**Together**

Extraordinary times beget extraordinary choices. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Union (EU) has already demonstrated the ability to take urgent, decisive and comprehensive action. But make no mistake: the road to recovery will be long. And so, the choices we will make in the coming months will have a major impact on Europe’s future.

At this decisive moment in the EU’s history, Germany, Portugal and Slovenia will take over from the 1st of July as the next trio of presidencies of the Council of the EU. For the next 18 months, the three presidencies will be responsible for not only ensuring a swift, resilient and cohesive recovery from the crisis but also laying the foundations for a climate neutral, digital, global and socially inclusive Europe.

We couldn’t be better prepared for this difficult mission. In a true European spirit of dialogue and solidarity, we have met each other over several months both in person and through digital means to debate, draw up and refine a common vision for Europe. From the outset, we decided to guide our work by the EU Strategic Agenda, and that was the common ground to which we added our priorities and points of view. Of course, no one could have anticipated the sheer scale of the challenge presented by COVID-19. Yet, we were able to move quickly to recast our program at the light of this exceptional crisis. This involves a commitment to implementing the relevant healthcare measures to overcome COVID-19 and following-up on the Commission’s proposals for a more ambitious, wide-ranging and coordinated crisis management system, inlcuding developing of the appropriate plans of action in cases of pandemics and large-scale cyberattacs,within the EU. It also involves prioritizing a robust recovery of the European economy, restoring and further deepening the Single Market, and working tirelessly to reach an agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 to ensure the timely start of the new programmes and instruments, as well as on the Recovery Package.

The Trio will also invest in building a more resilient, efficient and effective EU that delivers concrete results for our citizens, based on our core values, and respect for subsidiarity and proportionality. To tackle the social and human dimensions of the crisis, the Trio is committed to implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Conference on the Future of Europe should also contribute to the development our policies with tangible results for citizens. And we will strive for a comprehensive partnership with the United Kingdom that is fair and equitable for all Member States.

These commitments build on the four headline ambitions that we agreed prior to the crisis. First, we will protect our citizens and freedoms by, among other things, reaffirming our support to the full application of the Rule of Law throughout the EU, mainstreaming equality, promoting cultural diversity, following-up on the New Pact on migration, ensuring the safety of citizens online and enhancing the fight against terrorism and cross-border crime. Protecting our external borders will help us facilitate restoring the full functioning of the Schengen area.

Second, we will develop our economic base with a view to creating a Europe model for the future including a commitment to fully restoring and deepening the Single Market in its four freedoms, including through the promotion of a level playing field, investing in R&I and skills, developing an ambitious EU industrial policy strategy that promotes European value chains, strengthening the competitiveness of our SMEs and industries, striving for an effective and flexible Cohesion Policy and pushing forward the digital transformation in Europe.

Third, we will do our share to build a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe, including through the adoption of the European Climate Law, leading on the implementation of the Green Deal, , strengthening the efforts to fight poverty and improving access to social protection for all workers, and achieving an EU-wide coherent implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Fourth, the three Presidencies will promote Europe’s values in the world, including the promotion of a rules-based, multilateral international order, pursuing ambitious bilateral free trade and investment protection agreements, and strengthening our political partnership with, among others, Africa, Asia, Latin America, as well as our transatlantic partnership, with the overall goal of making the EU a responsible, capable and reliable global partner for peace and security.

The European perspective of has been a powerfull force in enusring transformation of societies and the implementation of neccessary reforms in the Western Balkans. The trio will continue to support the countries of Western Balkans on their European pathway.

All this, and much more, is contained within our Trio programme. It is now up to all of us, members of the Council, the Commission, the Parliament and, indeed, all Europeans to show the courage to implement this program together. For unity is our need today. And the only way to a better European future is by acting, and acting TOGETHER.