted by the President of the European Council, setting out the main items the European Council is expected to address at the above meeting.

In the light of the final discussion to be held by the General Affairs Council within the five days preceding the European Council meeting, the President of the European Council is to draw up the provisional agenda.

I. COVID-19

The European Council will take stock of the epidemiological situation and pursue the coordination effort in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing in particular on the production and the rollout of vaccines as well as on the movement of persons.

II. HEALTH

The European Council will have a first exchange of views on the lessons learned so far from the pandemic with a view to strengthening the EU's resilience to health threats.

In this context the European Council will also take into account the follow-up to the Commission's Health Union package and possible next steps such as improving the EU's preparedness, early warning and prevention, crisis management and response tools, making better use of health data and data modelling, supporting and better matching research and innovation with production of vaccines and critical medical supplies in the EU, as well as the diversification and resilience of global medical supply chains.

Leaders will also address how to reinforce international solidarity and future international health cooperation, notably by strengthening the World Health Organization and through a global treaty on pandemics.

The European Council is expected to invite the Commission to prepare a report by the end of the year.

III. SECURITY AND DEFENCE

The European Council will hold a strategic debate on European security and defence.

Strengthening the EU's security and defence policy will contribute to increasing its ability to act autonomously and to promote its strategic interests and values on the global stage. This should be done in close partnership with NATO, the United Nations and other key partners.

The European Council will review ongoing initiatives in defence investment, capability development and operational readiness and will explore next steps to reinforce these. It will look into efforts to increase the EU's resilience, in particular against cyberattacks and hybrid threats. It will also discuss the EU's partnerships in security and defence, in particular with NATO.

In this regard, the European Council will call for an ambitious Strategic Compass by March 2022 and invite the High Representative to work in that direction in an inclusive manner and making use of the entire EU toolbox.

IV. SOUTHERN NEIGHBOURHOOD

The European Council will hold a strategic discussion on EU relations with the Southern Neighbourhood. [*No new conclusions are envisaged.*]

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In the light of events, the European Council may address other specific foreign policy issues.
