

Praha, March 2009

It is my honour to invite you to the meeting of the European Council in Brussels on 19 and 20 March 2009. This meeting takes place against the background of a severe financial crisis, the worst recession for decades and growing unemployment. Building on the good work done over the past weeks and months, we will address all of these issues. We will also pursue our work on the related issues of climate change and energy security.

The meeting will start with the traditional exchange of views with the President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, at 16:00, including on institutional issues. This will be followed by the family photo.

The first working session of the European Council will start at 16:45 hours. Given that the beginning of this year was marked by the gas energy crisis, the discussion will focus on how to enhance the Union's energy security in the medium and long-term, in line with the orientations of the Second Strategic Energy Review. We should also emphasise our common interest in the finalization of the Internal Energy Market Package. Finally, we will exchange views on how to make a success of the Copenhagen conference on climate change and how to achieve a common EU position in view of Copenhagen.

We will then take up the major issue of this European Council and examine the current economic and financial situation, with a view to developing clear orientations on the way forward. We shall look both at what is required to get the credit flowing again and at the necessary concrete lessons to be drawn for the future from the financial crisis. At the same time, we will continue our debate on the best ways of putting the real economy back on track. Finally, I will use the opportunity of this debate for informing you on my intentions concerning the organization of the Employment summit of 7 May.

We will continue this discussion among Heads of State or Government over dinner, starting at 20:00 hours. We will use the opportunity to discuss in more detail the preparation of the upcoming G20 meeting, which requires a strong EU position. Should it be necessary, we will also examine the Community part of the economic recovery plan.

Ministers of Foreign Affairs will discuss over dinner questions regarding Pakistan and Afghanistan and regional cooperation. Ministers of Finance are invited to a separate working dinner to take stock of the results of the meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors on 14 March in London and exchange views on some G20 issues of particular importance to the EU.

On Friday the second working session of the European Council will begin at 10:00 hours and be dedicated to finalizing the conclusions as well as to adopting the Eastern Partnership initiative.

The Presidency will inform the accession candidates on the outcome of the discussion.

Yours sincerely,