

Brussels, 05/03/2014

*Dear colleagues,*

*We are witnessing a dramatic period in the history of the European continent. Events in Ukraine represent a setback for Europe's peace, stability and indivisibility and are a cause of serious concern for us all.*

*I welcome Herman's initiative to convene an extraordinary European Council to enable us to have a broad political and strategic discussion amongst leaders on how best to respond to the current situation. The most immediate priority is to find a peaceful solution to the current crisis in full respect of international law, which should encompass a Russian withdrawal of its armed forces to the areas of their permanent stationing.*

*Another important dimension of our response will be the short term support to help stabilise the economic and financial situation in Ukraine. The European Union has always respected Ukraine's sovereign choices and I firmly believe that, if it is to stand a chance to succeed, any rapid assistance or modernisation programme needs to be owned and developed in close cooperation with Ukraine. This is why it is important for the new Ukrainian government to remain committed, inclusive and reform oriented.*

*It is with this in mind that the Commission has put together a package of immediate short and medium term measures offering trade, technical, economic, and financial assistance to Ukraine and its people.*

*These measures combined could bring an overall support of at least 11 billion euros over the next couple of years from the EU budget and EU based international financial institutions, in addition to the significant funding being prepared by the IMF and World Bank. It also includes a proposal on how to engage with these institutions and external partners, and on how best to cooperate and coordinate to address current and future challenges by proposing the setting up of a donor co-ordination platform.*

*The detail of these measures can be found in the paper annexed to this letter and I look forward to explaining them further this Thursday and working with you all to rapidly take these proposals forward.*

*To the Heads of State and Government, and the President of the European Council*

*In the current circumstances it is more important than ever that the EU acts as one on all levels, not just politically but also financially and on other areas of co-operation. For example, if we are to fast track autonomous trade preferences, we need the full support of the Council and the Parliament. We are also looking to what you, the Member States, can do and how we, the EU collectively, can leverage that support, also with others, to significantly improve the impact of our collective action. It is clear that we need to involve our international partners and financial institutions in this exercise.*

*The EU needs to demonstrate resolve in bringing together all elements for a comprehensive response to the present crisis in order to open what I am confident can be a new era for all Ukrainians.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*José Manuel BARROSO*

*Annex: Commission support package to Ukraine*