

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT CHARLES MICHEL FOLLOWING THE 2nd DAY OF THE SPECIAL MEETING

OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL 24-25 MAY

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USPA NEWS - « Today we had two essential items on the agenda. The first, the COVID situation; and the second, the issue of climate change and our ambition on the subject. On the first point, we have had the opportunity to express cautious optimism. We are convinced that we are making progress all over Europe in terms of vaccination. At the same time, we feel that we must remain vigilant and carry out precise monitoring in connection with mutations and variants. » We publish the full text of the Remarks of Charles Michel following the second day of the special meeting of the European Council, 24-25 May.

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The second point which has been the subject of our debates today relates to the agreement reached with the European Parliament last week on the EU Digital Certificate. We welcome this agreement which has been reached. And we welcome the fact that we can speed up the process of revising the recommendation in connection with travel within the European Union. We have set in mid-June the ambition to adapt this recommendation to gradually regain a capacity for freecirculation within the European Union. Finally, the third point is international solidarity. Since the very beginning of this pandemic, since the European Council met for the first time on this subject, we immediately considered that we could only defeat this pandemic if we were all mobilized together in international cooperation. . This was the meaning of the first initiatives to fund research in order to develop vaccines. This was the meaning of the launch of the COVAX initiative and it was also the meaning of the choice made within the European Union to maintain exports of doses produced on European soil. On average, 50% of the doses produced were exported each month to more than forty countries around the world.-----

We also had the opportunity to formally decide on this ambition to set up a mechanism to make it possible to give, before the end of the year, at least 100 million doses. The first announcements made by the Member States show that we will most certainly be beyond this capacity.-----

Finally, we support the work that was carried out with the Italian Presidency, with the commitment of the Commission in connection with the G20 last week and, more particularly, this extremely strong initiative announced by the Commission: mobilizing financial capacities to promote the possibility of increasing production capacities in the pharmaceutical sector, including vaccines, on the African continent. Particular attention must also be paid to Latin America. Several colleagues around the table have shown that it is important to be so involved in this part of the world.-----

Finally, one last element: at this very moment a number of meetings are taking place within the framework of the WHO, in connection with the discussion to move forward in favor of the negotiation of a treaty on pandemics. And we are optimistic that in the coming hours, an additional step can be taken in order to engage the international community in the multilateral framework, to all together draw the lessons of this crisis which is hitting the world, in order to try to take decisions that lead us to be more robust, stronger, more resilient, better prevent future pandemics and better cooperate when they arise.

The second topic on the agenda today was climate change. We prepared this European Council. We had a lot of consultations before. All the delegations expressed their priorities, concerns, legitimate concerns, in order to take into consideration this process and the responsibility of the Commission, who will put on the table concrete legislative proposals in the next week.

We trust the Commission to take this into account. We had important discussions on different topics, ETS, effort sharing, carbon adjustment mechanism, and different starting points in the different countries. We reaffirmed our common goals which are ambitious, climate neutrality by 2050, but also the decisions that we have taken in December last year, decreasing our emissions by at least 55% by 2030.-----

This is a very complex debate, with many areas which are interconnected. It's important to have a global vision, it's also important to

take into consideration the impact assessment for the different member states. You can be certain that we will continue to work a lot with the member states, with the Commission, and with the European Parliament.-----

It's a process and in preparation for the next COP26 in Glasgow, we hope it will be possible for the European Union to continue to play a leading role and to be concrete in order to make progress. We also agreed that we will have the opportunity to come back to this issue at a future meeting of the European Council and after the Commission has been able to table its legislative proposals. » Charles Michel President of European Council declared.

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