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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations

Subject: Friends of the Presidency Group "Improving the functioning of the EU".
Fourth meeting (1 December 2014) : Other and pending issues

The work accomplished during the first three sessions of the group already promoted general agreement and in-depth discussion on a set of concrete deliverables. Annual and multiannual programming, Council working methods in preparing the European Council and the issue of delegated and implementing acts were among the issues that were further discussed in the General Affairs Council, Coreper and at technical level in order to improve the way the Union functions.

The Presidency intends to inform the group on the latest developments concerning these issues, opening the floor -if need be- to further feedback.

Starting from these achievements, the final report will draw attention on a wide range of issues. Some of them have still not been discussed and will be tackled during our last session in order to have an overview of how to fully exploit the possibilities offered by the existing Treaties, in view of pursuing the EU's overarching priorities.

The final questions will be on subjects and instruments that were envisaged in the Lisbon Treaty for fundamental purposes (reinforcing democratic legitimacy, strengthening integration, adopting decisions more efficiently, etc.) and on which we will have a first evaluation on how they worked and how they can be put at better use.

Against this background the Presidency suggests the following questions to guide discussions:

- 1) The Lisbon Treaty introduced the so-called European citizens' initiative with an aim to facilitate citizens' participation in the EU issues. The citizens' initiative right is set out in Article 11(4) of the TEU. Delegations are invited to express their opinions on the implementation of the initiative, as well as on its role in the next years in strengthening participation and democratic legitimacy, following the results of the last European elections.
- 2) Do you consider that inter-governmental agreements signed beyond the existing legal framework are answers to the challenges Europe is facing, or should the EU objectives be pursued within the limits of the Treaties?
- 3) Considering that the Lisbon Treaty entered into force five years ago, there are still possibilities for better use of the Treaty. In this vein, for example, how do you see the implementation of Articles 20 (enhanced cooperation) and 48(7) (so-called "passerelle clause") of the TEU during the upcoming years?
- 4) Taking into account the security situation in the EU's broader neighbourhood, the Foreign Affairs Council recently reiterated the urgent need of enabling the EU and its member states to assume increased responsibilities as a security provider, internationally and in the EU's neighbourhood. Delegations are therefore invited to express their opinion on possibilities to improve the EU's external action, focusing on: how the new European Commission is organized, the way the Council deals with the EU external action and how provisions set out in Articles 42 and 44 TEU shall be exploited.
