Priorities of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Engagement with the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

Leinster House, 23 January 2019

I would like to begin my presentation today by thanking the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs for regularly organizing meetings with the incoming Presidencies of the Council of the European Union every semester, as well as for its constant engagement with European missions in Dublin. I am honoured to be here today as part of this active dialogue on European Affairs.

Romania has taken over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union on 1 January 2019. Our first ever EU Presidency is to take place against a backdrop of large-scale developments that will determine the shape of the Union: the reflection on the future of Europe, the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, the transition towards a new legislative cycle, as a result of the European elections (May 2019) and implicitly the end of the European Commission and European Parliament’s terms of office.

Common efforts of the Member States and of the EU institutions are needed in order to identify workable solutions to major challenges the European unification project is currently facing. Brexit takes the European Union into a new reality; this process must be orderly managed and the unity of the EU27 maintained, while striking for strong and close future relations with the UK. The EU is stepping into a new phase after Brexit and the Presidency should act in order to shape, together with the Member States and the EU institutions, a **strategic frame for its future**. In this context, **a landmark of our Presidency will be the Sibiu informal Summit on 9 May**, two weeks before the European elections. We see this Summit as a crucial
moment to raise awareness among the citizens about the added value generated by the EU and to send a message of unity within the Union.

Furthermore, the end of the current EU institutional cycle translates into a high number of pending files that reflect key priorities for the future of our Union and its citizens. We have set a high level of ambition in achieving tangible results, while also adopting a realistic approach. For this reason, in the first half of its term, the Romanian Presidency will focus its efforts on advancing with the legislative process, in order to finalise as many files as possible. Work will continue assiduously in the second half of our term with the non-legislative files equally important and complex.

The Union of the future needs a solid and appropriate budgetary framework and resources, in order to achieve the objectives of the following seven years. The European budget is a reflection of how we see the European Union in the future. That is why we need to make sure that the results of the negotiations on the future multiannual budget are equally balanced and well calibrated to the realities that the European citizens perceive day by day. In this vein, another topic on our agenda is moving forward with the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework, which is a flagship file for our Presidency. From this point of view, we will make all efforts to prepare the grounds for a timely agreement on the next multiannual financial framework.

While holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Romania will act as a genuine and honest broker in order to find solutions that enable progress on the European agenda.

We are convinced that the key to this path is COHESION and this is why we have chosen as our motto and central theme of our Presidency - “Cohesion as a common European value”.

Within this paradigm of cohesion, we have defined our Presidency priorities assigned to four pillars of action, as follows:

Pillar 1 - "Europe of convergence": Our Presidency aims at bringing a contribution to ensuring convergence and cohesion in Europe, for a sustainable and equitable development for all citizens and Member States, by enhancing competitiveness and closing development gaps, social progress, promoting connectivity and digitization, stimulating entrepreneurship and strengthening industrial policy. Taking forward the
negotiation process on the **2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework** will be an overarching objective throughout our Presidency.

**Pillar - 2 „A safer Europe”:** Our Presidency aims at consolidating a safer Europe through increased cohesion among EU Member States in dealing with the new security challenges that threaten the safety of citizens and through supporting the cooperation initiatives in this field. **Migration** will continue to be a topic intensely debated in Europe and our action needs to be comprehensive, both on the internal and external management aspects of migration.

**Pillar 3 - „Europe, as a stronger global actor”:** During our mandate, we will aim at further consolidating the global role of the EU through promoting the enlargement policy, a more active role of Europe in Africa and South Asia, in promoting multilateralism, the European action in its neighbourhood, further implementing the Global Strategy, offering the necessary resources for the EU and implementing all of the EU’s global commitments. The **EU’s action in the Eastern Neighbourhood** will benefit from a favourable context during the first semester of 2019, when we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the launch of the Eastern Partnership. The **Enlargement Policy**, as an instrument capable of extending stability and prosperity across Europe, will represent another important topic, which contributes to a safer and a more prosperous future for the EU.

**Pillar 4 - „Europe of common values”:** Our Presidency aims at stimulating the solidarity and cohesion of the EU by promoting policies to fight discrimination, encourage equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women, and increase citizens’ involvement in European debates. All EU policies and action should be underpinned by **European values and principles** as provided by the Treaties. At the same time, advancing on the European project should be done through a united, inclusive and open approach for all Member States. There cannot be divisions throughout the Union and this is a key message to reinforce citizens’ trust.

The **calendar of the Romanian Presidency** comprises a significant number of high-level and technical meetings and events that will take place in particular in Brussels, Luxembourg, Strasbourg and Bucharest. Approximately 1,700 technical meetings and 40 meetings of the EU Council at ministerial level are scheduled to take place in Brussels. At the same time, besides the Leaders Summit in Sibiu on 9 May 2019, we will host 288 meetings and events in Romania, out of which 22 informal ministerial
meetings in Bucharest, 98 high-level officials’ meetings, 68 expert meetings and 99 conferences. Further activities and events are foreseen in the capitals of the EU Member States as well as of third countries, where Romania will ensure local representation of the European Union.

Last but not least, the following six months are also a great chance to bring Romania closer to the citizens of the other Member States, to present a European country deeply anchored in the cultural and spiritual tradition of the European continent. We are looking forward to it!